

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, APRIL 12, 1999**

President Kessler convened the April Work Session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:47 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on April 12, 1999.

**Board Members Present:** Stuart Kessler, Marc Orlow, Beverly Brown, Rich Connolly, Gary Johnson, Robert O'Neill, Jack Pinheiro, and Thomas Yunker.

**Board Members Absent:** Robert Carroll.

**Also Attending:** Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent; Dr. Ann Stormes, Director of Curriculum & Instruction; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; R. Scott Klinger, Director of Personnel; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Frank O'Hara, Solicitor; Carol Cohen and Jean Johnson, CEA; Gerhard Dietrich, Colonial Foundation for Educational Excellence; Allan Dovberg, President, Colonial United Taxpayers; Kim Clemente; Dominique Erb; Reggie Fisher; Doris M. Haskins; Penny Levin; Dr. Bulcola and Motumrayos Ogunkue; Dr. Hugh Lipshutz; Michael Macaninch; Brenna Rosenberg; Billy Scotti; Cynthia Slagle; Megan and Nancy Soffin; and Bob Thompson.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the minutes of the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meetings of 03/10/99, the Special Board Meeting of 03/10/99, the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 03/15/99, the Work Session of 03/15/99, the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 03/17/99, the General Meeting of 03/18/99, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 03/03/99, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #7, and the minutes of the Special Board meeting of 04/05/99, as shown in Enclosure #31. There were no comments or questions from the Board on the minutes.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Kessler referred board members to the Budget Transfers Report of 04/99; the Bond Fund Report for the month ending 03/31/99; the Capital Projects Report for the month ending 03/31/99; the General Fund/Federal Program Bills; the Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 03/31/99; the Food Service Bills/Cafeteria Report of 02/28/99; the Outstanding Investment Report, the Cash Flow Summary, the Comparison of Taxes Collected, the Real Estate Tax Escrow Report, and the Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 03/31/99; the Budget Analysis of 04/05/99; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 03/31/99, as shown in Enclosures #8 through #19. Mr. Pinheiro inquired about a missing current bill from Gilbane, and Mr. Bickleman indicated that he

would look into the matter. Mr. Orlow asked for a clarification on why a payment was being made to U. S. Healthcare. Mr. Pinheiro and Mr. Bickleman suggested that it might be the result of retirees or staff paying for continuing healthcare or dental coverage. Dr. Durtan indicated that he would have Mr. Klinger clarify the issue at the general meeting the following Thursday.

**Old Business:** None.

**Correspondence:** Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to two pieces of correspondence. The first was a letter from Bernadette Biasi, Chairperson of the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School Scholarship Fund providing information on the scholarship fund and requesting Board authorization to include one dollar for the fund in the price of student picture packages for the 1999-2000 school year. Mr. Kessler noted that the request would be on the agenda for action at the meeting of 04/15/99. (See Enclosure #20.) The second was a request by the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation to present two mini-grant recipients to the Board at its April meetings. Mr. Kessler recognized Gerhard Dietrich of the Colonial Foundation.

Mr. Dietrich first introduced Doris Harkins, a family and consumer science teacher at Colonial Middle School who reported on the Knit One, Pearl Two program. She described the program as one that gave students the opportunity to learn something about the traditional hand skill of knitting and to use a modern knitting machine. She noted that the program not only taught students a traditional skill with a new face, but it also taught fine motor skills, and gave the students some first-hand knowledge about the varying quality of fabrics thereby helping them become more intelligent consumers. The foundation grant paid for the purchase of the knitting machine.

Mr. Dietrich then introduced Bob Thompson, Kim Clemente, and Cyndi Slagle, teachers at Colonial Middle School, who highlighted the structure and design field trip for students of their sixth grade Silver Team. The trip involved the students participating in a program at a low ropes challenge course, and its purpose was to foster teamwork and trust and teach problem solving skills. They shared photographs of the trip with the Board and reported that they would be seeking a major grant from the foundation in order to take all sixth grade students on the trip in the future. The foundation grant paid for the cost of the trip.

All grant recipients thanked the foundation for its generous support.

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Durtan briefly reviewed his personnel report as shown in Enclosures #21 through #23. He noted that the report was being updated to include several retirements, and he thanked Ms. June Boyle and Mr. Carmen Branco, teachers of long-standing with the district, for providing early notice of their intent to retire. Such notice allowed the district the opportunity to begin the

search for qualified replacements early. Dr. Durtan also reported that one custodial substitute would be added to the substitute list and that he would be requesting authorization to proceed with the summer school program for 1999. He also advised the Board that the annual school survey would be sent out by bulk mail before the end of the week. He noted that it would be arriving in homes shortly and that, if families did not receive survey forms through the mail, they could get copies at the District Office. He encouraged community input. Board members confirmed that nepotism played no part in the appointment of any new staff and that advance notice of pending retirement was not required by contract but greatly appreciated. Mr. Pinheiro echoed the latter sentiment and noted that the announced intention of the entire math department at Cheltenham High School to retire during the current early retirement window was but one reason why competition could increase for talented replacement teachers.

**Budget Report:** Ms. Brown presented the Finance Committee report on the revenue and debt service projected in the 1999-2000 preliminary budget. She noted that the debt service would be down slightly, that federal revenue was up but designated strictly for federal programs, and that state revenue was down because of a decrease in the contribution rate for the retirement program. Ms. Brown reported that the preliminary budget included a 3.57% increase in local real estate taxes. In response to Board queries, she advised the Board and community that the preliminary budget included all projects requested by Board committees and that the preliminary budget would be acted on at the Board's general meeting the following Thursday. Ms. Brown reminded the community that the preliminary budget was the basis for discussion and community input prior to the adoption a final budget. She announced the availability of the approved preliminary budget on April 15<sup>th</sup>, a public budget presentation on May 20<sup>th</sup>, and final budget approval on June 17<sup>th</sup>. The complete Finance Committee report is attached to these minutes as Attachment #1.

**New Business:** Mr. Kessler reported that five items of new business would be on the agenda for action at the meeting of 04/15/99. They included a request for approval of student participation in the PMEA All-State Choir, the 1999-2000 preliminary budget, corporate resolutions for bonds proceeds accounts, and bid awards for athletic supplies and a nine-passenger school van. See Enclosures # 24 through #26. Dr. Durtan noted that the PMEA All-State Choir event began on April 14<sup>th</sup> and that approval at the regular meeting the following Thursday would be action after the fact. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the over-night participation of Michael Cho, a student at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School, in the All-State Choir in Valley Forge from April, 14 – 17, 1999. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler advised that the corporate resolutions for bonds proceeds accounts were a matter of routine. Dr. Durtan reported that the bids for athletic supplies were for the 1999-2000 school year but had to be placed early to insure the arrival of

the supplies prior to the fall sports season. Mr. Bell provided some background information on the van bid and advised that he would correct two typographical errors that Mr. Pinheiro had detected in the dates on the bid summary.

**Solicitor's Report:** None.

**Committee Reports:** Mr. Yunker provided a brief Curriculum Committee Report. He advised that the committee was considering options for upgrading the ILS at the elementary schools and would be seeing demonstrations on 04/14/99 and 04/22/99. He also reported committee support for the addition of technology and media management staff to enable the district to stay abreast of the installation and maintenance of the district's technology equipment. Board members briefly discussed the value added if these recommendations were adopted. Mr. Yunker advised that the committee was not yet ready to respond to Mr. Connolly's earlier request for data on the need for additional technology in support of block scheduling. Mr. Yunker reported briefly on curricular initiatives underway at the high school, including revised graduation requirements, the graduation project (an interdisciplinary activity comparable to a thesis), block scheduling, and an updated student handbook, which should be available for Board review in mid-May.

Dr. Durtan confirmed that the Finance Committee would be recommending appointments to the Committee on Local Tax Reform and received direction on presenting candidates to the Board for review prior to the Board meeting the following Thursday.

**Public Comment:** Mr. Dovberg, President of C.U.T. and the Montgomery Taxpayers Consortium, expressed his feeling and voiced his concern that Mr. Bell, the Board Secretary, was taking great license in the preparation of Board minutes and that the minutes were sometimes vague and could be misleading. He cited several examples of what he considered incomplete or misleading reporting of his comments to and interactions with the Board. He provided the full text of his thoughts in a letter to Mr. Kessler and requested that the letter be made part of the agenda for the meeting on 04/15/99, and it has been included in that agenda as Enclosure #36.

Mr. Dovberg voiced support for an extra technology person and suggested that the Board consider seeking help from the community on technology issues. He asked about the status of the task force on technology and learned that the task force was being reconvened to take a look at computer issues at the elementary level. Mr. Orlow reported that the task force had originally had community representatives among its membership, and Dr. Durtan indicated that the district could include additional community participants on the task force. Mr. Dovberg suggested that the district announce on CITV that community participation on the task force was welcome. In response to a query from Mr. Dovberg, Dr. Durtan reported that the district usually used state bid pricing when estimating the cost of computer

hardware. Mr. Dovberg suggested using other sources. Board members noted that other sources were considered during the actual bidding process.

**Other Announcements:** Mr. Kessler advised the community that the Board had met in executive session from 7:30 p. m. to just prior to the work session that evening to discuss personnel and legal matters and would be meeting briefly again in executive session just following the meeting to discuss additional personnel matters.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

James M. Bell  
Board Secretary