

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
(WORK SESSION)  
September 12, 2006

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on September 12, 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  
Ms. Irene M. Boyle  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Frank J. Koziol  
Dr. William H. Spitz  
Mr. Ritchie Webb

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Mr. Paul J. Kadri  
Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Dr. Sandra Costanzo  
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise  
Mrs. Jacqueline Rattigan

**BOARD MEMBER NOT PRESENT:**

Mr. Jason Bowman

**SOLICITOR:**

Thomas Profy, III, Esquire

**SECRETARY:**

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

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

**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**

Mr. Eccles advised that the Board will meet in Executive Session for approximately ten minutes after the meeting to discuss personnel issues.

**4. Public Comment**

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated he had two issues to address. Mr. Rodos is concerned about school closings. Mr. Rodos would like the Board to be careful about closing schools whether elementary or middle schools. Mr. Rodos believes that more families with children are moving into the district. Middletown Township has publicly stated that they are not interested in any more senior housing or age restricted housing. The senior citizens who currently live and make up one-third of the district will be moving away. Mr. Rodos would not rely on experts from Harrisburg. Mr. Rodos is also concerned regarding test scores. Mr. Rodos believes that the parents must be involved to a much greater extent. You learn what you learn. This phrase is a great one and the district will be measured by the results of the test scores. The scores are the only thing the newspapers are interested in. The trend is that in the elementary schools the scores are high and the high school scores drop. Mr. Rodos would like to see the parents more actively involved and concerned with the progress of their children.

**5. Items For Discussion**

a) **Update on School Opening**

Mr. Kadri was pleased to report that opening of school has gone exceptionally well. Mr. Kadri advised that some scheduling issues existed at the high school. The high school principal in charge of scheduling is addressing the issues and Mr. Kadri has personally spoken with some parents. A new software program was implemented this year. Mr. Kadri noted that it always takes a few weeks to have all the busing issues resolved and those measures are being taken of. Mr. Kadri advised that a phone system went down at Poquessing and Ferderbar. The phones were down for two days and that is something which is not acceptable, but was out of the district's control.

Mr. Kadri noted that all the principals are reporting an exceptional opening of school. Mr. Kadri stated that everyone has been wonderful in welcoming him into the district.

**b) Update of School Construction**

Mr. Paradise advised that Poquessing is 99% complete. This district is very pleased with the work that has occurred and punch list items are being completed. The staff, community and students are very pleased with the results. The project was under budget and on time.

Mr. Paradise further advised that the high school project is also moving along very well. The work scheduled for the summer was completed and also on time. The school opening was successful. Mr. Rick Marotto is the construction liaison person who began work a few days before the start of school. He is present every morning and he has been very successful in handling situations before they become an issue. A memo will be issued to all staff members later this week to keep the staff informed.

Mr. Eccles advised that having Mr. Marotto in the high school building was a pro-active approach by the Board and the Administrative cabinet to stay on track. The Board and cabinet felt that the best course of action was to bring a person into the position with a tremendous knowledge of Neshaminy, a fantastic reputation and has the respect of everyone in the building. Mr. Eccles noted that the educators are educating the students and Mr. Marotto will address safety issues and concerns of parents, staff and students that arise at the high school.

**6. Items for Approval**

**a) Overnight Trip**

Trip information distributed for the following trip was self-explanatory:

Mr. Kadri noted that this is a standard trip. Mr. Kadri advised that several people are briefing him on the trips. Mr. Kadri is presently in the process of reviewing the matter in light of comments made at a prior board meeting. Mr. Kadri feels at this time approval should be given and he will be briefing the Board at a later date.

- i) **Neshaminy High School Instrumental Music Department Trip to Orlando, Florida/Bahamas Cruise – April 11-16, 2007**

**b) Approval of Appointment of the Tax Study Commission**

Mr. Kadri advised that under Act One by September 14<sup>th</sup> the Board needs to appoint a commission. The Board would commission nine people to take part in the tax study and meet not only the diversity requirements under the legislation, but also diversity within the Neshaminy regions. Mr. Kadri advised that 29 people applied to be part of the commission. Mr. Kadri and Mr. Paradise identified nine people who met the diversity requirements of the Board and legislation. Mr. Kadri advised that the Board has decided to accept the objective selection of the nine individuals. Mr. Kadri noted that three individuals were selected from each region, diversity of gender, economic diversity, and a retired individual from each of the regions was selected and occupational diversity.

Mr. Eccles thanked all those individuals who applied for the tax study commission.

Mr. Paradise advised that the commission will have ninety days to complete all their meetings and make a non-binding report to the Board on whether or not to adopt an earned income tax or a personal income tax to offset real estate taxes.

Mr. Paradise responded to a question from Mrs. Barrett that the average age of the commission is 52.3 years old. Mr. Paradise noted that income information was not able to be averaged since it was not a requirement. The least amount of household income was \$50,000 and the most was \$150,000. Mr. Eccles noted that the average household income in Neshaminy School District is \$65,000.

**Motion: Local Tax Study Commission**

Mr. Blasch presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, on June 27, 2006, Governor Rendell signed Act 1 "The Tax Payer Relief Act"; and

WHEREAS, Act 1 requires local School Boards to appoint a Local Tax Study Commission ("Commission") on or before September 14, 2006; and

WHEREAS, the Commission must be comprised of members who are resident individuals or taxpayers of the School District, and shall "reflect the socioeconomic, age and occupational diversity of the School District to the extent possible." No member shall be an official, or employee, or a relative thereof, of the School District.

WHEREAS, the Commission will study the existing taxes levied, assessed and collected by the District, and the effect of any County or Municipal taxes imposed concurrently with the School District. The Commission also will examine how the tax policies of the District could be improved by the levy, assessment, and collection of any tax, authorized by Act 1 (earned or personal income taxes).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of School Directors, as follows:

Section 1. The following members of the Commission are hereby appointed:

Robert S. Coffin	Keith A. Moss
Donna Esposito	Charles Raudenbush, Jr.
Terri Lynn Graves	Gordon D. Silverman
Susan Holderer	Richard F. Sypek
Ethel M. Kesselman	

Section 2. Within 90 days of its appointment, the Commission will make non-binding recommendation to the Board of School Directors regarding the imposition and the rate of an EIT or PIT to be placed on the question at the May 2007 Election. Prior to making its recommendation, the Commission will hold at least one public hearing.

Section 3. This Resolution shall become effective immediately.

Duly Adopted, by the Neshaminy Board of School Directors, in lawful session duly assembled, on this 12<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2006.

Neshaminy School District  
Bucks County, Pennsylvania

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Richard M. Eccles, President  
Neshaminy Board of School Directors

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Anita Walls  
Secretary of the Board of School Directors

(SEAL)

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Bowman was not present.

**c) Approval of Revision to Board Policy #505**

Mr. Kadri noted that prior to his arrival at Neshaminy the Board had identified concerns with the Discipline code. As a result the revisions to Board Policy #505, concerns were formally raised by the teacher's association with how the actions would be put into practice. This issue could take two paths. One was to do nothing and the second was to explore the issue and see if the issues that were important to the Board could be addressed, improve the school climate, and create a momentum or relationship that could transcend into other initiatives. Everyone has been extremely cooperative.

Mr. Kadri is asking the Board to make further enhancements and changes to Board Policy #505. Mr. Kadri wanted everyone to know that this is a complex process and is not an easy process. If in the future the Board feels that its concerns have not been substantially addressed it can certainly take the actions necessary to address same at a later date.

**Motion: Modification of School Board Policy #505 (Student Discipline)**

Mrs. Barrett presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy Board of School Directors, on the recommendation of the Superintendent, is modifying the language of Board Policy #505 (Student Discipline). It is the Superintendent's belief that the suggested modifications create the best environment and direction to achieve the Board's goals. The Board will review the impact of these changes at an appropriate time, but not later than the end of the 2006-2007 school year, in order to understand the effectiveness of the Superintendent's recommendation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board adopt the modifications to School Board Policy #505.

Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

The Board approved the motion with seven ayes (Mr. Eccles, Mrs. Barrett, Mr. Blasch, Mr. Webb, Dr. Spitz, Mrs. Cummings and Ms. Boyle) and one nay (Mr. Koziol). Mr. Bowman was not present.

Mr. Koziol advised that he has listened to everyone's comments and concerns and has read and reread the policies, discipline codes and notes and it is his belief that the verbiage, language and structure of the old policy created a better learning climate and provided a better chance of improving

the lives of the students. Mr. Koziol voted what was in his heart and conscience, however will support the recommendation of the Board.

Dr. Spitz commented that this was a very difficult vote for all Board members. Dr. Spitz would like to support where the Superintendent is leading the district and Dr. Spitz feels it is a worthwhile approach to follow, however, his vote is reluctant. Dr. Spitz hopes that the Superintendent is correct and the Board does not have to come back and institute some of the changes that have been removed from the policy. The Board will be monitoring same closely.

Mr. Kadri commented that he is asking for this policy change because he genuinely cares about the ability to be successful with the students of Neshaminy.

Mr. Eccles commented that this vote shows that we have confidence in our new Superintendent and with Mr. Kadri's leadership and the only way for the district to move forward is with change. Without making changes nothing happens. The Board is showing full support behind the Superintendent. The public is demanding certain directions for this district and Mr. Eccles believes the district is working on the path to fulfill those directions. Listening to staff, support staff and administrators on a daily basis provides feedback and only good things can happen.

Mrs. Barrett advised that she is very glad that the zero tolerance policy is gone. It does not help the district. Everyone in life makes mistakes. The district cannot function with a zero tolerance policy. Yes, things will happen, however, hopefully with this new policy administrators and staff will be able to deal with the problems on an individual basis.

**d) Bids/Budget Transfers**

There were no bids/budget transfers.

**7. Items for Information**

**a) Summer School 2006**

Mr. Kadri directed the Board's attention to the packets distributed regarding summer school 2006. Also enclosed was a summary of the summer tutoring program.

Mrs. Barrett thanked Mr. Stoneback for providing a wonderful report.

Mr. Paradise advised that there was approximately a \$10,000 profit from the programs. The programs are self-supporting and the profits will be transferred into the contingency account.

Ms. Boyle inquired regarding certain estimates. Mr. Eccles inquired whether the funds derived from the summer school could be used to help students during the normal school year.

Mr. Blasch attended the summer fine arts presentation and noted that there were comments from the public that the admission tickets of \$10.00 were high. Mr. Blasch wanted to know whether the money from the tickets would go towards next year's program. Mr. Paradise advised that typically the monies from the programs are combined and if any excess revenue exists or any excess expenditures it is balanced and the difference is applied to the contingency account. That account is available to the Board during the course of the year to use for whatever purposes arise.

**8. Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Kadri provided his comments earlier.

**9. Committee Reports**

**a) Board Policies**

No report.

**b) Educational Development**

Dr. Spitz advised that a meeting will take place on October 5, 2006 at 6:30 p.m.

**c) Finance and Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised that a meeting will take place on September 21, 2006 at Poquessing Middle School.

**d) IU Board**

Dr. Spitz advised that a meeting will take place on September 19, 2006.

**e) Educational Foundation**

Mrs. Cummings advised that the annual Fall Fundraiser will take place on October 13, 2006. The event will be held at Kings Caterers from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and ticket price will be \$30.00 per person with a cash bar available. The proceeds benefit the Neshaminy Education grant program. Reservations can be made through Dr. Costanzo's office.

**f) Technical School**

Ms. Boyle advised that a meeting took place on August 28 and the Tech School passed a wellness policy. Tremendous growth in the PSSA testing scores were seen.

**g) Technology**

Mr. Koziol advised that a meeting will be scheduled in the future.

**10. Future Topics**

Mr. Koziol would like the issue of testing for steroids and student athletes be addressed. Mr. Eccles suggested that the Board await a recommendation from the Administration and direct the issue to Board policies.

**11. Agenda Development for the September 26, 2006 Public Meeting**

**12. Other Board Business**

Mr. Kadri responded to an inquiry from the public and Mr. Webb regarding declining enrollments in upcoming years in the 9-12 grade level. Mr. Kadri noted that the capacity of the high school building will be sufficient. The building was designed with levels of efficiency to get maximum room utilization if the numbers should increase. Mr. Kadri also noted that just because PDE shows certain number of students enrolled in grades 9-12, are they actually at the high school facility, since the district has other ways of servicing students. The numbers are approximately 140 students off for this current year. The architect noted that there are logical places for the building to expand and amend the building.

Mr. Basen, Langhorne, PA, commented that he feels the Board should have an alternate committee member on the tax study commission.

Mr. Profy advised that the statute contains no provision for alternate committee members.

Mr. Basen also disagrees with Mr. Rodos regarding school closures. Consider under enrolled and over staffed schools which are not being utilized. There comes a time when a school closure becomes necessary.

Mr. Webb clarified that the class trip on the agenda will be presented at the next meeting for consideration.

Mr. Rodos thanked the Board and Mr. Webb for their efforts. Mr. Rodos suggested that the \$10,000 revenue from the summer school program should be applied to the printing of the student handbooks.

Mr. Christopher Graham, Langhorne Borough, PA, expressed that there has been nothing but positive feedback from the hiring of Mr. Kadri to our district. Mr. Kadri is a breath of fresh air and a welcome change. Mr. Graham hopes that the Administration at the high school will be strong enough and treat all students the same across the board, regardless of whether they are involved in sports, music, good students, etc. In the past different students have been treated differently. Hopefully, this will not be evident in the future.

**13. Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. Blasch 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 7:55 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary