

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
September 28, 2010

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on September 28, 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
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
Dr. Geeta Heble
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:

Ms. Irene M. Boyle

OTHERS: Approximately 225 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

Mr. Webb announced that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held where personnel and legal issues were discussed.

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

None

Board Recognition

Mr. Paradise presented Walter Miller Elementary School with the United States EPA Energy Star Award for demonstrating superior energy performance.

Mr. Webb stated that the Board had received letters from the NFT and NESPA regarding to the security of the schools. Mr. Webb declared that the School Board and the Administration takes school safety and security very seriously. He stated that they have always demonstrated that commitment. Mr. Webb said that the comments made on September 14, 2010, that were referred to in the letters date September 17, 2010, the words that the speakers said were inappropriate. Mr. Webb affirmed that the speakers at future meetings will be cautioned at future meetings prior to speaking to consider how their comments might be misinterpreted. Mr. Webb also stated that no personal attacks will be tolerated.

Dr. Muenker commented on the recent statements that were made on September 14, 2010 at the Public Board meeting. Dr. Muenker stated that the comments were inappropriate and should not be tolerated by the governing body. Dr. Muenker declared that negative comments and personal attacks generated at public meetings and in the media do not help in resolving the current labor dispute. Dr. Muenker warned to be mindful of rumors generated as a result of inaccurate reporting or misinformation. Dr. Muenker stated that letters of recommendations are being written and teaching is occurring throughout Neshaminy. In response to an email Dr. Muenker had received from a parent wanting to

to know what the morning procedures were in the high school, Dr. Muenker made the following statement: Neshaminy is very aware of the challenges at the high school in the a.m. and are doing their very best at supervising the students as they arrive each day. The safest place for the students at Neshaminy High School in the a.m. is inside the school. Dr. Muenker said that he has personally assisted with the supervision at the high school and will continue to do so. Prior to 7:00 a.m. stationed throughout the building and school lanes are seven administrators, five building aides, three security officers, one additional aide, and one cabinet member. Teachers walk into the building between 7:00 and 7:05 a.m. Classroom doors are locked until homeroom teachers unlock them. Most students gather in the locker area main street, some are in the cafeteria for breakfast and some sit outside their homeroom until 7:12 a.m., which is the warning bell. To date, students have been well behaved and cooperative during this time in the morning. We are doing our best with the supervision of students. There are approximately 2,900 students arriving in the morning.

Dr. Muenker stated that Friday, September 24th, at the Neshaminy/Abington football game, Abington's team had personal items stolen from the locker room during the game. He stated that an investigation is underway. Dr. Muenker also stated that if anyone has any information regarding this incident to contact Neshaminy High School at 215-809-6142. Any tips or information can be given anonymously. Dr. Muenker mentioned a highlight that took place during half-time. The Abington principal, athletic director, coaches and players presented a check in donation to the sister of senior co-captain Marcos Dapkey, who is currently in Children's Hospital being treated for Leukemia. The contribution was collected on behalf of the Abington teaching staff.

Dr. Muenker stated that The Feasterville Rotary Club is hosting a spaghetti fund raiser dinner on Monday October 11th, from 4:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. It will be held at the Trevoise Fire Company and tickets are \$8.00 per person, \$4.00 for children under thirteen and free for children under three. Takeout meals will be available. All proceeds will go for winter coats for children in the community.

Dr. Muenker congratulated the girl's field hockey team for winning a match between Neshaminy and Truman High School.

Public Comment

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Langhorne, opened his comments by apologizing to the Board for any misunderstanding regarding his comments at the September 14, 2010 Public Meeting. Mr. Pastor said that at no time has he ever made a personal attack on any individual. He noted that an expression that he used is a common phrase used in the business world and was not intended to be taken literally. However, Mr. Pastor said that he understands the recent sensitivity to the expression and for this he apologized. Mr. Pastor asked Mr. Webb to clarify during Board comment if there were any other remarks by any other individuals regarding the phrase in question other than from the Union. He thanked the Board for rejecting the Union's counter offer. He reiterated his request that the Board be more transparent with the estimated cost of the counter proposal from the union, which includes no concessions, retro pay, and a Rolls-Royce healthcare plan from now through retirement. Mr. Pastor mentioned that he would like clarification regarding the contents of the 2002 Collective Bargaining Agreement so the public understands what the teachers are asking for in relationship to the existing CBA. To further clarify his point, Mr. Pastor stated that the Board should affirm what the teachers are being asked to concede and what concessions they are refusing, which will be grandfathered into a new CBA.

Rich Miller, accountant and parent of Neshaminy students, Langhorne, stated that the announcement regarding an investigation into the recent theft of personal property during a Neshaminy football game was offensive to his daughter as well as several other students. Mr. Miller said that it appears that this was an organized effort by an unknown group which calls for a complete investigation.

Lisa Pflaumer, small business owner and parent of a Neshaminy student, Middletown Township, thanked the Board for standing firm in their position regarding contract negotiations. Mrs. Pflaumer commented that the union leadership should know that their members are not the only employees who are asked to do work that are above and beyond their official duties. She said in the business world this is known as "other duties as assigned." Mrs. Pflaumer stated that performing duties other than their official duties are done with the purpose of being a team player, supporting the mission of the company and ensuring superb customer service. Mrs. Pflaumer questioned why the union is asking the

overburdened taxpayers to sacrifice when it is not willing to do the same. Mrs. Pflaumer cautioned the union leadership that they have already lost the sympathy of many of the taxpayers with their unreasonable demands.

Charles Alfonso, director of sales, Laurel Oaks, began his comments by apologizing for previous remarks he made about a school Board member. Mr. Alfonso stated that his remarks were wrong and he had personally apologized and he now wanted to publicly apologize. Mr. Alfonso declared that he is very disturbed that the United States has lost its standing as the leader in education in the world. Mr. Alfonso said that he attributes teacher apathy as part of the reason for the problem. He said that job security and rewards should be measured by performance. Mr. Alfonso pleaded with the Board to retract the 2008 offer immediately and start over with a new offer. Mr. Alfonso said that activities such as attending "Back to School Night," graduation, writing letters of recommendation, school trips, etc., are all part of the teaching responsibility all over the country; therefore the "work to contract" action should not be tolerated.

Steve Pirritano, self-employed small business owner, Feasterville, read a letter that he had written to Mr. Webb and the School Board. He stated that since 2001 he has been happy with the education, programs, and facilities in the Neshaminy school system, as well as most of the teachers. Mr. Pirritano said that while he feels that not enough dollars are spent per student, an estimated 80% of the school budget is consumed by payroll and benefits. He stated that the District can no longer afford contracts with the expenses and benefits as it has in the past. Mr. Pirritano said that the refusal of the teachers union to apply common sense is turning the negotiations into class warfare. Mr. Pirritano commented that he has seen his standard of living freeze in place or even decreased due to the hard economic times and the taxpayers are asking the teachers not to give up all benefits, but to simply carry some of the burden. He declared that if the teachers union is not willing to make some reasonable concessions then the taxpayers are ready to stand firm and take them on.

Mark Shubin, technology sales executive, Langhorne, commended the Board for adding the three night mandatory work order into the new agreement. Mr. Shubin said he acknowledges that the NFT is well within their rights not to agree to a public negotiation meeting, so he suggested that they consider a closed door meeting with a group of concerned parents to provide details of the union's position. Mr. Shubin called on the leadership of the NFT to substantiate claims that they have made about members of the Board allegedly lying and misrepresenting the truth. He reminded the NFT that the elected Board members have the same rights as teachers concerning due process and fair hearings when an accusation has been made. Mr. Shubin declared that the NFT should stop calling their employees liars and if they have a grievance against any elected official, they should file it publicly with facts and details, so that the parents and taxpayers can judge for themselves.

Carolyn Graw, bookkeeper, Levittown asked the Board if any healthcare payments from teachers paychecks would be deducted before taxes. She also asked if this is so, has this matter been brought to the attention of the NFT, because it would be a savings to teachers as well as to the District. Ms. Graw also mentioned to Dr. Muenker that, contrary to what has been reported, senior students are not getting the cooperation from teachers regarding letters of recommendation due to the "work to contract" action.

Matt Pileggi, computer programmer, Levittown, stated that he wanted to bring to the attention of parents some of the items covered in the "work to contract" action, which included do not prep for fall, do not volunteer, no ninth grade orientation, no "back to school night," no gym night, do not visit the prom, do not attend graduation, no letters of recommendation except for children of other staff members, no updates of bulletin boards or websites and look for core concepts in curriculum and teach those - avoid frills. Mr. Pileggi said that the NFT action plan was distributed to all teachers regardless of experience; therefore, the existing contract does not distinguish the duties of experienced teachers over beginning teachers. Mr. Pileggi asked the Board why the District has placed a premium on accreditation and years of experience while it requires nothing in return. He asked why a teacher with 20 years of experience and a Master's degree is compensated more than a first year teacher with a Bachelors degree if nothing more is expected from the experienced teacher. Mr. Pileggi stated that the next contract must deal with these issues.

Steve Rodos, retired, Villages of Flower Mills, Langhorne, commented that any healthcare plan should not be considered without a co-pay. Mr. Rodos asked the Board why a brand new contract is not being written. He also requested that the Board explain to the public what is covered and what is not covered under Act 1. Mr. Rodos stated that computer

education and full day kindergarten should be a priority consideration for Neshaminy. He concluded by asking if any plan is being considered to replace Mr. Paradise when he retires in three months

Dennis Hliwski, Philadelphia teacher, Langhorne, announced that medical benefits are not a Neshaminy problem, but rather a national problem because the cost keeps rising every year. Mr. Hliwski said that the cost of the budget goes up each year not because of salaries and benefits, but because of programs such as busing to other districts, testing and special education.

Keith Wesley, field service engineer, Trevose said that Neshaminy has the second highest paid teachers in the state of Pennsylvania and yet we have failed in standardized testing. Mr. Wesley stated that over the years the taxpayers have been good to the teachers and he suggested that if the teachers would do the same for the taxpayers perhaps there could be a settlement. Mr. Wesley suggested that the collective bargaining should be fair on both sides; a give and take approach is needed. He mentioned the saying "you can attract more bears with honey than with vinegar."

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of the August 24, 2010 Public Board Meeting and Public Work Session Meeting. Upon motion of Mrs. Cummings and seconded by Mr. O'Connor the motion passed by a vote of seven ayes, zero nays, and one abstention (Mr. Eccles.) Mr. Eccles was not present for the August 24, 2010 meeting. Ms. Boyle was not present.

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

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- August, 2010 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register - August, 2010
- Investments Summary

Mr. Eccles moved the August, 2010 Treasurer's Report be approved, subject to audit, Check Register for August, 2010, and the Investment Summary be approved. Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said report. Ms. Boyle was not present.

Dr. Muenker stated that students who are having trouble seeking letters of recommendations should contact Dr. McGee and he will follow-up on that concern.

Certified and Support Personnel Actions

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- Elections - Certified Personnel
- Resignations and Leaves of Absence - Certified Personnel
- Elections - Support Personnel
- Resignations and Leaves of Support Personnel
- Extra-Curricular Staff and Salaries

Dr. Muenker recommended the approval of the personnel report for certified and support personnel and the extra-curricular staff and salaries report. Mr. Koutsouradis moved that the said reports be approved and Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

Mr. Eccles made a motion to separate number 28, on page 30, day to day substitutes from the rest.

The motion was not seconded. Motion failed.

Mrs. Cummings inquired if the rates increased last year from the extra-curricular activities.

Dr. Muenker answered no.

Mr. Webb requested a roll call tally. The tally indicated that the motion passed with six ayes, (Mr. Congdon, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. Morris, Mr. Oettinger, and Mr. Webb) and two nays, (Mr. Eccles and Mr. O'Connor.) Ms. Boyle was not present.

Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker stated that the Pre-K Counts Grant provides an early intervention program for 19 student's ages 3-5 who reside within the Neshaminy School District. The fund is in the amount of \$74,100.00 bringing the total grant amount to \$1,759,308.00.

Other Board Business

None

Public Comment

Lisa Pflaumer, small business owner, Middletown Township, apologized for her outburst when she became distressed over comments made by another speaker. Ms. Pflaumer said that she felt the comments were disparaging to some Neshaminy students, particularly to special education children. Ms. Pflaumer also suggested to Mr. Webb that anyone speaking in such a manner in the future should be asked to leave the podium.

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Langhorne, reiterated that the entire CBA should be dissolved and completely rewritten. He implored the Board to help the public understand the facts and continue to be completely transparent. He stated that the Board's offer is more than generous, but it was made in 2008 and today it is unaffordable. Mr. Pastor said it does not appear as though a reasonable counter-offer will be made, so this offer will most likely expire in June, 2011. In the meantime, he hopes that the Board will be working on writing a new CBA.

Steve Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, stated his concern with what will happen going forward since the negotiations seem to be at an impasse. He asked the Board to keep the public informed as to how the process will impact the parents and students of Neshaminy.

Mark Shubin, technology sales executive, Langhorne, stated that he is very concerned that Neshaminy Elementary schools are lagging far behind other school districts in computer technology. He affirmed that the problem is a serious one. Mr. Shubin asked the Board to give priority to this matter and come up with ways to fund a technology program.

Charles Alfonso, director of sales, Laurel Oaks, Langhorne, in response to an earlier speaker, recited the following quote. "An educated man is not necessarily one who is learned or holds a high degree, but rather one who possesses that inner quality which makes him calm in adversity, happy when alone and sane and logical in all the affairs of life."

Board Comment

Mr. O'Connor read a poignant excerpt from an email written by a Neshaminy parent to the NFT president in which the parent states that the union is targeting the children with the "work to contract" action as though the children have the power to give the NFT a contract. Mr. O'Connor stated that any action that hurts 9,000 students is not right. He urged the teachers to return to full work and set aside the "work to contract" action.

Mr. Congdon told the public that he reads every email that he receives and he thanked the administration and support staff for picking up the slack that has been created by the "work to contract." Mr. Congdon mentioned that he attended two "Back to School Nights" and he was extremely disgusted with the "work to contract" results. He said that many parents in attendance were visibly upset. Mr. Congdon said that the students are being affected in a less than positive way. He said that outstanding teachers are being forced to do less because of the "work to contract" action. He challenged these teachers to do something in their classrooms to put a smile on a child's face. Mr. Congdon asked the teachers to stand up and do the right thing and do the job they were hired to do.

Mrs. Cummings said she was pleased to hear that the teachers are writing letters of recommendations for seniors. Also Mrs. Cummings commented that she knows that Neshaminy teachers care about the students and she asked them to

write the letters of recommendations in spite of the direction from the union leadership and not let the students down. Mrs. Cummings asked Dr. McGee to come to the podium and inform the public of the circumstances of the matter.

Dr. McGee stated that seniors have been instructed to ask the teachers for the letters as usual and if they have any problems they should notify him. This information has been relayed during senior class meetings and it is posted on the high school website. Dr. McGee also stated that the students should allow approximately two weeks after a request for the letter to be completed.

Mr. Morris commented that the teachers work 51.5 days less per year than the average worker. He stated that the average two salary household makes approximately \$64 thousand dollars per year combined and they pay for their healthcare. The average teacher's salary is approximately \$64 thousand dollars per year and they want free healthcare. Mr. Morris said the NFT needs to face reality. He said the Board cannot award retro pay to a union that held out for three years to settle a contract. He emphatically declared that he will not support retro pay. Mr. Morris voiced his approval that the testing for alcohol and drugs should be in the new contract. Mr. Morris concluded by thanking the public for the show of support and attending the meetings.

Mr. Koutsouradis mentioned that other unions in the country are making drastic concessions because of the current economic conditions, notably the teamsters and the UAW. Members of these unions are doing the same jobs and taking fewer wages in order to keep their positions. Mr. Koutsouradis said that he wished that the NFT would do the right thing also. He also urged the NFT to accept the current offer before it is too late and the offer is rescinded and replaced for one that is much more suitable to the current economy.

Mr. Eccles thanked the majority of speakers for their calm and concise remarks and he appreciated the civility of most comments. Mr. Eccles declared that change is hard and he noted that the issues that were discussed are not only Neshaminy issues, but they are national issues. Mr. Eccles said that the educational problems will not be resolved overnight and we need leaders that will take action.

Mr. Webb replied to Mr. Pastor's question that it was only the union that had commented on Mr. Pastor's remarks from the former meeting. Mr. Webb confirmed that the Board will continue to be transparent and post information on the website as soon as the figures are available. Mr. Webb stated that it is not known who broke into the locker room during the recent football game and they certainly were not implying that a student was responsible. In response to the question why the offer has not been withdrawn, Mr. Webb said that it is a reasonable offer. Although the Board is under a lot of pressure to withdraw the offer, he is still hoping for a settlement. Mr. Webb remarked that even though a speaker may be objectionable, he nevertheless has the right to have his say. He also stated that the points that were raised by the Philadelphia teacher were state issues, which the Board has no control over. Mr. Webb confirmed that should a teachers strike occur there would be a 48 hour notice, which would allow time for the Board to notify parents via Neshaminy TV, Global Connect, etc.

Adjournment

Mr. Eccles moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary