

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
(PUBLIC MEETING)
March 27, 2007

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on March 27, 2007, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President
Mrs. Sue C. Barrett, Vice President
Mr. Joseph R. Blasch
Mr. Jason Bowman
Ms. Irene M. Boyle
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Frank J. Koziol
Dr. William H. Spitz
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

Mr. Paul J. Kadri
Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Dr. Sandra Costanzo
Dr. Geeta Heble
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

SECRETARY:

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR:

Thomas Profy, IV, Esquire

OTHERS: Approximately 12 persons from the public, staff and press

Call to Order

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

No announcements.

Public Comment

Mr. Solis Basen, Langhorne, PA, remarked that Sunday's Inquirer which listed all Bucks County School Districts and their per budget dollar amount per student: Central Bucks - \$12,000, Centennial - \$13,000, Pennsbury - \$14,000, Council Rock - \$14,000, Neshaminy - \$17,000, Bensalem - \$17,000. Mr. Basen would like to know why?

Mrs. Marianne O'Connor, Langhorne, PA, posed the following questions: Whether the wording for the EIT referendum is mandatory? Mrs. O'Connor's concern is that people will see the rebate figure and not understand the ramifications of the tax. The public needs to know that if the tax is voted in they will be hit with the 1% earned income tax; however, the rebate will take a long time to receive.

Mr. Paradise advised that the wording is indeed mandatory. The credit that people would receive is as a result of the income tax. The credit does not have to do with the gambling revenue.

Mrs. O'Connor further stated that the public needs to educate themselves. Mrs. O'Connor requested that the Board provide a factual report with the figures. Every single person in the household, including children working part time jobs, will be taxed. Every taxpayer needs to know that this is not a done deal and the taxpayers can vote this tax down. Further, this tax is not in place of any tax increase that you will see on your school or county and township bills. This plan will not help the majority of taxpayers. It will hurt the majority of this community. The public needs to go to the leaders in Harrisburg and demand a plan that helps our seniors not have to choose between paying for medication or food and heat, and at the same time allows those non-seniors to be able to save for their golden years. The community needs to write the leaders in Harrisburg and tell them that this is not acceptable.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Langhorne, PA, stated that he has asked Chris King, Representative, to attach a request to the proposed regulation regarding seat belts on school buses in Harrisburg to provide that no school bus be over ten years of age. Mr. Rodos stated that he is the voice of the 9,200 students in Neshaminy School District. Mr. Rodos determined that it would cost $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% to add full time kindergarten to a \$160M budget. A small price to pay for a large dividend. Mr. Rodos would also like the Board to address the cost of education per student, because most of the difference in expense involves special education and the technical school.

Student Representative Report

Miss Arriel DeLuca provided the following report:

- Gym Night was a huge success – Blue Team was on top
- Welcome Spring Concerts – Vocal and Instrumental students
- 570 Students attended the Junior Prom
- Spring sports are beginning
- Two students went to States for instrumental and vocals
- Boy's Indoor Track placed 2nd in the State
- Three girls represented Neshaminy for Track at States
- Brian Gamberling placed 3rd at States for Diving
- 110 Students attended the Instrumental Music trip in mid-April
- Neshaminy placed 2nd out of 19 at the Scholars Bowl
- Girl's Bowling team won the SOL Champs

Mrs. Barrett inquired where the Scholar's Bowl was held. Miss DeLuca advised that she would get in touch with Ms. Murphy and obtain the location.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Kadri announced that Graduation will take place on Wednesday, June 13, 2007. Mr. Kadri advised that the 2007-2008 Calendar will be brought before the Board on April 10th. During this calendar period there will be a significant move at the high school regarding the construction. The winter break period may be extended in order to accommodate this situation.

Mr. Kadri advised that the Sunshine Foundation, located in Lower Southampton and through Feasterville Rotary, students at the high school have adopted a student through this organization. The students will be running an event entitled "Neshaminy Idol" to help raise funds.

Mr. Kadri advised that this week is Peace Week at Ferderbar Elementary and every day this week the students are talking about how to best interact with other people. This is a wonderful example that the students are taking the lead and being proactively good citizens with each other. Also, a community service group called the Early Act Group which is a Rotary affiliate is also forming at Ferderbar. Mr. Kardi commended the staff and counselors at the school for all their hard work.

Mr. Kadri noted that regarding the Penndel Borough Revitalization Plan, Mrs. Heffelfinger advised that there would be some apartments and condos as part of the plan.

Mr. Kadri advised that he has completed a draft of the Tawanka Alternative Program Analysis and it will be distributed to the Board by the end of the week.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Walls presented the minutes of the February 27, 2007 and March 13, 2007 public meetings. Upon motion of Mr. Koziol and seconded by Mr. Bowman, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the February 27, 2007 and March 13, 2007 Public Meeting.

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

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- February, 2007 Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit
- Check Register – February, 2007
- Investment Summary
- Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations – February, 2007

Mr. Blasch moved the treasurer's report, check register, investments, and exonerations of personal and per capita tax be approved. Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol wanted to bring to the public's attention the amounts of certain checks within the check register, for example, \$1.2M to the Bucks County IU#22, which is one of five payments to the IU for special education costs; payroll deductions to the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers which occur 26 times throughout the year.

The Board unanimously approved the Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit, check registers, and investments.

Approval of Bids

Mr. Paradise presented the following bids:

Bid No. 08-01

Bid Amount: \$160,333.05

The bid is for various classroom and office supplies for use throughout the district for the school year 2007/2008.

Bid No. 08-02

Bid Amount: \$85,665.62

The bid is for supplies for physical education programs and various team sports for the school year 2007/2008.

The Board unanimously approved Bid Nos. 08-01 and 08-02.

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
- Sabbatical Leaves of Certified Personnel

Dr. Muenker advised that personnel have until Friday of this week to advise that they wish to retire from the district.

Dr. Muenker advised that on page 82, #2, that person has rescinded his request for retirement. Dr. Muenker advised that the Board will be voting on everything in the report except for #2 on page 82.

Mr. Webb moved the personnel report be accepted with the exception of #2 on page 82. Ms. Barrett seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol inquired as to what entitles and determines a sabbatical leave for an individual. Dr. Muenker advised that a teacher must fulfill the requirements of a certain number of credits within a semester block at university level course work (graduate level).

Mr. Koziol further inquired regarding social security disability pay, medical leave sabbatical and sick pay. Dr. Muenker advised that he would provide Mr. Koziol with the accurate information regarding same.

Dr. Muenker further advised that Mr. Bauer will be retiring from the school district after serving 33 years. Dr. Muenker commended Mr. Bauer for his fine work on behalf of Neshaminy School District.

Dr. Muenker noted that once the report is approved by the Board individuals can no longer rescind their requests.

The Board unanimously approved the personnel reports.

Motion: Approval of Revised Board Policy #110 – Board Governance Standards/Code of Conduct

Mr. Blasch presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors recognizes the importance of ethical behavior among its members; and

WHEREAS, a code of conduct can act as a foundation for supporting all School Board Members in their endeavors to provide leadership through governance; and

WHEREAS, a code of ethics can provide a framework board members may use to assess appropriate governance behavior and responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, after review by the Board Policies Committee the district is ready to recommend:

Revised Policy 110 – Board Governance Standards/Code of Conduct

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that said Policy be revised and approved by the Neshaminy Board of School Directors.

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Motion: Approval of Penndel Revitalization Development Plan

Mr. Bowman presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Penndel Borough wishes to explore the opportunity to economically develop its downtown area; and

WHEREAS, the borough developed the Penndel Revitalization Development Plan; and

WHEREAS, part of the plan involves petitioning the state for support in their efforts to revitalize the downtown area; and

WHEREAS, in order to petition the state, Penndel Borough needs to have resolutions from all government agencies, including the Neshaminy School District, supporting their efforts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors of the Neshaminy School District pass this resolution expressing support for the TRID (Transit Revitalization Investment District) Grant Application.

Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Motion: Approval of Installment Payment Plan for Property Taxes

Ms. Boyle presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, Act 1 of 2006 requires that the Board of School Directors adopt an Installment Payment Plan for Property Taxes; and

WHEREAS, the Facilities and Finance Committee has discussed and reviewed the attached installment program which conforms with the requirements of Act 1. (See Attachment A)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approve the program as provided on the attached document, effective July 1, 2007.

Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

Mrs. Barrett advised that this is only eligible to approved homestead/farmstead properties. Three equal installment payments based on face value, without the discount. Due dates are as follows: July 31st, September 15th, October 31st. Any late installment requires a mandatory 10% penalty required by Act 1. One bill sent to taxpayer with coupons for the installments. Installment payment option does not include interim or delinquent bills as per the Act. Any taxpayer who is delinquent by more than 10 days or more than two installments is ineligible for the installment payment option the following year.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Motion: Approval of 2007-08 Bucks County Technical High School Budget

Mrs. Cummings presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in order to provide technical high school education for our students, six Lower Bucks County School Districts cooperatively established the Bucks County Technical High School; and

WHEREAS, each participating school district must annually approve the Technical High School's annual budget.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the 2007-2008 Bucks County Technical High School budget in the total amount of \$20,505,162 with the Neshaminy School District 2007-2008 net fiscal payment to be \$4,025,229.

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

Mr. Webb advised that Mr. Koziol and he reviewed the budget with the business manager from the Tech School in order to figure out why Neshaminy's share is up 8 ½%. Back in 2003 Neshaminy was paying \$1.5M and currently Neshaminy will pay \$4M. This is a substantial increase and it is Mr. Webb's recommendation to meet with the Tech School to review the formula. However, Mr. Webb advised that the overall budget developed by the Tech School at 3.4% is great.

Further Board discussions took place regarding the Tech School budget and Neshaminy's portion thereof. Mr. Bowman reviewed figures of other districts with Board members. Mr. Bowman is concerned primarily with the funding formula and Mr. Bowman believes that Neshaminy is subsidizing too much of the budget. Mr. Bowman cannot support the Tech School budget for that reason and this Board has an obligation and responsibility to Neshaminy taxpayers to make sure that their tax dollars are looked out for.

Mr. Webb noted that we have an obligation based upon this formula to support same, and nevertheless, we need to pass the budget.

Dr. Spitz advised that the formula has a built in two to three year lag. Neshaminy is now paying for increases in enrollment that the district made two and three years ago. Bristol Township made a conscience decision about three years ago to cap the number of students they send to the Tech School.

Special education students are not reflected in the funding formula. Costs for all students are similar.

Ms. Boyle noted that it seems that the Tech School did a fine job developing their budget; however, it seems that Neshaminy is paying more than its fair share.

Mr. Eccles requested a roll call vote. The roll call tally indicated that the motion passed by a vote of six ayes (Mrs. Barrett, Mr. Blasch, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Dr. Spitz, and Mr. Webb) and three nays (Mr. Bowman, Mr. Eccles and Mr. Koziol).

Motion: Approval of Summer Programs - 2007

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District has operated a successful summer school program for 49 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, Dance, 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 50th year.

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

Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Federal Programs

Mr. Kadri advised that a new grant, NRG was received for nutrition and wellness at Neshaminy Middle School. Also, Kids In Need Grant was provided to purchase fabric for a community service project in conjunction with St. Christopher's Hospital.

Other Board Business

Dr. Spitz referred to a letter provided by the solicitor regarding Additional Tax Collector Compensation. Mr. Paradise advised that as a result of the motion passed this evening the Tax Collectors must make a request within 15 days of today. Although they may have already made the request it must be done again. Mr. Paradise has advised the tax collectors of same and the information has been relayed to them.

There was Board consensus to forward a letter to the Tax Collectors regarding compensation.

Mr. Paradise advised that the District received a request from Lower Bucks Basketball Group to utilize facilities on Saturday and Sunday at both Maple Point and Carl Sandburg. They are already registered in the buildings and allocated time in the gyms on Saturdays. They are requesting Sunday use. They are aware of additional costs and will be responsible for same.

There was Board consensus to allow Lower Bucks Basketball Group to utilize the facilities on Sunday, April 1st.

Mr. Eccles noted that he knows Mr. Wisniewski personally and he has devoted his time through the years to volunteer in helping children with sports and CYO's.

Mr. Kadri advised that on the April 10th meeting agenda an item will be discussed regarding communications to the public about the Act 1 ballot question. Mr. Paradise advised that the Question and Answer sheet is currently on the T.V. and website.

Mr. Kadri advised that on April 10th the architect will be providing an update on the high school construction project and McKissick Associates will provide a facility plan update and, further discussion of the district wide mailing of Act 1 information will also take place.

Mr. Koziol is concerned why society continues to want to increase the tax burden on the senior citizen taxpayers. Everyone will be a senior citizen someday. Mr. Koziol cannot see where Act 1 hurts everyone. It helps senior citizens, it helps people under \$57,000 income. 37% of the people live there. It is a shift. Taxpayers will decide if they want to shift that burden from the poor and senior citizen to broader shoulders. Another way, lets come up with a new tax and raise the sales tax. Mr. Koziol feels at age 65 taxes should decrease and at 75 or 80 they should no longer pay taxes.

Mr. Eccles noted that a 2004 Neshaminy graduate, Brian Gross, serves on the USCGC Sherman, that was involved in a major drug bust. Mr. Eccles read the following: "Friends and Family: Tomorrow, March 21, 2007, at 12:30, 9:30 on the West Coast, the Commandant of the US Coast Guard, Admiral Allen, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, and the DEA Administrator, Karen Tandy, will announce that the USCGC Sherman has made the largest drug bust in US history. On March 17, 2007, off the coast of Central America the Sherman seized the 330 ft. Panamanian motor vessel, Gatón, with over 19 metric tons (21.4 tons) of cocaine on board with an estimated street value of over one-half billion dollars. Every person on board contributed in some way to this bust. It is a great team effort and you should be very proud of your loved ones. The amount of contraband is overwhelming. This drug bust shatters the old record by over tons. Wait till you see the pictures."

Brian Gross is the son of John and Mary Gross of Levittown, PA. Congratulations!

Public Comment

Mr. Steve Rodos, Langhorne, PA, stated that the Tech School discussion is very hard to follow. Every student that goes should pay the same amount, however, Bristol is paying \$4,000 less per student than Neshaminy. Somehow this needs to be explained to the public. Mr. Rodos is also concerned about the special education costs and the lack of state assistance to cover these ever growing costs.

Mr. Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, is concerned that Mr. Basen's questions and comments have not been addressed. Everyone deserves an answer as to why the education costs are so vastly different than other districts. The public deserves an answer. Other regions are producing higher scores. If the scores would show that since we are spending this money the scores were better than other districts it would be acceptable, however, the results are not showing us that the money being spent is worthwhile.

Board Comment

Mr. Bowman commented that the numbers are concerning regarding the per pupil costs.

Ms. Boyle noted that Lower Merion is spending approximately \$21,000 to educate a pupil. Ms. Boyle thinks that since we are spending \$17,000 should be to our district's credit. This is money going towards our students benefit.

Mrs. Barrett noted that 73% of the district's certified staff makes \$75,000 +. The district's staff is mature and that is part of the problem. Times are changing and currently Neshaminy has 25 people retiring.

Mr. Kadri noted that school district's are built on history, practice and sense of changing landscapes. There is a process of review and understanding the core costs to provide stability. Mr. Kadri asked everyone to persevere since there is no quick fix to bringing fiscal stability. Communicating with the community and facing challenges need to be discussed with the public.

Mr. Webb advised that the Finance Committee is beginning on working on the Superintendent's budget. This is a Preliminary Budget and we will continuously work on decreasing the budget. Currently, the average taxpayer would have a \$238 increase in taxes. This amount is totally unacceptable.

Mr. Bowman noted that the increases in some areas will be larger than \$238. Cider Knoll will be \$340, Flowers Mill is a \$360 increase, Laurel Oaks is a \$430 increase. This is too much money and the budget needs to go down. Look at fixed overhead costs, building utilization, labor contracts, etc.

Public Meeting of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors (cont.)
March 27, 2007

Mrs. Barrett commented that the Renovation Guide is a very helpful tool in understanding the construction process at the high school. Mr. Blasch commented that the guide will only be distributed to 9th, 10th and 11th graders.

Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Bowman moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Webb seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary