

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania  
  
PUBLIC BOARD MEETING  
PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
September 8, 2009

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on September 8, 2009, in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President  
Mr. Joseph Blasch  
Ms. Irene M. Boyle  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Frank J. Koziol  
Mr. William D. O'Connor  
Dr. William H. Spitz

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Mrs. Patricia Boylan  
Dr. Geeta A. Heble  
Mr. Kevin Kane  
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

**BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:**

Mr. Richard M. Eccles  
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis

**OTHERS:** Approximately 55 persons from the public, staff and press

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Anita E. Walls

**SOLICITOR:**

Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

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**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**

Mr. Webb announced that Mr. Eccles is not present this evening due to work commitments and Mr. Koutsouradis is on vacation.

**4. Public Comment**

Mr. Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is retired and thanked Mr. Minotti and his crew for the magnificent job they performed since the last time everyone was in attendance.

Mrs. Carolyn Spina, Levittown, PA, stated that she is a mother and homemaker. Mrs. Spina stated that everyone knew that this school year was going to have many changes and cuts were unavoidable. Not all the changes were executed in the best way and with regards to her elementary school specialists will be shared. All three specialist have a two two day spit. How will this affect the planning of the concerts, art show, field day and the other events that the specialist teachers planned? Will they have special planning time to figure out the logistics for labor intensive events? Events which are proven to increase test scores and create better citizens for the future or will this fall on a teacher who has no real office except for their car because they need to share space with another person. Teachers will have half a school or quarter a school depending on the time spent. Mrs. Spina has witnessed the amount of work necessary for these special events. How will this happen? Were the specialists asked about how to make this something doable in the schools? The children will be the ones to suffer because of same. Elementary schools no longer have computer technicians. This is necessary and the future is in computer knowledge. It will be in every facet of life. Technology will not get used and this will pose a problem. Everyone needs to give the greatest effort that they can give. That includes the administration and board. You owe my children that

and you owe everyone's children that and you owe the community. Who are children are will be our community. This is our future. This is an emergency. We need to step up and every school needs volunteers, more and more. Senior citizens and SAGE volunteers can use what you have done in your life and talents. Parents and community leaders and business owners can get involved. Mrs. Spina knows that Central Bucks and Council Rock have community groups that write grants to find monies for their schools and they run the requirements for the grants. Professionals are helping and filling the gaps. The promise of the community brings the promise of the administration and board when, not if, when we are able to give us back our specialist teachers for five days. Give us back the programs. Once something is cut, it is really hard to get it back. That is something that can be a question.

Mr. Larry Pastor, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is a business executive and is delighted to be back for a new season. Mr. Pastor thanked all board members for the work done on the budget and it was done prudently and effectively without gutting the programs that are near and dear to the people of Neshaminy. Mr. Pastor thanked Dr. Muenker and Mr. Webb for the handling of the President's address to students in the district. It was responsible and professional. It was a voluntary exercise and should not have been forced. The address was not the key issue with the address but the accompanying workbook and materials that asked students to write what inspired them about President Obama and how they could help President Obama. It is the teacher and parents responsibility to have a relationship with children. It is fully understandable that some district's banned the broadcast. Neshaminy handled it the correct way. It should have been offered in an auditorium with a select to, not a select not to, by the students.

Dr. Muenker advised that a variety of different set ups based on the interest in each of the schools. Sandburg had the entire school view the President. The majority of the classrooms which have T.V.s had the President's speech on during that time. Approximately two or three students chose not to view same. Some of the elementary schools had the fourth and fifth grade only participate. Options were provided to each of the educators. There was a brief narrative from the US Department of Education and a brief narrative from the PA Department of Education talking about the opportunity for the President to provide a national speech to motivate our children. This seemed very positive to motive children to achieve and do well and minimize potential drop outs. An opt out was given to parents.

Mr. Pastor stated that in 1991 the liberal bias to the National Education Association led the charge in the United States against Bush One speaking to the children. In 1991 it was not a direct address into the classroom. It was televised. Obama's speech was supported very enthusiastically.

Mr. Pastor stated that the Board needs to have a very detailed strategic plan that is executed over the next twelve months and that the work that began in May and June to finalize the 2009-2010 budget should be occurring as we speak. Task force is being formed to look at the closure of a school. Pick up where you left off. The economic landscape is not going to change. There is a very deep economic down turn. There is a recession if you don't have a job, if your house is being foreclosed, if you can't pay for health care or you lost health care you have a recession. Employee health care costs are rising. The Board needs to continue to hold its ground on the contract position. It is unaffordable. Pick up on the 11 point plan that Dr. Muenker delivered in June for an additional \$7M in savings. That should be another task force formed for the 2010-2011 budget. There is funding for librarians, reading specialists, etc. that total \$4M. Look at them and scrutinize them. It is your fiduciary duty to look at the cost of support services. The cost of the NFT contract which was poorly negotiated by a prior board, that this board is trying to address, is causing an extreme burden. Cost savings are obvious, dramatic and they are lasting. Look at the support staff. Layoffs are painful. You owe it to the taxpayers to be transparent about the benefit and the cost savings of in house versus outsource services to the school district. Again, it is your fiduciary responsible. It is not something that can be hidden in a contract or negotiated in a back room. It is too obvious a place for savings. These three areas should be continued on an ongoing basis through this budget cycle, but not at the last minute. Let's pick up with the eleven points and add to them. There will be no contract settlement with the teacher's, ongoing cost of health care, the same issues will be faced that we did in the past.

On the Board's offer to the NFT Mr. Pastor considers this a more than generous and fair offer. Under the sunshine of day that offer can only be construed as incredible to the NFT and teachers. The fact that they have not accepted same for well over a year is stunning. The taxpayers in this district are behind the Board in the offer. It is reasonable, fair and it cannot be attacked. Anyone in this district in the private sector would die for 10% of what is in that current contract offer. Hold the line and no reason to negotiate. It was all given to the NFT two times, 1998 and 2002 by a wholly incompetent and irresponsible Board. You are responsible, competent and determined to do the right thing for the community. This is not just for taxpayers, it is for the community. Mr. Pastor encouraged the Board to begin the season and take to heart how to address the problems ahead.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is retired, however, he substituted at Neshaminy High School today. Mr. Rodos stated that the substitute teachers deserve a raise. We are nowhere near competitive with any other school district. Mr. Rodos stated that the student's requested that the speech by President Obama be played on the T.V. Mr. Rodos congratulated the district and staff in the continued improvement in the PSSA scores. These are results expended by the Administration and teachers. Mr. Rodos applauded the Board for addressing problem areas early in the school year. Mr. Rodos stated four areas need to be addressed:

- Transportation expenses
- I.U. expenses
- Tech School expenses
- Outside professionals

Cost of transporting students to and from schools and to other sanctioned activities is out of line with surrounding districts. After meeting with the transportation department it seems that expenses could greatly be reduced by transporting our own students to the I.U. rather than paying the I.U. to transport our students. Mr. Rodos believes the district should pursue avenues of savings by meeting with the transportation department to exchange ideas and follow their suggestions. Other school districts are taking back classes from the I.U. whenever it becomes economically feasible to do so. Mr. Rodos believes that Neshaminy should also do the same. Many millions of dollars are expended to the Tech School. The Tech School is not making adequate yearly progress. The public should be informed how this expense impacts our students and is our expenditure a worthwhile expense. Mr. Rodos does not know into which group our students are counted. Mr. Rodos stated that the Board should investigate the outside professional costs and need for their use. It is a very large and growing expense and consumes a larger part of the budget. Mr. Rodos urged the Board is reinvest the savings directly into educational programming. Mr. Rodos has intentionally not addressed savings from the hiring of outside contractors to replace the maintenance staff. Basically, first you should take care of the people that take care of you. Take care of the people that take care of the people that take care of Neshaminy School District. Mr. Rodos urged to investigate savings in the four areas mentioned before you lay off local people and perhaps cause them to loose their homes and join the ranks of those looking for work.

Mr. Rodos urged the Board to have an open house at the high school in order to showcase the facility to those homeowners who actually paid for same. Mr. Rodos urged the Board to switch the meetings to the small auditorium in the high school because the acoustics are better in the high school. Mr. Rodos provided the Board with an article from the New York Times regarding going paperless and cost savings methods which some school districts around the nation have used to cut down on paper.

Mrs. Mindy Anderson, Levittown, PA stated that she is a secretary and President of the Neshaminy Support Staff. Our association at the last Board meeting turned over approximately 200 signatures from the Neshaminy community on our behalf not to hire companies for profit to fill the jobs of the people who own homes, reside in the community and pay taxes. Mrs. Anderson provided additional signatures to the Board. Additional signatures will be forthcoming.

Mr. Solis Basen, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is retired. Mr. Basen noted that in years past the public comments were not answered by the Board or Administration. Tonight a speaker was answered by the Superintendent. Mr. Basen feels that this was wrong. A young lady spoke and her questions were not answered. In the future it should be decided whether public comments will be answered or not answer same.

**5. Items for Discussion**

**a) Update of School Opening**

Dr. Muenker reported that on September 1, 2009 students were welcomed back. Students from K-10 came back and 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade had a staggered start because of the high school opening. Dr. McGee stated that it was a wise decision to handle same in that manner. Buses are running smoothly at the high school. Extra curricular activities are up and running throughout the district. Band numbers have increased and their performance was excellent.

Dr. Muenker reminded the community regarding Back to School Nights. All begin at 7:00 p.m. and are listed on the webpage.

- Middle School – September 17<sup>th</sup>
- Elementary School – September 24<sup>th</sup>
- High School – September 30<sup>th</sup>
- Learning Center – October 15<sup>th</sup>

Dr. Muenker advised that Carl Sandburg will be celebrating National Constitution Day on September 17<sup>th</sup> with a special program for students and staff.

**6. Items for Approval on September 22, 2009 Public Board Meeting**

**a) Procurement Card program**

Dr. Muenker advised that the Board will be asked to approve a procurement card program which extends itself into the Chester County Intermediate Unit. This is an opportunity to get savings by going out to an additional intermediate unit for bids for supplies throughout the district.

**7. Superintendents Report**

Dr. Muenker advised that there were no further reports.

**8. Committee Reports**

**a) Board Policies**

Ms. Boyle advised that the meeting will be held on October 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. and discussion of the Search and Seizure Policy will be done at said meeting. Ms. Boyle requested that said meeting take place at the high school.

**b) Educational Development**

Dr. Spitz advised that the meeting is scheduled for September 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 p.m. Discussion of the PSSA results will take place. Other topics will be determined.

**c) Finance/Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised that no meeting has been scheduled for September. A meeting will take place upon Mr. Paradise's return.

**d) IU Board**

Dr. Spitz advised that a meeting will take place next week. I.U. expenses are a legitimate concern and are a potential future topic that will be discussed in educational development.

**e) Educational Foundation**

Dr. Muenker advised that the foundation will be meeting on Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup> in the Board room.

**f) Technical School**

No report.

**g) Technology**

Mr. Blasch advised that the committee did not meet this month, but a report will be supplied at the next meeting.

**9. Public Comment**

Mr. Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that the public was looking forward to announcements with regards to the teacher's contract. This is now ongoing for a year and several months. Some of the cuts which have taken place may be doing damage to the students and the main reasons the cuts are necessary is because we don't know where our future expenditures are with regards to the teaching staff. Is there any movement? Are they still that stubborn and naive to think that they can get blood from a stone.

Mr. Dan O'Connor, Senior at Neshaminy High School, thanked the Board and Administrators for allowing the students to view the President's speech today. It was very educational and he was proud that the President is talking to the students. Thank you for the choice to view same.

**10. Future Topics**

None.

**11. Agenda Development for the September 22, 2009 Public Meeting.**

**12. Other Board Business**

Mr. Blasch sat in on an orientation at the high school. Dr. McGee was very well organized. Mr. Blasch toured the new Neshaminy Learning Center. Our staff did a wonderful job in getting same prepared. The principal was very happy and it will be a good thing for the district.

Mr. O'Connor stated to Mr. Pastor's comments regarding the children opting in and opting out if that were the case not one frog would be dissected in Biology class. What we are teaching our children is critical thinking and the ability to hear different perspectives and to take in what sounds reasonable and to eject what does not. The ability to look at a problem, think outside the box, and look outside the parameters. Mr. O'Connor remembered back when Bush One wanted to speak with the kinds regarding the concerns of drug abuse and what could possibly be wrong with that. Dick Gephardt stated that this is a paid political ad at taxpayer's expense. What was the problem and personally was appalled by that behavior. These moments can inspire the children. Neshaminy has hosted a former President and the current Vice-President. It was a great opportunity for the students. They learned and grew from the experience. It was discussed around the dinner table. We should expect more from our Presidents and they should be more than elected officials. They should be leaders. All future President's should speak with the children. They are part of the country. They are the future of the country.

Mr. Koziol inquired regarding the increase in the tax credit for senior citizens and whether the Board would consider doing away with taxes on anyone over the age of ninety years old that owns their own house and pays real estate tax.

Mrs. Cummings wanted an update on the committee regarding the closure of elementary schools.

Mr. Webb commented that the teacher's union met two or three weeks ago and not much movement took place. A new date has not been rescheduled for further discussions. We remain optimistic, but at the moment there is not much to speak about.

Mr. Webb advised that an ad hoc committee will be formed to discuss the possibility of closing a school. Mr. Webb is also concerned about maintaining the budget that the district has now. The index fund last year was 4.1%. This year since prices have come down it may be 1, 1.5 or 2%. The district has no reserves. Finances are not very good at this point and time. Cuts have been necessary.

Mr. O'Connor stated that the ad hoc committee should not be referred to a building closure committee. Current enrollments and building utilizations will be discussed. If utilization is down and the district has an opportunity, then the committee will consider recommending a closure, but again it is not the intent of the committee to go find a building and close same.

Mrs. Cummings requested a time schedule for said committee. Mr. Eccles will represent Levittown and Mr. Blasch will represent Lower Southampton. All meetings will be open to the public.

Mrs. Cummings inquired when Purchasing will move to the high school facility. Mr. Minotti responded that it would be sometime in 2010 probably Easter or later. Deliveries would be timed accordingly not to interfere with students.

Dr. Spitz noted that the Act 1 index number will be published on Friday and Dr. Spitz believes that it will be higher the 1.5 to 2%.

**13. Adjournment**

Mr. Blasch moved that the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Koziol seconded same. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary