

**BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD FACILITIES COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 5, 2008**

Mrs. Michele Cann, Facilities Chairperson of the Board of School Directors, called the meeting of the Board Facilities Committee to order at 6:47 p.m. on Monday, May 5, 2008, in the Dining Room of the Education Center. Present were School Board members Benjamin Tenaglia, Charlene Koch, Loretta Leeson, Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, and Eugene McKeon. Also present were Dr. Joseph Lewis, superintendent of schools; Scott T. Gilliland, director of facilities and operations; Arif Fazil, district engineer (D'Huy Engineering, Inc.); Robert Gross, associate superintendent; Stanley Majewski, assistant to the superintendent for finance and administration; Thomas Washington, director of student services; David Himmelberger, supervisor of transportation; Richard Agretto, director of special education; and representatives from the press.

The following items were discussed:

DISCUSSION ITEMS –

Mrs. Leeson apologized for the late start of the meeting. She stated that there was an emergency executive session called to discuss a matter involving personnel and the district's solicitor was only available at the beginning of the meeting.

Dr. Lewis reviewed agenda item 1, Discussion on Northampton School District Leasing Old Northeast Middle School for the 2008-2009 School Year. He stated that leasing this building to Northampton School District to house George Wolf students was one of many options for their district and not the only option. If Northampton School District was to lease the old Northeast Middle School, they would pay rent, utilities, and provide maintenance for the building. With the board's approval, Mr. Majewski would draft a lease and have it reviewed by the solicitor. Dr. Linda Firestone, superintendent of schools for Northampton Area School District, recently came to our district to tour the old Northeast Middle School building to see if it would meet her district's needs. George Wolf's current enrollment is approximately seven hundred students; the old Northeast Middle School building's capacity is approximately eight hundred and fifty. Dr. Firestone concluded that the building would be more than adequate.

Mrs. Cann asked for confirmation that Northampton would only be leasing this building for one school year.

Mrs. Koch asked if leasing out this building would hamper the needs of our district. Would it be possible to use this building to house one of the district's offices that have a need for a larger space?

Dr. Lewis responded that Northampton would only be leasing the old Northeast building for the 2008-2009 school year. He also said that the overhead of roughly \$200,000 to \$250,000 on the building is too large to have it used to house smaller offices.

Mrs. Koch said that we have inconvenienced the students at Northeast Middle School as they do not have on site athletic fields until the old Northeast Middle School building is torn down. By leasing out the building, we would be further postponing the installation of athletic fields. She also asked who would be responsible for major repairs on the building.

Dr. Lewis said that a reasonable agreement would be made and repair responsibility would be listed in the lease.

Mr. Gilliland asked the board to consider the fact that even if the decision was to be made today to raze the old Northeast Middle School building, it would be approximately nine months before the building could be torn down. The design, approvals for the demolition and site work need to be completed.

Mr. Fazil suggested demolishing the building once Northampton's lease has expired. The responsibility of the failing infrastructure and roof issues should be worked into the lease.

Mr. Majewski said that Northampton School District and Bethlehem Area School District would create the lease together and then it would be reviewed by the board. We are seeking the board's approval to proceed with the steps necessary to create a lease. We know it will be approximately \$5 million to raze the building. Leasing it for the 2008-2009 school year will give our district time to review options for financing the demolition and site improvements.

Mr. Tenaglia asked if the old Northeast Middle School building could be used to house Nitschmann Middle School students while the building was renovated.

Mr. Majewski answered that the Nitschmann project will not be started within the year as there are still many things that need to be completed such as design of the school.

Mr. Tenaglia said that he understands that the building will not be razed in the next nine months.

Mrs. Cann said that leasing the building out would not postpone anything that our district is currently planning such as demolishing the old Northeast building or building new athletic fields.

Dr. Lewis stated that if we were to hold onto the Northeast building for Nitschmann students, the district would not be able to absorb the overhead cost of approximately \$250,000.

Mrs. Leeson asked that the board be apprised to all discussion regarding the leasing of the old Northeast building.

Mrs. Koch said she remembered an instance when a Bethlehem Township school flooded. Bethlehem Steel was generous enough to let our district use their Third Street building, however, everything was our financial responsibility. Northampton needs to understand that they are getting this building "as is" and it will not be fixed up. They need to "be prepared" for what condition the building is in.

Dr. Lewis said that our district is not expected to put any money into it.

Mrs. Cann asked the board for authorization to proceed with the negotiations of the lease.

Mr. Fazil said he would like to remind the board that they still need authorization for demolition and site work of the old Northeast Middle School even though it may be leased.

Dr. Lewis said that the authorization for the demolition and site work for the old Northeast Middle School building should come before the board for approval in November. Dr. Firestone would like the lease approved at the May 19, 2008, Regular Board Meeting, if that was the option they decided to go with.

Mrs. Leeson requested a copy of the lease be sent to the board members once it is drafted.

The board committee authorized the district to take the steps necessary to draft a lease between the Bethlehem Area School District and Northampton Area School District to lease the old Northeast Middle School building for the 2008-2009 school year.

Mr. Gilliland presented agenda item 2, Information Only items.

Mrs. Leeson said she reviewed the materials in the agenda packet [for item 2.1, Parking at Liberty High School] and wanted to know why a parking lot would cost \$1 million. Are we not installing a new driveway anyway?

Mr. Fazil stated that parking for over two hundred vehicles would create too much volume and require a separate driveway. He suggested a new driveway could exit onto East Fairview Street where the current location of the temporary construction entrance is. Currently, this location is being restored to a field according to the original plan.

Mrs. Leeson asked what the estimated cost for this entrance would be to lay gravel or stones now and pave it at a later time.

Mr. Fazil said that a gravel lot is considered impervious. This condition was allowed for construction, however, it would not be allowed on a permanent basis. After a while, the stone would become matted into the ground and also poses problems when snow plowing needs to be done. The grading for this area is in process now for the new field. We would need to stop the planned work and redesign the plan now so the area does not have to be dug back up to install the storm water system.

Mrs. Leeson was concerned that currently there are not enough parking spaces for staff and events. Installing this lot would draw traffic off Elizabeth Avenue where students are forced to park due to the lack of parking. It would be much safer than trying to cross Elizabeth Avenue.

Mr. Fazil said this proposed plan would still need to be brought before the city, approvals would be needed, and change orders would be required.

Mrs. Leeson stated that this lot would serve as an advantage as it is close to events at the stadium. It would also provide additional parking for school events and serve as a benefit to students who stay at school until late at night for after school activities.

Dr. Lewis asked what stage the construction was currently in.

Mr. Fazil answered that clean up has been done and the trailers were removed. Grading of the ball fields is underway. He presented a drawing plan and showed the board where the existing 386 spaces, including street parking on Grenadier Boulevard, were located. There is approximately 309 staff at Liberty High School, so there is a shortage of spaces on site. The redesign to develop the parking lot including storm water, lighting, and an access drive would need to be designed immediately in order to make this change.

Mrs. Leeson asked the board if anyone had an interest in this project.

The board committee decided not to install the proposed parking lot due to cost considerations.

Mr. Gilliland presented agenda item 2.2, Emergency Management Update – Guidelines for Bus Accidents. This plan was adopted from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Council and is used in all Northampton County schools. The plan outlines the district's and responders responsibilities.

Mrs. Dexter questioned the section that states that everyone on the bus must be checked when a fatality takes place. Was it necessary for everyone to be checked?

Mr. Himmelberger answered that everyone must be checked when fatalities occur for liability and insurance purposes.

Mrs. Dexter asked if the plan could be altered in any way.

Mrs. Cann said it could not be "manipulated". Mr. Gilliland confirmed this as well.

Mr. Gilliland outlined agenda item 2.3, Relocation Plan. He said that the summer help has been hired and teams assigned.

Mrs. Leeson asked what cost was associated with the moves.

Mr. Gilliland said there should not be additional costs associated with the moves as it will be done by the summer help and not outside companies. The district will use the spare dining services truck for the moves so there will be no additional costs incurred for renting equipment.

Dr. Lewis said costs associated with the moves have been previously budgeted. These moves will be monumental to the budget [by saving money].

Mr. Gilliland reviewed agenda item 2.4, Turf Studies. He said he spoke with Mr. Ray Battistel from Sportex and he assured Mr. Gilliland that there was no lead in the Momentum turf that was purchased and installed by our district. There was lead found in the colored turf products, but not in the green and white. It was fair to note that the two fields tested for lead in New Jersey were locations within a close proximity to manufacturing facilities.

Mrs. Cann presented agenda item 2.5, Nitschmann Middle School Project. She said that the summary of town meeting notes was included and asked if anyone would like to comment on the notes.

Dr. Lewis stated that these were included solely for review and it was not necessary that anyone comment on them at this time.

Mrs. Dexter said that many people continue to ask her if the Hanover Elementary School site is still being considered for the Nitschmann Middle School project. She would like to see this option put to rest if it is no longer going to be considered.

Mr. McKeon said he would like to see Nitschmann Middle School stay on its current site. The Hanover community was concerned with additional traffic.

Mrs. Koch stated that she did not hear anyone say that they wanted the school moved into Hanover Township.

Mrs. Leeson agreed that no community members have expressed an interest in having the school moved there.

Dr. Lewis noted the administration would appreciate direction on the preferred location, as they would concentrate the administration's efforts on that option. He concurred that no one seemed to strongly support relocation.

After a vote, it was agreed upon that focus of the project would remain on the current Nitschmann Middle School site.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR TO VISITORS –

The board extended the courtesy of the floor to hear all of the public input. The following people addressed the committee with comments:

Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem: Mr. Antalics complained to the board for delaying the start of the meeting. He said that this was a facilities and finance committee meeting, not a human resources meeting. He suggested holding all executive sessions after the committee meetings to avoid future delays.

Mrs. Cann told him this is only done when it is an absolute emergency and this evening, the district's solicitor was only available for a short time before the meeting. The board will keep it in mind to hold executive sessions after public meetings.

Mrs. Dexter said it was imperative to hold the executive session before the meeting as the solicitor's advice was needed to discuss a budget item.

OPEN FORUM –

Mrs. Koch said there was a letter dated April 28, 2008, that she received from the board. Only six board members were aware of the letter and the remaining board members knew nothing about it. This concerned her greatly.

Mrs. Leeson asked if it would be possible to discuss this matter in private as the matter discussed in the letter was an executive session issue.

Mrs. Koch agreed.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:37 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Kristen M. Snyder, Secretary to the Director of Facilities and Operations

Scott T. Gilliland, Director of Facilities and Operations