

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, MAY 14, 2001**

Vice President O'Neill convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:38 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on May 14, 2001.

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

Board Members Absent: Marc Orlow.

Also Attending: Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; R. Scott Klinger, Assistant to the Superintendent for Administrative Services and Personnel; Patricia 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; Susan Castle, Colonial Foundation of Educational Innovation; Carol Bucci; Bob Grieshober; and Scott Helfand.

Mr. O'Neill led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: Mr. O'Neill directed Board attention to the minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee Meeting of 04/11/01, the Work Session of 04/16/01, the General Meeting of 04/19/01, and the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 04/24/01 and the Personnel Committee Meeting of 05/01/01, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #5 on the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday. Mr. Pinheiro requested a change in the summary of his comments on page 3554 of the minutes.

Financial Reports: Mr. O'Neill directed Board attention to the financial reports which were listed as Enclosures #6 through #17 on the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. The reports included the Budget Transfer Reports for 05/01; the Bond Fund Reports, Capital Projects Reports, and Capital Reserve Fund Reports for the month ending 04/30/01; General Fund and Program Bills; the Food Service Report for 03/01; the Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes, Real Estate Escrow Report and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 04/30/01; the undated Budget Analysis; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 04/30/01. Mr. Pinheiro asked if the district had recouped the funds deposited in escrow with Whitmarsh Township for the all-weather track project. Mr. Bickleman reported that the district not as yet received the money but, since the project had been completed, he would contact Whitmarsh Township and arrange for its return.

Staff Report: Mr. O'Neill reported that Mr. Bickleman would be making the required formal presentation of the 2001-02 preliminary budget. Mr. Bickleman provided those in attendance at the meeting copies of his summary of the preliminary budget. He walked the group through the narratives and graphs contained in the document and highlighted key items in both revenue and expenditure sections of the budget. Mr. Bickleman noted that the preliminary budget included the additional staffing being recommended by administration but did not include any funds for a settlement of the teachers' contract. A complete copy of the information that he presented at the meeting is attached to these minutes as Attachment #1. Mr. Pinheiro asked why state grant funds for pay-for-performance were not included in the budget. Mr. Bickleman noted that such funds came from competitive grants, were not guaranteed, and had not been budgeted in prior years for those reasons. Dr. Cotter noted that the grant application process would not begin until October.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Mr. O'Neill recognized Sue Castle, member of the Executive Committee of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation. She took a moment to compliment Ms. Iannelli for her on-going contributions to the foundation board and then presented Carol Bucci, mini-grant recipient and teacher at Colonial Middle School, to the Board. Ms. Bucci gave a brief presentation on her grant proposal for an alternative curriculum that combined real life experiences, activities in the school store, community resources and visits to job sites to help prepare students to become independent people.

Mr. O'Neill noted correspondence from Joseph C. Oravitz, Executive Director of PSBA , concerning PSBA dues. He asked Mr. Kessler, who serves on the PSBA Board, if he wished to comment. Mr. Kessler shared his perspective on the operation of the PSBA Board and the services that the organization provided member districts. He noted that PSBA mounted a lobbying effort on behalf of the boards of local districts, had its own insurance company that many districts used, and offered a variety of legal and information services. He advised that he was attempting to work within the organization to make it more progressive in its approach to educational issues. He recommended that action on the budget be deferred until after PSBA had adopted its final budget for the coming year.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter briefly reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #19 through #21 on the agenda for Thursday evening. He noted recommendations to fill the position of assistant principal at the middle school, authorize a leave of absence for a secretary and fill summer school positions in the "Read to Succeed" program at Conshohocken Elementary School. Board members had no questions or comments on the report.

New Business: Mr. O'Neill noted that the annual election of a treasurer would be on the agenda for action at Thursday's meeting and that Mr. Bickleman was recommended to continue serving in the position at an annual rate of \$6,900.00, a four-percent increase over the current year.

Mr. O'Neill reported that it was again time to appoint an independent auditor for the district. He noted that Barbacane, Thornton & Co. had been the district's independent auditor for a number of years. He indicated that the firm had submitted a proposal to continue to perform the district's audit for the next three years at an annual fee of \$13,000.00, \$14,000.00 and \$15,200.00, respectively. See Enclosure #22 on Thursday evening's agenda. Mr. Marchozzi advised that the going rate for increases in audit fees was between 2% and 4%. He felt that the increases proposed by Barbacane, Thornton & Co. were excessive. Mr. Bickleman offered to explore further with the firm the costs of its proposal.

Mr. O'Neill reported that the annual appointment of the district's solicitor would be on the agenda for Board action at the general meeting. He noted that the Board would need to act on Enclosure #23 of the agenda for Thursday evening to reappoint Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Esq. of Fox, Rothschild, O'Brien & Frankel as solicitor. He noted the 4% increase in the retainer to \$19,500.00 plus out-of-pocket expenses and litigation rates of \$140.00 per hour, effective July 1, 2001. Board members had no questions about the proposal for the coming year.

Mr. O'Neill reported that the district would be naming a depository for district funds during the 2001-02 school year at its general meeting on 05/17/01 and that First Union had been recommended. Mr. Bickleman noted that the bank had a new product that paid market rate interest on checking accounts until the checks cleared and that the district had earned substantial interest as a result. Mr. Pinheiro wondered if it might be prudent to seek bids for fees. Mr. Marchozzi noted that there might not be enough money involved to worry about but asked Mr. Bickleman if he could do an informal survey. Mr. Bickleman agreed that he could but noted that services and rates were complex issues and that it might be difficult to get a clear picture of the advantages of one proposal over another.

Mr. O'Neill also reported that a list of investment banks, trusts, and savings and loans would be on the agenda for Board consideration on Thursday. It was noted that district investments would be subject to confirmation of bank maintenance of legally required collateral. See Enclosure #24 on the agenda for the general meeting of 05/17/01.

Mr. O'Neill advised that the Board had interviewed two candidates for a position as Student Board Representative and would be taking action at its Thursday meeting to appoint Colleen Dougherty or Jeff Borkowski to the position.

Mr. O'Neill noted that the Board would be considering at that meeting a recommendation to reappoint Mr. Bell Board Secretary for a four-year term starting 07/01/01 at an annual rate of \$5,520.00 for the 2001-02 school year. In response to a question from Mr. Marchozzi, Dr. Cotter indicated that the amount represented a four-percent increase over the previous year.

Mr. O'Neill noted that the 2001-02 MCIU Special Education Services Agreement would be an action item on the agenda for the meeting on the following Thursday. Mr. Shipman advised that the agreements related to services for low incidence handicapped children. He indicated that the agreement was a fluid one that could increase or decrease over the course of the school year depending on the services provided and was reconciled at the end of the year. He reported that the agreement initially called for \$423,899.00 to cover the services. See Enclosure #25 on the agenda for the meeting of 05/17/01. Mr. Pinheiro advised that costs of providing services to students could be charged back to the school district of residence.

Mr. O'Neill indicated that the annual Allocation for Federal Programs would be up for Board consideration at Thursday's general session as Enclosure #26.

Mr. O'Neill directed Board attention to the list of textbooks contained in Enclosure #27 on the agenda for Board action at Thursday's meeting. Dr. Lipshutz asked if the Board would be voting on the books but not on the funding for them. Dr. Cotter responded in the affirmative. He noted that, with its vote, the Board would be endorsing the book and that the budget, when approved, would cover the cost. He went on to note that the books had been reviewed in Curriculum Council. In response to a question from Mr. Carroll, Dr. Cotter indicated that the district had kept state standards in mind when reviewing the books but had considered more than just the standards. Mr. Carroll asked for the cost of the books and expressed concern that recent news articles had reported that there were many errors in social studies texts. Ms. Iannelli stated that the books would cost approximately \$261,000.00 and indicated that she would have Mr. Lopresti check on the accuracy of the social studies texts.

Mr. O'Neill reported that the Board would be considering proposed increases in some facility rental fees in the coming school year. Mr. Bell briefly outlined the scope and reason for the increases in the fees for the high school auditorium, stadium and pool. He cited the increased cost of operating these facilities and the need to protect the district's investment in them. He also noted that the Buildings & Grounds Committee was recommending making the pool unavailable to Category VI organizations, namely out-of-district not-for-profits charging fees and for-profit entities. In responding to questions from board members, Mr. Bell indicated that the district had no legal obligation to make its facilities available to outside groups but that it had long-standing mutual agreements with its local municipalities and a long history of use by certain organizations.

Mr. O'Neill noted that a joint purchasing agreement with the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit and a resolution to participate in Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit's PEPPM Bid Plans would be on the agenda for Board action on Thursday evening. Mr. Bickleman explained that both items allowed the district to benefit from joint purchasing programs that resulted in savings to the district. See Enclosures #29 and #30 on the agenda for the meeting of 05/17/01.

Mr. O'Neill advised that five bids for instruction supplies and one bid for janitorial supplies would be on the agenda for Board action on Thursday evening. The bids would be Enclosures #31 and #32 on Thursday's agenda.

Solicitor's Report: None.

Committee Reports: CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson reported that he would be asking the Board to approve funding of the roof at the Center for Technical Studies on Thursday.

Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro announced that the Board would be taking action on Thursday evening on the 403(B) retirement plan for the CASEA group. He also reported that it would be acting on a \$7,600.00 stipend for the Director of Technology for his ongoing work on securing federal grants totaling some \$800,000.00 to \$900,000.00 per year.

Public Comments: None.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. O'Neill adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**