

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
June 7, 2011

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on June 7, 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
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President
Ms. Irene Boyle
Mr. Scott E. Congdon
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Richard M. Eccles
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. William Oettinger

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan
Dr. Geeta Heble
Mr. Kevin Kane
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. William D. O'Connor

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 7:06 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

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

3. Announcements

Mr. Webb announced that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held where personnel and contract issues were discussed.

4. Public Comment

Mark Schmidt, health and physical education teacher at Neshaminy High School and head football coach, Ambler, PA, declared that he has always admired the Neshaminy School District, because he felt they put the students first and his goal was to coach at Neshaminy. Mr. Schmidt said that he has noticed that there has been somewhat of a change in the "kid's first attitude" over the past few years. He said that he hopes that there will be a reconsideration to eliminate 10th grade physical education because it will be very detrimental to the students.

Jane Gibbons, teacher for 18 years, Langhorne, stated that she is speaking as a homeowner and concerned taxpayer voicing her concern for the resale value of property in Middletown Township. She stated that a decrease in activity due to program cuts of 10th grade PE and after school programs students are three times more likely to skip school and experiment with drugs. Ms. Gibbons added that future homebuyers will not consider purchasing homes in the district if families are not offered what they need in the schools. Ms. Gibbons concluded by asking the Board to seriously consider the impact that this decision will have on the value of homes, the health and safety of students, and the loss of Neshaminy's reputation.

Amy Geruc, Health and Physical Education Chairperson at Neshaminy High School, Fairless Hills, stated that the gym night tradition will be affected drastically by the elimination of 10th grade physical education. She also stated that gym night educates the whole student physically, educationally, and emotionally. Ms.

Geruc concluded by asking the Board to consider the impact their decision will have on one of Neshaminy's oldest and finest traditions - gym night.

Jeff Dunkley, elected officer of the NFT and Neshaminy school teacher, Feasterville, said he was disappointed that the Board did not accept either of the two proposed meeting dates in May. Mr. Dunkley said that the NFT was also disappointed that the recent offer, which included a contribution to healthcare, was not met with at least a counteroffer. Mr. Dunkley concluded by saying that no settlement will ever be reached until both sides return to the bargaining table.

Holly Madison, director of audio visual at Bucks County Community College, Levittown, expressed her concern over the parking situation over at Walter Miller Elementary School stating that a recent Township ordinance prohibits parking on Cobalt Drive South. Ms. Madison stated that it is a dangerous situation for students who are walkers. Ms. Madison appealed to the Board to suggest a viable solution.

Mr. Webb suggested Ms. Madison speak to Mr. Minotti on that matter.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired, Laurel Oaks, expressed his concern that a recent function that he attended honoring 8th grade honor roll students was completely officiated by only the teachers and no administrators. He questioned who is actually in charge of the schools. Additionally, Mr. Alfonso questioned why the teaching staff continues to wear the blue NFT t-shirts and asked the Board to comment when a dress code will be implemented. Mr. Alfonso agreed that he is also concerned about property value; however, he stated that the reason is because, the schools no longer have top ranking and property taxes are exorbitantly high.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, stated that while he thinks that charter schools are a good concept because they offer parents educational choices; however, the applying charter school has fallen short in displaying a real commitment to the area and establishing community support. Therefore, at this time he is undecided about a charter school in Neshaminy because there are too many unanswered questions.

Larry Pastor, business executive, Middletown, opened his comments by stating that the recent NFT offer does not present any savings to the district, but rather would cost the district more money. He mentioned the "me too" clause in the administrators and support staff contracts, which would actually raise cost to the district by decreasing their health contribution from 15% to 8% and changing their healthcare plan to a more expensive one. Mr. Pastor said that the other demands that the NFT has put on the table such as retro pay, non merit based pay increases with steps, retirement healthcare, retirement incentive, and longevity pay in addition to healthcare will result, not in savings for the district, but in costing the district more money.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flowers Mill, said that the NFT and the School Board should enter into a brand-new contract starting from scratch. Mr. Rodos suggested that a clause be inserted into the contract stating that the contract is subordinate to the Pennsylvania Law. Mr. Rodos concluded by stating that he applauds the hard work of the teachers but says it should be understood that the taxpayers are not responsible for the current situation and the teachers must understand that sometimes it is necessary to take a step back in order to move forward.

5. Items for Approval Tonight

a) Approval of suspension (furlough and demotion of certified staff)

Mr. Webb presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, The Board of School Directors directed the Superintendent, the Business Administrator and such other members of the School District's Administration team who the Superintendent deemed necessary to undertake various studies related to program requirements, staffing capacities and needs; and

WHEREAS, the School District Officials did conduct such studies and prepared for consideration by the Board, a plan detailing such findings and recommendations to these matters; and

WHEREAS, the Board hereby concurs with the Superintendent's recommendations and authorizes the Superintendent to undertake such measures as are necessary and prudent in order to obtain approval from the Department of Public Instruction of the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the recommended courses of action and to undertake such other actions as are necessary to advance the purposes of this resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors concurs with the recommendation of the Superintendent to curtail or alter the educational programs in the School District, which will affect a change in the School District's organization.

The Board hereby authorizes the Superintendent of the School District to seek approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to reduce professional staff to meet the circumstances outlined above.

Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

The Board approved said motion by a vote of eight ayes, and zero nays. (Mr. O'Connor was not present.)

Mr. Webb announced that Mr. O'Connor was not present due to work.

6. Items for Approval at the June 21, 2011 Public Board Meeting

a) Approval of Budgetary Increase for Federal & Other Programs (2010-2011)

Mrs. Markowitz advised the Board that there would be a motion at the end of the month Public Board Meeting to modify the current year budget for all of those programs.

Mr. Webb stated that this will be an agenda item at the June 21st Public Board Meeting.

b) Facilities Professional Services/Consultants for 2011-2012

Mrs. Markowitz advised the Board that approval will be sought at the Public Board Meeting on June 21st, for the Facilities Professional Service/Consultants for 2011-2012.

Mr. Koutsouradis asked Mrs. Markowitz when the latest bids were submitted for these items in order to confirm that the district is getting the best price.

Mrs. Markowitz responded that they are either annually or every three years depending on the contract and the district does seek quotes.

Mr. Webb stated that this will be an agenda item at the June 21st Public Board Meeting.

c) 2011-2012 Bucks County Technical High School Budget

Dr. Muenker informed the Board that approval would be sought at the Public Board Meeting on June 21st for the 2011-2012 Bucks County Technical School Budget. Dr. Muenker also noted that Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. Eccles, and Mr. Morris were instrumental in providing the budget recommendations for the Bucks County Technical High School.

Dr. Muenker stated that this will be an agenda item at the June 21st Public Board Meeting.

d) Calendar Addendum for Act 80 Day Reporting

Dr. Muenker advised the Board that approval would be sought at the Public Board Meeting on June 21st required by Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Mr. Webb stated that this will be an agenda item at the June 21st Public Board Meeting.

e) Appointment of Auditor

Mrs. Markowitz informed the Board that approval would be sought at the Public Board Meeting on June 21st for the renewal of a three year contract, keeping their fee the same for the first year and a \$500 increase for the second and third year.

Mr. Webb asked if the district obtains any other quotes.

Mrs. Markowitz stated that they have been the district's auditors for the past four years and four years ago they did obtain quotes.

Mr. Webb advised that it may be beneficial to get other quotes.

Mr. Webb stated that this will be an agenda item at the June 21st Public Board Meeting.

f) Approval of Year End Budget Transfers

Mrs. Markowitz advised that the Board will be asked to approve the year end budget transfers at the June 21st meeting in accordance with the Auditor General's Office.

g) Proposed Fee Increases for 2011-2012

Mrs. Markowitz advised the Board on the Proposed Fee Increases for 2011-2012 as follows:

- A \$10 fee increase for the high school student parking fee from \$35 to \$45 a year.

Mr. Morris asked what the purpose was for the \$10 fee increase.

Dr. Muenker stated that the \$10 fee increase was one of many items recommended for the budget cost savings measure.

Mr. Congdon asked how many parking permits are sold each year.

Dr. Muenker stated it is approximately 250.

Mr. Morris asked how many students are in the senior class and if there is a waiting list.

Dr. Muenker stated there are 700 seniors and there is a waiting list and it is a privilege.

Mr. Morris asked if there is property registration information and insurance for the vehicles.

Dr. Muenker stated that it is all part of the application process.

Mr. Webb stated that this will be an agenda item at the June 21st Public Board Meeting.

h) Homestead and Farmstead Exclusion Resolution

Mrs. Markowitz provided to the Board a draft resolution, which will be brought for approval at the June 21st meeting.

Mr. Webb noted that this money goes directly to the taxpayers in a form of a reduction in their taxes.

Mr. Webb stated that this will be an agenda item at the June 21st Public Board Meeting.

i) Local, State and National Contract Participation Authorization for 2011-2012

Mrs. Markowitz advised the Board that there will be a motion made at the June 21st meeting for the approval of the Local, State and National Contract Participation Authorization for 2011-2012.

j) Approval of Fund Balance Commitment for PSERS

Mrs. Markowitz advised that the Board must approve a motion before year end if any fund balance will be committed.

Mr. Webb stated that PSERS has some major increases and the district is trying to put money away, if possible, to offset some of those increases.

k) Bids/Budget Transfers

Mrs. Markowitz advised the Board on the following:

Budget Transfer Report - 11-5

Description: To close summer school accounts

Mrs. Markowitz stated that Budget Transfer 11-5 will be presented at the June 21st Public Board Meeting for approval.

Mr. Koutsouradis asked what the increase to PSERS might be.

Dr. Muenker explained that double digit increases are a possibility, so money was set aside last spring in anticipation and additional funds will be considered.

l) Adoption of the 2011-2012 Budget

Dr. Muenker stated that at the June 21st Public Board Meeting the Board would be required to adopt a balanced budget in accordance with the State Law. The budget is presently at a \$2.8 million dollar deficit and the district is patiently waiting for any relief that still may come from Harrisburg.

7. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker presented the following information to the Board:

- Due to excessive heat there will be an early dismissal for the district's non-air conditioned schools on Wednesday, June 8th, and Thursday, June 9th.
- Graduation date is set for June 8th, at 6:30 p.m.
- Any updates can be found on the district's website.

Mr. Congdon asked if early dismissal was just for the students.

Dr. Muenker stated that any early dismissals due to weather the staff is permitted to leave once their students are safely dismissed from their classroom duties.

Mr. Webb clarified that the \$2.8 million dollar budget gap is a worst case scenario at this point. There are still some pending issues. Additionally, the budget is a moving document and it will continue to move up until June 21st.

8. Committee Reports

a) Board Policies

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that the next meeting will be scheduled in the fall and the first item on the agenda will be the dress code for the staff.

b) Educational Development

Dr. Muenker informed the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 13th, at 6:30 p.m.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Webb advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 15th, at 7:00 p.m., in the boardroom and the agenda consist of ways to save money and any additional budget issues.

d) IU Board

Mr. Eccles advised the Board that there was no update.

Mr. Congdon asked if there was an agenda for the Finance and Facilities Meeting. Mr. Webb said the discussion with future possible brokers will include comparison of services, what their commission rate will be, how their services would be good if not better, and what ideas they would recommend.

Mr. Congdon asked how many candidates were invited to attend the meeting.

Mrs. Markowitz stated there were eleven candidates invited.

e) Education Foundation

Dr. Muenker announced to the Board that they have had a successful year through fundraising that enabled the district to support graduating seniors interested in perusing a career in education. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 13th.

f) Technical School

Mr. Koutsouradis informed the Board that at their last meeting fourteen students were honored who are going to compete in the National Skills U.S.A. Competition. The Bucks County Technical School was the only technical school in Bucks County to go to nationals this year. He also noted that the insurance consultant, the Racine Group, came out to speak about different money saving ideas, such as, being a consortium with other districts for more buying power and also self funding. Mr. Koutsouradis noted that the Technical School Budget was passed, which will be voting back here at Neshaminy on June 21st. He stated that graduation date is set for June 15th, at the Sun Bank Arena in Trenton.

g) Technology

Mr. Congdon advised the Board that they are in the process of rescheduling the May 31st meeting.

9. Public Comment

Scott Bennett, business owner, Levittown, expressed his disappointment at seeing the teachers wearing the blue union t-shirts at his daughter's recent field day. Mr. Bennett said that if students must abide by a certain dress code then the same should be true for the teachers. He said that he is appalled that the union leaders are willing to see programs cut in order to save their own benefits. Mr. Bennett concluded by stating that he does not think the teachers deserve a salary increase or "bump up" according to the performance that they have displayed.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired, Laurel Oaks, Langhorne, reiterated his previous comments regarding the inappropriateness of the NFT members wearing union t-shirts at school functions. Mr. Alfonso also declared that he was offended by NFT members using students to support an NFT position when the students spoke at recent School Board meetings. He said that while he does respect the rights of students to speak on behalf of their cause, he does not approve of teachers using the students for their own agendas.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, suggested the implementation of a monthly newsletter to keep the public informed of important issues. Mr. Pirritano said that a well informed public is important to the district and the School Board in order to dispel rumors, misinformation, and harmful propaganda.

Larry Pastor, business executive, Middletown, agreed that a monthly newsletter is an excellent idea to keep the community well informed. Mr. Pastor said that the NFT's offer did not save the school district any money whatsoever. He advised the Board that the offer should be rejected and the current CBA should be rewritten. Mr. Pastor said that the demand for retro pay is totally out of the question. Mr. Pastor concluded by stating that over the past decade the current contract has overpaid by \$100 million dollars in salary and benefits over and above what the neighboring school districts paid to their teachers unions. Mr. Pastor declared that the Neshaminy taxpayers should not have any tax increase considering the tax burden that they have shouldered over the past ten years.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flowers Mill, asked the Board if they would announce the members of the public that were chosen to participate in the Contract Advisory Board. Additionally, he asked if the decision regarding the charter school will be announced soon. Mr. Rodos voiced his concern regarding various disparaging remarks about the school district and the teachers that have been made during school board meetings. Mr. Rodos said that these remarks have never been challenged for source material or accuracy, which is something the Board should be doing.

Solis Basin, retired, Langhorne, defended the Board regarding comments made about keeping the public informed, stating that there is a website, newspaper articles regarding meetings and televised Board meetings. He concluded by saying that it is the duty of the public to attend meetings in order to keep themselves informed.

10. Future Topics

None

11. Agenda Development of the June 21, 2011 Public Board Meeting

None

12. Other Board Business

Mr. Congdon stated that he takes exception to a comment made that students are not a top priority in the Neshaminy School District. He intends to attend the 2011 graduation ceremony and hopes to see the teachers there as well. Mr. Congdon said that while he does not want to see the 10th grade physical education program cut, he does not think that property values will be affected by this action. He stated that the School Board made a fair offer to the NFT and he does not understand why they would not have accepted it.

Mr. Morris asked what kind of revenue Gym Night produced.

Mr. Webb stated that gym night cost the district \$28,000 and \$17,562 was paid out in salaries and the district took a loss of \$8,900. He also stated that if the 10th grade physical education program were to be cut, Gym Night would not be altered in any way.

Mr. Morris inquired if the NFT set up a negotiations meeting in June.

Mr. Webb stated that the mediator suggested two dates in May, which unfortunately could not be met due to conflicting work schedules. He also noted that two dates were accepted in June.

Mr. Morris asked if an analysis is being done of the NFT's May 31st offer to the Board.

Mr. Webb responded that an analysis will be forthcoming, but it will take several days due to the year end budget workload.

Mr. Morris informed the public that the NFT did not show a savings of \$2.8 million dollars or the 16% savings that they claim. He stated that the Board is doing everything possible to keep the programs intact. He suggested that the NFT should make an offer that is responsible. Mr. Morris said he believes that the CBA should be rewritten completely. He apologized to the parent who was offended by the inappropriate dress code at a recent school function by the NFT members. Mr. Morris said that the School Board would be interested in any information regarding nonresidents attending Neshaminy School District.

Mrs. Cummings asked if the members chosen for the Advisory board will be posted on the website.

Mr. Webb stated that the individuals selected for the Advisory Board requested that their identities not be released to the public due to fear of retaliation to their children.

13. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Eccles moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:38 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary