

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

March 24, 2009

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on March 24, 2009, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President  
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President  
Mr. Joseph R. Blasch  
Ms. Irene M. Boyle  
Mr. Richard M. Eccles  
Mr. Frank Koziol  
Mr. William D. O'Connor  
Dr. William H. Spitz

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise  
Mrs. Patricia Boylan  
Dr. Geeta A. Heble  
Mr. Kevin Kane  
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

**BOARD MEMBER NOT PRESENT:**

Mrs. Susan Cummings

**SOLICITOR:**

Thomas Profy, III, Esquire

**SECRETARY:**

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

**OTHERS:** Approximately 125 persons from the public, staff and press

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Mr. Webb announced that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held for Board members regarding personnel matters from 6:15 p.m. until 7:05 p.m.

**Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Webb requested those in attendance join in the salute to the flag.

**Announcements**

Mr. Webb made the following statement:

"Earlier today the Neshaminy School District Administrator's Association ratified a new three agreement that the Board of School Directors proposed. This new agreement is in my opinion an extremely responsible one that goes a long way towards helping the students of Neshaminy by controlling future costs. The Administrators of this District have shown a key sense of leadership by being willing to make substantial concessions for the betterment of all involved. This would include partnering with the District to mutually accept the burden of high health care costs with premium co-pay for the first time in history of this school district. This and other changes will help the District dramatically reduce our present and future post employment costs and, therefore, ensure that we will retain the jobs we need to properly support our students. If other bargaining groups in the District follow this example it would go a long way towards resolving our financial crisis, saving jobs and preventing program cuts. In summary, this agreement is the first step in the process towards a goal of fiscal responsibility for Neshaminy. It is good for our employees and taxpayers. It is my hope that the NFT will follow the Administrator's lead so we can reach an agreement with them. Thank you."

**Student Representative Report**

Ms. Meshael Jones, Student Council Treasurer, provided the following student representative report:

- Laughing Stock had a successful run in the Performing Arts Center.
- Dancing with the Faculty featured Neshaminy students and teachers and was a successful event.

- Jazz Band had a successful trip to Rhode Island.
- Vocal Spring Music Concert is being held this evening in the High School Auditorium.
- Spring sports are currently underway.
- Neshaminy Cheerleaders were named grand champions at the National Competition in Maryland.
- Junior Prom will take place on Saturday at Kings Caterers.
- FBLA members will be traveling to Hershey, PA for the State Competition.

#### Public Comment

Mr. Larry Pastor, Laurel Oaks, an Executive with IBM, stated that the progress with the Administrator's contract is significant and it is delightful to see same on the behalf of the taxpayers that they have agreed to this contract which was also extended to the teachers as well that they rejected. Mr. Pastor represents the taxpayers for a Fair Neshaminy School Budget. The Administrative staff is a significantly smaller increment of the personnel, so we still have some concerns of the overall budget, especially the \$14M deficit, but significant progress is being made. It would certainly be encouraging to the other parties, teachers and support staff, to come to the table with a reasonable offer of concessions, because concessions is what it is all about in today's environment of economic strain across the board in every public sector and environment. All areas from school districts, municipalities, cities, federal government, etc. are affected. The Inquirer stated that Mayor Nutter from the City of Philadelphia has problems with public worker contracts and is facing a \$1.4 billion deficit. The public worker contracts consist of extremely high health care costs. Health care and benefit costs is 60% in the City of Philadelphia. "The toughest fight that Nutter will have is with the municipal unions. Nutter set aside no raises for the City workers for five years. He aims to clamp down on the two fastest growing costs of the City budget, health insurance and pension benefits. The Mayor is right to reign in employee costs which eat up 60% of the overall budget. The unions do not want to hear same, but their health and pension benefits are gold plated and unaffordable giving the city's soaring costs and shrinking tax base." Mr. Pastor suggested that this could have been written for the Neshaminy School District. This is not an uncommon problem. This will be a major trend over the upcoming years. The burden on taxpayers at every level of government has gotten out of hand. At the local school district level is where the extreme pain of taxation is felt. A tax increase is real pain to people. What will they give up? Mr. Pastor has petitions which have been signed by more than 500 taxpayers strong. The AIG bonus issue is very similar to what Neshaminy has going on with the unions. Corporate greed. The teacher's rejection of the contract is nothing less than greed. Every other segment of society is paying towards health care. Taxpayers are outraged and they are signing the petition. Teachers are facing a moral dilemma. The Administrative contract is a great symbol for what is important. They are giving back after being recipients of excess for the past several years. The current contract on the table with the teachers does not close the math equation. This contract on the table cannot solve the problem. It should be withdrawn. Take on the challenge. The taxpayers request is for 2 years with no increases, 25% payment to start year one towards health care, and 2% raises in the remaining years of the contract. This could put a significant dent in the budget issue. The petition has been signed by people of all backgrounds, workers, retirees, etc. People are outraged and frustrated and they cannot afford a tax increase. Many people would like to stay in Bucks County, but they are forced to leave. Quality of education, quality of school district, and the lack of enhancement over the last twenty years of tax increases, until we solve that problem Mr. Pastor does not feel that a tax increase is justifiable.

Mr. Sy Goldstein, Villages of Flowers Mill, stated that six years ago the residents were here telling the Board that the raises were not right. At that time the Board voted 7-0 to give raises of 3% every single year. Some board members stated that they voted for the contract because they hated to think of the children if there would have been a strike. Six years later it has cost the district close to \$9M. Three percent adds up very fast. The sixth year it is almost 19%. Each teacher in the total six years ended up on the average of \$42,000 extra. The total for the district was \$29M which is \$5M per year. If the contract on the table currently was ratified it would cost the district approximately \$10M and where is it coming from? This does not include the administration and support staff which also wants raises. The district has over 700 teachers. The statistics from 2006-2007 stated the district has 616 with an average salary of \$76,000. The percent of teachers earning \$75,000 or more was 73%. Something is wrong. The increases need to be calculated over the years, not just the first year.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is a substitute teacher in three school districts, Council Rock, Pennsbury and Neshaminy. Mr. Rodos stated that teacher bashing is not productive and it does not recognize the valuable efforts of the teaching staff. Refocus the sights on the proposed budget. Compare expenses to Pennsbury and their busing. All districts need to adhere to the Department of Education guidelines for busing. Savings of \$2M-\$3M could occur per year. The Department of Education states that they reimburse an average of 50% of transportation of costs, yet Neshaminy School District gets only \$1.8M reimbursement on \$10M of current transportation expenses. Pennsbury pays \$8.3M for transportation and receives \$2.2M in return. This is a savings of \$2.5M. Mr. Rodos is concerned about the expenses for professional services for special education are 70% when in comparison Pennsbury spends 40% of their basic salaries. These two areas could save approximately \$5M. Mr. Rodos would like to know the need for building improvements of \$1.76M or a 277% increase over the current budget. Why is the non-salary part of the budget allowed to spiral upward without question? Mr. Rodos would like the entire non-salary portion of the budget to be re-examined and reduced to zero increases in every category and then show why it must be increased. Mr. Rodos would also like to have examined all reimbursed travel expenses. The Board must adjust its proposals regarding the teacher's contract. Mr. Rodos urges the teachers union to adopt a contract similar to the Administrator's.

Mrs. Connie Patrick, Lower Southampton Township, PA, advised that she went door to door and received more signatures on the petition. Mrs. Patrick stated that many residents are having hard times. Most are retired and they don't have any more money. Mrs. Patrick feels very bad for the retired people and also the young couples who are struggling to pay their taxes. The community is hurting. Mrs. Patrick questioned the stimulus package.

Dr. Muenker advised that the package has not been defined and how each school district will be able to use those funds. Unfortunately, plans cannot be made in the budget until further information is received from the state.

Mr. Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that because of the type of negotiations and publications being printed it does not seem that the main concern is the children. The teachers are being demeaned in the children's eyes. The union needs to take the time to re-poll the teachers because Mr. Dickler feels that there is a great majority of the teachers that feel that it is a time of sacrifice and in order to not destroy the image of the teacher in the children's eyes they need to stop and face reality. Stop playing the political game because it is setting the educational system back years. The teachers will need to regain the confidence of the kids.

#### Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker provided the following updates:

- Walter Miller Elementary held a successful Science Fair.
- Future Problem Solving Teams are participating in State Finals (Maple Point, Poquessing and High School level). Topic at State finals is "Counterfeit Economy."
- Carl Sandburg Middle School is having a benefit for the Jones family.
- Family/Consumer Science majors at Maple Point delivered packages at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children.
- Family/Consumer Science at High School provided 200 blankets for the homeless in Philadelphia.
- FBLA Club participated in the Leadership Conference in Hershey, PA. 12 students will be attending from Maple Point.
- Maple Point is hosting King Arthur Flower Company which is an assembly which will demonstrate hearth bread baking. The bread will then be given out to the local community as a service project.
- Carl Sandburg Middle School will host Dr. Quincy Hilliard, composer, conductor and music educator who will work with the middle school band.
- Bucks County Music Festival will take place and Neshaminy has placed 63 students among the group of participants.
- Graduation will take place on June 11, 2009. Rain date: June 12, 2009.
- Student's last day will be June 19, 2009.

#### Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Walls presented the minutes of the February 24, 2009 public meeting. Upon motion of Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Koutsouradis the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the February 24, 2009 Public Meeting. Mrs. Cummings was not present.

#### Approval of Treasurer's Report, Check Registers, Investments, and Exonerations of Personal and Per Capita Tax

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- February, 2009 Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit
- Check Register – February, 2009
- Investment Summary
- Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations – February, 2009

Ms. Boyle moved the February, 2009 treasurer's reports, subject to audit, check register, investments, and exonerations of personal and per capita tax be approved. Mr. Koziol seconded the motion.

Mr. Koutsouradis questioned a specific check for waste oil recycling. Mr. Koutsouradis further asked if the district ever explored for outside companies to pay the district for the removal of the oil. Mr. Paradise noted that he will investigate same.

The Board unanimously approved the Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit, check registers, investments and personal and per capita tax exonerations. Mrs. Cummings was not present.

#### Certified and Support Personnel Reports

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- Elections of Certified Personnel
- Resignations/Leaves of Certified Personnel
- Elections of Support Personnel
- Resignations/Leaves of Support Personnel
- 2008/2009 Recommended Extra-Curricular Staff and Salaries

Dr. Spitz moved the Certified and Support Personnel Reports be approved. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

The Board approved said reports by a vote of seven ayes and one nay (Mr. Eccles). Mrs. Cummings was not present.

#### Motion: Summer Programs – Summer of 2009

Mr. Koutsouradis presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District has operated a successful Summer School Program for 51 consecutive years; and

WHEREAS, in recent years has operated completely on a self-sustaining basis via student tuitions; and

WHEREAS, the following programs have been discussed with the Neshaminy Board of School Directors:

- Secondary Summer School (Enrichment and Make-up)
- Summer Fine Arts including, Art, Instrumental Music, and Summer Stock

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the request to operate summer programs for the 52<sup>nd</sup> year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that students residing in Neshaminy School District be given first preference for program involvement and related program activities.

Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion. Mrs. Cummings was not present.

**Motion: Approval of 2009-2010 Proposed School Calendar**

Mr. Koziol presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, each year the Board of School Directors must establish an official school calendar for the coming year; and

WHEREAS, the six participating school districts of the Bucks County Technical High School strive to establish a common school calendar; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors reviewed the proposed calendar at the March 10, 2009 Public Work Session; and

WHEREAS, the proposed calendar was forwarded for comments to each of the employee bargaining groups.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors adopt the attached school calendar for the 2009-2010 school year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors specifically designate Section 1502 holidays: December 24 and 28, 2009; February 15, 2010; and April 1 and 2, 2010 as five official local school district holidays.

Mr. O'Connor seconded same.

The Board unanimously approved said motion. Mrs. Cummings was not present.

**Update: Board Strategic Action Committee Meetings**

Dr. Muenker advised that a number of meetings have taken place to date and no future meeting has been planned to date. Discussion will take place to consolidate the recommendations and provide a recommendation to the Board.

**Federal Programs**

Dr. Muenker advised that the total of approximately \$2.4M is currently in the federal programs grant fund.

**Other Board Business**

Mr. Koziol provided a handout to Board members regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Mr. Koziol advised that he visited five of the elementary schools regarding the proposed furniture purchases. Mr. Koziol provided a handout to Board members stating what furniture would need replacement at each of the facilities due to poor conditions, age and safety issues. Mr. Webb suggested that Mr. Paradise review same.

Mr. Koziol requested that Middletown Township return or forgive Neshaminy School District for the building permits charged for the land development filing fees and the permits for modular trailers and the planning board review.

Dr. Spitz recalled that Middletown Township had charged those fees, but they will be accounting for their actual costs and then at the end of the project there will be some sort of reconciliation in terms of the dollar amounts.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Phil Schieber, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, thanked Mr. Koziol for his dedicated service to the school board. Mr. Schieber stated that it has been reported that the average 401K loss for the American taxpayers is between 25%-30%. Many people are devastated by the earnings. Everyone is suffering with the exception of the school teachers. They are not being realistic. Their state plans are protected and guaranteed. Everyone should be lobbying with the state legislators to change from a property tax to a broader base tax. There needs to be a much more generic tax to pay for the schools.

Mr. Larry Pastor advised that the community is very diverse. This impact will affect everyone. Mr. Pastor asked whether Mr. Webb could speak on the T.V. regarding what was actually accepted by the Administrators in their contract with more specificity.

Mr. Profy advised that the contract has not yet been approved and pending Board approval of the contract it is not a contract at this point. Board ratification is necessary before further information is disclosed. Information is available on the website.

Mr. Pastor further commented that the NFT is proposing a 6% annual increase for three years and they want no participation in health care and continue with the existing health care plan they have today and full retirement benefits. Mr. Pastor would like a public comparison of what the NFT is requesting and what the Board agreed to with the Administrative staff. Mr. Pastor would like to have a public forum regarding the contract and is the Board considering same. Mr. Webb stated that it would be considered.

**Board Comment**

Mr. O'Connor thanked Mr. Webb and Dr. Spitz for their efforts and time with the successful contract settlement with the Administrators.

**Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. Koziol moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anita E. Walls", enclosed in a faint, hand-drawn oval.

Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary