

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
(WORK SESSION)
October 12, 2004

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on October 12, 2004, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President
Dr. William H. Spitz, Vice-President
Mrs. Sue C. Barrett
Mr. Jason Bowman
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Ms. Carol A. Drioli
Mrs. Kimberly A. Jowett
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

Mr. P. Howard Wilson
Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Dr. Sandra Costanzo
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Mrs. Jacqueline Rattigan
Mr. Bruce M. Wyatt

BOARD MEMBER NOT PRESENT:

Mrs. June R. Bostwick

SOLICITOR:

Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

SECRETARY: Mrs. Anita E. Walls

OTHERS: Approximately 14 persons from the public, staff and press

Prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held to discuss personnel issues.

1. Call to Order

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance

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

3. Announcements

No announcements.

4. Public Comment

Mr. Joseph Schoenleber, President of MVP Sports Training and Fitness, congratulated the Board for the grant going to support the Kids Fit Program which is a topic close to his heart because he is involved in the fitness industry. Mr. Schoenleber is also on the education committee of National Strength and Conditioning Association which is the governing body of strength, conditioning and fitness for sport. Mr. Schoenleber understands that currently Neshaminy School District has a contract with the Sports Institute from West Chester, PA to provide sports training for the teams at Neshaminy High School. Mr. Schoenleber inquired whether the Board has considered what the timeline is for renewal of the contract and, if so, when will that take place? Mr. Schoenleber's interest is to become involved in the bid process when the contract is ready for renewal and provide services to the school district which would be at a more affordable rate.

Mr. Alden Thorpe, Langhorne, PA thanked the CARE organization for working so hard to have it come about. Mr. Thorpe thanked the response of the school board in going as the public wished they would. Mr. Thorpe is concerned; however, that ATS&R is getting involved again with the high school project. Mr. Thorpe is aware that they are a good organization, but the first time they did not bring us up with the same report. There is a \$30M difference between the first proposal and the current one. Mr. Thorpe thanked the voters

and everyone involved. Mr. Thorpe feels everyone can work together and the district is on track to getting the school back in a condition that it can be used in a useful way.

5. Items for Discussion

a) Bridge Certification

Dr. Muenker provided a handout to Board members to provide information connected to the No Child Left Behind and highly qualified teacher definitions. Dr. Muenker advised that the district's middle school teachers who are elementary certified have until June, 2006 to be highly qualified. This is particularly important in grades 7, 8, and 9 where certification is necessary in the subject area. Dr. Muenker noted that the district has already begun work in this area. Dr. Muenker noted that a handful of teachers remain that are not currently certified in a specific subject area and the district will speak with each one of them to see what their plans are. Dr. Muenker noted that the district has the responsibility to report the highly qualified teachers to the state of Pennsylvania on November 1, 2004.

Dr. Muenker advised board members that the special education staff in grades 7 thru 12 must also meet this definition of highly qualified. Information is just beginning to become available and neighboring districts, as well as our district has concerns. The requirements are that Stage 1 is completed by June, 2005 to qualify for the three year window to get the certification. Teachers still have the opportunity to take the PRAXIS in the subject area in which they are teaching. Special education teachers in middle school and high school that teach subject areas 1 like math and English. The state is saying that those teachers need to be certified in those areas by 2006. Dr. Muenker noted that this will be a challenge for teachers to receive the points necessary by 2006.

Dr. Muenker will share this information with teachers on the inservice day scheduled for November 2, 2004. Approximately 70-80 special education teachers will be present and the process will be reviewed.

Ms. Drioli noted that this is extremely scary. Special Education teachers are probably the ones that really do legitimately have a shortage due to their job. Special Education teachers need to teach children that are not only remedial, however, they teach children whose only function in a classroom is swallowing or developing hand coordination. The job is extremely physically enduring and mentally challenging day in and day out. The job is a love for the student and a love for what you are doing, then to be over qualified and highly certified in the area that you are trying to teach. Ms. Drioli noted that Special Education has become a medical entity. Ms. Drioli is concerned that there will not be enough teachers left to teach because of all the certifications necessary to perform the job. Not only is the job extremely difficult, but the government is making it more difficult for the teachers to do same.

Mr. Wilson noted a teacher may graduate able to teach special education, however, the district may not be able to hire that person because they are not highly qualified to teach special education. All districts are in the same position. The students wishing to major in special education not only major in special education, however, you need master science or math certification. Mr. Wilson noted that this was just information for the Board. Mr. Wilson commented that possibly PDE may change their response to the federal requirements.

Ms. Drioli noted that parents will need to rise up. Dr. Muenker noted that things could still change; however, the district wants to be on the side of caution.

b. Act 72

Mr. Paradise advised that Act 72 is the most significant change to school finance which has occurred in the last 50 years. Certain requirements will obligate the school board to react in certain ways within

the law. Mr. Paradise noted that by October 16, 2004 every homestead in the district will be sent an application for Homestead exclusion. Mr. Paradise provided board members a sample. The Bucks County Board of Assessment will also be involved in this process. Mr. Paradise advised that property tax is not immediate, but it is current. It will begin only if the Commonwealth Secretary of the Budget certifies that the state has enough gaming revenue to make payments to school districts to offset their local revenue and reduce property taxes.

Mr. Paradise noted that in order to qualify as a homeowner, the homeowner must complete the Homestead Exclusion Application. The district must follow-up with a second notice. Mr. Paradise noted that the information will be on the Neshaminy channel and also a news release to inform residents that this is important to complete and respond. The Board must decide by May 20, 2005, to participate in this program by adopting a resolution for a 0.1% earned income tax. Mr. Paradise noted that by November 2005 a referendum could be held asking the voters of the district if they wish to increase their earned income tax that would be used to reduce property taxes.

Mr. Webb noted that if the homeowners do not respond they will not receive any financial reward. Mr. Webb feels that Neshaminy may qualify for something; however, it will be very minimal.

Dr. Spitz noted that since our district does not have an earned income tax, there is also another route which the district could take and that would be to hold a referendum in November 2007.

Mr. Paradise noted that all the work involved with the budget process will need to be significantly accelerated in the months to come and it will be very difficult without making the budget much more general in nature.

Mr. Webb noted that the state needs to receive One Billion Dollars first before any money is received.

6. Items for Approval

a) American Education Week

Mr. Wilson noted that this is a standard approval item that the Board recognizes that American Education Week is November 14 - 20, 2004. A motion will be made at the next public meeting.

b) Approval of Tax Assessment Appeal

Mr. Paradise provided a letter from Begley, Carlin and Mandio, Thomas Profy, III, Esquire regarding Federal Realty Investment Trust, Feasterville Shopping Center which involves the fixing of the tax assessment for parcel number 21-7-189 effective November 1, 1997 through December 30, 1997 at \$122,700 and effective for the 1998 tax year at \$147,800.

Mr. Profy advised that this matter was concluded of record on September 26, 2002, and it was subsequently determined that for a 14 month period, mainly from November 1, through December 30, 1998, that a portion of the property had been demolished and had not yet been reconstructed. When settled in 2002 it was settled on the basis of the condition of the property at that time. It is clear that a portion of the property had been demolished and had not been reconstructed. That is the reason for the reduction in the assessment for the 14 month period.

There was Board consensus for the approval of the settlement. Mrs. Bostwick was not present.

c) Delta Community Supports, Inc.

Mr. Paradise advised that Delta Community Supports, Inc. is the tenant that leases 2/3 of the Eisenhower Elementary School. They have been a tenant since the district has begun leasing the building. Their lease expires on December 31, 2004. The District has proposed an increase in rent; however, they are unable to agree to same. Delta has suggested that there be no increase in the first

year and a 2% in years 2 thru 5. Delta Community Supports, Inc. is a government supported educational entity. Mr. Paradise provided a letter to Board members from Delta proving their financial ability to pay for the lease.

Mr. Paradise noted that Delta Community Supports is a good tenant and they take care of the building. They pay utilities for the building and they are educational in nature. They cohabitate well with the facilities department.

Mr. Paradise noted that the district has the right to terminate the lease even though it is a five year contract.

Mr. Paradise noted that a motion will be presented to the Board at the next meeting for approval of the lease.

d) Bids/Budget Transfers

Mr. Paradise noted that there are no bids. A budget transfer (Working Copy 05-1) including four transactions.

7. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Wilson advised that Mr. Schmidt and Dr. Costanzo did a fine job obtaining the physical education grant dealing with obesity in the public schools. The money will be spent specifically for equipment and upgrades.

Mr. Wilson advised that meeting will take place on October 19, 2004 at the IU regarding Act 72.

Mr. Wilson noted that there will be a combined Work Session/Public Meeting on November 9, 2004 at 7:00 p.m.

8. Committee Reports

a) Board Policies

Mr. Bowman advised that Mrs. Rattigan will be meeting with Mr. Marotto to see if any outstanding policies need review and in relation to No Child Left Behind. An agenda and meeting will be set sometime at the end of the month.

b) Educational Development

Dr. Spitz advised that the SAGE program was discussed at the last meeting. Dr. Spitz noted that there are start up costs associated with the SAGE program:

- ✓ One time start-up fee of \$3,500
- ✓ Annual fee of \$1,500

Dr. Costanzo and Mrs. Katz advised that the start up fees are for the operation manual, membership manual, administrative work, website setup, DVD, orientations for staff, students and seniors, and setting up the program for the district. Dr. Costanzo noted that all participants will need to go through the state Child Clearance requirements at their own costs and photo I.D.'s will be provided.

Dr. Spitz noted that a volunteer coordinator needs to be found to essentially run the program in our district.

Dr. Costanzo noted that the program is a not for profit organization that runs outside the school district. The program will have a volunteer board. At the present time the school district does not have a vehicle to provide for seniors to volunteer within the district. This program would provide such a vehicle. A representative from the school district would sit on the volunteer board to provide support.

Ms. Drioli inquired regarding the costs. Dr. Costanzo noted that the first year the cost to the district would be \$5,000. Each year thereafter the cost to the district would be \$1,500.

Mrs. Katz advised that there are 750 members of the organization in Council Rock school district, 100 of who volunteer in the classrooms on a weekly basis for at least one hour.

Mr. Eccles raised a concern regarding the Federation of Teachers, support staff, etc. Dr. Costanzo advised that there were meetings with the support staff and federation in order that there would be a mutual understanding about the activities provided so that no work rules will be violated. Mrs. Katz noted that in the Council Rock district the teachers and support staff welcomed the help of the seniors.

Dr. Costanzo noted that 12 activities are scheduled in the upcoming months. First activity is a Thanksgiving Feast.

Mr. Eccles inquired whether there will be a liaison between the Board and the SAGE group in order to receive updates. Mrs. Katz advised that it would be possible.

There was Board consensus for the SAGE organization to proceed with its programs at Neshaminy School District.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Webb advised that Mr. Erickson from ATS&R presented several renovation proposals for the high school at the last meeting. One proposal was a \$66M project that provided for 50% new construction, save recently renovated areas of the building and reconfigure the building to eliminate the sprawl and security concerns. Mr. Erickson noted that asbestos could be dealt with safely and would not affect children. The proposal for this renovation would provide a 40-50 year life cycle. The construction timeframe would be approximately 3 ½ years. Mr. Erickson would like to sit down and negotiate a contract. Mr. Webb felt very optimistic and another meeting is scheduled for October 27th and Construction Managers and Poquessing renovations will also be discussed at that meeting.

d) IU Board

Ms. Drioli advised that a meeting will take place on October 19th at 6:30 p.m. with discussions regarding Act 72. Ms. Drioli is not very optimistic that tons of money and great reform will be received. Ms. Drioli noted that the poorer districts will be considered first. The wealthier districts will then be considered. Ms. Drioli urged the taxpayers to pay attention to Act 72.

e. Educational Foundation

Mrs. Cummings advised that the fundraiser "Nifty/Fifties" will take place on October 15th at Twining Hall in Trevoise. Cost is \$25.00 per person with dancing, door prizes and great food. The Neshaminy High School Alumni Directory is available and has been distributed. The Education Foundation has included a flyer within the directory.

f) Technical School

Dr. Spitz advised that there was a meeting at the end of September with the new Administrative Director, Mr. Parks and the new superintendent liaison, Mr. Howard Wilson.

g. Technology

Mrs. Jowett advised that there was no report.

9. Future Topics

10. Agenda Development for the October 26, 2004 Public Meeting

11. Other Board Business

Mrs. Barrett requested Mr. Wilson to address the new administrative position, Director of Management Information, starting in December, 2004.

Mr. Wilson advised that the position is going to be for 12 months, salary to be determined, and the position will oversee the computer operations within the district and take a look at the number of people in the department (4 currently working and servicing the district regarding computer problems, 1 person assigned for software programs which runs the district and 13 computer lab aids). Mr. Wilson believes that if someone is hired with knowledge of the system the district can possibly combine some things and utilize some people in a different manner to make for a more efficient working system. Mr. Wilson noted that no one was aware of how big technology was going to become within the district. Mr. Paradise has done an outstanding job with the system. Presently, our capabilities are exceeding our abilities. The district has a lot of hardware, servers, backup systems, etc. The district has a good plan for placing systems in various parts of the district. Mr. Wilson noted that all the elementary schools have new labs this year, computers are in faculty rooms which have internet capability for teacher usage, new computers are at the high school, and expansion continues. As a result an administrative position is necessary to coordinate the efforts and has expertise with hardware, software, etc. and knows where technology needs to go further down the road. The district could utilize their equipment more efficiently. The district is looking for someone from business that has a good understanding of computer technology, where the district needs to be directed and the problems that will be encountered down the road.

Mr. Bowman noted that with the project that the district is going to undertake at the high school it is important that the district outfit that with the networking hardware right from the beginning.

12. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Bowman moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Webb seconded the motion. The Board approved the motion with eight ayes. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary