

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
December 11, 2007

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on December 11, 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
Mr. Frank Koziol, Vice President
Mr. Joseph Blasch
Ms. Irene Boyle
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis
Mr. William D. O'Connor
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

BOARD MEMBER NOT PRESENT:

Mrs. Susan Cummings

OTHERS: Approximately 14 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. Kadri announced that Mr. Harry Franks passed away. Mr. Kadri advised that Mr. Franks was 89 years old and died on December 7, 2007 and served the district in many capacities over the years including, Administration, Athletic Director, Teacher and Coach. Mr. Franks was credited with building Neshaminy into a statewide football power and the stadium that is often referred to as "Heartbreak Ridge" now bears his name. Mr. Franks and his wife were regulars at all the Neshaminy football games. Mr. Franks contributed to the Gym Night concept at Neshaminy which is now part of the community landscape.

Mr. Kadri asked for a moment of silence in honor of Mr. Harry Franks.

Mr. Eccles announced that Mrs. Cummings was not in attendance this evening due to the death of her father-in-law.

4. Public Comment

Mr. Solis Basen, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, congratulated the new Board members. Mr. Basen suggested to the Board and Administration to eliminate the public comments at the Board meetings. Mr. Basen advised that the last time any action was taken on public comments was when the Board approved the Lacrosse team under the Administration of Superintendent Wilson approximately three years ago. The

Administration and the Board know that in the last four years many figures have been thrown at the public. In the season 2004-2005 the budget was \$138M. It climbed in four years to \$160M. Increase of \$22M over 4 years. Enrollment has dropped approximately 300 students in those four years. In the four years, what happened to Tawanka, closure of Neshaminy Middle School, modulars that were to be taken off-line and the McKissick report. No movement by the Board or Administration has taken place as far as the public knows. Mr. Basen feels the public is entitled to know. Savings have been none in four years. PSSA scores have not improved, the cost for educating the students have risen and the district is the highest in the area per pupil, per year. The median staff salary is \$90,000. Tutors are necessary for the students to graduate. It is time for the Board and Administration to stop sitting on their hands and face the real world. Stop treating the school district as if it were a trip through fantasy land.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he attended a meeting of the Education Committee and listened to a presentation from the Technology Department and learned that the current budget provides \$9.3M for Tech Education. \$4M is for Technical High School tuition. The remaining \$5.2M was provided for the Neshaminy High School Technology program: Salaries and Supplies are \$539,955.00. Mr. Rodos would like an explanation on what happens with the remaining \$4.75M. Mr. Rodos assumed that most of the money spent was at the high school. This is not the case.

Mr. Rodos further advised that with regards to full day kindergarten there is ample space throughout the district to provide for the full day kindergarten. The McKissick study has validated that. Mr. Rodos also noted that if the district went to full day kindergarten there may be a savings of 15 buses every day for a two hour trip with 15 drivers, approximately \$27 per hour, or \$150,000 in bus costs. This would yield a net expense of \$928,000 for full day kindergarten if all 770 students would apply. Mr. Rodos would like the district to forward a questionnaire to the parents to ascertain their interests in having their children attend the full day kindergarten program. Counsel for the school board should be able to advise you if you can charge for the classes not funded by the state or federal government or can parents make a donation to the Neshaminy Education Foundation to cover the costs. Mr. Rodos would like to know why there is no full day kindergarten. Every study points to the fact that the long term benefits to students are exceptional and there are no down side risks.

5. Items for Discussion

a) **Review of the 2008-09 Working Draft Budget**

Mr. Paradise provided Board members with a copy of the 2008-09 Working Draft Budget. Mr. Paradise reviewed with Board members the document as follows:

Important Dates:

- January 3, 2008 – Act 1 Deadline to make Preliminary Budget proposal available for public inspection.
- January 23, 2008 Act 1 Deadline to adopt 2008-09 Preliminary Budget
- January 28, 2008 Act 1 Deadline to Submit Preliminary Budget with proposed Tax increase to Department of Education
- February, March & April, 2008 – Continue budget review
- April 22, 2008 – Primary Election
- May 20, 2008 – Act 1 Deadline to adopt 2008-09 proposed final budget
- June 17, 2008 – Adopt a 2008-09 Final Operating Budget

Mr. Paradise reviewed with Board members the following:

- Current Enrollment, Enrollment Projections for 2008-09
- Summary of Certified and Administrative Staff Positions
- Summary of Support Staff positions

Mr. Paradise noted that this is a budget development process that does not begin for another six months from today. An enormous amount of assumptions are being made at this time and the data is very rough. It provides the Board with an early view of the budget providing time to do something about same.

Mr. Paradise explained to Board members that the budget consists of Revenues and Expenditures. 77.9% of the budget is from local revenues which is mostly real estate taxes. Interim Real Estate Taxes, Public Utility Realty Tax, Real Estate Transfer Taxes, Delinquencies on Taxes Levied Assessed by District and Investment Income are negatively affected. The real estate decline issue is affecting Neshaminy. The national economy has an affect on the School District. Mr. Paradise reviewed the General Fund Expenditures: Instructional Programs, Support Services, Non-Instructional Programs, Facility Improvement Services, and Other Financing.

Mr. Paradise advised that in the past few years the budget has been exceeding the Revenues and the Board has opted to tap into the Fund Balance rather than increase taxes even further. Savings are beginning to be spent.

Mr. Paradise directed Board members to page 95 of the document which provided the Reconciliation as of December 11, 2007.

• Excess of Expenditures over Revenues	\$15M
• Appropriate Fund Balance (Same as Current Year)	\$7M
• Excess of Expenditures over Revenues after fund balance	\$8M
• Value of 1 Mill of Real Estate Tax Levy	\$774,779
• Required Additional Mills to Fund Increase	10.6

Mr. Paradise noted that Act 1 provides provisions for Special Education, Maintenance of AIE per ADM and Maintenance of Selected Revenue. Mr. Paradise has summarized the referendum exceptions for Board members review.

Mr. Paradise advised Board members that if there was any good news in the budget document it was not likely that the district would need to take the budget to referendum in the Primary Election according to the current figures.

Mr. Paradise also provided to Board members in the budget document a section entitled School Finance 101 which would help explain much of the terminology and funds available to the district.

Mr. Koziol inquired that if the average property was assessed at \$27,080 what would the tax increase be? Mr. Paradise stated that it would be approximately 10.6 mills or \$287.00 increase. Dr. Spitz noted that this is at a very early stage and many items have been overestimated in expenditures and very conservative with the revenues. Dr. Spitz noted that this Board is not approving anything close to this. This is simply a requirement by the State to present a Preliminary Budget. Dr. Spitz did note that the Board has a lot of work to do in order to get the budget more manageable.

Mr. Webb noted that the district is losing investment income, transfer taxes since real estate sales are down, and the total income has declined. The district continues to spend money, however, expenses are not being cut. Mr. Webb would like to see things happen with what has been discussed regarding Tawanka, Neshaminy Middle, modulars, etc.

Mr. Koziol noted that the following issues could help with budgetary development

- Closing of Tawanka
- Elimination of Lead Teachers

- Teacher and Department Head Restructuring
- Reducing Administrative Staff
- Class Sizes
- Closing of Middle School
- Removal of modulars

Further, Mr. Koziol advised that the average spending per pupil based on 2005-06 for Neshaminy was \$13,270 which was 15th in the State out of 501 districts. This was based on a study by the Augenblick report called "Costing Out the Resources" and it was estimated per pupil for that time period and other variables should have been approximately \$11,710. Neshaminy overspent \$1,560 per student.

Mr. Kadri would appreciate speaking with the Board regarding opportunities to look at cost structures and discuss ideas and address specific issues. Mr. Kadri stated that he is interested in speaking with the Board in Executive Session regarding data which is available and could be possibly applied to the Neshaminy District.

b) Brief Update on the High School Construction

Mr. Paradise advised that on Tuesday, January 8, 2008 Main Street and the G Wing will be open to students and staff. On Monday, January 7, 2008 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. an Open House will take place for tours of the facility. Also, the high school video club will be taping a tour which will be shown on Neshaminy T.V. Also, the additional PlanCon documents submitted have been given a very receptive response and the additional subsidies should hopefully be awarded by the State.

6. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Kadri wished everyone in the district and community a safe holiday and happy, healthy New Year. Mr. Kadri stressed the necessity for students to act responsibly during the holiday season.

7. Future Topics

None.

8. Other Board Business

Mr. O'Connor stated that at the last meeting he suggested drafting policy or moving to committee to discuss precluding the solicitor from making campaign contributions. Mr. O'Connor stated that this is not intended to slight any one person. Campaign donations however bring a certain type of perception and this could perhaps help the district and manage that negative perception.

Mr. Eccles stated that rather than just look at the solicitor, union contributions, PAC money, etc. which has been contributed to various parties in this district be looked into. Mr. Eccles does not just want to alienate the solicitor. People are working in our district, on the construction project, that have donated PAC money to various campaigns. Mr. Eccles recommends looking into all the issues, not just the solicitor.

There was Board consensus to move this issue to committee.

Mr. Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mills, Langhorne, PA, congratulated the new members of the Board. Mr. Dickler stated that it has never been the intention of any members of the audience to disturb the education of this children. If anything, we feel that all day kindergarten would help to benefit and expand the learning possibilities and giving them a running start. However, on the other side, month after month, total waste has been pointed out by Mr. Basen, the district has admitted to the waste, and yet nothing gets done. The preliminary document took many hours of preparation, but yet the same type of effort does not seem to be applied to getting rid of the waste so that it is not necessary for tax increases. Mr. Dickler urged

the Board to finally address the situation of the modulars, Tawanka, closing of a Middle School, etc. and come to some solutions so the money can be put to where it is needed to finally bring the school averages and scores back up to where Neshaminy once was and it does not have to be throwing money away.

9. Adjournment

Mr. O'Connor moved that the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Webb seconded same. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary