

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
(WORK SESSION)  
February 14, 2006

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on February 14, 2006, 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. P. Howard Wilson  
Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Dr. Sandra Costanzo  
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise  
Mrs. Jacqueline Rattigan  
Mr. Bruce Wyatt

**SECRETARY:**

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

**SOLICITOR:**

Thomas Profy, III, Esquire

\*Left meeting at 8:30 p.m.

**OTHERS:** Approximately 16 persons from the public, staff and press

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**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:00 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. Gil Howland, Langhorne, PA, stated that he has been watching the Neshaminy channel. Mr. Howland recalls when Maple Point was under construction and Ralph Clark took charge of the project. Just recently he was tax collector for the Township of Middletown. Mr. Clark has done a lot of work for the district and made sure money was spent in the correct places. Mr. Howland wanted to recommend that Mr. Clark become Superintendent of the district. Mr. Howland is concerned with the suicides and low security. Years ago when things got out of line the teachers would handle the students.

**5. Items For Discussion**

**a) Task Force to Study Teen and Adolescent At Risk Issues with Special Emphasis on Teen Suicide**

Mr. Wilson introduced Dr. Marc Langman, Mr. Joseph Kelly and Mrs. Diane Marseglia who provided a short presentation to the Board.

Dr. Langman advised that he has been working with Neshaminy for many years and Neshaminy has always been in the forefront of helping at risk students. Dr. Langman advised that Neshaminy has had several tragedies over the last several years as have other districts with students taking their own

lives. Many, many attempts have also been made besides that. Dr. Langman read a couple of lines from an e-mail which fortunately a Neshaminy teacher, who happened to be up at 1:00 a.m. in the morning, was awake to receive. "It's now 1:00 a.m. and I still have two hours of homework to do and I just can't go on. They want us to do everything. I understand that school is going to be hard and stressful at times, but the burden just gets harder and harder. I don't know if anyone would even care if I did kill myself. I am only one person out of twenty-four hundred and I am not even noticeable. I feel rejected. I am not a mental, horrible person. This is supposed to be the best years of my life, not the worst possible. Maybe you could share this with somebody. I am writing to you because I know you will care." Dr. Langman advised that the teacher intercepted this e-mail happened to be up and was able to use our resources to work with the family and save this particular youngster.

Dr. Langman wanted to address the Board this evening not so much about suicide, but about saving kids. Mr. Wilson advised Dr. Langman and Mr. Kelly that the district wants to do everything possible not to lose any kids; Neshaminy wants to be in the forefront, in fact, leading the pack, of what can be done to help kids at risk. Mr. Wilson advised Dr. Langman that he had free reign to assemble a task force. Outside experts from many different disciplines were involved and have ultimately produced the recommendations that the Board has in front of them.

Dr. Langman noted that this is not a document of blame, but a document of hope. The kids that we are seeing now days are more impacted. They speak constantly in the focus groups about how much pressure is on them. Families are being dissolved, kids coming to the high school level without even elementary social skills. They are a video game generation. They hit reset and, unfortunately when things get difficult in high school and life does not reset when you hit a button. Impacts which the students have are SAT's, graduation projects, PSSA tests, substance abuse problems, etc. Dr. Langman noted that there is a decreasing amount of services for these students. More and more insurance companies are giving less and less to students at risk.

The task force met and spoke about ways to impact the students not just at the high school, but throughout the district.

Dr. Langman noted these areas:

- What supports could be initiated at the high school?
- How could we change the culture of the high school?

Dr. Langman advised that the task force discussed the establishment of a sanctuary area in the high school which would be staffed by a mental health professional who would do diagnosis, triage, support for faculty, support for students and administrators, and would serve as a liaison to outside agencies.

The 35 hours that the students are in school is sometimes the best, most supportive time of their week. The more services that are in place the more we can keep them in school.

Dr. Langman advised that atmosphere changes need to take place at the high school. So many students referred to the high school as being a mine field, waiting for something bad to happen or have some privilege taken away from them. Discussions took place regarding making the discipline code more positive.

The district wants to bring teachers into positive contact with the students, because so often they can be the life line for these at-risk students. Students and faculty were surveyed. The report is based on focus groups and surveys.

Mrs. Diane Marseglia serves on the Task Force and is the mother of one of the high school students who has recently taken her life. Mrs. Marseglia addressed the Board and noted that it is not just average or below average students that are affected, but also above average students. Mrs.

Marseglia urged the Board to act upon the recommendations found in the report, many of which are cost free, and hoped that the lines of communication between administration, staff, students and families remains open. It is imperative that the schools reduce some of the pressures that are being placed upon students. Mrs. Marseglia thanked the School Board, Mr. Wilson, Dr. Muenker, Dr. Langman and her personal mentor, Mr. Kelly for their support.

Mr. Kelly addressed the Board stressing that when we see rapid change in the society we see the dissolution of the traditional institutions, the family, church, schools, government, etc. It is going on constantly and the impact is seen on a day to day basis. Mr. Kelly advised that what is occurring is not unique to Neshaminy, but it is affecting the entire culture. What needs to be remembered is that our adolescents are among the most vulnerable people. Mr. Kelly noted that adult expectations are being placed on the students.

Mr. Kelly noted that first students must be taken care of emotionally. These needs must be taken care of first, before the students can function at maximum ability. Mr. Kelly stressed that a positive culture needs to be created at Neshaminy. Schools need to be safe and user friendly. Things like graduation, proms, and dances have been turned into consequences and things that need to be attained, instead of entitlements. The impending threat of these consequences is hanging over these at-risk students.

Mr. Kelly advised that the real fix is connecting with students, making the district trustworthy to students so that the channels of communication can be open. The way to make a school safer is not with cameras and security, but open lines of communication.

Mrs. Cummings questioned what the next steps would be. Mr. Wilson advised about staff development time regarding this situation. The sanctuary within the school has already started to some degree without the actual person. Joe Kelly and Marc Langman have been staffing the sanctuary. Students have been coming and going on a daily basis. What Mr. Wilson will be proposing to the Board is to use federal monies to get a mental health professional that will not be a certificated administrator, nor certificated teacher, but a per diem person that will be on a contract consulting basis so that a Board is not tied in to that person for eternity. The district will look for a mental health person, not a teacher or counselor, but someone from a private agency or a licensed psychologist or clinical psychologist.

Mrs. Cummings thanked everyone for providing an informative presentation and especially to Mrs. Marseglia.

Mr. Blasch thanked Mr. Wilson for his efforts in bringing the Task Force together. Mr. Blasch likes the study because it points out the negative things at the school, as well as the positive things that go on in Neshaminy. Mr. Blasch referred to a paragraph in the report that spoke about the unreasonable mandates placed upon students. Just this evening Mr. Blasch was made aware of a student who was suspended for 10 days for throwing a snowball. Mr. Blasch is aware that the district has a zero tolerance policy, however, does that same zero tolerance exist for the staff, certified and support, and administration. If these folks make a mistake they get a second chance, but the students do not.

Mr. Blasch has never been an advocate of zero tolerance because the district needs to be more receptive to the students and listen to them. Mr. Blasch feels that there needs to be more time to digest the report before any decisions can be made.

Mr. Wilson agrees that since the Columbine incident zero tolerance has gotten out of hand. Districts need to reevaluate and go back, since it has been proven that zero tolerance does not work. Too many extra-curricular things need to be earned by students and that is not appropriate.

Dr. Spitz thanked the Task Force and the Administration for doing an excellent job. Dr. Spitz is concerned about the discipline code at the high school and changes need to occur.

Mrs. Barrett asked whether the graduation project was required by the state and Mr. Wilson responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Boyle inquired how the mental health professional will interact with the staff and students. Dr. Langman advised that one person would serve as a consultant across the board with the ability to meet with students, staff, faculty and administrators and a liaison with community agencies to help students get assistance. The presence of a specialist in-house, even if not in use all the time makes everyone more at ease.

Mrs. Barrett referred to the report and the ability to have classroom meetings. Dr. Langman stated that they have proven to be very beneficial in other districts and allows the students to discuss situations which they would not be able to communicate if the time were not allowed.

Mr. Kelly advised that the students in the focus groups were seeking some type of meeting area. This would give them the opportunity to connect better with themselves and their classroom teachers.

Mr. Koziol thought the use of text messages might be helpful. Dr. Langman noted that Mr. Koziol use of technology is fabulous.

Mrs. Barrett questioned whether there is a common thread that can be seen which runs through these student's minds that in the end makes them resort to such grave measures. Dr. Langman responded that the common thread is unbearable pressure, unbearable pain, and the feeling of hopelessness, made more difficult to understand because many of them are very connected kids. They come from good families and have good relations with teachers. Mrs. Barrett noted that depression is a huge factor and common sense is not being used. Dr. Langman noted that common sense comes with age.

Mr. Kelly feels that the common thread is the exposure to today's culture. There is a tendency to catastrophize what we see as insurmountable problems in the past. A message is sent to kids that if you mess up now the consequences are enormous. Mrs. Cummings inquired how many students were in the focus group and Mr. Kelly advised that 90 students took part from all three grades and were randomly selected.

Mr. Eccles thanked all for the efforts put forth with the Task Force. It is a valiant effort and a step in the right direction for the high school. Mr. Eccles inquired how will this remain to be monitored and how will the Board be kept abreast of what is happening with the Task Force. Mr. Kelly advised that Diane has already formed a shadow focus group of parents within the community and the district is planning on making the focus groups permanent in order to monitor the implementation of the program and progress.

**b) PSSA Report**

Dr. Costanzo and Mr. McGee provided the Board with a presentation regarding No Child Left Behind & PSSA Update and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.

Dr. Costanzo advised that the 2006 PSSA testing will begin tomorrow. Dr. Costanzo noted that three additional grade levels will be tested. Last year the district was eligible for a significant amount of grant money. The accountability block grant enabled the district to hire tutors and tutor coaches. Dr. Costanzo introduced Mr. McGee who provided a power point presentation which was shown to the Educational Development Committee earlier in the school year.



**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board is also approving the transmittal sheet necessary for submission of the above documents to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.**

Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mrs. Cummings was not present.

**c) Approval of General Obligation Bonds, Series 2006**

Mr. Jim Losty reviewed with Board members a summary of the Swap Financing Plan.

Terminate original swaps and issue fixed rate bonds with Basis Swap.

Realize estimated potential present value savings of \$950,000 and other advantages (ability to refinance in 10 years, no credit risk, easier to manage).

Estimated present value benefit has increased due to market movements and more efficient swap structure:

- Terminate only \$35,000,000 BMA Swap and convert \$35,000,000 Existing Libor Swap to Basis Swap
- Pay BMA termination from bond proceeds
- Potential present value savings increased from \$950,000 to \$1,500,000 when compared to existing swap plan
- Estimated bond issue breakdown:

Bonds Issued	\$67,000,000
Original Issue Premium	3,800,000
Less: Swap Termination Payment	(800,000)
Net Funds for Total Project	\$70,000,000

After costs of issuance and capitalized interest funds available for construction will be approximately \$67,412,000.

**Estimated Budget Impact**

	Original Swaps Plan - 04/05	New Swap Plan
2006 - 07	\$1,415,254	\$1,369,488
2007 - 08	\$1,414,248	\$1,369,488
Total	\$2,829,503	\$2,738,976

**Board Action Required Tonight**

- Consider the adoption of a Supplemental Resolution
- Approval of Interest Rate Management Plan, Interest Rate Management Agreement and Preliminary Official Statement
- Authorizes appropriate District Officer to execute Supplement to Bond Purchase Agreement (bond sale), Termination of BMA Swap and Basis Swap (tentatively scheduled for February 15<sup>th</sup>)
- Bonds Settlement occurs & Basis Swap become effective March 1<sup>st</sup>

Ms. Clupper addressed the Board and further explained the Swap Financing Plan proposed and responded to Board members questions. Ms. Clupper's firm PFM works directly for the school district and they feel that this is a good transaction for the district and it will put the district out of the higher swap exposure and fixing at a low interest rate environment and the district is including a potential cash flow savings in the basis swap.

Bob Jones, Esquire addressed the Board and distributed a document entitled Supplemental Resolution. Mr. Jones noted that this is a Supplemental Resolution because the base resolution is already on the books and approved by the State. Mr. Jones provided a brief tutorial on Federal Income Tax law requirements applicable to the high school project. The district is borrowing money on a tax exempt basis. Three requirements must be met: 1) Incur a substantial binding obligation to commence the project within six months of the time you issue the bonds; 2) proceed with due diligence; and 3) spend 85% of your bond proceeds within three years of the issue date.

**Motion: Approval of General Obligation Bonds, Series 2006**

Mr. Webb presented the following motion:

**WHEREAS, Neshaminy School District (the "District") has heretofore undertaken a Capital Improvement Program for Neshaminy High School (the "Improvement Program"), as described in the Resolution adopted by the Board of School Directors of the District on August 24, 2004 (the "2004 Resolution"), and has authorized the incurrence of indebtedness for the Improvement Program in an amount not exceeding \$85,000,000 pursuant to the provisions of the Pennsylvania Local Government Unit Debt Act, as amended (the "Act"); and**

**WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors of the District, by further Resolution adopted on April 12, 2005 (the "2005 Resolution"), determined to lock-in interest rates for the Improvement Program prior to the time that the District was ready to issue bonds for the Improvement Program through Interest Rate Management Agreements commonly known as "swaps"(collectively, the "Swap Agreements"); and**

**WHEREAS, pursuant to the 2005 Resolution, the District entered into two forward-starting Swap Agreements with Royal Bank of Canada (the "Counterparty") having an effective date of March 1, 2006, which may be terminated by the District at its option upon meeting the payment terms set forth in the Swap Agreements; and**

**WHEREAS, the School District retained Public Financial Management, Inc. (the "Financial Advisor") to act as independent financial advisor with respect to the Swap Agreements and the issuance of bonds for the Improvement Program, and the Financial Advisor has presented a new Interest Rate Management Plan ("2006 IRMP") relating to the existing Swap Agreements and certain potential swap transactions; and**

**WHEREAS, based on recommendations of the Financial Advisor and after the review and recommendation of the Finance and Facilities Committee, the District now desires to (a) proceed with the sale and issuance of a series of bonds pursuant to the 2004 Resolution and this supplement thereto to be designated "General Obligation Bonds, Series of 2006" (the "2006 Bonds"), in a principal amount not exceeding \$70,000,000, (b) approve the 2006 IRMP, and (c) authorize various additional actions relating to the issuance of the 2006 Bonds, the Swap Agreements, and potential swap transactions pursuant to the 2006 IRMP, including termination or replacement of the Swap Agreements and execution of one or more new swap transactions.**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the attached Resolution be approved and executed as submitted.**

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and the Board approved the motion by a vote of seven ayes (Mr. Webb, Dr. Spitz, Mr. Koziol, Ms. Boyle, Mr. Bowman, Mr. Blasch, and Mrs. Barrett) and one nay (Mr. Eccles). Mrs. Cummings was not present.

**d) Bids/Budget Transfers**

Information distributed prior to the meeting. Mr. Paradise reviewed the following bids:

Bid No. 06-25 Asbestos Floor Tile Removal at Oliver Heckman Elementary and Herbert Hoover Elementary Schools

Bid Amount: \$88,000.00

The bid is for removal of asbestos floor tile and associated mastic and acoustic ceiling surfacing material from Oliver Heckman Elementary and Herbert Hoover Elementary.

Bid No. 06-26 Floor Tile and Carpet Installation at Oliver Heckman Elementary School

Bid Amount: \$103,300.00

The bid is for installation of vinyl floor tile and carpeting in hallways, office, Library and classrooms at Oliver Heckman.

Bid No. 06-27 Exterior Door Replacements at Heckman Elementary, Maple Point Middle School, Neshaminy Middle School and Bus Maintenance Building

Bid Amount: \$85,736.00

The bid is for the replacements of original exterior doors at buildings noted.

**7. Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Wilson stated that the Celebration of Life Week went very well and the students did a great job. Property Tax Relief is still being worked on.

**8. Committee Reports**

**a) Board Policies**

No report.

**b) Educational Development**

Dr. Spitz advised that a meeting took place on February 8<sup>th</sup> and spoke about textbook requests. A major presentation took place regarding the PSSA scores and what improvements can be made at the high school. Dr. Spitz provided a proposed MPC ("Motivational PSSA Course") which the committee is looking into. Dr. Spitz advised that the MPC would provide remedial instruction for Math and Reading for students in grades 9-12 which could take place during the student's study hall. This proposal could start as early as next year. Dr. Spitz discussed the costs of the program.

Mr. Eccles suggested that the matter be placed on the next Work Session agenda.

**c) Finance and Facilities**

No further report.

**d) IU Board**

Dr. Spitz will attend his first IU meeting next week and will report back to the Board.

**e) Educational Foundation**

No report.

**f) Technical School**

Ms. Boyle advised that the next meeting will be February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**g) Technology**

Mr. Koziol advised that a meeting will be scheduled for February 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

**9. Future Topics**



Mr. Wilson advised that a guest lecturer, Governor Rendell, will be coming to the high school.

**10. Agenda Development for the February 28, 2006 Public Meeting**

**11. Other Board Business**

Dr. Spitz advised that at the Facilities and Finance meeting there was discussion regarding a responsible contractor policy. All Board members received a copy of the proposal presented to the Facilities and Finance. Mr. Bowman inquired where exactly did the policy come from? Mr. Bowman stated that the policy contains Neshaminy School District all over it and Mr. Bowman questioned who is Gerard M. Waites, Esquire, the lawyer who wrote the policy. Mr. Bowman is concerned that a policy is created with Neshaminy School District as part of it. Dr. Spitz advised that Robert McMonagle, a Middletown Supervisor, passed out envelopes at the meeting which included this policy. Mr. Bowman is concerned that no one from Neshaminy School District asked for this policy. Mr. Bowman is concerned about the intentions of the parties involved. Ms. Boyle advised that it is a sample policy. Ms. Boyle stated that the information was prepared by a nationally recognized expert.

Mr. Profy stated that he received the policy and communication from Reynolds and considered the same points which Reynolds has raised in his communication dated February 8<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Profy added that the Reynolds communication points out that there are provisions in this draft which the school district received which are standard, i.e. prevailing wages. Mr. Bowman questioned whether there are conflicts with Pennsylvania State law. Mr. Profy stated that there are provisions in the policy which exceed Pennsylvania requirements and there are also provisions contained which would not be permitted. Mr. Bowman stated that "Reynold's opinion is that the project costs will be increased and the start of construction will be delayed sixty days if the non-responsible contractor policy is adopted for this project." That is a real problem for this Board and district.

Dr. Spitz wished to discuss other items which Reynolds did not include. Mr. Eccles advised that a majority would need to be in agreement to discuss the matter further. Mr. Eccles polled the Board and there were not five Board members willing to move forward. The matter was returned to the Finance Committee for discussion.

**12. Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. Bowman moved the meeting be adjourned and Ms. Boyle seconded the motion. The Board approved the motion with eight ayes. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary