

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
(PUBLIC MEETING)
April 24, 2007

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on April 24, 2007, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President
Mr. Joseph R. Blasch
Mr. Jason Bowman
Ms. Irene M. Boyle
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Frank J. Koziol
Dr. William H. Spitz
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

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

BOARD MEMBER NOT PRESENT:

Mrs. Sue C. Barrett, Vice President

SOLICITOR:

Thomas Profy, III, Esquire

SECRETARY:

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

OTHERS: Approximately 13 persons from the public, staff and press

Call to Order

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

No announcements.

Public Comment

Mr. Solis Basen, Langhorne, PA, stated that he has spoken at many meetings and has never gotten involved politically, however, he is appalled by a few of the candidates that are distributing literature that the Board should reflect the community at large and currently there are only two persons under the age of fifty. What does that have to do with the election?

Mr. Eccles stated that he did not want Mr. Basen to proceed with his comments. Mr. Basen asked if the meeting was run under Roberts Rules. Mr. Profy stated that the meeting was run in accordance with Roberts Rules; however, the President was stating that the matter Mr. Basen was discussing was not a matter that was reasonably expected to come before the Board. Political comments are not germane to the School Board meeting and agenda.

Mr. Basen asked for a point of personal privilege. Mr. Basen wished to speak on the senior problem.

Mr. Basen stated that the School Board is comprised of people that are elected. Age has nothing to do with same. Their abilities and qualifications are the things that people vote on. Mr. Basen stated that there are 1,000 homes in Shady Brook and Flowers Mill that have over 2,000 people and the communities do not have one child in the school system. Just because it was stated that most people are over 50, does that mean that the Administration and the teachers should be fired once they turn fifty. Mr. Basen feels that this should be looked into.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Langhorne, PA, stated that the Governor's 2007/08 budget provides \$25M for school districts that choose to launch a full day kindergarten program or expand their existing full day kindergarten program. A full day kindergarten will have an additional \$25M in funding which will allow 65% of all children to benefit in that age category in the state. In addition, the Governor has stated that districts cannot continue to teach children with the tools of the past and expect them to be adequately prepared for the jobs of the future. The Governor has suggested that schools apply for the second year of the Classrooms For the Future Grants. This grant will contain \$90M for equipment and \$11M for teacher training. The Department of Education expects an additional 254 schools to join. This will be more than one-half of Pennsylvania's high schools. Mr. Rodos would prefer that Neshaminy is in the first half always of the schools taking advantage of the grants. Mr. Rodos believes that these are the types of programs that the District should apply for. Mr. Rodos stated that closing schools does not make programs better; however, it does make programs less expensive. If schools are being closed the money should be applied to programs in other schools.

Mr. William O'Connor, Langhorne, PA, stated that he has seen surfing the web a blog that contained the following: "Neshaminy School District citizens need to be aware of the Neshaminy School Board's latest tactic to try and line the school district's coffer by picking the pocket of every hard working district resident. At a recent Neshaminy School Board meeting, the current school board, in a sneaky way, voted to place a Referendum question on the May 15, 2007 election ballot asking if we, the residents of the Neshaminy School District, are in favor of paying them, school district, 1% of our wages every paycheck. The Neshaminy School Board has obviously lost any sense of upstanding, integrated vision it may have once had and is now endangering the values of homes in the school district towards a decline in resale value. Neshaminy School Board is leading district homeowners down a path of decreased home resale value. We who reside in Neshaminy School District must be sure to vote NO on May 15, 2007 and urge our neighbors to vote NO for the ballot question. Then in subsequent elections we must be sure to vote against any Neshaminy School Board member seeking re-election in retaliation for their disrespect and disregard for 1) how hard each one of us works for the money we earn and 2) for what we are already paying in taxes to the school district."

Mr. O'Connor was concerned about the fact that the writer claims the Board was very sneaky. The Board has had a tax study commission, televised meetings, board minutes, newspaper articles, etc. The Board is going to put a mailing out to the community regarding the issue. Mr. O'Connor stated that he encourages the Board to put the information forward. Mr. O'Connor put out a challenge to anyone and everyone watching the meetings to get the word out that there is a referendum. Many people are not aware and are not involved in the District or reading their newspapers. Tell everyone that there is a referendum and direct them to the Neshaminy website to get more information.

Mr. O'Connor has nothing against the gentlemen who wrote the above, however, it is not true and representative of the facts of how the School Board has tried their very best to get the information out to the public.

Student Representative Report

Representatives were not present at the meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Kadri stated that institutions around the country mourned the tragedy at Virginia Tech. The Neshaminy community sends our thoughts and commitment to keep our students safe throughout their entire education experience. Neshaminy does have some students at Virginia Tech and they are all safe.

Mr. Kadri stated that all security measures within the District have been reviewed.

Mr. Kadri advised that the District has instituted a program with Gwynned Mercy known as dual credit. The students while in high school have the opportunity to take classes which they would receive college credit for. A student will receive, if they successfully pass the program, a college transcript upon graduation from high school that can be applied to the college that they attend and save them having to pay for an extra class in the future.

Mr. Kadri noted that the new web page will be coming online in early May.

Mr. Kadri introduced Dr. Costanzo and Dr. McGee who presented a PSSA Data Report for 2006 to Board members.

Dr. Costanzo advised that tomorrow the District would be completing 2007 PSSA testing with administration of the Science field test for grades 4, 8 and 11. Reading and Math were completed last month. Those scores will be available in early Summer and a presentation will be provided in early Fall.

Dr. Costanzo advised that the presentation was presented to the Educational Development Committee in October, 2006 and in February, 2007. The PSSA is just one measure of academic achievement.

Dr. Costanzo noted that the goals of the presentation are as follows:

1. Background of No Child Left Behind
2. PSSA Performance
3. AYP Status

Dr. McGee stated that the goal of No Child Left Behind is that all students will be at or above proficient by the year 2014. In the first phase of legislation the District was required to have 35% of students proficient in Math and 45% proficient in Reading. The present phase requires 45% Math and 54% Reading. The percentage moves up gradually until 100% will be proficient in 2014.

Dr. McGee stated that the presentation will compare Neshaminy with state results, with other schools in Bucks County, history of results, growth model, performance level, and take a look at the AYP.

Dr. McGee stated that prior to No Child Left Behind PSSA scores were averaged and came up with a school average. After No Child Left Behind those same scores are taken and a cut score is taken and a proficiency level is taken.

Dr. McGee went through the scores with Board members. Dr. McGee noted that tests take place in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11. Dr. McGee advised that the value added growth system tries to quantify a year of learning in a particular grade and particular subject. Dr. McGee noted that even though a specific child may have improved achievements it may not be reflected in the line of gain and the bar graphs do not go up. Dr. McGee hopes that next year there will be more accurate information with regards to the value added growth system.

Dr. McGee stated that one of the goals of No Child Left Behind is to identify achievements gaps within the population.

Dr. McGee reviewed the status of schools with the District. Dr. McGee noted that Poquessing did not make AYP status for 2006. Two schools had 17 targets, Maple Point and Neshaminy High School. Maple Point made all 17 targets. Maple Point is only one of three schools in the state that made AYP status. The High School missed one target in reading and two in Math.

Dr. McGee made Board members aware of the AYP status of the schools over the last three years. Dr. McGee compared the high school to other high schools within the area. High School scores are also reflective of the number of students that were lost and gained and the proficiency levels that they were currently at.

Dr. McGee stated that the goal of the District is to improve the achievement of all students. Intervention must take place in all grades, especially the early grades. If intervention waits until the high school grades it reduces the achievement of all students.

Dr. Costanzo reviewed the programs in place to reach all students to help improve student achievement:

- Universal Screening assessment - Kindergarten and First Grade
- Curriculum alignment
- Special Education Math and Reading curriculum
- Instructional coaching
- Technology Infrastructure improvements
- Differentiated instruction
- Co-teaching models
- Penn Literacy Network
- Pre-K Counts
- Elementary Before/After School Tutoring
- Summer Math/Reading Camp for Elementary students and Academy for middle schools students
- IOP Math and Reading Instruction
- EAP High School Tutoring Program (Educational Assistance Program)

Dr. Costanzo is optimistic that the 2007 scores will be an improvement of the 2006 scores. The District is moving in the right direction.

Mr. Blasch inquired what is in place now to identify students in order to place them into the specific categories. Mr. Blasch referred to the Countywide data warehouse. Dr. Costanzo stated that Mr. Kadri is leading the charge regarding the Countywide data warehousing.

Mr. Kadri stated that he has had conversations with the County IU and other districts within the County to possibly create a data warehouse. The warehouse is a place where data can be stored regarding student performance and other things. Mr. Kadri noted that the presentation just seen was covering a grade level. The data warehouse would allow those specifics on an individual student level. It will be a very powerful tool to look at students as individuals.

Mr. Koziol asked if tutoring was mandatory. Dr. Costanzo noted that beginning next year it will be mandatory.

Dr. Spitz thanked Dr. Costanzo and Dr. McGee for an informative and comprehensive presentation. Dr. Spitz looks forward to the current year results in the fall.

Mr. Koziol inquired whether the data warehousing would identify teachers who possibly would need additional training. Mr. Kadri advised that a very important part of the tool being successful is knowing how to use same. Data is one of the most important components to success and one of the most destructive and dangerous

components. Data is used as a tool to build and not to destroy. Focus of having data is for students to be successful. The staff needs the tools to get valid information and training to be successful. Mr. Koziol is concerned that teachers are provided the help when needed from the District.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Walls presented the minutes of the March 27, 2007 public meeting. Upon motion of Mr. Bowman and seconded by Ms. Boyle, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the March 27, 2007 public meeting. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

Approval of Treasurer's Report, Check Registers, Investments, and Exonerations of Personal and Per Capita Tax

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- March, 2007 Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit
- Check Register – March, 2007
- Investment Summary
- Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy 07-4)
- Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations – March, 2007

Mr. Koziol moved the treasurer's report, check register, investments, budget transfer report (Working Copy 07-4) and exonerations of personal and per capita tax be approved. Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol questioned a check to Gilmore Associates and the purchase of a rotary mower for \$61,000. Mr. Koziol questioned the Food Service Report and profit sharing. Mr. Paradise advised that is a contractual agreement with the support staff. It developed in lieu of an additional paid holiday. Employees are reimbursed for a portion of the profit. Food Service is a self supporting entity within the governmental structure of the school system. They must make a profit to survive. They pay their own wages; buy their own food, etc. Would profit sharing be eliminated if there was no profit by the Food Services Department? Mr. Paradise answered in the affirmative.

The Board unanimously approved the Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit, check registers, budget transfer, personal and per capita tax exonerations and investments. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

Approval of Bids

Mr. Paradise presented the following bids:

Bid No. 08-12 – Bituminous Concrete Paving, Resurfacing & Repair

Bid Amount: \$42,586.00

Bid Description:

Item #1: Paving to repair and resurface playground area at Everitt Elementary.

Item #2: Reseal parking lots that were previously resurfaced (Pearl Buck Elementary, Walter Miller, Lower Southampton, and Carl Sandburg) so that pavement can be sealed from possible water damage and to protect the District's investment.

The Board unanimously approved Bid No. 08-12. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

Certified and Support Personnel Reports

Mr. Kadri presented the following for approval:

- Elections of Certified Personnel
- Resignations/Leaves of Certified Personnel

- Elections of Support Personnel
- Resignations/Leaves of Support Personnel
- Sabbatical Leaves of Certified Personnel

Mr. Blasch moved the personnel report be accepted. Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol inquired regarding the wage scale for long term substitute positions and the experience factor of certain candidates selected. Ms. Boyle also inquired regarding experience level of candidates and salary rate for long term substitutes.

Mr. Koziol questioned the resignation of a certain individual and the retirement date being October, 2007. Mr. Kadri replied that this is a positive step and it gives the District the ability to plan further ahead in the process of replacing a retiring individual.

Mr. Eccles requested a roll call vote be taken on the Personnel report presented. The roll call tally indicated that the report was passed by a vote of six ayes (Mr. Blasch, Mr. Bowman, Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, and Dr. Spitz) and two nays (Mr. Koziol and Mr. Webb). Mrs. Barrett was not present.

Mr. Kadri presented the 2006-2007 Recommended Extra-Curricular Staff and Salaries. Ms. Boyle moved the report be accepted. Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the Extra-Curricular staff and salaries. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

Motion: Approval of 2007-2008 Proposed School Calendar

Dr. Spitz made a motion to table the approval of the 2007-2008 proposed school calendar. Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.

Mr. Kadri requested an extension until May 1, 2007 due to the unique challenges that are necessary due to the high school construction project. Holidays, testing, and number of school days need to be considered along with the two bargaining units with contractual elements that affect the calendar.

The Board unanimously approved the tabling of the motion.

Motion: Approval of the IU Special Education Contracted Services for 2007-2008

Mr. Bowman presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District is required by law to provide special education and related services to children from pre-school through age twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of our students have severe mental and physical disabilities for which we do not operate programs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors of the Neshaminy School District approves the contract for special education services with Bucks County Intermediate Unit 22 for the 2007-2008 school year.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

Motion: Revision of Policy #123 – Attendance at Educational Conferences

Mr. Blasch presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in order to keep District Board Policies updated and current, new policies and revisions are recommended by the Administration to the Board Policies Committee for review; and

WHEREAS, recommended policies meet the requirements of Federal law; and

WHEREAS, after review by the Board Policies Committee the District is ready to recommend:

Revised Policy 123 – Attendance at Educational Conferences

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that said policies be revised and approved by the Neshaminy Board of School Directors.

Mr. Koziol seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

Motion: Approval of CISCO Lease/Purchase Agreement

Mrs. Cummings presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy Board of School Directors has approved a “Technology Advance Purchase Plan”; and

WHEREAS, a portion of the equipment purchases are products manufactured by CISCO Systems, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, CISCO has offered the School District an interest free Lease/Purchase Agreement for all CISCO products purchased under this “Technology Advance Purchase Plan”.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors authorize the execution of the Lease/Purchase Agreement upon review and approval of the Board Solicitor and the Business Administrator.

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

Federal Programs

Mr. Kadri reviewed the Federal Programs with Board members.

Other Board Business

Mrs. Cummings inquired about the mailings for Act 1 and the status of the letters and phone calls to legislators.

Mr. Paradise advised that he received the final proof for the mailing and the price is approximately \$8,000. Extra copies will be available for distribution. Mr. Paradise advised that he hoped to get same into the mail to all residents of the District by the end of next week.

Mr. Blasch advised that he has done research on bio-diesel fuel and there are grants available to pay for the difference in price between regular diesel and bio-diesel. Mr. Blasch feels that it would make sense for the District to use clean fuel.

Mr. Eccles asked if everyone could remember where they were at the first Earth Day. Mr. Eccles noted that he was at Carl Sandburg as a student and a dumpster was filled with glass bottles and the bottles were being smashed.

Public Comment

Mr. Mark Shubin, Langhorne, PA, advised that he is a concerned parent and local resident paying close attention to the Board over the past five years. Mr. Shubin decided that it is time to be the voice of reason and develop some solutions to the problems facing our education system. It is Mr. Shubin's hope that in 2023 his daughter will be prepared to face the global economy and challenges that will face her world when the time comes. As a community we must ask if we are doing everything possible to prepare our children for the challenges that lie ahead. Neshaminy School District has a rich, rewarding task, in his opinion. It seems that this Administration has rested on those laurels and has not moved this District into a competitive situation against others in the Country, State and the County. We must take a position of continuous improvement and focus our efforts on advancing the educational experience. Mr. Shubin proposes a new partnership where parents with teachers and administrators effectively deal with the challenges that face our schools today. It does take a village to raise our children and we as parents must step up and get involved. Mr. Shubin is passionate about speaking his mind about the issues that affect our children's future. Mr. Shubin feels that at the end of the day there is a significant business aspect to education. A Board member stated that Lower Merion is spending approximately \$21,000 per student to educate a pupil. This member thinks that since Neshaminy is spending around \$17,000 this should be to our District's credit. This is money going towards our student's benefit. This comparison is not logical and furthermore, does not compare demographically. Lower Merion has a substantially higher medium income per family, well above \$115,000 per household compared to Middletown's family of \$71,000. The average property in Lower Merion is above \$450,000. National statistics prove that there is absolutely no direct relationship between the performance of our school system and the increase cost per student. In fact, education funding increased has been way above the average rate of inflation over the past ten years. We have seen little to no improvement in results, especially, when Reading, Science and Math are compared with other industrialized nations. We as a community must see this comment as doing a disservice to us all. Mr. Shubin suggests that we pledge to ourselves a laser focus on improving the education system in our schools, while at the same time rationalizing the cost structure. We look just beyond test scores and develop partnerships with parents, teachers, and administrators to create a five year plan that can be implemented within six months to bring our school district back to its prominent position in the County, State and Country. We must compete with other school districts and private schools with the best possible product available. Mr. Shubin recommends a concrete acid test that will reduce administrative expenses, not associated directly with education, and to ask that every funding position that we make in one way or another be targeted towards improvement. We must have a sense of urgency in this matter and discontinue the political rhetoric and continuous showboating that is seen by some on this podium and come up with real solutions so that my child and all the children in this community can compete with tomorrow. Mr. Shubin thanked the Board for its time and looks forward to future discussions on issues and challenges instead of rehashing the past.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Langhorne, PA, applauded the Board for making the high school tutoring program mandatory starting in September and no longer an elective program. Mr. Rodos thanked Dr. Costanzo and Dr. McGee for the presentation regarding the PSSA results. Mr. Rodos thought this was a fantastic aide and will be televised for the general public.

Board Comment

Mr. Webb requested that Mrs. Walls provide the minutes for the June 8, 2006 Work Session. Mrs. Walls advised that she will forward the minutes to Mr. Paradise as soon as possible.

Dr. Spitz responded to Mr. Shubin and stated that he does not believe that this Administration is resting on its laurels. Dr. Spitz is offended by that statement and Dr. Spitz believes that Mr. Kadri is working very hard to move this District forward and providing excellent leadership.

Mr. Eccles commented that this Board goes to great lengths to disseminate information to the public. The comments made this evening are concerning because politics should not be made part of this Board. Mr. Eccles asked that the candidates have some decorum, respect and validity for the position as School Board Member and the truth is not distorted. Let's put true facts out. This job is done on a voluntary basis. Mr. Eccles stated that he takes both parties to task on this, Democrat and Republican. Let's make sure the public knows that the information is true and accurate. Let's make educated decisions and role models for the students. Politics in general has come to the point where can anyone be trusted. Let's not develop issues that don't exist. This Board has functioned over the last three years very well. Mr. Eccles stated that ethics plays a huge role. Please do not distort the truth, however, be truthful to the public.

Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Bowman moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Blasch seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary