

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, APRIL 18, 2005**

President Orlow convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:01 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on April 18, 2005.

Board Members Present: Marc Orlow, Gary Johnson, Hope Luken, Susan Moore, William Ryan, Pascal Scoles, Steven Slutsky and Mitch Zimmer.

Board Members Absent: Thomas Davis.

Also Attending: Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; MaryEllen Gorodetzer, Assistant Superintendent; Gerald Berger, Director of Human Resources; Cassandra DeLong, Director of Pupil Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Chief Financial Officer/Board Treasurer; Andrew Boegly, Chief Information Officer; David Sherman, Administrative Assistant, Community Relations; John Quinn, Director of CITV; Dante DelVecchio and Bob Martin, reporters; Nancy O'Brien; Dennis Powell; and the following members of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Act 72: Janet Cahill, David Caplan, Robert Franz, Walt Humm, Connell McGill, Bob O'Neill, Bill Peters, Jack Pinheiro, Frank Precopio, Stanley Rosenau and Craig San Pietro.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in Executive session on 03/14/05, 03/23/05, 04/06/05 and 04/18/05 to discuss legal and personnel matters.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow reported that Board action would be taken on Thursday evening on the minutes of the work session of 03/14/05, the General Meeting of 03/17/05, the Personnel Committee Meeting of 03/31/05, the Facilities Management – Transportation Committee Meeting of 04/04/05, the Finance Committee Meeting of 04/06/05, Community Relations/Student Life Committee Meeting of 04/14/05, and the Curriculum Meeting of 04/18/05. See Enclosures #1 through #5 and materials for Thursday evening. There were no questions on the minutes.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow reported that the Board would take action on the financial reports on Thursday evening. The reports included Budget Transfers, the Bond Fund Report, Capital Project Report, General Fund/Federal Program Bills, Capital Reserve Fund Report, Food Services Bills/Cafeteria Report, Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparisons of Taxes Collected, Real Estate Escrow Report, Reconciliation of Cash Accounts, the Budgetary/Deficit Status Report and Treasurer's Report for the month ending 03/31/05, as shown in Enclosures #6 through #17 for Thursday evening. Mr. Orlow asked if the bill for Polatnick Zacharjasz Architects was the final bill for the classrooms for all-day kindergarten. Mr. Bickleman confirmed that it was.

Public Comments on the Agenda: None.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow announced that there were members of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Act 72 in the audience and that they had requested an opportunity to formally provide their report to the Board. He noted that the committee had met eight times over the course of several months to look into Act 72 to form an opinion as to whether the act was right for Colonial School District and the community. He noted that the committee had done a lot of reading, studied the Act, secured information from a variety of sources and deliberated. Mr. Orlow took the opportunity to read for the record the names of the individuals who reflect a wide cross-section of the community and had served on the committee from start to finish. He thanked them, on behalf of the Board and the community, for their hard work and dedication. Mr. Caplan formally presented the written report to Mr. Orlow. Ms. Cahill presented the findings of the committee to the Board and Mr. San Pietro provided the six primary reasons why the committee recommended that the district opt out of the Act. He noted that the supporting sources and calculations were listed at the end of the report that the committee had presented to the Board. The committee's recommendation to opt out of Act 72 was unanimous and was based on a determination that the downside risks of the Act far outweighed its likely benefits. Mr. San Pietro reported that he would not have predicted that the committee's decision on the report would be unanimous, that all of the citizens on the committee valued public education highly and did not feel that the benefits of the act were worth the problems that it raised. The full committee report is attached to these minutes as Attachment #1.

Mr. Orlow again thanked the committee members for their efforts. He asked what, if anything, had surprised the committee as they did their research on the act. Mr. San Pietro reported that they had discovered that there was little that the Board could have done beyond what it had done in the face of unfunded mandates, strong unions and the need to address the concerns of its various constituencies. Mr. Caplan noted that committee members cared about education and wanted to help. They realized, however, that the Act did not help much because it did not increase revenue but shifted revenue from one tax source to another and had the downside of hampering what the Board could do. Mr. Zimmer asked what the committee had learned from the legislators with whom they had talked. Committee members felt that the legislators were themselves struggling to understand the Act and mostly echoed the perspective of Governor Rendell. Mr. Orlow reported that the Board had also been analyzing the Act, thanked the committee members for their insights and announced that the committee would take action on Act 72 at its Thursday meeting. He asked the Members of the Ad Hoc Committee to come back for the Board's general meeting in May to share their perspectives on budget issues that would be before the Board. See Enclosure #18 for Thursday evening for correspondence from the Committee.

Mr. Orlow directed the attention of board members to Enclosure #19 for Thursday evening, an anonymous donation of \$500 per year for the next three years to provide a scholarship or multiple scholarships for one wrestler or wrestlers to attend a summer wrestling camp. Mr. Orlow indicated that the donor was known to the Administration and that the wrestling coach and Guidance Department would determine the winners of the scholarships. Mr. Orlow indicated that the district could accept the donation without publicizing the name of the donor.

Budget Report: Mr. Orlow announced that the Budget Report would be deferred until a special meeting on Monday, 04/25/05.

Old Business: Mr. Orlow advised that Board Policy #815, Acceptable Use of Computers, Network, Internet, Electronic Communications and Information Systems was an exceptionally long one because it incorporated three previous policies into one. He noted that the policy addressed the requirements of House Bill 2262 requiring school districts to monitor and supervise the use of school technology and was aligned with the Child Internet Protection Act. Mr. Orlow noted that the policy had been reviewed by the Community Relations and Student Life Committee and would be up for adoption on a second reading on Thursday evening. Board members had no questions on the policy.

Mr. Orlow reported that Board Policy #231.1 – Commercial Exploitation of Students and #231.2 – Soliciting Funds from Students would be on the agenda for Board action on Thursday evening. Dr. Cotter reported that changes requested in March had been included in the update of Policy #231.1 in the agenda and that additional changes were outlined in the handout given to Board members that evening. He indicated that the Community Relations – Student Life Committee had reviewed the documents. Mr. Orlow asked if feedback had been received from others. Dr. Cotter reported that a committee composed of building and District Office administrators had reviewed and had input into the policy. Mr. Orlow reported that Policy #231.2 had also been revised as well as retitled. He noted that both policies were coming before the Board on a second reading. See Enclosures #21 and #22.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter reviewed with board members the personnel actions listed in Enclosures #23 and #24 of the agenda for Thursday evening. He highlighted the hiring of a Database Coordinator and, at Mr. Orlow's request, walked board members and the community through the steps taken to reorganize the Technology Department. Dr. Cotter explained the effort to integrate technology services to make district systems more efficient and user friendly. He noted the reorganization begun under the Chief Information Officer following guidelines suggested by a team of professionals from the PA Association of School Business Officials and the inclusion of telephones and copy machines under the umbrella of the department. Dr. Cotter highlighted the promotion and reassignment of existing staff and the creation of one new position, Database Coordinator. He also noted that the department had a current vacancy in the position of Telecommunications Technician.

Dr. Cotter reported that the proposed contract for nurse substitute services, contained in Enclosure #25 for Thursday's general meeting, was under review by the solicitor and would, upon receipt, be forwarded to the contractor for review and a determination of their interest in moving forward.

Dr. Gorodetzer explained the duties of the proposed Curriculum Liaison for School Health Services, an extra-duty/extra-pay position contained in Enclosure #26 for action on Thursday evening. She specifically noted the professional development tasks involved in the position.

The Board received notice of the Administration's intent to offer two summer music programs, one for band and the other for orchestra. The programs were to be housed at Colonial Elementary and Middle Schools. See Enclosure #27 for Thursday evening.

New Business: Mr. Orlow referred back to the earlier presentation by the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) on Act 72. He noted the committee's recommendation that the district opt out of the Act, and he recognized and welcomed the committee's interest in looking into district operations and the budget process. He stated his belief that Colonial School District was more ready than most districts to take action on Act 72 because of the committee's input. Mr. Orlow said that he had heard of other district's taking action on Act 72, but Dr. Cotter reported that most districts were still gathering information. Dr. Cotter recapped the CAC's involvement in that process in Colonial School District.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board would be taking action on Thursday evening on Board Policy #216, Student Records Policy. Ms. DeLong summarized the policy before the Board in Enclosure #28 and noted the importance of the attachment to the policy outlining provisions for handling student records. Mr. Orlow noted how important it was that parents understood the policy and asked how the information had been communicated in the past. Ms. DeLong reported that the essence of the policy had been and would be communicated through student and parent handbooks. The policy was before the Board on a first reading.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board would be taking action during the spring to reappoint Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Esquire of Fox Rothschild, district solicitor for the coming fiscal year. He referred to Enclosure #29 for Thursday evening which called for an increase in the annual retainer rate by \$175 per quarter and an increase in the litigation rate to \$160/hour. Mr. Orlow noted that these charges were below what was charged in other districts. Mrs. Moore asked for additional details on the increases in the rates. Mr. Orlow suggested that the solicitor confirm what is included in the retainer. Mr. Slutsky noted that the reappointment offered an opportunity to discuss services and suggested that the Board take advantage of that opportunity. Dr. Cotter noted that Fox Rothschild had a large and talented staff with extensive experience but noted that the Board could take action on the reappointment in May as the Administration sought additional information from the solicitor.

Mr. Bell provided information on renewals of child care leases for the coming school year. He reported that leasing fees were based on the district covering its costs and were projected to rise by 4% to \$3,865 for Head Start at Conshohocken Elementary School, by 3% plus a \$20/month internet access fee for the Montgomery Early Learning Center's (MELC) office space also at Conshohocken Elementary, by 8% to \$65/day for the MELC summer program at Whitmarsh Elementary School and by 4% to \$26/day for the MELC before and after-school programs at all elementary schools. Mr. Bell confirmed that the leases were based on language previously approved by the solicitor. Mr. Slutsky asked the Administration to explore whether there was any new legislation or legal opinion that may impact on the contract language.

Mr. Orlow indicated that revisions of the CMS and PWHS Handbooks would be on the Thursday agenda for Board action. He noted that the revisions had been reviewed in committee and that the most significant change involved the resource period at the high school. Dr. Gorodetzer explained that seventeen students would be assigned to each teacher during the resource period and that these students would remain with that teacher over their four years in the high school. Under this practice students and teachers would get to know each other better. Dr. Gorodetzer noted that students would still have options to visit other teachers for remedial and enrichment assistance and that grade levels and clubs would still have the opportunity to meet during the resource period. She also reported that the period would be moved to the second block so that vo-tech students would benefit from the opportunities that it offers.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board would be acting on Thursday evening on a request from a department head to attend the ASCD Summer Conference on Differentiating Instruction and Understanding by Design. The conference will be in New York City from 07/27/05 through 07/30/05. See Enclosure #34. Mr. Orlow asked if district staff had attended the conference in the past. Dr. Gorodetzer reported that the district had sent staff to ASCD conferences in the past but not one on this topic. She noted that the attendee would be sharing the information that they received with their colleagues upon their return.

Mr. Orlow advised that the Board would be considering on Thursday evening a request for the DECA sponsor to take two students to the National DECA Conference in Anaheim, CA from 04/27/05 through 05/01/05. He noted that the cost of the trip would be born by the club and the participants. See Enclosure #35 for Thursday evening.

Mr. Bell provided a brief summary of the three bids that would be on the agenda from the general meeting the following Thursday. See Enclosures #36 through #38. He noted that the PWHS Athletic and Physical Education Supplies bid was the annual bid covering a wide variety of supplies. He confirmed that vendors responded to one or more of the many items on the list and that the lowest responsible bidder was selected for each item. Mr. Orlow noted that the bid was traditionally awarded early to ensure that supplies would be on hand at the start of the fall sports season in mid-August. Mr. Bell reported that the student picture Request for Proposal (RFP) involved the expenditure of no district funds and was for fall pictures of students and complimentary digital and non-digital services for the district. He noted that the award would be based on the district assessment of the best mix of picture quality, photo services and complimentary products and services for the price. Mr. Bell reminded board members that the bid for the renovation of the PWHS library involved the approval of the general contractor bid deferred from the March meeting and the award of the new bids for HVAC and electrical contractors to the lowest responsible bidders. He noted that work would begin on the project immediately following the end of classes in June and would be completed by the end of November 2005.

Solicitor's Report: No report.

Committee Reports: Mr. Johnson reported that he would be seeking Board approval on Thursday evening of the 2005-06 budget for the Center for Technical Studies. He noted

that budget would increase 3.6% over the previous year, budget to budget. Mr. Johnson also announced that he would be presenting for Board consideration a memorandum pledging the district's taxing authority in lieu of funds for escrow for the renovation of the CTS facility.

Dr. Cotter advised that he would place a request for funding from the Post Prom Committee on the agenda for Board consideration on Thursday evening.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**