

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, APRIL 16, 2001**

President Orlow convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:50 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on April 16, 2001.

Board Members Present: Marc Orlow, Robert O'Neill, Robert Carroll, Stuart Kessler, Hugh Lipshutz, Gary Johnson, Thomas Marchozzi, Jack Pinheiro, and Thomas Yunker.

Board Members Absent: None.

Also Attending: Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; R. Scott Klinger, Assistant to the Superintendent for Administrative Services and Personnel; Patricia A. Iannelli, Director of Educational Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; William Wells, Chairman of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation; Ron Stoud, middle school teacher; Fred Citron, Executive Director of Montgomery Early Learning Centers; and Scott Helfand.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the minutes of the Work Session of 03/12/01, the Community Relations Committee of 03/13/01, the General Meeting of 01/15/01, the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 03/15/01, the Personnel Committee Meeting of 03/29/01, and the Finance Committee Meeting of 04/02/01, as shown as Enclosures #1 through #6 on the agenda for the General Meeting on Thursday, 04/15/01. Board members had no questions or comments on the minutes.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow noted that the financial reports for the month of March 2001 would be on the agenda for Board consideration the following Thursday. The reports included the Budget Transfers dated April 2001; the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report, General Fund/Federal Program Bills and Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 03/31/01; the Food Service Report for the month ending 2/28/01; the Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes Collected, Real Estate Tax Escrow Report, and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 03/31/01; the Budget Analysis through 03/31/01; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 03/31/01, as shown in Enclosures #7 through #18 on the agenda for Thursday evening. Mr. Marchozzi noted that the district appeared to be behind in collecting transfer and delinquent taxes. Mr. Bickleman explained that the slowdown in collecting transfer taxes was probably the result of slower turnovers. He also reported that he had lowered estimated transfer taxes by \$100,000.00 for the upcoming budget year. Mr. Bickleman felt that the lower collection rate for delinquent taxes was probably the result of fewer taxpayers being delinquent in their payments because of the district's aggressive collection activities. He estimated, however; that the district would eventually reach the budgeted level of collections. Mr. Orlow asked if the district based its collection estimates on historical data, and Mr. Bickleman confirmed that it did.

Budget Report: None.

Staff Report: None.

Old Business: Mr. Orlow reminded his fellow board members that Montgomery Early Learning Centers (MELC) had advised the Board that it would be seeking a 4% increase in tuition for the programs it offered in the district and had, in accordance with its lease of space at Colonial Elementary School, requested Board approval of its request for the increase. Mr. Orlow noted that Fred Citron, MELC Executive Director, was present. He invited him to provide additional information about the proposed increase. Mr. Citron provided a history of the MELC's service to the community and some background on its programs. He also reported that the primary purpose of seeking additional tuition revenues was to cover increases in staff compensation in order to retain qualified teachers. Board members had a number of questions. Mr. Orlow asked if MELC engaged in collective bargaining with its staff and Mr. Citron indicated that it did not. He noted that salaries were, in large measure, determined by market conditions. Dr. Lipshutz expressed concern that the kindergarten enrichment program appeared to be overpriced when compared with some local kindergarten programs. Mr. Citron asked about the competing programs. He noted that compensation varied in MELC's schools based upon costs in the areas where they were located and indicated that his free-standing, not-for-profit organization would find it difficult to compete with schools that were underwritten by supporting organizations. He also noted that MELC's kindergarten enrichment program was designed to mesh well with the district's elementary programs. Mr. Orlow thanked Mr. Citron for his input and advised that the Board would consider MELC's request at its general meeting the following Thursday.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow recognized Mr. Wells of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation. Mr. Wells asked the Board to accept foundation funding of the five new mini-grants. A complete list of these grants is attached to these minutes as Attachment #1. Mr. Orlow inquired about the grant to fund a student project. Mr. Wells noted that Jill Hallman, a PWHS student, had requested the grant to cover start-up costs for a local chapter of the philanthropic organization, Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Orlow advised that the board would take action on Mr. Wells' request at its general meeting on 04/19/01. (See Enclosure #19 on the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday.)

Mr. Wells introduced Ron Stoud, a special education teacher at Colonial Middle School and an earlier recipient of a foundation mini-grant. Mr. Stoud outlined a program of incentives that he used in his emotional support class to reinforce appropriate student behavior. He explained how the incentive program worked and how the funds had been used to purchase equipment to supplement or replace items that he had purchased on his own or received from family and friends. He also highlighted how he used student access to electronic games as a reward for meeting basic class goals and explained his close interaction with students' families as the students moved through his program. Dr. Cotter reported that he had observed Mr. Stoud's fine work first-hand and complemented him on the great job that he was doing with a difficult group of children. Mr. Carroll suggested

that, in future years, the district should find a way to fund successful programs such as this through its operating budget.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter briefly reviewed his Superintendent's Report for the General Meeting on Thursday evening. (See Enclosures #20 and #21 on the agenda for that meeting.) He highlighted a recommended leave extension for a math teacher and noted receipt of a retirement notice. Mr. Orlow asked if the notice was the first for the year. Mr. Klinger responded that it was the second, not the first.

New Business: Mr. Orlow noted that the district's preliminary budget for 2001-02 would be on the agenda for Board action Thursday evening. Board members and administrators spoke briefly about the preliminary budget and raised a number of points. They noted the following: The preliminary budget to be presented on Thursday evening had been discussed at the Finance Committee Meeting of 04/11/01 and called for expenditures totaling \$57,511,291.00, as. The budget was based on information reviewed and discussed in a number of board committees. The listed expenditures called for a real estate millage rate of 13.78, a 6.57% increase over the current year. Presentation of the budget that night would meet the district's statutory requirement to place a budget on the table for public review and comment. Administration had prepared a list of action items that could reduce those figures and would, at Board request, distribute it to board members by Thursday evening's meeting. The budget calendar called for a formal presentation and public discussion of the proposed budget at the regular Board meeting of 05/14/00 and the adoption of the final budget at the regular meeting scheduled for 06/21/01. The finance committee would serve as the umbrella group for handling budget deliberations. A decision on special education appeal that could affect the budget was expected any day. The district and its bond counsel were already looking into the possibility of a new bond issue to deal with potential capital projects.

Mr. Orlow noted that there would be two trip requests on the agenda for Board action at its meeting on 04/19/01. Mr. Frank Whitehead, PWHS teacher and DECA co-advisor, had requested board authorization to take two DECA students to a national competition in Anaheim, California from 04/25/01 to 04/29/01. The district was to incur no expense beyond the cost of providing substitute coverage. (See Enclosure #22 on the agenda for 04/19/01.)

Mr. Orlow advised that Mr. Geoff Oxbury had qualified to participate in the American Regions Math League at Pennsylvania State University on 06/01-02/01. High school administrators supported his participation. (See Enclosure #23 in the agenda for Thursday evening.)

Bid Awards: Mr. Orlow noted that several bid awards were scheduled for Board action the following Thursday evening. These could include athletics, health and physical education bids at the middle and high schools; physical education bids at elementary schools, and an electrical upgrade project at Conshohocken Elementary School.

Solicitor's Report: None.

Committee Reports: CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson briefly reviewed a resolution that would be on the agenda for Board action the following Thursday evening. The resolution would authorize the borrowing of \$698,343.00 for roof repairs at the Center for Technical Studies. Mr. Johnson noted that the cost of the project would be funded in accordance with the center's Articles of Agreement and that financing would be divided among the sending districts based upon the current market value of real property in the districts. He also reported that Colonial School District's share of the cost would be 35.88%, that the interest rate on the 10-year loan would be 4.5%, and that the district's annual payment would be \$31,745.37. (See Enclosure #24 on the agenda for the meeting of 04/19/01.) Mr. Johnson reported that two out of the three sending district Boards and a majority of all of the board members from the three districts would have to vote in favor of the resolution for it to pass.

Mr. Yunker provided some background information of the proposed operating budget for the Center for Technical Studies for 2001-02. He noted that total expenditures in budget were up about 8% but that operating expenses were up 5.9%. He reminded the Board that expenses to each district were allocated on the basis of three-year average enrollment and reported that Colonial's enrollment was up over the previous year. As a result, the total cost to the district would be up \$137,000 in the coming year. The average cost per student would be up 7.3%. Mr. Yunker also reported that the budget included funding for health insurance under Personal Choice Plan 5 but that the benefits were still being negotiated. Mr. O'Neill noted that the budget reflected the fact that the center was experiencing cuts in grant funding and contained additional debt service payments. Mr. Marchozzi sought and received clarification of the \$100,000.00 in funding from the building improvement fund. (See Enclosure #25 on the agenda for the meeting of 04/19/01.)

Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro reviewed a proposed addendum to the CASEA Meet and Discuss Agreement that had been deferred from the general Board meeting of 03/15/01. He noted that he would be asking for formal Board approval of the move from Personal Choice 5 to Personal Choice 215 that took place in January and resulted in a 10 percent reduction in premiums. He also indicated that he would be asking approval of a proposal to allow administrators to use funds from unused vacation days to fund approved tuition reimbursements. (See Enclosure #26 of the Thursday Agenda.) Dr. Lipshutz asked administration to track the impact of this last proposal and report back to the Board the following year. Mr. Pinheiro advised that the solicitor was still working on a proposal for a Tax Sheltered Annuity and that he would bring this item back to the Board at its May meeting.

Buildings & Grounds: Mr. Kessler advised that the committee had completed its visits to all district schools. He noted that the committee was working with the Maintenance Department on enhancing accountability for processing maintenance work orders and that he was recommending that the district ask its independent auditing firm to look at the system and make recommendations for improvement. He reported that he had spoken with the district's solicitor and had been told that the district already had an agreement with Barbacane Thornton and could, if board members had no objection, proceed with the proposed engagement without additional Board action. Board members had several questions about the scope of the project, including the information being sought, expectations concerning time reporting and controls, and a several other issues. Mr.

Kessler indicated that firm's review would cover the whole spectrum from time reporting through payroll accounting and on to project tracking. He noted that the firm would select one month, review the activities and processes in place that month, and issue a report would before final budget approval.

Mr. Kessler reported that the Board would soon need to look into long-term financing of capital projects to address livability issues in district schools. He cited aesthetic, creature comfort and facility use issues at several schools. He offered as examples Conshohocken Elementary School's need for a new curtain wall and Plymouth Elementary School need for a major overhaul of interior spaces. Mr. Kessler also reported on ventilation needs in server rooms and computer labs in district schools. Mr. Marchozzi noted that any projects covered by bond funds should last at least as long as the term of the bond.

Public Comments: None.

Additional Comments: Mr. Carroll reported on a recent newspaper article on state vaccination requirements for school children and asked for an update on where the district stood on meeting the requirements. He noted that the article stated that students who were not in compliance with the state guidelines were to be excluded from school. Dr. Cotter and Mr. Shipman reported that the district was already at work on the issue. They provided information of the steps that the district had already taken to make parents aware of the requirements. These included letters home to parents, announcements on CITV and the district's web page and information shared in Friday packets to parents. Mr. Shipman noted that there was a 04/30/01 deadline for students to be in compliance or they could not attend school. He estimated that about 400 students, mostly at the secondary level, were still out of compliance. Both Dr. Cotter and Mr. Shipman indicated that they would continue their efforts to get parents to take advantage of the options available for meeting the state mandate on vaccinations.

An announcement was made that the Board had met in Executive Session that evening from 7:30 p.m. to just before the meeting to discuss legal and personnel matters.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell
Board Secretary