

NORTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special School Board Meeting

Slatington, PA
April 29, 2002

PURPOSE A special meeting of the Northern Lehigh Board of School Directors, for the purpose of adopting a preliminary budget and for some general purposes, was called to order by the President, Mr. Gary S. Fedorcha, at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, April 29, 2002 in the Northern Lehigh High School auditorium.

ROLL CALL Members present: Mr. Cox, Mrs. Escott, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mrs. Giles, Mr. Green, Mr. Newhard, Mr. Fedorcha (8)

Members absent: Mr. Dorshimer (1)

Non-members present: Dr. Nicholas P. Sham, Sr., Mrs. Lynne B. Fedorcha, Mr. Christopher Iacobelli, Dr. Linda Marcincin, Mrs. Karen Nicholas, Mr. John Hrizuk, Mr. David Papay, Mr. Robert Mack, Mr. Brian Geiger, Mr. Bernard Rockovich, Mr. Jeffrey Bachman, Ms. Laurie Newman, Mrs. Doneta J. Merkle

VISITORS Approximately 175 visitors attended the meeting, in addition to Sharon Minnich, reporter for The Times News and Elizabeth Bartolai, reporter for The Morning Call.

FINANCIAL A motion was made by Mrs. Geronikos, with a second made by Mrs. Escott, that the Board of Education approve to purchase furniture from Roberts & Meck, Inc. in the amount of \$31,677.75 to be purchased through State Contract #7105-05. Funds for this furniture will come from the Furniture and Equipment portion of the Middle School Project.

YEA: Mr. Cox, Mrs. Escott, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mrs. Giles, Mr. Green,
Mr. Newhard, Mr. Fedorcha (8)

NAY: None (0)

PRESENTATION OF BUSINESS A motion was made by Mrs. Geronikos, with a second made by Mrs. Ganser, that the Board of Education approve to adopt the tentative general fund budget of the Northern Lehigh School District for the 2002-2003 school year in the amount of \$20,224,251.12. This is an increase of \$1,253,585.22 or 6.608% over last year's figures. (The tentative budget is adopted with a 5.9242 mill increase for Lehigh County and a 5.0352 mill increase for Northampton County).

- Adopt 2002-2003 Northern Lehigh School District Tentative Budget
1. A \$5.00 Resident Per Capita Tax, taxable on 18 year olds and over based on Section 679 of the School Code of 1949. No change from 2001-2002.
 2. Taxes under Act 511 with no changes from 2001-2002:
 - a. A 1% Earned Income Tax shared equally with coterminous municipalities.
 - b. A 1% Realty Transfer Tax shared equally with the coterminous municipalities.
 - c. A \$10.00 Resident Per Capita Tax, taxable on 18 year olds and over.
 - d. A \$10.00 Occupational Privilege Tax.

PUBLIC COMMENT Kathryn Prudel – Washington Township – Is this budget based on the reconfiguration of the elementary schools? If the budget is adopted does that mean the board as approving the reconfiguration?

ROLL CALL: YEA: Mr. Cox, Mrs. Escott, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mrs. Giles,
Mr. Fedorcha (6)
NAY: Mr. Green, Mr. Newhard (2)

Motion carried.

Early Retirement Incentive Plan A motion was made by Mrs. Geronikos, with a second made by Mrs. Ganser, that the Board of Education approve to adopt a Northern Lehigh School District Early Retirement Incentive Plan for the 2001-2002 school year as presented.

ROLL CALL: YEA: (0)
NAY: Mr. Cox, Mrs. Escott, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mrs. Giles,
Mr. Green, Mr. Newhard, Mr. Fedorcha, (8)

Motion defeated.

Early Retirement Incentive Plan Policy #449 A motion was made by Mr. Newhard, with a second made by Mr. Green, that the Board of Education approve revisions to school board policy #449 – Early Retirement Incentive Plan, as presented after first reading.

Table Previous Motion A motion was made by Mrs. Escott, with a second made by Mrs. Geronikos, that the Board of Education table approving the revisions to school board policy #449 – Early Retirement Incentive Plan and refer the policy back to the Policy/Education Committee for review.

YEA: Mr. Cox, Mrs. Escott, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mrs. Giles,
Mr. Green, Mr. Newhard, Mr. Fedorcha, (8)
NAY: None (0)

RECOGNITION OF GUESTS Patricia Nonnemaker – Washington Township – She had some questions with regard to the previous business manager and the equalization error that caused the district some problems. Who is responsible for replacing this money and is it part of the reason for the reconfiguration of the elementary schools. Why do the schools have to be divided into different grades? Asked the board to remember that they are representing the members of the community when they make their decision with regard to the reconfiguration of the elementary schools.

Lynn Sechler – Washington Township -- Referred to her notes from the last Strategic Plan and she noted along with the reconfiguration of the elementary schools, the following issues were studied for more than a year at that time: the possibility of yearlong schooling and lengthening the school year was discussed, the committee looked at intensive scheduling, and also the middle school model. She shared some of the advantages and disadvantages of the issues that were researched at that time. The board has an obligation and the perfect opportunity to correct the situation with regard to Title I funding

Dawn Mulcany – Walnutport – Asked the board to please vote no to reconfiguring the elementary schools. Take your time, look it over, and bring it up again.

Terry Hildebrand – Slatington – Who is in charge of the renovations to the senior high school and the junior high school and when will the renovations end. His paycheck is not getting any bigger and his taxes are getting higher each year. He does not want to pay higher taxes for something he does not agree with.

Elizabeth Buresh – Washington Township – As a member of the Strategic Plan Committee she addressed some issues that were discussed at a recent Organizational Structure/Facilities Action Planning Team committee meeting. She also asked what is the current bus contract with Laidlaw and how will this change or increase next year? Is it a flat rate, mileage, time, etc. She surveyed the bus drivers and shared this survey with the board and administration.

Linda Deurer – Washington Township – Thanked the board for their time and the work that they do for our schools. She feels that the reconfiguration should happen and that it is educationally sound for our children.

Valerie Barber – Washington Township – Presented the board with a petition with 350 names representing residents of Slatington and Washington Township opposing the reconfiguration of the elementary schools.

Two Elementary Students addressed the board with their concerns about the reconfiguration.

Patrice Arnold – Washington Township – Teaches in a K-2 elementary school that is looking to reconfigure to a K-5 structure. Asked the board to please take their time and not risk their credibility with this issue. The community is passionately opposed to the reconfiguration.

Rodney Lobach – Slatington – Attended both elementary schools. He also rode the bus to school. He stated that parents should take responsibility for their children at home. The board members are his voted officials and he respects whatever decision they make.

Kathryn Purcell – Washington Township – If the decision to reconfigure is made, will that decision be final tonight?

Dan Evans – Walnutport – This decision will impact his children in the future. He is neither for nor against the reconfiguration, but feels there is a lack of research presented and it seems as though it is more financially motivated instead of educationally motivated. He would like to see documentation before the board moves forward. He asked the board to take their time, understand the situation fully, and then make a good decision.

Diane Seremula – Washington Township – She is concerned that the board is moving too quickly. Asked them to think about it and take their time. The idea may be good, or it may not. She has a problem with YCare since she will have two children at different YCare centers.

Christine Schwarz – Walnutport – She has a son in special education at Peters Elementary and she is concerned with his alternate regular education program.

LeAnne Krause – Washington Township – If the reconfiguration goes through, and after the first year the administration finds it is not working, what plans do board members have to correct the situation. Will taxes be raised again? She hopes that board members will vote the way they feel and not be influenced by other board members' ideas when voting.

Robin Schmall – Slatington – Lived in Parkland School District when she was a child and they did a reconfiguration and it didn't cause any problems.

Paula Seiler – Washington Township – A parent of two children who would be split if the reconfiguration goes through. She is also a NLSD Slatington Elementary School staff member. The hostile attitude brought about by this reconfiguration is alarming. We all have children who need to go to school and will be going to this district. If the reconfiguration goes through and this attitude remains our students will be petrified to go to each one of these schools. Parents need to be supportive of their children. One school is not better than the other. They need to send their children off with a good attitude next year if the reconfiguration goes through.

Steve Owens – Walnutport – He is a graduate of Slatington High School and he is still living in the school district. He is hoping that the board will begin looking at long range plans to save money for the district. He feels that the reconfiguration is financially driven. It may be good, or it may be bad, but he would like more information to make that decision. On behalf of the community he asks that the board not make hasty decisions about their children.

Dave Mulchany – Walnutport – If reconfiguration is voted down, are there other alternatives for Title I funding. Asked the board to think this through and make sure this reconfiguration is going to save the district money both now and in the future.

Brandi Owens – Peters Elementary Fourth Grade Student – Shared her thoughts and feelings on the reconfiguration.

Marc Grammes – Washington Township – Feels that this move is not a good thing to do because there is too much confusion. We need to take more time and get more input and digest what is happening. He would like to see information with regard to what the teachers think about the reconfiguration. Asked that the board think this through and not make a rash decision.

Denise Hoffman – Washington Township – Concerned with bullying that will take place on the busses. If children ride 45 minutes to school, how will that save the district money?

Donna Lutz – Washington Township – Concerned with the safety of the bus for her children. How will the district deal with transporting students living on a hazardous route?

Terry Bowman – Washington Township – Why is the curriculum between Peters and Slatington Elementary Schools different? Why are the assemblies offered at both elementary schools different? What is the major downfall if the reconfiguration is not approved?

Bill Satow – Washington Township – Will the district still pick up at daycare centers? Will the district send a bus to Park View Daycare? If not for Title I funding, would the district still be doing this?

Kelly Kromer – Walnutport – She is an educator and a parent in the Northern Lehigh School District who taught at Peters and is currently teaching in the Slatington Elementary School. She assured everyone that both schools have an excellent team of teachers dedicated to providing the best education for the children of our district.

Recess

President Fedorcha called for a short recess at 9:05 p.m. The board reconvened at 9:20 p.m.

Dr. Sham presented the educational side of the reconfiguration plan. He called on Mrs. Nicholas, Principal at Peters Elementary School and Mr. Iacobelli, Principal at Slatington Elementary to share their thoughts on the reconfiguration of their schools.

Reconfigure Elementary Schools For 2002-2003 School Year

A motion was made by Mrs. Escott, with a second made by Mr. Cox, that the Board of Education approve to authorize the administration to reconfigure the elementary schools beginning with the 2002-2003 school year. The configuration of the Peters Elementary School will be K-3 and the configuration of the Slatington Elementary School will be 4-6.

Before the final vote on the reconfiguration of the elementary schools some comments/questions were addressed by board members as follows:

Mrs. Geronikos – She wants to make the right choice. Can we back this financially next year? Next year if class sizes swell, will the board give the administration the teachers they need? If we need books and curriculum will the board support the administration next year?

Mrs. Escott – This is a very difficult decision to make because of our financial situation. This idea was put on the back burner in the past. Initially it was a financial issue, but as the board worked through the plan she saw that it was educationally sound as well. This decision was not done in haste, it was painstakingly talked through. She urged those in attendance to attend meetings regularly throughout the year as the board makes decisions. If the reconfiguration issue is adopted tonight, please support your children and support the board and know that they are not jumping to conclusions and making uninformed decisions.

Mrs. Ganser – She stated that she is very new to the board and she sees what it takes to run a school district. She is very conservative thinker but stated that we are pretty much in a

predicament right now. We should all work together with a common goal and that should be the education of our children and creating a safe and productive environment for them.

ROLL CALL: YEA: Mrs. Ganser, Mr. Cox, Mrs. Escott, Mr. Fedorcha (4)
NAY: Mrs. Geronikos, Mrs. Giles, Mr. Green, Mr. Newhard (4)

Motion defeated. No affirmative vote.

ADJOURN-MENT A motion was made by Mr. Cox, with a second made by Mrs. Escott, that the special meeting of Northern Lehigh Board of School Directors be adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

YEA: Mr. Cox, Mrs. Escott, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mrs. Giles, Mr. Green, Mr. Newhard, Mr. Fedorcha (8)
NAY: None (0)

Respectfully submitted,

Jane J. Escott
Secretary

ATTEST: _____ President
Gary S. Fedorcha