

NESHAMINY

Study: School buildings are underused, need renovations

By LIZ DONOVAN COURIER TIMES

Liz Donovan can be reached at news@phillyburbs.com

Neshaminy School District took the first step toward making the most of its schools at the board meeting Tuesday night.

A feasibility study by McKissick Associates determined that Neshaminy's schools are being underused and many are in dire need of renovations.

Firm representative Vern McKissick outlined different options available to the district to adjust the problem during his presentation Tuesday. All options involve the closing of at least one school. The board plans to review the options and meet again this summer for further discussion.

Superintendent Paul Kadri said that the intention is to initially consider each option without constraints, allowing everyone involved to "think creatively." This approach, he explained, "forces us to make sure that no stone is left unturned."

Kadri told the board that no one option is a leading contender at the moment and that all further discussion on this issue will be open and available to the public. Board president Richard Eccles added, "This is not something that will happen overnight."

Regardless of the option the school board adopts, McKissick recommends that all schools be upgraded to a "good" condition rating; McKissick now rates the schools between "fair" and "good" in his study. He also recommends that 9th-grade students be shifted to the high school and that all schools receive air conditioning.

Some scenarios allow for a "school within a school" setup, which combines some elementary and middle schools in a hybrid structure. McKissick explained that modular classrooms will not be included in the plan as they are considered "substandard classrooms" by the Department of Education.

McKissick went over the projected costs of the various options, showing a range from \$52 million to \$79 million. He also hopes for the board to obtain state aid for the project.

Currently the district operates one high school, four middle schools, eight elementary schools and an alternative school.