

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
October 9, 2007

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on October 9, 2007, in the District Offices Board Room in 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 Blasch
Mr. Jason Bowman
Ms. Irene Boyle
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Frank Koziol
Dr. William H. Spitz
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

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

OTHERS: Approximately 18 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

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 announced that at the last meeting an Executive Session took place for the reasons of preparing for the budget and the Board came up with a proposed budget in reference to the Certified Staff negotiations.

Mr. Kadri advised that a concert will take place in memory of Rebecca Welwood at Sandburg Middle School on Thursday, October 18th at 7:00 p.m.

4. Public Comment

Mrs. Marianne O'Connor, Langhorne, PA, inquired whether the 10th graders will be receiving the PSAT testing. The concern is that a lot of children will not be able to take those tests. Why is the district not issuing them anymore? If the decision is not to administer the test then a notice should have been mailed out to all 10th grade students. The deadline has been missed. Making a couple of announcements would have been beneficial. Could the test be taken in the Spring? Is the district going to make provisions for the students to take the test again? Why was something not mailed out letting the parents know that the district no longer provides that test?

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, addressed the following issues:

- Neshaminy buses students to over 110 schools and would it be more economical for the taxpayers of Neshaminy if an autistic program would be housed in Neshaminy as opposed to sending the students out of the district. This also could happen with other types of special education programs.

- Mr. Rodos feels that full time kindergarten could be accomplished for less than \$1M for all current kindergarten and pre-K students. It would require less money if done as a pilot program in a few select schools.
- Pennswood Village request for total real estate tax exemption

Mrs. Sue Holderer, Levittown, stated that at Back to School Night parents were given misinformation regarding AE classes. Due to conflict in scheduling, students were told they would need to drop the AE classes in order to participate in their regular classes and would need to be retested in order to continue with the AE program in the future. Mrs. Holderer stated that she contacted the state and a child can be exempted from AE for an entire year by simply saying their needs are being met in the classroom.

5. Items for Discussion

a) **Three Year Implementation of the Wellness Program**

Mrs. Jan King, Lead Teacher for Health and Physical Education presented the Board an overview of the implementation of the wellness program. Mrs. King provided Board members with a copy of the power point presentation and Policy #522:

- In 2004 Federal law was enacted and Neshaminy approved Policy #522 on June 20, 2006
- Phase in Program - 2-3 years
- Phase One: Elimination of candy sales as fundraisers, school stores, at school, or during school sponsored activities. (Presently occurring at High School & Neshaminy Middle). Selection of healthy snacks, no soda sales, elimination of using candy as student incentives, baked goods that are healthy or low fat snacks
- Food Services is working towards this goal
- Fundraising: Packaging and sales will be changed
- Phase Two: Expand the policy to extra curricular activities ("N" Club, booster clubs, class and team parties)
- Phase Three: Evaluation of previous two years, feedback from communication teams

Food Services, which supplies the school lunches is working to meet the alliance guidelines. Food services is a self operating entity with its own budget. Home lunches are never as healthy as school lunches, however there is a fear that more students will bring home lunches if the school lunches are ever changing.

b) **Board Policy #126 - Facilities Dedication**

Dr. Rattigan presented the following policy to Board members:

- 2/3 majority vote of full Board will be required when naming a district facility in someone's honor
- Nomination needs to be in writing
- Rationale why the person should receive the honor
- Written form needs to be presented to Superintendent and Board President
- Superintendent and Board President will form a committee of 5-9 members to exam in detail and then a Board vote will occur
- Facilities should not be renamed except for compelling reasons
- Board has the authority to deny or revoke the naming of a facility
- Evaluative criteria: retired or deceased for five (5) years; outstanding contribution/moral character

c) **Fee Structure for Township Bills**

Board members ensued discussion regarding the bills received by Middletown Township regarding the high school construction project.

- Taxpayers of Neshaminy have been charged \$459,569.28 by Middletown Twp. for building fees.
- In past projects fees have not been charged by the Townships (Middletown, Lower South, etc.).
- \$350,000 was allocated in soft costs for permit fees and inspection fees.

October 9, 2007

- Outside engineering firms are billing the Township (Township employees are not performing inspections). Middletown contracts with other firms to do the inspections. Bills then turned over to Neshaminy.
- \$5.5M project at Poquessing Lower South did not charge any fees. Inspections were done by Lower South staff.
- Middletown Township uses their own fire marshall (still billed).
- \$100,000 billed the first year for inspection fees/\$350,000 permit fees.
- Middletown Township has waived fees for other Middletown projects.

Mr. Eccles is concerned about Pay to Play politics. Board discussion ensued regarding the effects this has on the taxpayers. Comparisons were made with other projects that took place within the Township and what types of costs were applied to those projects.

There was Board consensus to draft a letter to Middletown Township in order to explain the invoices and costs incurred to date and possibly have a representative from the Township attend a meeting and provide an explanation.

d) Tech School Funding Formula

Mr. Paradise provided Board members with data regarding the Tech School Funding. The data provided the per pupil costs for certain types of special education students for each district sending students to the Tech School. Also provided was enrollment date by category and district. It was suggested that modifications would need to take place to the formula. If this modification were to take place Neshaminy would spend an additional \$446,000. Each district's amount would be calculated with some districts paying more and others receiving a credit based on the individual special education student enrollment data.

The modification phase-in would begin next year with ninth grade students. The Finance Committee has decided that this should not be agreed to until there was some resolution to the regular education concerns regarding funding. The Finance Committee would like to send it back to the Tech School in order for them to provide something simpler that each school district can work with.

The Tech School is looking for feedback from each of the member districts.

Board discussion took place regarding the complication of the funding formula. Mr. Koziol provided Board members with calculations that he came up with regarding the issue.

A unanimous vote from every sending district will be necessary in order to get this formula reopened. It will be very unlikely that this will occur.

Mr. Kadri noted that Neshaminy is sending students that are appropriate and motivated to perform and be successful at the Tech School.

Mr. Bowman would like to have the Tech Education program at the High School studied in order to determine whether courses are not being duplicated and offered at the Tech School. Possibly budget reductions could take place in this area.

There was Board consensus to go back to the Tech School and have the formula reopened.

e) PA Common Cents Initiative

Mr. Kadri advised that this is a proposal from the Governor to have a competitive program designed to encourage school districts to share services with one another in order to increase the efficient use of taxpayer resources and improve service delivery for students.

A consultant will conduct studies and provide specific recommendations about combining services and activities across participating school districts within each intermediate unit in order to promote improved service delivery, efficiency, economy of operations and cost savings. The consultant will issue reports to PDE and participating school districts within intermediate units selected to participate in the Common Cents Initiative.

Recommendations from the consultant's study will not be binding upon any school district participating in the Common Cents Initiative.

The Board was concerned with the consulting fees and what the costs would be. Mr. Kadri will attempt to acquire more information and e-mail such information to Board members.

f) **Personnel Committee (Human Resources Oversight Committee)**

Mr. Webb noted that the district continues to create new positions at a time when enrollment is declining and the district is depleting its budgetary reserve account. The Board receives very little information regarding candidates for positions and they are asked to approve same at upcoming meetings. Mr. Webb is suggesting an Oversight Hiring Committee consisting of staff department heads, administrators, board members, and community members. This will help eliminate internal as well as external politics and who you know hiring. It will provide the checks and balances to make sure only the most qualified candidates are hired. This committee would establish hiring procedures and make sure documentation is accurate.

Mr. Kadri noted that this is the first time that this concern is being addressed to the Superintendent.

Discussion took place regarding efforts to cut the budget. Mr. Kadri noted that he has been with the District approximately one year and has no problem being held accountable for the facts, but it is discouraging at a public board meeting to have this type of discussion take place. This needs to take place in another setting. Mr. Kadri feels that he should not need to defend the integrity of his administration in a public setting. Mr. Kadri noted that it is very difficult to be successful if direction and respect cannot be reached prior to a board meeting.

Mr. Koziol feels it is necessary to have a personnel committee to look at hiring the management and staff of Neshaminy School District.

Ms. Boyle feels the topic has been discussed before and the Administration has provided the Board with more information regarding personnel being considered and hired. A good first step has been taken. Ms. Boyle is not necessarily against a Personnel Committee, however, the information that has been provided recently has been a step in the right direction and it may not be necessary to form an official Board Personnel Committee.

Dr. Muenker feels that the roles and responsibilities of the proposed Committee would need to be defined precisely. A time frame commitment would also need to be developed. Hiring takes place on a daily basis and the ability to meet the needs in a timely fashion is imperative.

Mr. Bowman feels it would be beneficial for the District to have a committee available to review positions and possibly attempt to have budgetary reductions result from the possible consolidation/elimination of positions.

Mr. Blasch noted that enrollment has been declining and it is spread across the entire district. Mr. Blasch feels that a strong look needs to be taken at the Facilities study to see if any buildings can be taken off-line in order to reduce budgetary costs.

Dr. Spitz is concerned that a Personnel Committee will not fulfill the needs that the Board feels it will. The Administration should be thinking periodically on how to better deliver services and it may require

redefining positions and possibly cut some Administrative positions. A Personnel Committee will not further that, but will delay the hiring of people that need to be hired.

Mr. Bowman feels that an ongoing Committee will not bog down the system.

Mr. Kadri advised that sometimes through the hiring of people you can control costs from going up. Further, new and more cost effective programs can be developed in order to bring fiscal success. A district cannot be run looking at isolated pictures. The Superintendent needs to present a vision as to how all the pieces fit together and how the positions can be most cost effective. Mr. Kadri needs a budgetary target from the Board.

Mr. Koziol noted an outline has been provided from the PSBA regarding setting up a personnel committee.

Mr. Eccles inquired whether there was Board consensus to have at least a couple members of the Board form a committee and provide a recommendation to the entire Board. Ms. Boyle and Mr. Kozoil have been very involved with the topic and looked at the PSBA guidelines and came up recommendations for that committee for fact finding purposes and define the role of what they feel a Personnel Committee should consist of and bring that information back to the Board.

The Board consensus was to have such a committee explored. Dr. Spitz and Mrs. Cummings were not in favor of same.

6. Items for Approval

a) Overnight Trips

Dr. Heble presented the following trips for the Board's consideration:

1. Neshaminy High School Foreign Language Trip to Quebec – April 2 -6, 2008. Students travel to Quebec by bus, stay with French speaking families and visit historical/cultural sites in Quebec and surrounding areas.
2. Neshaminy High School Cheerleading Competition – Atlantic City Convention Center, February 8-10, 2008

There was Board consensus for the above trips.

b) American Education Week – November 11-17, 2007

Mr. Kadri announced that American Education Week will take place on November 11 – 17. The Board will pass a proclamation to signify same.

c) Board Policy #126 – Facilities Dedication

Dr. Rattigan presented to the Board said policy earlier during the meeting.

d) Bids/Budget Transfers

Information distributed prior to the meeting. Mr. Paradise advised that there were no bids and there are two budget transfers (Working Copy 08-1) for funds within the Per Pupil Allocation area.

7. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Kadri advised the following:

- Mr. Gerry Abramson has been named Business Educator of the Year by the PA Business Education Association
- National Board of Professional Teaching Standards has recognized Ms. Coleen Kemp as an assessor
- Walter Miller Elementary has initiated a 51st Birthday blog
- State recognition has been received in the special education area regarding least restrictive environment. Mr. Kevin Kane and his department have been commended on their efforts in this area.
- Data training took place last week and was a joint effort of the Administration and the NFT.

- State has begun to require additional information be collected for recording purposes – a financial burden will take place and there may be a requirement for the district to upgrade their systems.

8. Committee Reports

a) Board Policies

Mr. Bowman advised no further report.

b) Educational Development

Dr. Spitz advised that a meeting took place prior to the meeting this evening and the graduation project was discussed. Everyone recognizes that the old formula does not work, but the implementation of the new project will have some trial and errors. This year only 300 students will need to follow the new project guidelines since the other students have already completed the project. The graduation project includes three phases including research, writing and presentation.

Dr. Spitz noted that a trip to Europe is scheduled for 2009 for the high school students. Also discussion took place regarding data warehouse/data research position. Mr. Kadri advised that this position can be allocated through the Accountability Block Grant. Board discussion ensued regarding the type of specifics as to whether it will be a teaching position or administrative position. Mr. Kadri feels that this will be a neutral head count move and a neutral cost move.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Webb advised that the following items were discussed:

- Poquessing Middle School – Air conditioning for Auditorium/Library
- Bids for Band Room storage – Poquessing Middle School
- Modular classrooms (eliminate them by next year). Dr. Rattigan, Dr. Heble, and Mr. Kane will investigate the modulars on a school by school basis and see if a sense of balance can be obtained (22 modulars exist within the school district, not including the high school). (Security issues exist within the modulars, age is also a factor).

d) IU Board

Dr. Spitz advised that there was no report.

e) Education Foundation

Mrs. Cummings stated that the Fall fundraiser will take place on October 19th and tickets are \$30.00 and contact Dr. Costanzo's office for tickets. Proceeds from the dinner will benefit the grant program.

f) Technical School

Ms. Boyle advised that contract negotiations are ongoing and the contract expires in June, 2008.

g) Technology

Mr. Blasch advised that the meeting was held on September 17th. Items discussed were as follows: Website construction, Intra network, telephone systems, etc.

9. Future Topics

Security and checks at extracurricular school events, football, basketball, etc.

10. Agenda Development for the October 23, 2007 Public Board Meeting

11. Other Board Business

Mrs. Cummings inquired regarding the Tawanka Center and use of the gymnasium by outside groups. Mrs. Cummings inquired regarding the PSAT testing and why the district has opted not to provide same during school hours.

Mr. Bowman noted that the Lacrosse team would like to have more stadium use.

Mr. Eccles advised that a question and answer session will take place after the meeting.

12. Adjournment

Mr. Webb moved that the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Bowman seconded same. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 9:30 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary