

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, APRIL 25, 2005**

President Orlow convened the special meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:05 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on April 25, 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; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services,/Board Secretary; Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Chief Financial Officer/Board Treasurer; Andrew Boegly, Chief Information Officer; David Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator; and John Quinn, Director of CITV.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance. He advised that the special meeting had been convened to adopt the preliminary budget. He noted that approving the budget that day provided sufficient time to advertise it and allowed for public comment on it before the formal budget adoption scheduled for a special meeting on 05/26/05.

Budget: Mr. Slutsky presented the preliminary 2005-06 budget of approximately \$75,385,000, an 8% increase or approximately \$5,800,000 over the budget for 2004-05. He noted that the increase was driven by state and federal mandates. Mr. Slutsky reported that the budget was fiscally responsible and met the needs of the district. He indicated that it called for a .51% decrease in real estate taxes.

Mr. Slutsky explained state legislation governing gaming revenue for education and the role of the district's Citizen's Advisory Committee in weighing the pros and cons of opting into or out of the state program. He cited the committee and Board's unanimous agreement to opt out of state gambling revenues and Board and Administration's excellent record of stewardship of the district's finances.

Mr. Slutsky noted that 73% of the district's preliminary budget covered under-funded federal and state mandates, such as special education and the employee retirement system, and that 8% was tied up in rising health care costs that were outside district control. He also expressed his belief that the Board had demonstrated that it was better prepared to manage the district's finances than the state.

Mr. Slutsky noted that the preliminary budget included a property tax decrease of .5% and an earned income tax of .5% that the district planned to enact. He stressed that the income tax was one that almost all districts across the commonwealth levied and that the vast majority of district residents were already paying to their own municipalities or to the municipalities and districts where they worked. He reported that 83% of district residents

paid the tax to the municipalities and school districts where they worked. He noted that these residents already paying the 1% municipal/school board tax would see no increase in taxes as a result of the district enacting an earned income tax but would, however, see the money that they had been paying coming back to their home district. Mr. Slutsky reported that residents paying only the .5% municipal tax in Whitemarsh would also pay .5% to the district. He noted that enacting the tax enabled the district to take advantage of an income source that other districts had long enjoyed and, at the same time, shift the local tax burden away from senior citizens and others on fixed incomes.

Mr. Zimmer sought and received confirmation that property tax savings in the preliminary budget would largely come from the earned income tax being paid elsewhere returning to Colonial School District. Mr. Ryan sought and received confirmation that the preliminary budget contained a planned .5% earned income tax. Mr. Orlow noted that the 1% earned income tax under Act 511 was always expected to be shared between municipalities and school districts but that the Colonial School Board had been reluctant to adopt its .5% while its real estate tax base was growing robustly. He reminded the community that growth had been much lower recently.

Mr. Orlow advised that the preliminary budget would become a public document that evening and would be available for public review, comment and input. He reported that the Board would take action on the final budget at a special meeting on 05/26/05. Mr. Slutsky encouraged community members to provide input on the budget. Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded a motion to approve the preliminary budget. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow sought Board action on a special education placement agreement before the Board. He asked Dr. Cotter to highlight the reason and purpose of the placement. Dr. Cotter reported that the child was deaf, in need of mental retardation services and suffered a physical handicap. He noted that the agreement called for the district to fund the student's educational program at a cost lower than what it would pay if the child was placed in a program with the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit. He also reported that an insurance carrier would pay for the residential placement. He noted that the family had waived a number of rights and that the agreement was, in every way, a real compromise. In response to a Board query, Dr. Cotter reported that the child was ten years old. Mr. Orlow asked how placements were made in such cases. Ms. DeLong outlined the process of receiving reports on the student and evaluating program needs. Mrs. Luken asked about age limits for providing services. Dr. Cotter reported that services could be provided until age 21. He confirmed Mr. Orlow understanding that all student IEP's were reviewed on an annual basis to confirm the appropriateness of the placements. Dr. Ryan asked when the placement would begin. Dr. Cotter reported that it would begin immediately and would include extended school year services. Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the placement. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Dr. Cotter requested Board Action on a recommendation from the Community Relations – Student Life Committee that the Board fund the Post-Prom Party at the same level as the previous year. Mr. Orlow noted that additional time was needed before the post-prom

program could become self supporting. He suggested that the Board remain a co-sponsor of the event the current school year. Dr. Scoles reported that the committee strongly supported the event because it put the students at less risk from post-prom activities. Dr. Scoles moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the contribution at last year's level, i.e. \$5,000 plus coverage for security and postage. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**