

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, AUGUST 13, 2001**

Vice-President O'Neill convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:42 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on August 13, 2001.

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

**Board Members Absent:** Marc Orlow and Thomas Marchozzi.

**Also Attending:** Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; R. Scott Klinger, Assistant to the Superintendent for Administrative Services and Personnel; Dr. Mary Ellen Gorodetzer, Director of Educational Services - Elementary; Patricia Iannelli, Director of Educational Services - Secondary; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services and Valerie Flounders.

Mr. O'Neill led the Pledge of Allegiance. He announced that the general meeting of the Board the following Thursday would be held at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium of Colonial Middle School. He advised that it would not be televised live but would be taped for broadcast immediately following the meeting. He also advised that the Board had met in executive session after the special meeting of 08/09/01 and again immediately proceeding this work session (08/13/01). The Board discussed legal matters, negotiations and personnel issues.

**Minutes:** Mr. O'Neill directed Board attention to the minutes of the Buildings & Grounds Committee of 07/13/01, the Work Session of 07/16/01, and the General Meeting of 07/19/01, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #3 on the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday. He also announced that board members had received a copy of the minutes of the Special Meeting of 08/09/01 in their packets that evening. He noted that those minutes would be on the agenda for Board action on Thursday evening. Board members had no question concerning the minutes.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. O'Neill directed Board attention to the financial reports that were listed as Enclosures #4 through #14 on the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. They included the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report, and Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 07/31/01; General Fund and Program Bills; the Food Service Report for the month ending 06/30/01; Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes, Real Estate Escrow Report and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 07/31/01; the Budget Analysis through 07/31/01; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 07/31/01. Mr. Pinheiro had questions about access to the tax office during

construction. Dr. Cotter assured him that taxpayers were able to reach the office. Mr. Carroll noted the difference in the amount of amusement tax collected in Whitemarsh Township and Plymouth Township. Mr. Kessler suggested that receipts were probably higher in Whitemarsh than in Plymouth because of the golf courses located in Whitemarsh Township. Mr. Carroll also inquired about services provided by O'Neill Catering listed on the check register. Mr. O'Neill noted that his family had no connection to the caterer.

**Staff Report:** Mr. O'Neill and Dr. Cotter briefly highlighted the presentations that Dr. Gorodetzer and Ms. Iannelli would be making at Thursday's meeting on summer programs and the Consortium of the Arts. Dr. Cotter also noted that Ms. Campbell would be reporting on the status of the newly implemented Graduation Project. Mr. Pinheiro praised a project in which a high school student translated the student handbook into Vietnamese for use by incoming Vietnamese students not yet in full command of the English language. Dr. Cotter reported that there would also be a report on Thursday evening on the childcare survey and the district's plans to address needs identified in the survey.

**Old Business:** None.

**Correspondence:** Mr. O'Neill noted two items of correspondence on the agenda for the general meeting Thursday evening. See Enclosures #15 and #16. These included letters from local resident, William E. Gunning, Jr. recommending changing the name of Plymouth Whitemarsh High School to Colonial School District High School and from Thomas J. Jentzel, Assistant Executive Director for Governmental and Member Relations, PSBA on the upcoming PSBA Legislative Council Meeting. Mr. O'Neill briefly recapped the history on suggestions to rename the high school. Dr. Lipshutz suggested that the district take an informal survey of public sentiment on the issue on the district web site. A majority of the board members present supported the idea. Mr. Kessler and Mr. Carroll indicated that they were willing to serve as delegates to the PSBA Legislative Council Meeting. Board members noted that Mr. Orlow and Mr. Marchozzi would have an opportunity on Thursday evening to express interest in the remaining seat on the district's team.

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Cotter reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #17 through #20 on the agenda for Thursday evening. He briefly explained personnel actions, conference requests and elementary foreign language staffing that were part of his report. Mr. Klinger gave an enrollment update and reported on hot spots where enrollment projections warranted watching. These included kindergarten and third grade at Conshohocken Elementary School, kindergarten at Plymouth Elementary School and third grade at Ridge Park Elementary School. Mr. Klinger confirmed Mr. O'Neill's understanding that Mr. Klinger would continue to monitor and update the data each Friday and fix final staffing on the third day of classes. In response to a query

from Mr. O'Neill, Mr. Klinger reported that he has had blanket approval to address staffing needs to meet district class size guidelines.

**New Business:** Mr. O'Neill advised that the results of a bid to re-wire Whitemarsh Elementary School would be on the agenda for Thursday evening. Mr. Bell explained the nature and timing of the work involved. He noted that the project involved re-wiring most of the building and would be done after hours. He advised that he anticipated no problems with clean-up each night for classes the following day.

Mr. O'Neill noted that there would be three requests to approve tuition students on the agenda for Thursday, 08/16/01. See Enclosure #22 on the agenda for that evening. Mr. Yunker asked if there were anything unusual about the requests. Dr. Cotter indicated that there was nothing unusual about them. Mr. Shipman reported that two of the students would be transferring from Germantown Friends and the other would be coming in from a school in Florida. He also noted that there would be a fourth request for a student from Germany who wanted to audit 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes for a couple of months. Mr. Shipman noted that INS regulations required that tuition be paid up front and the district had already received a tuition check. The student was hoping to improve his fluency in English. Mr. Pinheiro noted, and Mr. Shipman confirmed, that these requests would bring the total for the coming school year to five or six students. Mr. Shipman indicated that he had found no pattern to the increased number of tuition requests but noted that the district would be taking another look at establishing cut-off dates for applications. He responded to board queries about the transportation of tuition students by noting that parents/care givers were responsible for transportation for tuition students. He noted, however, that, when space was available, parents were sometimes permitted to transport students to district bus stops where buses would then pick them up and take them to school.

Mr. O'Neill directed the attention of board members to a series of transportation contracts for the 2001-02 school year, as shown as Enclosures #23 through #27 in the agenda for Thursday evening. The contracts were \$9.00 per student per day for Devon Preparatory School, \$24.50 per student per day for Lakeside Youth Service, \$4.95 per student per day for St. Joseph Preparatory School, \$9.88 per student per day for the Lincoln Center for Family and Youth, and \$10.00 per day for the Chester County Intermediate Unit.

Mr. O'Neill noted that a trip request from the high school basketball team would be on the agenda for Board action Thursday evening. (See Enclosure #28 on that agenda.) He reported that the trip would be to attend a basketball tournament 12/26/01 through 12/31/01 in Phoenix, AZ, at no cost to the district. Dr. Lipshutz acknowledged the value of the trip for the students but expressed concern that, if the days were declared school days as a result of a teachers' strike, the students would be missing four days of classes under block scheduling. He indicated his

opposition to the trip unless it was taken during vacation. Mr. Kessler asked and Mr. Klinger confirmed that extra-duty teaching positions, such as coaches, were covered under the collective-bargaining agreement. Mr. Kessler asked if the union had told its members not to work as activity sponsors or coaches after 09/03/01 if a new contract were not yet in place. Dr. Cotter indicated that he had not yet received formal notice to that effect but had heard of the direction informally. Several board members spoke about the impact of allowing students to take the trip if it fell when school was in session. They worried about the absence of teacher-sponsors during that time, questioned timing of the request and the reservations for the event, asked about the possibility of participating in a tournament closer to home, and several related issues. Several board members noted that there would be similar requests throughout the school year and the Board could be setting a precedent when it acted on this request. Mr. Kessler noted that the question before the Board was a policy decision that could easily affect other groups during the course of the school year. Dr. Cotter advised that such tournaments were an opportunity to reward and encourage students and showcase their talents to coaches who could offer students athletic scholarships. He noted that the trip would not be funded by the district but by the tournament itself, team fundraising, and family support. He also suggested that such requests be considered business as usual when they came up within the framework of the district's standard practice. Some board members argued that the request was not business as usual because it raised the possibility of a long trip on what might eventually be four school days. Dr. Lipshutz suggested that any approval be contingent on the trip taking place during a vacation period. Mr. Yunker voiced support for that approach and noted that, when such issues arose, one had to remember that life was not always fair.

Mr. O'Neill reported that administration was requesting approval to continue to participate in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement in the 2001-02 school year. Dr. Cotter noted that the original agreement had been for a period of three years and was now renewable on an annual basis. He reported that the agreement allowed a group of local municipalities, school districts and government agencies to get together to invest at favorable rates. Mr. Yunker asked how much the district had invested at that time and what the maximum was that the district had ever invested. Dr. Cotter indicated that he would have Mr. Bickleman provide that information when he returned from vacation.

**Solicitor's Report:** None.

**Announcements:** Mr. O'Neill reported that the Board and the CEA would be voting on the fact-finder's report a second time and that the Board would not be commenting on the report at that time. In response to queries from board members, Mr. Klinger stated his belief that the report had been published in the Philadelphia Inquirer the previous Saturday but would check the date of publication to confirm that the Board would meet the requirement to vote within five days of official

publication. Mr. O'Neill noted that the Board would be taking action on a "step movement" resolution at its meeting on Thursday evening.

**Committee Reports:** Mr. Carroll took the opportunity to explain that article #21 of the district's collective bargaining agreement with the CEA stated that all employees who joined the union had to remain members during the life of the contract but had a window to withdraw within 15 days of the expiration of the contract. He noted that a teacher could withdraw from the union starting 08/15/01 but would have to make a "fair share" payment even if he or she withdrew.

**Additional Information:** Mr. O'Neill reminded all in attendance and those watching the meeting on the cable broadcast that the general meeting for the following Thursday would be held in the auditorium of Colonial Middle School at 8:00 p.m. on 08/16/00. He also noted that the meeting would be taped and broadcast later rather than broadcast live because there is no cable hook up at the middle school.

**Public Comments:** None.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. O'Neill adjourned the meeting at 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell  
Board Secretary