

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
March 9, 2010

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on March 9, 2010, in the Theodore Kloos Auditorium at Neshaminy High School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President
Ms. Irene Boyle
Mr. Scott E. Congdon
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Richard M. Eccles
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. William D. O'Connor
Mr. William Oettinger

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan
Mrs. Patricia Boylan
Mr. Kevin Kane

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS: Approximately 70 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

1. Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:00 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

Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, opened his remarks by expressing his appreciation to Mr. Paradise for answering his questions regarding the budget process. Mr. Rodos further reiterated his concerns about the educational needs of the students of Neshaminy School District.

Larry Pastor, Business Executive and Chair of Taxpayers for a Fair Neshaminy Budget, Langhorne, requested that the Board consider a resolution to support the strike free education pact, which are House Bills 1369 and 2092. Mr. Pastor expressed his opinion that if the Neshaminy School Board would join the neighboring School Boards of Pennsbury and Bensalem with their support it would communicate the seriousness of their intensions to the community and unions. Mr. Pastor stated that he feels that it is possible for the Board to achieve a zero increase for the budget.

5. Items for Discussion

a) Budget Development

Mr. Paradise opened his comments stating that the district is projecting a 7.6 million dollar deficit for the 2010 -2011 coming year. Mr. Paradise reviewed 28 budget cut items for the Board to take under consideration.

Mr. O'Connor asked if several items from last year that are not included on the current list have been accomplished. Mr. O'Connor specified that the items in question are low enrollment course offering at

the secondary level, place all district and school publications on line, and cut training courses and conferences that are not contractually binding to the district. Dr. Muenker stated that a cap of 20 students as the minimum number per class is in place. Dr. Muenker confirmed that the district's efforts to place publications on line are a work in progress. Dr. Muenker also confirmed that the district has limited the conferences and training sessions that involve travel.

Mr. Eccles inquired if there was any input from certified staff on the proposed cuts.

Dr. Muenker replied that they have not received any formal comments from the certified staff; however, there is a window of opportunity opened through email.

Mr. Eccles made a motion to ask the certified staff, support union, and administrators to offer suggestions to help with the 7.6 deficit. Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Mr. O'Connor suggested that the Board review several particular budget cut items. The items mentioned were, the middle school instructional opportunity period, eliminate reading specialists, eliminate elementary guidance counselors, and the creation of activity fees.

Dr. Muenker replied that on the issue of eliminating elementary guidance counselors, there is a presentation on March 25th, at the facilities and finance meeting to talk about their roll and responsibilities as elementary guidance counselors. Dr. Muenker also mentioned that he has been spending time looking at the question of activity fees and trying to draft an equitable proposal.

Mr. O'Connor suggested anyone making a presentation before a committee on what it is that they do, talk about how it is that they measure success.

Mr. Paradise stated that on March 24th, the Finance and Facilities Committee will be making three presentations. The presentations will consist of the elementary guidance counselors, the Executive Director of the IU will talk about the services they provide and the cost, and also there will be a presentation of the middle school instructional opportunity period. Mr. Paradise encouraged all Board members to attend that meeting.

Mr. Morris asked if there could be some clarification on item number nine.

Mr. Paradise replied that Neshaminy runs an alternative school located on the campus grounds of the high school. He also stated that those costs run around \$900,000 or \$1 million dollars approximately. Mr. Paradise stated that the suggestion was made to contract those services out with an existing alternative school.

Mr. Morris inquired if the students of the alternative school were students on probation or problem students.

Dr. Muenker stated that these are students who typically get lost in the configuration currently at the high school. They are typically deficient in academics and have some behavioral components. There are 52 students currently enrolled in the alternative program.

Mr. Congdon requested attendance records on the students currently enrolled in the alternative school. He also asked for clarification regarding the amount of estimated savings stated in the 2010 - 2011 Potential Budget Reduction Report.

Mr. Paradise replied that the \$967,000 was the gross cost and \$425,000 is the net savings.

Mr. O'Connor mentioned that there was a savings from the high school construction project included in the net amount. He also commented how important the alternative program is to the Neshaminy students who are in need of these services. Mr. O'Connor also stated that the alternative program is highly successful and Mrs. Holland can provide numerous testimonials to the effectiveness of the program.

Mrs. Cummings questioned how sophomore physical education could be eliminated if it was a requirement for graduation.

Dr. Muenker replied that the physical education program in the Neshaminy School District provides more than the necessary requirement for graduation, so a partial elimination would still be possible.

Mrs. Cummings asked if this means the physical education program would be eliminated for the whole school year.

Dr. Muenker stated that it does not necessarily mean a full year; however, there is an opportunity for some cuts to be considered.

Mr. Paradise clarified that the suggestions of the proposed budget reduction report are merely suggestions to be explored.

Mrs. Cummings inquired as to how many participants are involved in the high school co-op program and what the savings is for this program to the district.

Dr. Muenker replied that he did not have the specific information to answer the question at this time.

Mr. Webb remarked that reducing the budget is a very important endeavor and the Board welcomes any further ideas or suggestions for reducing the budget from the community.

b) Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

Mr. Paradise explained that the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report of the Neshaminy School District is brought to the Board as an informational item. Mr. Paradise stated that the report is divided into three sections, introduction, financials, and statistics. The information is presented in a manner that fairly represents the fiscal soundness of the District.

6. Items for Approval at the March 23, 2010 Public Board Meeting

a) Summer School Programs for 2010 – Dr. Rattigan

Dr. Rattigan advised the Board on the following summer school programs for 2010.

- 1) Secondary Summer School (for students in grades 6-12) will offer accelerated or enrichment courses and also make-up courses. The dates are as follows, July 6, 2010 to August 6, 2010.
- 2) Summer Fine Arts Program (for students in grades K-12) will consist of art, dance, instrumental music and summer stock. The dates are as follows, art and instrumental will be held from July 6, 2010 through July 30th. Summer Stock will be held July 6, 2010 through July 31st and evening performances from July 28th through July 31st.
- 3) Elementary math and reading camp (for students in grades 3, 4, and 5) who meet established criteria. The dates are as follows, July 6, 2010 to August 6, 2010.

b) Approval of Revised Board Policies – Dr. Rattigan

Dr. Rattigan advised the Board on the following policies.

- 1) Policy 500 – Non-resident Students

The change in this policy is to accommodate seniors who move after the start of the second semester.

2) Policy 518 – Child Abuse Reporting

These changes are required by law under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.

c) **Proposed School Calendar for 2010 – 2011**

Dr. Muenker provided the proposed school calendar for the 2010 – 2011 school year to the Board. Dr. Muenker asked the Board members to review same prior to the next Public Board meeting at which time they will be asked to approve same.

Mrs. Cummings inquired if a date for graduation 2010 will be set for the next public meeting.

Dr. Muenker confirmed there will be a date set for graduation 2010, and also any make up plans for snow days that the district has encountered.

Mr. Webb stated that the proposed school calendar for 2010 -2011 will be an agenda item for the next public board meeting.

d) **Bids/Budget Transfers**

Mr. Paradise informed the Board that there are no bids and one Budget Transfer Report. The Budget Transfer report is Working Copy No. 10-4, with three transactions and sub transactions, will be presented to the Board for approval at the March 23rd Public Board Meeting.

7. **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- Everitt Elementary School collected over \$2,500 to help the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society fight childhood cancers.
- Herbert Hoover Elementary School presented a check in the amount of \$1,973.07 to the American Red Cross in support of the Haitian Earthquake Relief Fund.
- Walter Miller Elementary School will be hosting "Book Chats" in the month of March and April. Students in grades 1 through 5 will read a book, design a bookmark, and then join the Principal for lunch and "chat" about the book.
- Carl Sandburg presents: "Guess What I Did Last Summer." The dates are March 10th, 11th, and 12th, at 7:00 p.m., and March 13th at 1:00 p.m. Tickets are \$6.00 for adults and \$5.00 for students and seniors.
- Congratulation to Maple Point Middle School for their presentation of "Aladdin Junior" and also to the Neshaminy High School Drama Club for their comedy show, "Laughing Stock."

8. **Committee Reports**

a) **Board Policies**

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that at the next Board Policy meeting they will be discussing medical screening for athletes and qualifications for coaches in CPR. The exact date of the meeting will be posted on Neshaminy's website.

b) **Educational Development**

Mr. O'Connor informed the Board that on February 22nd, at the Educational Development Meeting there were two presentations. The first was on a pilot program for prevention curriculum, called "Too Good for Drugs." The second presentation was a report on the standards aligned system, which is a resource the state provides to teachers to aide them in enhancing student academic achievement. There were also ongoing discussions between Dr. Muenker and Dr. Heble involving computing labs at the elementary level. The next meeting is scheduled for March 22nd.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Webb stated that the next meeting will be held on March 24th at 7 p.m.

d) IU Board

Mrs. Cummings advised the Board that at the last IU meeting there was a presentation on the Safari Montage. The Bucks County Intermediate Unit, IMT division, coordinated the statewide purchase of Safari Montage digital media and video on demand content for every public school student in Pennsylvania. The next meeting will be held on March 15th, where there will be discussions on the motion that was made at the last meeting.

e) Education Foundation

Dr. Muenker informed the Board that there was \$11,000 awarded in grants to 15 participants. There is a Spring Phillies Basket being raffled to raise revenue. For tickets contact Dr. Muenker's office.

f) Technical School

Mr. Koutsouradis advised the Board that on February 22nd, the technical school recognized their own 35 gold medal winners from the skilled USA Competition. Students collected over \$2,000 for the Haiti Relief Fund. The committee is still in the process of working out the final budget. The next meeting will be held on March 22nd at 7:30.

g) Technology

Mr. Congdon stated that they are currently working on setting up their next meeting.

9. Public Comment

Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he takes exception to the topic discussed at the present meeting regarding the strike free education pact. Mr. Rodos further conveyed his opposition to the items listed for review in reducing the budget. He mentioned that the Board can find \$7 million dollars worth of cuts on the Neshaminy website. He also stated that he disagrees with the suggestion of closing alternative schools and contracting out services.

Mr. Webb countered that if Mr. Rodos will kindly show him the budget cut items on the Neshaminy website to which he is referring; Mr. Webb will gladly share this information with the Board.

Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, expressed his appreciation for the hard work and extraordinary efforts that the Board puts forth. He also encouraged individuals making public comment to offer suggestions and proposals for reducing the deficit instead of just voicing their criticisms.

Howard Lindner, Langhorne, PA, expressed his support for the Board and for their sensitivity towards the best interest of the Neshaminy students. He also stated that it is imperative that the teacher's union seriously considers an expedient settlement; otherwise, the alternative may be the loss of jobs.

10. Future Topics

None

11. Agenda Development for the March 23, 2010 Public Board Meeting

None

12. Other Board Business

Mrs. Cummings applauded the teachers and students involved in organizing a successful gym night.

Mr. Koutsouradis praised the cast of "Aladdin Junior" for an outstanding performance.

Mr. Congdon articulated his displeasure over disparaging remarks made towards the Board during public comment. He expressed his assurance that every member of the Board has the best interest of the students, staff, and schools at all times. He also complimented the professionalism of the staff at the Lower Southampton Elementary School during his recent visit.

Mr. Morris declared his displeasure regarding the public statement that Neshaminy students are not represented at the public meetings. Mr. Morris said that he is not only a School Board member, but also a Neshaminy parent and every member of the Board is attentive to the well being of the students.

Dr. Muenker acknowledged his appreciation for the staff and support staff for their cooperation with the gym night activities.

Mr. Eccles cited examples for several newspaper articles explaining that at times it is necessary for staff to sacrifice in order to retain their jobs. Mr. Eccles suggested that all parties concerned should review these articles as they are very informative and enlightening.

Mr. Webb inquired if there was any further information on the matter of the 19 percent increase on health insurance.

Dr. Muenker replied that to date there has been no progress regarding a change in the increase; however the newly appointed broker is aware of the importance of the matter.

Mr. Webb asked if there is a time limit in which an answer can be expected.

Dr. Muenker answered he will further check with Mrs. Boylan on that matter.

13. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Koutsouradis moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Mr. Eccles seconded it. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary