

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
June 29, 2010

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on June 29, 2010, in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center at Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President  
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President  
Ms. Irene M. Boyle  
Mr. Scott Congdon  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Richard M. Eccles  
Mr. Mike Morris  
Mr. William D. O'Connor  
Mr. William Oettinger

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise  
Mrs. Patricia Boylan  
Mr. Kevin Kane

**BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:**

**OTHERS:** Approximately 100 persons from the public, staff and press

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Jennifer Burns

**SOLICITOR:** Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

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Mr. Webb stated that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held regarding personnel and legal issues.

**Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**Announcements**

None

**Public Comment**

Annamarie Miller, 21 year resident of Middletown Township and parent in Neshaminy School District, thanked the School Board for all of their hard work this past year and for rescuing hundreds of jobs in the community. Ms. Miller commented on the actions that were taken out on the children of the Neshaminy School District by the NFT's "work to contract" actions. Ms. Miller quoted from an article in the Bucks County Courier Times a statement that the President of the NFT had made, which said, "We will not be bullied into a take it or leave it form of negotiations regardless of the District's dealings with other labor groups." Ms. Miller stated that the bullying was done by the NFT against the children in the district. In addition, Ms. Miller commented that the children were made to feel unwelcome in their own school buildings by adult role models that they have looked up to all year long. She said the children were forced to sit in classrooms that suddenly became devoid of all joy. Ms. Miller stated that the children could not access their homework via the Internet. She compared this action to cyber bullying, which is the exact sort of action that the Neshaminy School District is reported to find intolerable. Ms. Miller cited an example that was particularly upsetting to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. She said that the teacher sat at her desk while a recording was played to the class reading a chapter of a social studies book. She remarked that these 10 and 11 year old children were made to feel that they were not worth teaching and instead were an annoying presence in the classroom.

Charles Alfonso, salesman of fiber optic cable, Laurel Oaks, Langhorne, opened his comments by stating he believes that the taxpayers have been deceived by the Teachers Union leadership and the past School Board

members and advisors. Mr. Alfonso called for the Board to request the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office to investigate the possibility of bribery to public officials citing that the past negotiation meetings were held in secret behind the taxpayers backs resulting in excessive tax increases. Mr. Alfonso presented a list of suggestions to the School Board that, in his opinion, should be acted upon at once. The list included replacing the Neshaminy School Board Financial advisor and legal counsel, dismissing teachers for non performance, rehire new inspired teachers, and to require all teachers to become knowledgeable in computer technology.

Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, opened his comments by thanking two individuals for their work. He thanked Mrs. Burns for her work on the minutes and he thanked Mr. Paradise for being so accommodating in answering his questions and his open door policy. He further thanked Mr. Paradise for his years of service to the community and he said that Mr. Paradise will be missed when he retires at the end of the year. Additionally, Mr. Rodos thanked the Board for coming to an agreement with the NESPA Union. Mr. Rodos stated that he had been following the meetings for the last four months with anticipation to see how the budget would be balanced. Mr. Rodos said that he was pleased to see that both sides agreed to end the wasteful expenditures of funds for retiree health benefits. Mr. Rodos requested that an explanation be provided as to how the two to three million dollars in savings was accomplished.

Howard Lindner, former teacher at Neshaminy, Langhorne, spoke in defense of the Neshaminy teachers. Mr. Lindner declared that many Neshaminy teachers are dedicated professionals. Mr. Lindner pointed out that the teachers have a difficult job and they need the support and cooperation of the parents and the students in order to achieve the highest goals. Mr. Lindner noted that the School Board saved the taxpayers \$50 million dollars by the decision not to build a brand-new high school. Mr. Lindner declared that, in his opinion, the Neshaminy School District is one of the best in the nation. Mr. Lindner pleaded with the teachers to agree to a settlement where new teachers would not lose their jobs and programs would not be cut. Mr. Lindner called for a moment of silence for Mr. Bob Brann, a former teacher at Neshaminy and Middletown Supervisor, who had recently passed away.

#### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- Lauren Chelenza for her initiative in creating hair bows from duck tape as a fundraiser for the Mattie Miracle Cancer Foundation.
- Neshaminy High School Drama Club featured a presentation of improvisational games with 17 of the schools most comedic students raising over \$2,000 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the proceeds will be used to send several children to summer camp
- The Family and Consumer Science Department awarded Kelsey Lerman and Danielle Seipp with a \$300 scholarship for attending college and majoring in the F.C.S. field.
- Albert Schweitzer Community created a "Gratitude Wall" to thank one another for the great experiences shared throughout the year.
- A letter, which was erroneously sent, to two Neshaminy schoolteachers and their neighbors regarding the NFT was neither sent nor condoned by the Neshaminy School District.
- Governor Rendell and the Legislative Caucuses have recently come close to an agreement for approving a budget for the next year. The Neshaminy School District will be paying close attention to the items in this budget as to how it will affect the funds for education.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of June 15, 2010 Public Board Meeting. Upon motion of Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Ms. Boyle the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the June 15, 2010 Public Board Meeting.

#### **Approval of Bids**

Mr. Paradise presented the following bid for approval:

#### **Bid No. 11-5 Transportation Parts Supplies**

Amount: \$74,313.89

Bid Description: Various supplies for the maintenance of District vehicles for school year 2010/2011. Quantities on this bid are estimated. The actual quantities purchased may vary from this estimate but will not exceed the total recommended for award.

Mr. Koutsouradis moved that Bid No. 11-5 be approved and Mr. Eccles seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved Bid No. 11-5.

#### **Certified and Support Personnel Actions**

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- Elections – Certified Personnel
- Resignations and Leaves of Absence – Certified Personnel
- Summer School Staff
- Elections – Support Personnel
- Sabbatical Leaves – Certified Personnel
- Summer Support Staff

Dr. Muenker recommended the approval of the personnel report for certified and support personnel. Dr. Muenker also noted that Mr. Paradise will be retiring in December.

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

The Board unanimously approved said reports.

#### **Motion: Homestead and Farmstead Exclusion Resolution**

Mr. O'Connor presented the following motion:

**RESOLVED**, by the Board of School Directors of Neshaminy School District, that homestead and farmstead exclusion real estate tax assessment reductions are authorized for the school year beginning July 1, 2010, under the provisions of the Homestead Property Exclusion Program Act (part of Act 50 of 1998) and the Taxpayer Relief Act (Act 1 of 2006), as follows:

1. **Aggregate Amount Available for Homestead and Farmstead Real Estate Tax Reduction.** The following amounts are available for homestead and farmstead real estate tax reduction for the school year beginning July 1, 2010:

a. **Gambling Tax Funds.** The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has notified the School District that PDE will pay to the School District during the school year pursuant to Act 1, 53 P.S. §6926.505(b), as a property tax reduction allocation funded by gambling tax funds, the amount of \$3,591,235.70.

b. **Remaining Property Tax Reduction Funds.** Funds will also be available during the school year for real estate reduction as a result of undistributed funds from the property tax reduction funds received in 2009-10. These funds will be added to the allocation for this school year in the amount of \$1,385.73.

c. **Philadelphia Tax Credit Reimbursement Funds.** PDE has notified the School District that PDE will pay to the School District during the school year pursuant to Act 1, 53 P.S. § 5926.324(3), as reimbursement for Philadelphia tax credits claimed against the School District earned income tax by School District resident taxpayers, the amount of \$-0-.

d. **Other Sources.** No funds will be available during the 2010-11 school year for real estate tax reduction other than the gambling tax funds, remaining property tax reduction funds and Philadelphia tax credit reimbursement funds set forth in subparagraphs (a.), (b.) and (c.) of Section 1 of this Resolution.

e. **Aggregate Amount Available.** Adding the amounts set forth in subparagraphs (a.), (b.), (c) and (d) of Section 1 of this Resolution, the aggregate amount available during the 2010-11 school year for real estate tax reduction is \$3,592,621.43.

2. **Homestead/Farmstead Numbers.** Pursuant to Act 50, 54 Pa. C.S. § 8584(i), and Act 1, 53 P.S. § 5926.341(g)(3), the County has provided the School District with a certified report listing approved homesteads and approved farmsteads as follows:

a. **Homestead Property Number.** The number of approved homesteads within the School District is 17,212.

b. **Farmstead Property Number.** The number of approved farmsteads within the School District is -0-.

c. **Homestead/Farmstead Combined Number.** The aggregate number of approved homesteads and approved farmsteads is 17,212.

3. **Real Estate Tax Reduction Calculation.** The school board has decided that the homestead exclusion amount and the farmstead exclusion amount shall be equal. Dividing the paragraph 1(d) aggregate amount during the 2010-11 school year for real estate tax reduction of \$3,592,621.43 by the paragraph (2)(c) aggregate number of approved homesteads and approved farmsteads of 17,212, before considering the assessed value of approved homestead and approved farmsteads having an assessed value below the preliminary calculation of the maximum real estate assessed value reduction amount to be established as the homestead and farmstead exclusion amount, the preliminary calculation of the maximum real estate tax reduction amount applicable to each approved homestead and to each approved farmstead is \$208.73.

Based on calculations provided by the School District Business Office from the best available information and carefully evaluated by the School Board, considering the assessed value of approved homesteads and approved farmsteads having an assessed value below the preliminary calculation of the maximum real estate assessed value reduction amount to be established as the homestead exclusion and the farmstead exclusion amount, an additional aggregate amount of \$1,731 will be available during the school year for real estate tax reduction applicable to approximately 17,205 homesteads and farmsteads, resulting in an additional real estate tax reduction amount available for each homestead and farmstead of \$-0-. Adding this additional amount to the preliminary calculation of the maximum real estate tax reduction amount of \$208.73 the final maximum real estate tax reduction amount applicable to each approved homestead and to each approved farmstead is \$208.73.

4. **Homestead Exclusion Calculation.** Dividing the paragraph 3 maximum real estate tax reduction amount of \$208.73 by the School District real estate tax rate of 152.0 mills (.1520), the maximum real estate assessed value reduction to be reflected on tax notices as a homestead exclusion for each approved homestead is \$1,373, and the maximum real estate assessed value reduction to be reflected on tax notices as a farmstead exclusion for each approved farmstead is \$-0-.

5. **Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion Authorization – July 1 Tax Bills.** The tax notice issued to the owner of each approved homestead within the School District shall reflect a homestead

exclusion real estate assessed value reduction equal to the lesser of: (a) the County-established assessed value of the homestead, or (b) the paragraph 4 maximum real estate assessed value reduction of \$1,373. The tax notice issued to the owner of each approved farmstead within the School District shall reflect an additional farmstead exclusion real estate assessed value reduction equal to the lesser of: (a) the County-established assessed value of the farmstead, or (b) the paragraph 4 maximum real estate assessed value reduction of \$-0-. For purposes of this Resolution, "approved homestead" and "approved farmstead" shall mean homesteads and farmsteads listed in the report referred to in paragraph 2 above and received by the School District from the County Assessment Office on or before May 1, 2010 pursuant to Act 1, 53 P.S. § 5926.341(g)(3), based on homestead/farmstead applications filed with the County Assessment Office on or before March 1. This paragraph 5 will apply to tax notices issued based on the initial tax duplicate used in issuing initial real estate tax notices for the school year, which will be issued on or promptly after July 1, 2010 and will not apply to interim real estate tax bills for tax periods beginning prior to July 1, 2010.

RESOLUTION adopted this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2010.

ATTEST:

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT

\_\_\_\_\_

By:

Jennifer Burns, Board Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ritchie Webb, President

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

**Motion: Approval of Bucks County Technical High School 2010-11 Budget**

Mr. Eccles 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 approve the Technical High School's annual budget.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the 2010-11 Bucks County Technical High School budget in the total amount of \$22,513,051 with the Neshaminy School District 2010-11 net fiscal payment to be \$3,991,475.

Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

Mr. O'Connor noted that he had previously voted against this motion because he felt the Technical School had not done enough work to find cost reduction measures. He also thanked Mr. Koutsouradis, not only for the work that he did, but also for arranging a telephone call with the business manager of the Technical School so Mr. O'Connor could have a better understanding of the situation.

Mr. Eccles stated he would not be supporting this motion because of all of the sacrifices being made by Neshaminy. Mr. Eccles feels that all of the other facilities and institutions involved are not taking it with the same seriousness as Neshaminy.

Mr. Morris thanked Mr. Koutsouradis for all of his hard work and he also agrees with Mr. Eccles that more work and creativity needs to be looked at for next year.

Mr. Webb commented that he agrees that the budget should be continually looked at as far as cuts; however, it is important that this budget pass so there is no interruption with the summer program at the Technical School.

Mr. Congdon inquired as to how many representatives from each of the six districts make up the Board at the Technical School.

Mr. Webb responded there are a total of 14 members.

The motion passed by a vote of eight ayes, (Mr. Webb, Mr. Oettinger, Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Morris, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Congdon, and Ms. Boyle) and one nay, (Mr. Eccles).

**Motion: Approval of Fund Balance Commitment for PSERS**

Mr. Koutsouradis presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania School Employee Retirement System (PSERS) is a mandatory, multi-employer, pension plan for all Pennsylvania school employees; and

WHEREAS, PSERS is funded by three sources – employee contributions, employer contributions, and investment earnings; and

WHEREAS, investment earnings have been the primary source of funding for PSERS benefits, dwarfing the contributions from both school employers and PSERS active members; and

WHEREAS, because of declining investment income, lower employer funding rates, and increased benefits as required by Act 2001-9 and Act 2002-38, unfunded liabilities have been created; and

WHEREAS, such unfunded liabilities will create significant employer rate hikes in the near future.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors exclusively commit the amount of \$2,000,000 of our fund balance as of June 30, 2010, towards funding this pending debt. As a result of this commitment, these funds will not be available for any other purpose unless changed by a new commitment.

Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

**Motion: Adoption of the 2010 – 2011 Budget**

Mr. Webb presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy Board of School Directors received a 2010-11 Working Draft Budget from the administration on January 12, 2010. The Board has reviewed and adopted a Preliminary Budget on February 9, 2010 and subsequently adopted a Proposed Final Budget on May 4, 2010, all in accordance with Act 1 of 2006 and the Public School Code of 1949, as amended; and

WHEREAS, Notice of intent to adopt the budget has been duly advertised as required by law and the budget was also made public throughout the process on PDE Form 2028 as required by law; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Pennsylvania School Code, the Board of School Directors must adopt a Final Operating Budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors adopt a Final Operating Budget of all funds in the amount of \$163,524,327 detailed as follows:

- General Fund in the amount of \$156,482,365
- Capital Projects in the amount of \$1,863,430
- Federal and other programs in the amount of \$4,902,871; and
- Carry-over purchase orders of \$275,661

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Capital Projects Budget will be funded from the Series 2004, 2006, and 2007 Series B Bond Issues, and the capital reserve fund. The federal programs budget will be funded by specific federal grants. In order to fund the general fund budget the following taxes are hereby levied:

1. Real Estate Tax	152.0 mills	(zero increase)
2. Interim Real Estate Tax	152.0 mills	(zero increase)
3. Per Capita Tax - School Code	\$5.00	
4. Per Capita Tax - Act 511	\$10.00	
5. Local Services Tax (formerly OPT/EMS)	\$10.00	
6. Business Privilege Tax	1 mill wholesale, 1.5 mills retail, \$5.00 license fee	
7. Mercantile Tax	1 mill wholesale, 1.5 mills retail, \$2.00 license fee	
8. Real Estate Transfer Tax	1%	
9. Amusement Tax	10%, as amended by current law	

Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

Mr. Paradise reviewed the general fund expenditures and revenues summarized and the use of an anticipated fund balance appropriation of \$886,000 to come to a zero increase budget of the tax rate over this past year. Approximately \$2.5 million dollar worth of items were cut from the budget in order to accomplish a zero budget increase. The list of these items will be posted on the website for anyone wanting to review them. Mr. Paradise noted that this is the fourth time since 1994 that Neshaminy has had a zero increase budget. He also noted that due to the changes that were made Neshaminy avoided a \$14 million dollar deficit last year as well as a \$7 million dollar deficit that was avoided this year in the budget. Mr. Paradise stated that the Board was successful in achieving a zero increase budget in spite of a \$1.5 million dollar revenue reduction. Mr. Paradise commended every member of the Board who was part of this process. Mr. Paradise further noted that the general fund budget that will be adopted tonight is actually less than the budget in 2006-2007, which is an astonishing achievement.

Mr. Webb stated that despite the zero percent increase there is still a lot of work to be done. He also noted that there are many financial issues to be dealt with, e.g., one million dollars in stimulus money, \$886,000 was taken out of the reserves. The district is only doing capital improvements that must be done and delaying others, which can be delayed. Mr. Webb noted that revenues continue to decline and expenses continue to increase. He said that the Board heard the community's cries for help and felt it was their duty to pass a zero percent increase in the budget. Mr. Webb thanked NESPA for their part in the negotiations and for helping the district.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

**Other Board Business**

None

**Public Comment**

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Langhorne, expressed his appreciation to the Board for passing the zero budget increase stating that the taxpayers are grateful for the break. Mr. Pastor also thanked the members of the NESPA Union, and particularly to Mr. Torpey, for giving back to the community with the concessions agreed upon in the recent contract settlement. Mr. Pastor applauded the Board for their accomplishments over the past year, including balancing the budget, finalizing a significant contract (with the NESPA Union), voted 9-0 for a resolution banning teachers' strikes in the state of Pennsylvania, re-offered the NFT a generous settlement, and did not cut any educational programs in the schools. Mr. Pastor concluded by stating that the Board has done an outstanding job and has earned the support of the community. He stated that once the teachers' contract is settled the District can focus on reinvesting in the educational programs for the future of the children.

Cindy Bowman, teacher, asked the Board if they would be willing to pursue an injunction against the NFT to end the "work to contract" action should it continue into the upcoming 2010/2011 school year. Ms. Bowman voiced her concern that if the "work to contract" action was not rescinded at the end of the 2009/2010 school year then the teachers went out without taking curriculum, without reflective lesson planning and without professional development for the next school year, which would have a serious impact on the coming year.

Solis Basin, thanked the Board members, Dr. Muenker, and Mr. Paradise, on behalf of all seniors in the community, for passing a zero budget. Mr. Basin stated that this has made them very happy and appreciative.

**Board Comment**

Mr. O'Connor asked for an update on the scheduled meeting with the NFT.

Mr. Webb advised that the NFT cancelled the meeting for June 30<sup>th</sup>, stating that they needed more time to prepare. Mr. Webb also said that the attorney for the School Board has been in contact with the state appointed mediator and has requested another date be set for a meeting with the NFT. Mr. Webb said it is his wish to have as many negotiation sessions as possible with the NFT over the summer in the hopes of avoiding possible job actions in the fall. In response to the question of an injunction, Mr. Webb said that the matter will depend on the recommendation of their attorney. Mr. Webb expressed his appreciation to Mr. Paradise for his years of loyal service and said he will be greatly missed.

Mr. Koutsouradis thanked Mr. Paradise for all of his hard work. He also commended Mr. Webb for all of the time and effort that he puts forth for the Neshaminy School District.

Mrs. Cummings thanked Mr. Paradise, Dr. Muenker and Mr. Webb for their endless hours of work on the budget. She also thanked the Board and NESPA for their hard work on the contract. She stated that the support staff is the foundation of our district. Additionally, she thanked Chuck for all of his letters that he sent to the district.

Mr. Oettinger remarked that the comments regarding teacher bullying of the students in reference to the "work to contract" action to be very disturbing. Additionally, he thanked the parents for keeping the Board informed of situations such as this.

Ms. Boyle thanked Mr. Paradise and Dr. Muenker for all of their hard work. She also thanked Mr. Webb for all of his efforts and stated that Mr. Webb was very instrumental in the NESPA negotiations.

Mr. Webb stated as far as the injunction is concerned, they will wait to see what the attorney recommends. Mr. Webb expressed his deep sadness for Mr. Paradise's retirement and stated it will be a great loss to Neshaminy.



**Adjournment**

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns  
Board Secretary