

Board president disputes union's take on meeting

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By Christian Menno

Staff writer

Neshaminy School Board President Ritchie Webb on Wednesday questioned the accuracy of teachers union President Louise Boyd's account of Tuesday's negotiation session.

According to Boyd's statement after the meeting, the school board "terminated" the talks when questioned about its recent presentation regarding the impasse at a recent public meeting.

Boyd accused the board of manipulating scores and that a PSSA score ranking among Pennsylvania's 504 school districts - which was included in the board's recent presentation - is not tracked by the state.



Webb, however, said Wednesday that the board's negotiation team compiled the rankings on its own by adding up the scores posted on the Department of Education's website. He added that he stands by his statement that Neshaminy's informal PSSA ranking has fallen from 153 to 245 since the last teachers contract took effect in 2001.

Regarding Boyd's claim that the board terminated the meeting, Webb said his team was advised by its attorney and the state mediator that it would be best to continue talks on Dec. 14 as no progress was being made Tuesday night.

Webb also refuted Boyd's statement regarding an "extensive, fact-laden" presentation delivered Tuesday from a union official that showed "ready sources of money (in the district) on which to begin closure of many issues" that continue to affect contract talks. Boyd said Tuesday the board appeared "disinterested" during the presentation and did not ask any questions or offer any comments when it was completed.

"(The NFT's presentation) insinuated that the board, if we wanted, could take the \$4 million we put aside for (required contributions to the Public School Employees' Retirement System) and give it to the NFT," Webb said. "(The union) said this despite the fact that on Nov. 22, 2011, our contribution rate for next year increased from the state projection of 12.19 percent to 12.36 percent. Our current rate is 8.65 percent."

Webb reiterated his desire that negotiations should be televised.

"They suggested that our payroll went down in the past four years," Webb added, "(which is) something on which we agree because we reduced employees. However, our retirement costs and other expenses went up more than our payroll went down. The bottom line is nothing was presented by the NFT that would allow us to move forward."

He went on to accuse the union of refusing to truly negotiate and resorting to "bullying tactics."

Similar charges were delivered in Boyd's Tuesday statement toward the school board.

"The board's position at the table," she said, "has remained virtually unmoved since the day we began this process four years ago."

"Board president disputes union's take on meeting" Bucks County Courier Times 08 Dec 2011: A4