

NORTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board Minutes
Slatington, PA
April 12, 2004

PURPOSE The regular meeting of the Northern Lehigh Board of School Directors was called to order by the President, Mr. Mathias J. Green, Jr., at 7:40 p.m. on Monday, April 12, 2004 in the gymnasium located in the Slatington Elementary School.

ROLL CALL Members present: Mr. Franklin D. Beers, Mr. Robert J. Cox, Mr. Bryan C. Dorshimer, Mr. Raymond J. Follweiler, Jr., Mrs. Lauren A. Ganser, Mrs. Lori H. Geronikos, Mr. William H. Hazzard, Ms. Angelique M. Papay, Mr. Mathias J. Green, Jr. (9)

Members absent: None (0)

Non-members present: Dr. Nicholas P. Sham, Sr., Mrs. Lynn B. Fedorcha, Mr. John Hrizuk, Mr. David Papay, Mr. Brian Geiger, Ms. Christine Stafford, Ms. Laurie Newman, Ms. Ashley Kunkle

VISITORS Approximately 100 visitors attended the meeting, in addition to Sharon Minnich, reporter for The Times News, Terry Ahner, reporter for The Chronicle newspaper, Stacey Duck, reporter for The Morning Call, and Liam McManus reporting for TV 13.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA Mr. Green informed the public that anyone wishing to address the board on any agenda items can do that when the item comes up. The board will take their name and they will be placed on the agenda to comment. After that the board would like to go through the agenda and then there will recognition of guests for general purposes. This should be should confined to anyone who has any questions or concerns other than the budget. At that point the board will begin to discuss budget items among the board only. After that is finished, the board will open the floor to anyone in the public who would like to comment or ask any questions pertaining to the budget. At that point the board will, if they so desire, conduct further discussions and or take actions based upon the comments or adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Green brought a few things up to date. Some of the questions that were asked at last week's meeting was what are we doing to try to get more money from Harrisburg. Mrs. Geronikos will discuss that under her Legislative Report. The superintendent will comment on some of the items that were discussed last week, and our business manager will discuss some of the concerns with regard to the funding of the field house and the effect that it will have on this year's budget.

At last week's meeting there was a person who asked what could be done to help her pay her taxes. He stated that there is a form available through the state that can be obtained at Representative Harhart's office. She can fill out the form to see if she qualifies for a rebate.

He gave a quick update on the stadium project. The stadium was divided into two sections. The first section dealt with the bleachers, press box, etc. The question was asked as to why the district was doing this. The first reason was because they were old and deteriorating. There were no handrails in the middle sections and it was close to not meeting ADA requirements. There was some concern with electricity that needed to be addressed. There was additional steel and concrete needed to make the new bleachers secure. The second part is the field house part of the project, the area where the locker rooms, weight room and refreshment stand is located. The weight room is used by a lot of our students, both boys and girls and is very full. We did try to get some donations. One of the donations was some weight equipment, but we don't have any room to put it because our weight room is too small. That is one of the areas that is being enlarged. There are also some problems in the refreshment stand where during the games roasters are blowing fuses and other things in the stand were not working. These areas need updating. By law if a district has a sport for boys they must have a comparable sport for girls. If you have a facility for boys, you need to have a comparable facility for girls. These areas need to be updated and are being

upgraded to meet standards. Another question that was asked last week was if a board votes on something can they bring it up and vote on it again. Technically the answer is the board can revote on anything they want to. When it comes to the practicality of that vote that's another situation. When the board passes something that has a contract associated with it can it be revisited. The answer is yes we can, but it is ultimately going to mean that we are going to break that contract. The bottom line is the technical answer is yes we could, but the practical answer is that it is just not going to happen. Similarly with the field house the question was asked if the vote could be reversed. The answer is yes it could, unfortunately we have already started that project. What would the liability be of redoing the project at this point in time? First of all, the contract states that it would be our responsibility to pay the contractors for any profit that they would have earned on the project. It is also the responsibility of the district to pay for any and all materials that are on the site or have been ordered by the contractor. We would have to pay them for any work that has been done to date. We would have to pay any legal fees that would occur as a result of breaking the contract. We would have to pay all of the architect fees for designing the building. After we do that we have to pay someone to put the field house back into useable condition because a lot of things have been torn down or removed. We'd also have to bring the facility up to ADA requirements. The estimated cost of doing this is about \$730,000 and that cost increases every day because more work is done, more materials are ordered, etc. The board could vote tonight to stop the project, spend the \$730,000, plus the money to put it back together again and start over because the stadium does not meet Title IX and ADA rules.

Jane Kropf – Slatington Borough – Would like to reserve the right to comment on any agenda item.

Donna Kulp – Washington Township – Would like to reserve the right to comment on any agenda item.

Sheryl Giles – Washington Township – Would like to reserve the right to comment on any agenda item.

David Schnaars – Slatington Borough – Would like to reserve the right to comment on any agenda item.

**APPROVE
MINUTES**

Mr. Dorshimer made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Beers, that the Board of Education that the minutes of the regular school board meeting held on March 1, 2004, and the regular school board meeting held on March 8, 2004 be approved and ordered filed.

YEA: Mr. Beers, Mr. Cox, Mr. Dorshimer, Mr. Follweiler, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos,
Mr. Hazzard, Ms. Papay, Mr. Green (9)

NAY: None (0)

**COMMITTEE
REPORTS
AND OR
MEETINGS**

Mr. Green addressed previous discussion on spending money with respect to faculty members, support staff, and questions on employment contracts. Based on that, the board would like to appoint a special committee to hopefully work with the teacher's union and support staff union, and work on early bird settlements to try to come up with a new contract with them. Mr. Green appointed Mrs. Ganser as chairperson of that committee. He also appointed Mr. Beers and Mr. Follweiler to work with Mrs. Ganser on that committee.

**SPECIAL
BOARD
REPORTS**

Student Representatives To The Board Report -- Ms. Ashley Kunkle gave her report for the month. A written report was also distributed.

Legislative Report – Mrs. Lori H. Geronikos

Mrs. Geronikos shared some information with regard to the way Pennsylvania funds public schools and the proposed legislation on back end referendum.

PUBLIC COMMENT Community Member – Wanted to know what equitable funding is. Felt as though what was just heard was more like a political speech and he didn't get much information from it. Wanted to know what it is about equitable funding that made Mrs. Geronikos so passionate about it.

Mrs. Geronikos said that she is very passionate about it because she represents the district on this. Education unfortunately is a political issue and you can't separate the two. When you talk about equitable funding the State should be contributing 50% they are currently contributing between 37-38%.

David Edwards – Washington Township

Asked how long has it been that we haven't been getting the funding. We need to do something about it ourselves.

Federal and Other Programs – Mrs. Lynne B. Fedorcha

Mrs. Fedorcha distributed a written Curriculum and Instruction report and briefly reported on it.

Superintendent's Report – Dr. Nicholas P. Sham, Sr.

Dr. Sham called on Mr. Follweiler who explained that he, Coach Tkach, and some football players made a trip to Wilkes Barre and Lycoming College where they purchased items for the weight program. He stated they received over \$5,000 worth of equipment at a cost of \$1500.00. The money used to purchase this equipment came from fund raising, not from taxpayer's money. He commended Coach Tkach for what he is doing for our school.

Dr. Sham introduced Laurie Newman, Director of Special Education, who highlighted information contained in a Special Education Data Report that was distributed to board members.

Dr. Sham announced that he could supply community members with the web site for the Property Tax Rent Rebate Program Mr. Green had addressed earlier in the meeting.

An Executive Session was held for personnel issues beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the boardroom.

PERSONNEL

Mr. Cox made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Ganser, that the Board of Education approves the following personnel items:

Substitutes of \$7.25 Non-Instructional Approve the following substitute aide for the 2003-2004 school year at the substitute rate per hour: Kristen Mayer

Unpaid Leaves Tim Weaber Approve the request of Tim Weaber to take a one-day leave, without pay, on April 26, 2004. This day will be used to attend a Conference of Churches meeting of his denomination as a delegate. His request will not be considered a precedent for future requests per correspondence received from the Northern Lehigh Education Association.

Kathy Reese Approve the request of Kathy Reese, Special Education Aide at the high school, to take an unpaid leave of absence from her duties for personal reasons. The requested leave is effective April 19, 2004 and continues for the remainder of the 2003-04 school year. Approval or denial of this request shall not be deemed as precedent setting.

Resignation/Retirement Paul Horner Paul W. Horner, Food Service Director, has submitted his letter of resignation. Effective June 30, 2004 Mr. Horner will begin his retirement from the Northern Lehigh School District after completing thirty-nine years of service with the district.

2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan Approve the inclusion of Richard M. Snell, secondary social studies teacher, in the Northern Lehigh School District's 2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan adopted by the Board of Education on January 5, 2004.

Richard M.
Snell

PERSONNEL (Con't.)

Henry A. Distler, Jr. Approve the inclusion of Henry A. Distler, Jr., secondary social studies teacher, in the Northern Lehigh School District's 2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan adopted by the Board of Education on January 5, 2004.

Dalton C. Semmel Approve the inclusion of Dalton C. Semmel, secondary mathematics teacher, in the Northern Lehigh School District's 2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan adopted by the Board of Education on January 5, 2004.

Ronald J. Sadler Approve the inclusion of Ronald J. Sadler, secondary wellness and fitness teacher, in the Northern Lehigh School District's 2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan adopted by the Board of Education on January 5, 2004.

Resignations Richard M. Snell Accept the resignation of Richard M. Snell from the Northern Lehigh School District, provided that the Board of Education approves his inclusion in the 2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan, effective on the day following his contractual obligations for the 2003-2004 school year with the date being determined by the Board upon completion of snow make-up days. Mr. Snell has been employed in education for thirty-three years.

Henry A. Distler, Jr. Accept the resignation of Henry A. Distler, Jr. from the Northern Lehigh School District, provided that the Board of Education approves his inclusion in the 2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan, effective on the day following his contractual obligations for the 2003-2004 school year with the date being determined by the Board upon completion of snow make-up days. Mr. Distler has been employed in education for thirty-four years.

Dalton C. Semmel Accept the resignation of Dalton C. Semmel, from the Northern Lehigh School District, provided that the Board of Education approves his inclusion in the 2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan, effective on the day following his contractual obligations for the 2003-2004 school year with the date being determined by the Board upon completion of snow make-up days. Mr. Semmel has been employed in education for thirty-three years.

Ronald J. Sadler Accept the resignation of Ronald J. Sadler, Jr. from the Northern Lehigh School District, provided that the Board of Education approves his inclusion in the 2003-2004 Early Retirement Incentive Plan, effective on the day following his contractual obligations for the 2003-2004 school year with the date being determined by the Board upon completion of snow make-up days. Mr. Sadler has been employed in education for thirty-four years.

YEA: Mr. Beers, Mr. Cox, Mr. Dorshimer, Mr. Follweiler, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mr. Hazzard, Ms. Papay, Mr. Green (9)

NAY: None (0)

POLICY

A motion was made by Mrs. Geronikos, with a second made by Mr. Cox, that the Board of Education approves the following items listed under Policy:

Conferences Approve the request of Jeffrey Bachman, Amanda Glassic, Donna Marushak, Susan Strubinger, Mary Ann S.-Mattiola, Jane Kutney and Kori Dibilio to attend the Title IID Partner's in Distance Learning Conference at Grantville, PA on April 28 – 30, 2004. Approximate expenses for this conference include free registration, \$411.00 travel, \$41.00 meals, \$1,920.00 lodging for a total cost of \$2,372.00 plus the cost of substitute teachers for three days and has been approved by the district's Continuing Professional Development Committee and will be paid for through Title IIA and Title IID funds.

Approve the request of Suzanne Gower to attend the Commonwealth Excellence in

Science Teaching Alliance conference at Messiah College from July 18-12, 2004.

Expenses for this annual conference include \$145.00 for registration, \$45.00 for travel, for a total cost of \$190.00 and has been approved by the district's Continuing Professional Education Committee.

POLICY (Con't.)

Legal Notice Per Capita Tax Notification Authorize the Secretary to publish a Legal Advertisement notifying every resident or inhabitant within the territorial limits of the school district of Northern Lehigh attaining eighteen (18) years of age, and every resident or inhabitant in said school district to notify the proper Per Capita Tax Enumerator within twelve (12) months of his or her becoming a resident or inhabitant, in accordance with the School Laws of Pennsylvania, Section 680, as amended August 16, 1972, Act 138.

Tax Levies Under Act 511 Act **RESOLVED** by the Board of School Directors of the School District of Northern Lehigh, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, under and by virtue of the Authority vested in it by the Local Tax Enabling Act of 1965 (Act 511) and its amendments, that a Per Capita Tax in the amount of Ten Dollars (\$10.00), (\$5.00 Act 511 and \$5.00 Act 679) as originally enacted by the Board of School Directors of Northern Lehigh School District on April 11, 1966, be and the same is again hereby levied, assessed, and imposed on each resident or inhabitant over eighteen (18) years of age in said District; a 1% Real Estate Transfer Tax, as originally enacted by the Board of School Directors of Northern Lehigh School District on April 11, 1966 and revised on April 12, 1987, be and the same is again levied, assessed, and imposed; an Occupation Privilege Tax in the amount of Ten Dollars (\$10.00) on occupations as originally enacted by the Board of School Directors of Northern Lehigh School District on April 11, 1966, be and the same is again levied, assessed, and imposed; and an Earned Income Tax of 1%, as originally enacted by the Board of School Directors of Northern Lehigh School District on April 11, 1966, be and the same is again levied, assessed, and imposed for general school purposes for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2002. Please note that Real Estate Transfer Tax, Occupational Privilege Tax, and Earned Income Tax are split equally with the municipality.

Per Capita Resolution **RESOLVED** by the Board of School Directors of the School District of Northern Lehigh, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, under and by virtue of the authority vested in it by Section 679 of the Pennsylvania School Code of one thousand nine hundred forty-nine, and its amendments, that a Per Capita Tax to provide revenue for general school purposes be and the same is hereby levied, assessed and imposed in the amount of Five Dollars (\$5.00) on each resident or inhabitant over eighteen (18) years of age, in the territorial limits of the Northern Lehigh School District.

YEA: Mr. Beers, Mr. Cox, Mr. Dorshimer, Mr. Follweiler, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mr. Hazzard, Ms. Papay, Mr. Green (9)

NAY: None (0)

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION Mr. Dorshimer made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Beers, that the Board of Education approves the Northern Lehigh School District 2004-2005 Proposed School Calendar, as presented.

YEA: Mr. Beers, Mr. Cox, Mr. Dorshimer, Mr. Follweiler, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos, Mr. Hazzard, Ms. Papay, Mr. Green (9)

NAY: None (0)

NEW A motion was made by Mr. Cox, with a second made by Mrs. Geronikos, that the Board of **BUSINESS** Education grants permission for the Middle School to form both a boys and girls middle school cross-country team. Coaches approved for the high school cross-country team would coach the middle school team with no increase in current co-curricular salary. The meets will be held in conjunction with the high school meets. Middle School and High School teams will both ride the same bus, so no additional transportation costs will be needed. Uniforms are already available and will not need to be purchased. The only expense to the district would be a per student fee for physical examinations at an approximate cost of \$6.00 per physical.

YEA: Mr. Beers, Mr. Cox, Mr. Follweiler, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos,
Mr. Hazzard, Ms. Papay, Mr. Green (8)
NAY: Mr. Dorshimer (1)

FINANCIAL Mr. Cox made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Dorshimer, that the Board of Education approves the following financial items:

Treasurer's Report Approve the report of the Treasurer, Mr. Cox, as presented for the month of March 2004.

Reports (Info Only) All board members received the March 2004 Revenue and Expenditure Reports for the Cafeteria, General and Capital Reserve Funds.

General Fund Bills Approve payment of General Fund bills, as presented.

NL Athletic Fund Report Approve the Northern Lehigh Athletic Fund Report, as presented, for the month of March 2004.

NL Refreshment Stand Account Approve the Northern Lehigh Refreshment Stand Account/Northern Lehigh Sports Account Statement, as presented, for the month of March 2004.

NL High School Student Activities Statement Approve the Northern Lehigh High School Student Activities Fund Statement, as presented, for the month of March 2004.

Re-Solicit Bids For Gas Approve to authorize proper officials to re-solicit bids for DIESEL FUEL, #2 HEATING FUEL, AND UNLEADED GASOLINE for the 2004-2005 school year. (No bids were received the first time they were bid on April 7, 2004).

Agreement With Berks County IU To Print Approve to authorize proper officials to enter into an agreement with Berks County IU (BCIU) and the Northern Lehigh School District for the purpose of printing the Walnutport Borough Real Estate and Per Capita tax bills. The term of this agreement shall be from June 1, 2004 to June 1, 2007. Current pricing for tax bill printing is \$.38 per laser self-mailer bill. E-Tax Bills mailed computer files of per capita bills and real estate bills issued will be supplied at a cost of \$10.00 per file. BCIU reserves the right to increase bill and copy rates up to \$.02/year. Increases must be in writing to the customer by March 31st of each year of this contract.

YEA: Mr. Beers, Mr. Cox, Mr. Dorshimer, Mr. Follweiler, Mrs. Ganser, Mrs. Geronikos,
Mr. Hazzard, Ms. Papay, Mr. Green (9)
NAY: None (0)

RECOGNITION OF GUESTS

Jane Kropf – Slatington Borough – Wanted to put everyone's mind at ease as to what the plan is of the Northern Lehigh League of Taxpayer's is. As President, she wanted to clarify the goals and objectives for the board and members of the audience. Basically their primary purpose is to make sure that the taxpayers are informed of the issues that come before the board. They also would like to focus on responsible spending.

Shery Giles – Washington Township – Asked for clarification as to what the special committee appointed earlier in the meeting would be doing. Mr. Green responded that they would attempt an early bird settlement with the two unions in the district that would be mutually beneficial. Mrs. Giles questioned why he appointed the individuals without discussing it with them since two of them were new members and he didn't express any confidence in the other member for contractual issues. Mr. Green indicated that it is the board president's prerogative to appoint committee members.

PRELIMIN-ARY BUDGET DISCUSSION Art George – Slatington Borough – Asked Mr. Dorshimer what he meant when he said earlier about approving cross-country now when it might be cut later. Mr. Dorshimer answered stating that should there be some unforeseen expenses associated with it, where would the district get the money for this. He was being asked to approve something that may not survive the budget.

David Schnaars – Slatington Borough – If he wanted to review school board policy where would he find that in writing. (Mr. Green responded stating that all board policy can be found on the district's web page).

Mrs. Ganser – With regard to Mrs. Giles previous question, she was curious to know if the teachers were approached already by anyone on the board. Mr. Green offered to discuss negotiation strategies with Mrs. Ganser outside the public meeting as the district does all negotiation strategies. She indicated that she was blind sided by the appointment, however, she is happy to serve on the committee.

RECESS Mr. Green called for a short recess at approximately 8:40 p.m. The board reconvened at 8:53 p.m.

PRELIMIN-ARY BUDGET DISCUSSION Dr. Sham began budget deliberations by explaining that the current millage increase was 7.8 mills. He stated that there is no way that our board would tolerate this type of millage increase. He stated that the board instructed him to develop a “cafeteria style” menu listing prioritized cuts to get down to a 0 mill increase, or \$1.6 million of cuts. He reviewed that list. It will be the board's choice to determine what to cut and what not to cut. He discussed how our budget is built and where our cost increases come from. Chris Stafford addressed the cost of health insurance to the district and what the Consortium is doing to bring down those costs. She explained the value of a mill in our district. She also explained the effects of the field house and stadium project on this year's budget indicating that there is no effect this year.

BOARD COMMENT Mr. Dorshimer asked if the items listed within the priority groups were in any priority order. Dr. Sham indicated that they were not.

Mr. Cox asked if educational field trips weren't funded by the PTO. Mr. Geiger responded stating that not all of them, only the elementary trips.

Mrs. Ganser asked how old the computers are that are on the cut list. Mr. Hrizuk responded stating that they are four-five years old. She also asked how many times a year the Messenger is produced? Dr. Sham indicated three or four times a year. She asked Dr. Sham to explain the summer psychologist item to her. He explained that throughout the school year the district gets students that need to be evaluated. At the end of the school year, as they begin doing re-evaluations, which are required each year, there is a tremendous amount of paperwork and reports that are generated that need to be completed within a certain time line according to special education regulations. Also, special education students enter our school during the summer, and in order to get them ready for the first day of school, they need to be evaluated during the summer for placement. She asked how many hours do the AV directors work? Dr. Sham indicated that he couldn't give the numbers of hours they work. They work on an as need basis.

Mr. Green asked since the alternative cuts would be needed to get to a 0 mill increase, should they be called “or” items. Dr. Sham indicated that they should be classified as “or” because when you get to that level you get into some real serious situations.

Due to employment obligations, Mr. Dorshimer left the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

PUBLIC Jane Kropf – Slatington Borough – Had a question about the individual building budgets and what

COMMENT

they actually are comprised of. Not having seen the budget information, realistically there could be other line items that could be cut. It is hard for the members of the audience to comprehend the cuts that you suggested without seeing all the information. She asked what is left from last year's budget that could be carried over and what are the cost differences between last year's supplies? There may be other things that could be cut.

Chris Stafford explained what the building budgets include. Dr. Sham indicated that the building level principals were asked to bring their budgets in at the same level over the last two or three years. The board members had the opportunity to look at the building budget books, line item for line item, and they all agreed that there was nothing else that could be cut.

Vicky Rigby – Walnutport – Everyone here is in favor of responsible spending. How is that defined? Is it responsible to ignore all the data that shows what extra curricular activities promote in our youth, is it responsible to leave technology advances behind when it is the key component in our children's future. Was it responsible for the school board this past decade that didn't bite the bullet and raise taxes when it was truly necessary to assure the success of the district's future? Is it responsible for this school board to do the same? She also feels the burden of taxes, but she also sees the need that the success of our children's future and our community's future is to keep progressive and stay in line with the current necessary needs. Looking at the list provided tonight she felt that she didn't see one single item that should be on any budget cut list with the exception possibly of the raises. She urged the school board to rethink the amount of money they want to cut, even though it would be a significant tax increase, but as a taxpayer, even though it would put a strain on her personal budget, she considers it a price well worth paying.

Patrice Arnold – Washington Township – Asked if it was really realistic to have a 0 mill increase when we are all paying higher costs. As an educator and a teacher she feels that our children need to have a good well-rounded education – they need to have academics, arts, science, music, athletics and technology. She hopes that the board will not cut all those things. Athletics will keep our children off the streets. She indicated that she is seeing too many “for sale” signs on homes in our district, and part of it is because of the school district. We need to be progressive and continue to grow in all of these areas. Instead of listing cuts, the board needs to look at some cost saving items and wasted spending and look for alternative funding. Put the Messenger on the web site and send it home with our children. Don't cut aides and secretaries. They are needed. Transportation should not even be on the list, nor should the extra curricular activities. The books are very important, possibly look at purchasing them in increments.

David Edwards – Washington Township – How much of the budget is for raises? Chris Stafford reported that the increase from last year's budget is \$518,000. He asked how much of the budget is total salaries. Chris Stafford reported a little over \$11 million is for salaries. Mr. Edwards suggested the board cut in this area and give the kids what they need. He asked why Mr. Geiger is signing contracts and not Dr. Sham. He also asked if the contracts were legal? Dr. Sham stated that an attorney in our solicitor's office has inspected the contracts.

David Schnaars – Slatington Borough – What is costing the district \$1.6 million more this coming year than it cost us the past year? Chris Stafford responded that it is a \$1.4 million increase. The board used \$233,000 from the fund balance to balance last year's budget. Mr. Green gave Mr. Schnaars a quick run down of what is causing the increase to this year's budget. Mr. Schnaars commented that he feels that what has happened here tonight has been done to increase anxiety. He asked that the board and administration go back and discuss how they can find realistic answers because what he saw tonight he felt were not realistic.

District Student – She had some concerns about the textbooks that are going to be cut. In some of her classes she cannot take books home because there are not enough books to supply the class. Some of the textbooks for her social studies class are old, some are newer. She asked the board not to cut sports because they make students work hard at keeping their grades up and they also allow students to obtain scholarships to attend college. She addressed concerns about computers in the classrooms and the lack of pens and pencils for students.

District Student – Washington Township – Her main concern was sports. She is involved in many sports and works hard in her classes so that she can continue to play sports. Asked the board not to take away sports from the students in the district.

Tara Beltz – Slatington Borough -- Stated when you get out of school or college the likelihood of playing sports is not that good. You need to look at what is left after sports, which is your education. If the board is willing to cut teachers or certain classes from the budget, why is it that some of the administrative raises given recently are not cut.

Shery Giles – Washington Township – What is the formula that is used to determine the reimbursement for transportation? Mr. Geiger responded that the state determines that from the information that we send them. Who determines whether or not a student is bussed, the parents or the school district?

Ruby Owens – Washington Township – She informed the board that she already looked into the Property Tax Rebate program and it is not something she would be able to take advantage because of personal issues associated with the amount of money a person can earn to become eligible.

Sharon Karpiszin – Washington Township – Wanted to know if there were any new positions in this year's budget. Dr. Sham responded by telling her that the only new staffing position is a half of a chemistry teacher and that may not survive the budget process.

Tina Green – Washington Township – Questioned Chris Stafford about previous statement that she was not clear on with regard to funds that are available in million dollar increments usually that will pay for certain things that don't necessarily affect the budget. How readily available are they. Chris Stafford informed her that school districts can borrow money through bond issues for anything that has a life expectancy of at least 10 years. They can be used for long term maintenance projects or building projects. Mr. Green added that there is a timeline when the money that is borrowed needs to be spent.

David Edwards – Washington Township – How old was our field house? Mr. Geiger informed him that the field house is approximately 23 years old. Each year money is put in the budget for maintenance and the facility should have been maintained. Mr. Green indicated that there were many other things that needed to be upgraded and enlarged as mentioned before.

Melvin Gildner – Washington Township – When the school district makes a budget, the taxpayers must digest that budget and some how or other they must come up the taxes that they need to pay. When the board decides on the issues, where they are making cuts, they also should have to digest what they decide, whether they like it or not. With regard to sports and how they build character, he stated that it is his responsibility to build his child's character. The only thing he is asking the school to do is provide an education to his child.

Linda Ratz – Slatington – Addressed whether the district would be offering the AP calculus class at the high school next year or would it be cut from the budget. Mr. Green responded that nothing has been cut from the budget to date; however, he could not guarantee that it may not be cut because enrollment plays a big part in whether or not a class is run.

**BOARD
COMMENT
ON BUDGET**

Mr. Green spoke for Mr. Dorshimer in his absence indicating that he is not real comfortable cutting transportation but there were other items he would be willing to take a look at.

Mrs. Ganser indicated that every year the administration puts transportation on the cut list and she feels it is basically for "shock value" and she would never agree to cut it. She appreciates all the people who have been attending the meetings. She feels as though the district hasn't been as innovative as they could be. There is obviously a nationwide dilemma and everyone in the general public has suffered financially. There are some real dedicated folks working in this district that she

feels would bend over backwards for the kids. You can't always buy the Lexus when our account can only afford the Hyundai. We need to tighten our belt and go with the necessities that will reach our kids.

Mr. Green stated that the administration needs direction as to where the board wants them to go from here.

Mr. Beers – His feelings are that he doesn't want to take anything away from the kids. He doesn't want to see a millage increase. We need to tighten our belts and not spend unnecessarily. First we should open up the contracts in the district and try to save some money there. Mr. Beers stated that he does not agree with eliminating the Assistant HS-MS Principal and he also feels that Mr. Kern is doing a good job as Dean of Students. When asked, Mr. Beers stated he would be comfortable with a 2.5 mill preliminary budget increase.

Mr. Cox – He is not sure at this point what kind of millage rate he will be happy with. As stated previously he is certainly not going to do it by spending three hours discussing \$300 items. We've got to have the administration put the prioritized list with the millage rate and cost attached to each line item so that he can make appropriate cuts. When asked, Mr. Cox stated he would be comfortable passing the entire preliminary budget as presented, since it is preliminary knowing full well that we can make cuts from there down to a 0 mill increase if need be.

Mr. Follweiler – He ran for school board with the purpose of keeping taxes down; however, he is not in favor of all the cuts presented. Possibly we should consider putting a freeze on everything right down the line. We are spending money foolishly. When asked, Mr. Follweiler stated he would be comfortable with a 3 mill preliminary budget increase.

Mr. Green – He doesn't like to make budget cuts any more than anyone else does. Lets not spend any money unless we really need it. He suggests probably cutting half of the items on the cut list and that may give us a little better idea of where we are. He is not in favor of cutting transportation nor the extra curricular positions. He thinks that there is a possibility of outsourcing some of the high school courses and he would like to see some work done on that. Mr. Green stated he would be comfortable with a 4 mill preliminary budget increase.

Mrs. Ganser – She indicated she could see cutting one set of the portable bleachers, conferences for the Director of Support Services, the Sniffer network analyzer, substitute wages, the Messenger – (thought it was a good idea to put it on the Web), cut the summer psychology hours in half. There may be other items that she would like to consider. When asked, Mrs. Ganser stated she would be comfortable with a 3.5 mill preliminary budget increase.

Mrs. Geronikos – Commended the administration for not considering putting a Grant Writer in the budget because it is cut every year. It was suggested that we seek alternative funding, however, her only concern was who would be doing that. She is not in favor of cutting the athletic program or the music program. She feels that we need sports more than we need transportation. She felt that everything on the Priority 1 List could be cut except for the library aides because we only have one librarian for both elementary schools. Everything on the Priority 2 List could be cut except for the elementary office aides. She felt that we could not afford to cut the assistant middle school/high school principal – those students are the ones that are most challenged

Mr. Hazzard – He is not real happy with the budget cuts presented to the board. He feels a lot of them were designed for "shock value" not for real practical educational purposes of what we need. He stated the building budgets are down to 0 mills. He would really like to have more alternatives in different areas other than cuts. Anything past Priority Level 2 is a "shock value" cut. He felt that we shouldn't cut items tied into No Child Left Behind. Items in Priority 1 he doesn't have much of a

problem with. Most of his concerns deal in the areas of eliminating staff. He is looking for more alternatives because he really doesn't like a lot of the cuts on the list. When asked, Mr. Hazzard stated he would be comfortable with a 4 mill preliminary budget increase.

Ms. Papay – She is not willing to compromise on the following budget cuts – national conferences for superintendent and director of curriculum and instruction, marching band competitions, etc., elementary library aides, Assistant MS-HS Principal – Dean of Students not in budget, elementary office aides, summer academies for staff development, not replacing new PC's at the high school, transportation, all sports and related services, co-curricular activities, middle school intramurals, AV directors on elementary and secondary level, department heads, high school office aide and the entire list of alternative staff cuts on the last page of the document. Most of the things she didn't mention she didn't know anything about. Asked if there isn't any money in reserve.

Dr. Sham informed the board that the items placed on the budget cut list were not put there for "shock value". Quite frankly, he does not know where to go beyond this list unless we are going to get people to agree to no salary raises or freezes in salaries. He is not sure that between now and the end of the school year anyone is going to be successful in getting that to happen. Does the board want the administration to make cuts down to 4 mills and bring that back to them or would you prefer that they took the current list and assign it a priority order and show the millage that it will impact. The administration was told to put the list in priority order and take it down to a 0 mill increase.

Mrs. Geronikos departed from the meeting at 11:15 p.m.

**ADJOURN-
MENT**

Mr. Cox made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Ganser, that the regular meeting of the Northern Lehigh Board of School Directors be adjourned at 11:27 p.m.

YEA: Mr. Beers, Mr. Cox, Mr. Follweiler, Mrs. Ganser, Mr. Hazzard, Ms. Papay, Mr. Green (7)

NAY: None (0)

(Note: Mr. Dorshimer and Mrs. Geronikos left before the meeting was adjourned).

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan C. Dorshimer
Secretary

ATTEST: _____
Mathias J. Green, Jr.