

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
February 14, 2012

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on February 14, 2012 in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center at the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President  
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President  
Ms. Irene Boyle  
Mr. Scott E. Congdon  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Mike Morris  
Mr. William Oettinger  
Mr. Mark Shubin  
Mr. Anthony Sposato

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz  
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan  
Dr. Geeta Heble  
Mr. Anthony Devlin  
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS:** Approximately 65 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 issues.

1. **Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

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

3. **Announcements**

None

4. **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Muenker introduced Karen Wychock, a former teacher and building administrator in the Neshaminy School District. He also stated that she is currently a middle school principal in Central Bucks School District.

Karen Wychock gave a brief presentation of a dissertation that she wrote entitled, *Looking to the Past to Ensure Our Future: A History of the Neshaminy School District*. The goal of this study was to provide school districts a means by which they could study, preserve and share their history using the Four-Frames Model as defined by Holman and Deal in their 2003 book *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*. Using structural, political, human resources, and symbolic frames, the study sought to identify the internal events and external forces that shaped school districts across the United States during the second half of the 21st century.

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the Following:

- Thanked Mr. Pastor for his efforts in instituting a \$10,000 community grant from IBM.
- Thanked Senator Tomlinson for his generous donation of \$2,800.
- Congratulations went out to Neshaminy High School musical students for their successful performance of Phantom of the Opera.
- Kindergarten registration will be Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>.

5. **Solicitor's Report**

Mr. Profy advised the Board on the following:

1. Recommendation to settle pending 2006 through 2012 Tax Year Assessment Appeals of Simon Property Group – McStome-Kravco as follows:

Simon Property Group

Settlement Assessment

22-057-047

\$924,000.00 – 2006 Tax Year Assessment  
\$816,750.00 – 2007 Tax Year Assessment  
\$750,750.00 – 2008 Tax Year Assessment  
\$723,800.00 – 2009 Tax Year Assessment  
\$746,900.00 – 2010 Tax Year Assessment  
\$839,300.00 – 2011 Tax Year Assessment  
\$807,950.00 – 2012 Tax Year Assessment

Mr. Webb made a motion to accept the recommendation to settle pending 2006 through 2012 Tax Year Assessment Appeals of Simon Property Group – McStome – Kravco and Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of nine ayes and zero nays.

#### **6. Public Comment**

Kevin Gallagher, IT Analyst, Middletown Township, said he sees the NFT world as a closed culture, which has developed their own rules, within which, a traditional concept such as right or wrong has no relevance. He said that they see themselves rightly isolated from society. Mr. Gallagher said they bristle and resent any criticism or opinions against their actions. He said although they claim to work for the sake of the students and yet they engage in work actions that clearly harm the students. Mr. Gallagher said the Neshaminy Information Page does not block or prevent anyone from commenting, including teachers, while, the NFT page discourages outsiders from voicing any opinion that is not supportive of the union and no criticism is tolerated. Mr. Gallagher said he has come to the conclusion that the NFT does not want to collaborate, they want the contract that they want regardless of the cost to anyone.

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Middletown, said the IBM Company, who sponsored the grant for the Neshaminy School District, is very focused on the work force of the future beginning with K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Mr. Pastor said he would like to encourage profit and non-profit companies within the Neshaminy footprint to consider bestowing grants to the school district. He stated that according to the National Center for Stem Elementary Education strengthening elementary teachers in math and science is the first step in the right direction in the stem concept.

Steve Rodos, retired, Villages of Flowers Mill, commented that after four years of no contract, there is a lack of meaningful negotiations from both sides. He said the students have had no new innovations in education and have suffered through two WTC actions and a strike. Teachers have endured three and a half years of supporting their families and rising costs of living with nothing to show for it except good health coverage. Mr. Rodos proposed a doubling of the senior citizen tax rebate to protect them and low income home owners from future tax increases. He also suggested a new contract with the NFT, which includes a new salary structure, a new health insurance plan and the elimination of any financial obligation towards retirees.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired Business Executive, Middletown, remarked that the disagreement that exists between himself and a Board member is simply a difference of opinion; however, he is still united with the Board in the effort to put the best interests of the students first. Mr. Alfonso pointed out that the parents and taxpayers are free to disagree with the Board and still remain united in the same cause; however, the teachers are not free to disagree with the NFT leadership and are ordered to follow Ms. Boyd's directives. Mr. Alfonso suggested that the new contract contain a clause outlining a percent of healthcare contribution that would be increased by 1% for each week of delay by the NFT in accepting the contract.

#### **7. Items for Approval at the February 28, 2012 Public Board Meeting**

##### **a) Revised Board Policies**

Dr. Rattigan advised the Board on the following:

- Revised Policy #512 – High School Diploma
- Revised Policies #227, 327 and 427 – Work Regulations and Guidelines

##### **b) Overnight trip to Lancaster, Pennsylvania**

Dr. Rattigan advised the Board on the following:

- Eastern Regional Bowling Tournament in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Twelve students will be attending. The cost is \$50 per person. There will be two chaperones. Trip is paid for out of the co-curricular budget at the high school.

Mr. Congdon asked who the chaperones are.

Dr. Rattigan noted that the chaperones would be two teachers who are also the bowling coaches.

The Board unanimously approved said trip.

**c) Summer School Programs for 2012**

Dr. Heble advised the Board on the following:

- 1) Secondary Summer School (for students in grades 6-12) will offer accelerated or enrichment courses and also make-up courses. The dates are as follows, July 9, 2012 to August 9, 2012.
- 2) Summer Fine Arts Program (for students in grades K-12) will consist of art, dance, instrumental music and Summer Stock and Summer Theater Workshop. The dates are as follows, art and instrumental will be held from July 9, 2012 through August 4, 2012. Summer Stock will be held July 9, 2012 through August 4, 2012, and the Summer Theater Workshop will be held July 9, 2012 through August 4, 2012.
- 3) Elementary math and reading camp (for students in grades 2, 3, 4, and 5) who meet established criteria.
- 4) Summer Adventure Camp (for students in grades 3-8) will participate in adventure and team building activities.

Dr. Heble stated that each program is operated on a self-sustaining basis, except for the Elementary Summer Camp. Students will have to qualify for the summer camp based on criteria. Dr. Heble also stated that there are no changes to the programs.

Mr. Congdon asked if some parents cannot afford this program what is in place to help them.

Dr. Heble responded that the district does try to accommodate parents.

Mr. Congdon stated that no Neshaminy student is then denied summer school.

Dr. Heble confirmed that statement.

Mr. Morris asked if the children receive a lunch.

Dr. Heble noted that there are snacks available for purchase but they are not provided.

Mr. Morris asked if the graduation requirement would fall within this program

Dr. Heble stated that it could but other ways to remediate students who don't meet the PSSA proficiency requirements are being looked into.

Mr. Morris asked Dr. Heble to further explain the summer school program versus Policy 512.

Dr. Heble stated that she will review it and get back to him.

Mr. Shubin asked how the teachers were selected for this program.

Dr. Heble responded that the teachers who have taught summer school in the past are asked first and then other teachers who might be interested are asked.

Mr. Congdon asked if the teachers have to be from our district.

Dr. Heble stated that if there are no teachers available within our district for a particular subject then the district would look for teachers outside the district.

Mr. Congdon asked where the Adventure Camp was held.

Dr. Heble stated that it is held at the high school because of the equipment used.

Mr. Congdon asked if teachers were running the summer camp.

Dr. Heble responded that it is teachers running the camp.

d) **BCIU #22 – 2012 – 2013 Programs & Services and Instructional Materials & Research Services Budget**

Dr. Muenker stated that the BCIU #22 2012-2013 Programs & Services Instructional Materials & Research Services Budget will be presented for the Board's approval at the February 28<sup>th</sup> Public Board Meeting.

e) **Bids/Budget Transfers**

Mrs. Markowitz stated there was one bid and one Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy 12-3)

**Bid No:** 13-01

**Bid Amount:** \$27,272.79

**Bid Description:** Various classroom and office supplies for use throughout the district for the school year 2012/2013.

Mrs. Markowitz stated that Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy – 12-3) has two transactions and one sub transaction.

Mrs. Markowitz noted Bid No. 13-01 and Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy – 12-3) will be presented for the Board's approval at the February 28<sup>th</sup> Public Board Meeting.

Mr. Shubin asked if the Board ever considers using state pulled resources to get better pricing.

Mrs. Markowitz stated that state bids are looked at as well as all other options.

8. **Committee Reports**

a) **Board Policies**

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5:15 p.m. in the Boardroom.

b) **Educational Development**

Mr. Shubin informed the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.

c) **Finance/Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised the Board that the next meeting will be on March 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.

d) **IU Board**

Mrs. Cummings informed the Board that at the last meeting a presentation was given by Bridges Virtual Education Services. The Intermediate Unit in Quakertown would like to provide cyber courses offering cyber programs development support including remediation, enrichment, home-bound instruction, credit recovery, and hard-to-fill courses.

e) **Education Foundation**

Dr. Muenker advised the Board that there is a Spring Phillies Basket raffle being put together to raise revenue for scholarships. For tickets contact Dr. Muenker's office. The next meeting is scheduled for May 14<sup>th</sup>.

f) **Technical School**

Mr. Koutsouradis advised the Board that the last meeting was the Board Recognition Dinner given by the students who did a fantastic job.

g) **Technology**

Mr. Congdon advised the Board that the first scheduled meeting for 2012 will be Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>.

h) **Ad Hoc Facility Use Update**

Mr. Oettinger informed the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for March 20<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m.

9. **Public Comment**

Charles Alfonso, semi retired Business Executive, Middletown, remarked that he has yet to get an answer to his request for a list of school districts in Bucks and Montgomery Counties who have implemented a graduation requirement of passing the

PSSA's. Mr. Alfonso said the current Neshaminy freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors should be exempt from this requirement, because they should not be penalized for the teachers' failure to properly educate them.

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Middletown, suggested that the policy be revised to limit non-taxpayers (including township employees) from speaking during public comment. Mr. Pastor said the public comment is not a forum for NFT propaganda, but rather it is for the parents and taxpayers of Neshaminy to voice their opinions. He also stated that a 2010 memo from the NFT president has been uncovered, which specified that teams were formed in the schools, i.e., Solidarity Team and Action Team, apparently without the permission of the Administration or the School Board. He asked the Board to comment on these teams, what was the mission of the teams, was the Board aware of the formation of the teams, etc. Mr. Pastor also asked the Board to comment on the investigation by the District Attorney's Office regarding the possible criminal actions committed against Mr. Ferrara, a Neshaminy teacher, who spoke out against the union. Mr. Pastor concluded by voicing his disdain regarding a past public comment that accused the Board of not doing anything to assist the children of the school district in the past two years. Mr. Pastor said it is an absurd and ridiculous comment, because everything that the Board does is for the children of the community.

Almando Carrasquillo, Private Investigator, Langhorne, asked the Board to reconvene the citizens committee to deliberate an action that would prevent the NFT from using school property for union meetings. He said the NFT has proven to be unworthy of protecting the privacy of personal information of parents and students. He urged the Board to pull the contract if the NFT does not accept the proposal at the next negotiation meeting.

**10. Other Board Business**

Mr. Koutsouradis asked Dr. Rattigan to look into creating a policy regarding classroom environment, which would preclude the Work to Contract action.

**11. Agenda Development for the February 28, 2012 Public Board Meeting**

None

**12. Board Comment**

Ms. Boyle said there will be a meeting of the Educational Development Committee on February 27, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. and the final draft of the PSSA remediation plans will be discussed. She also said that she has the information regarding the school districts that have implemented the PSSA graduation requirements and she will share the information upon request.

Mr. Shubin said that he wants the public to know the truth about the Board's current proposal in order to correct any wrong impression that the public may have due to Ms. Boyd's prejudicial comments. Mr. Shubin stated that the employees (teachers) will have shared voice and input along with other members in the development of any committee recommendations. It is understood that all committee recommendations are subject to the approval of the district. Mr. Shubin challenged the NFT to show him another school district that utilizes equal voice as a successful policy and then he may consider changing his opinion on the matter. Mr. Shubin said that the Board is performing their duties as best as they can with the limited resources that are available and he feels that calling the Board irresponsible is disingenuous. Mr. Shubin concluded by thanking Mr. Pastor for his efforts in procuring the \$10 thousand dollar grant from IBM.

Mr. Congdon stated that he agrees that the "equal say" clause must be eliminated from the contract. He urged the teachers to stop the WTC action and to cease wearing the blue shirts on Fridays, because it is unprofessional.

Mr. Koutsouradis said that the offer by the NFT to pay up to 8% of the healthcare is certainly not a significant concession as they profess it to be.

Mr. Morris thanked Mr. Pastor and IBM for the \$10 thousand dollar grant and he encouraged more industries to follow suit.

Mr. Webb said that, unfortunately, at this time, it is not practical to restrict public comments to only taxpayers. He stated that by allowing non-resident teachers to speak, it actually lets the public know what the Board is contending with. Mr. Webb said he would rather continue to have the Board be very open and clear; however, if it should ever come to a point where residents are not able to comment due to time constraints caused by non-resident teachers speaking, then he will consider limiting the communication to residents/taxpayers only. Mr. Webb said the District Attorney is conducting an ongoing investigation and the Board is not privy to the particulars at this time. He concluded by thanking Mr. Pastor and IBM for donating the \$10 thousand dollar grant and for being a good corporate neighbor and he said he hopes others will follow this lead.

13. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Webb moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Shubin seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns  
Board Secretary