

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
January 11, 2011

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on January 11, 2011 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
Ms. Irene Boyle
Mr. Scott E. Congdon
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Richard M. Eccles
Mr. William Oettinger

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan
Dr. Geeta Heble
Mrs. Patricia Boylan

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. William D. O'Connor

OTHERS: Approximately 50 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

Mr. Webb stated that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held regarding Personnel and Contract issues.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

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

3. Announcements

None

4. Public Comment

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, spoke of his previous public comments over the past months and his concern regarding contract negotiations. Mr. Pirritano voiced his displeasure over the parents and taxpayers being referred to as a small, misinformed minority. He stated that the message that he has heard repeatedly at the meetings that the teachers are appreciated, but we can no longer carry the financial burden of their demands. Mr. Pirritano urged the teachers to attend every negotiation meeting and address each issue and come to a settlement.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flowers Mill, asked the Board hypothetically if they had 1.4% revenue available would they spend it on teacher's salaries or educational programs. Mr. Rodos asked the Board to explain to the public the relationship between Act I and retro pay. He also asked the Board to explain the reasoning behind not funding full day kindergarten, while the district may be forced to pay for all day kindergarten through a charter school. Mr. Rodos quoted from an article regarding teacher assessment. The article contends that merit pay benefits some, while it devastates others financially. The article defines a truly good teacher and concludes by stating that teachers are not the problem with education in America today. Mr. Rodos urged both the NFT and the School Board to continue negotiations until a settlement is

made. He concluded by stating that the monies used on retirees benefits could be redirected to better use on education.

5. Items for Discussion

a) 2011 – 2012 Working Draft/Proposed Preliminary Budget

Mr. Webb gave a brief review of the 2011-2012 Budget according to Act I to adopt the 2011 -2012 Preliminary Budget.

- Instruction Programs have an approximate 1 million dollar increase.
- Benefits Package has a proposed 2.8 million dollar increase.
- Construction Services 1.3 million dollars.
- Other Services 983 thousand dollars.
- Projected expenditures are estimated at 10 million dollars above the current year expenditures and revenue is approximately ½ million dollars below current year expenditures resulting in a budget gap of 11.2 million dollars.

b) Neshaminy Kids Club Lease Renewal

Dr. Muenker advised the Board that the Neshaminy Kids Club would like to request a five-year extension on their current lease with the Neshaminy School District.

Mr. Eccles inquired how many facilities are involved.

Dr. Muenker responded there are six schools that are utilized for before and after school care and summer programs involve a couple schools.

Mr. Eccles asked if a building is sold does that null and void the contract for that building.

Dr. Muenker stated that it is mentioned in the contract that any future sale of a building would void the contract.

6. Items for Approval Tonight

a) Overnight Trips

Dr. Rattigan presented the following trips for approval:

- Neshaminy High School Annual Ski Trips to Vermont – January 21 to January 23, 2011 and February 11 to February 13, 2011.

Mr. Eccles asked if there were any less expensive ski trips offered to the students.

Dr. McGee responded only day trips would be less expensive.

Mr. Eccles inquired if there are any day trips scheduled for the middle schools or the high school.

Dr. McGee responded that there were day trips scheduled.

There was Board consensus to approve the Neshaminy High School Annual Ski Trips to Vermont on January 21 to January 23, 2011 and February 11 to February 13, 2011.

b) Approval of Student Disciplinary Action

Motion was presented by Mr. Webb:

WHEREAS, a disciplinary hearing of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors was held on December 21, 2010.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors accepts the recommendation of the Neshaminy School District administration and hereby determines that the student be permanently expelled from Neshaminy School District and approves the adjudication as prepared by the solicitor.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 6 ayes and zero nays. (Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Morris were not present.)

7. Items for Approval at the January 25th Public Board Meeting

a) School Director Recognition Month

Dr. Muenker stated that at the January 25, 2011 Public Board Meeting there will be a proclamation made to honor the School Directors of Neshaminy.

b) Election of Board Member to the Intermediate Unit Board

Dr. Muenker stated that at the January 25, 2011 Public Board Meeting there will be a motion presented for the approval for the Election of a Board member to the Intermediate Unit Board.

c) Revised and New Board Policies

Dr. Rattigan presented the following policies for the Board's consideration at the January 25 meeting:

- Revised Policy #548 – Prohibition Against Discrimination and Harassment of Students and/or Staff – now Policy # 547 – Discrimination & Harassment
- New Policy #247, #347, and #447 – Discrimination & Harassment
- New Policy #548 – Sexual Harassment

d) Resolution Authorizing 2011 – 2012 Proposed Preliminary Budget to be made Public

Dr. Muenker stated that the Resolution Authorizing 2011 – 2012 Proposed Preliminary Budget must be made public on January 19, 2011.

e) Bids/Budget Transfers

Dr. Muenker noted that the Budget Transfer Report is Working Copy No. 11-3 and there were no bids.

8. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- Pearl Buck Students celebrate Martin Luther's King, Jr. Day with service to the community.
- Words of appreciation were expressed to Mr. Mark Shubin and his employer for donating five laptops to Neshaminy School District.
- Announced that the District will inform parents of any school closings due to inclement weather via Neshaminy web site, Global Connect, TV News and Neshaminy TV.

9. Committee Reports

a) Board Policies

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that the Board Policy meetings will take place at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesdays and the exact date of the next meeting will be forthcoming. Topics of discussion will be memorandums of understanding, physical testing of athletes and lice infestation.

b) Educational Development

Mr. Webb informed the Board, on Mr. O'Connor's behalf, that the next meeting will be held on Monday, January 24th at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room at Maple Point.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Webb advised the Board that no date has been set for the meeting.

d) IU Board

Mr. Eccles informed the Board that a date is scheduled for January 18.

e) Education Foundation

Dr. Muenker advised the Board that the next meeting will be scheduled for some time in February.

f) Technical School

Mr. Koutsouradis was not present.

g) Technology

Mr. Webb advised the Board, on Mr. O'Connor's behalf, that no meeting has been scheduled; however, he will be meeting with Dr. Muenker to discuss future dates and topics.

10. Public Comment

Steve Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, mentioned that when the 2010 – 2011 budget was created it was his understanding that the contract would then be settled. Since it has not yet been scheduled, Mr. Pirritano asked the Board to explain what this means in the way of a possible tax increase to pay health care costs. Mr. Pirritano also inquired if alternative electricity suppliers will be considered by the School Board in an effort to lower utility costs. Mr. Pirritano asked for an update regarding the five year 40 million dollar building plan, specifically how the revenue would be raised and how it will be spread out.

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Langhorne, commented that several Board Members were absent and he wondered if there are a required number of members that must be present in order to conduct a meeting. Mr. Pastor inquired what the exceptions are under Act I Law. He also implored the Board not to approve any exceptions above and beyond Act I. Mr. Pastor asked the Board to explain the quality and content of master's equivalency, because he says it is suspect due to the fact that as many as 18 credits can be acquired in a matter of 3 months from an online course.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flowers Mill, mentioned that since Mr. Paradise has retired, he is opposed to following the list of budget cuts originally proposed by Mr. Paradise. Mr. Rodos said that in fairness to the parents and taxpayers it is not necessary to go back to the debates about cutting programs and so forth.

11. Future Topics

None

12. Agenda Development for the January 25, 2011 Public Board Meeting

None

13. Board Comment

Mr. Webb explained that Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Morris were not in attendance because they were working and Mr. Koutsouradis had a family obligation. He also stated that meetings are held as long as there are five Board members in attendance.

Mr. Webb read a statement on behalf of Mr. O'Connor. Mr. O'Connor mentioned that he proposed an idea of holding negotiation meetings open to the public, but the NFT has rejected the idea. Mr. O'Connor explained that he is weary of the lack of progress with settling the contract and thought this suggestion may bring about better results. Mr. O'Connor asked that Dr. Muenker look into the matter of teachers earning a Master's Equivalency in a matter of a few short months and requested that Dr. Muenker report to the Board the criteria that is used in evaluating course requests.

Dr. Muenker stated that the matter can be confirmed by the School District Labor Attorney. Dr. Muenker stated that it is accurate that credits can be earned in a very short period of time, the classes may be taken online and the classes do not necessarily relate to the teachers' expertise. Dr. Muenker confirmed that Master's Equivalency Diplomas are subject to Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines and not Neshaminy School District guidelines. He further mentioned that the current contract language controls the quality of the courses and to his knowledge cannot be challenged by the School Board at this time.

Mr. Congdon asked if Dr. Muenker could give some examples of the courses that are eligible for the Masters Equivalency.

Dr. Muenker replied that it is not course specific; however, he would look into getting examples of the courses that teachers are taking.

Mr. Webb noted that the language to change the guidelines for Master's Equivalency is in the new proposed contract.

Mr. Webb stated that Act I limits the ability of a district to raise taxes. Since the district does not have the revenue to pay for the teachers demands and taxes cannot be raised enough to cover it, the matter would then have to go to a referendum. Mr. Webb said he doubts the community would support such an action. Mr. Webb said that in reference to exceptions the Board would not go beyond the amount allowed for raising taxes in Act I. In reply to electric rates, Mr. Webb responded that Neshaminy belongs to a consortium which discusses ways to save energy.

14. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Eccles moved the meeting be adjourned and Ms. Boyle seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 7:57 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary