

NESHAMINY

Plan for personnel committee back on table

The superintendent, who opposes the committee, said he was concerned about allegations of politics in the hiring process.

By RACHEL CANELLI COURIER TIMES

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If Neshaminy residents thought that the idea of a personnel committee was dead, they were wrong.

Although the Neshaminy school board previously discussed the issue for several months, conversations about the personnel committee recently fell silent.

But that changed during Tuesday night's work session when talks resurfaced and a majority of board members agreed to move forward with creating a committee that would establish hiring procedures and decide if positions are needed as they become available.

They conceded that board member Irene Boyle spearhead the project by working with the administration to define what the role of the group would be.

Board member Ritchie Webb, who sparked the debate, said that the district needs the group because it is living off dwindling savings and Neshaminy's enrollment is declining. It's now under 9,000 students for the first time in 20 years, he said.

The district should consolidate administrative positions and provide more information to the school board when approving jobs, Webb said. He suggested that board members, residents and staff work together to "eliminate politics" and "who-you-know hiring."

That concerned Superintendent Paul Kadri, who called the accusations "discouraging."

Kadri, who said he's opposed to such a committee, defended Neshaminy's working 2007-08 \$164 million budget that was under the state's limit.

He also asked the board for a budgetary target. The administration is currently analyzing the district's costs, Kadri said, but added that Neshaminy, like many other districts, need people to supervise and control those costs.

Lou Muenker, assistant superintendent, also expressed concern about making sure the committee meetings fall within the administration's hiring timeframe.

"We've tried our best to have a fair and consistent process," he said.

Administrators recently provided board members with more background information on candidates that they're approving, said Muenker.

Board member Jason Bowman said the board wouldn't be involved in the interview process, just consolidating positions.

Board members Susan Cummings and William Spitz though disagreed.

Spitz said he's concerned that instead of setting guidelines for an ongoing process to consolidate positions, committee members would get bogged down in the details of who's hired and why.