

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, APRIL 16, 1998**

President Kessler convened the April Meeting of the Colonial School Board of Directors at 8:03 p.m. in the Board Room of the Colonial Elementary School on April 16, 1998.

**Board Members Present:** Stuart Kessler, Marc Orlow, Beverly Brown, Robert Carroll, Rich Connolly, Gary Johnson, Robert O'Neill, Jack Pinheiro, Thomas Yunker.

**Board Members Absent:** None.

**Also Attending:** Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent; Dr. Ann Stormes, Director of Curriculum & Instruction; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; R. Scott Klinger, Director of Personnel; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Frank O'Hara, Solicitor; John Lukens and Katy Swetkowski, Student Representatives to the Board; Carol Cohen, CEA; Sally Abbott; Tom Davis; Bill English; Don Flathman; Alan, Isabel and Kathy Friedlander; Tom Gibson; Mark Helms; Dina Kilpatrick; Hugh Lipshutz; Susan Lunney; Michael Macaninch; Pat Marinelli; Darilyn Moyer; Donald Newmeyer; Y. S. Patel; Barbara Pitt; Lisa Rhodamer; Mike Schaller; Nancy Soffin; Amy Stohner; Mary Theiss; Joanne Wiess; students and parents of students of district schools; and district teachers.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Kessler and Dr. Durtan greeted students and staff who had distinguished themselves in the areas of academics, the arts, athletics, scholastic competition and career development and presented a certificate of achievement to each of the individuals recognized by the Board. A complete list of those honored is attached to these minutes and listed as Attachment #1.

**Minutes:** Mr. Kessler asked for comments or questions on the minutes of the Work Session of 3/16/98, the General Meeting of 3/19/98 and the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 3/30/98, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #3, and the Community Relations Committee, as shown in Enclosure #29. In response to a Board query, Mr. Bell confirmed that all changes to minutes suggested at the meeting of May 13<sup>th</sup> had been made. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the minutes as amended. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Kessler asked the Board if there were any comments or questions on the Budget Transfer Reports of 4/98; the Bond Fund and the Capital

Reserve Fund Reports for the Month Ending 3/31/98; Food Service Bills and Reports for the Month Ending 2/28/98; the Outstanding Investment, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes Collected, and Real Estate Escrow Reports, and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the months ending 3/31/98; and the Budget Analysis of 4/6/98 and Treasurer's Reports for Month Ending 3/31/98, as shown in Enclosures #4 through #14. Mr. Bickleman reported that an updated Reconciliation of Cash Accounts including figures reconciled to bank statements had been included as a revised Enclosure #12. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to approve the reports as revised. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

**Public Comments on the Agenda:** None.

**Staff Report:** None

**Old Business:** None.

**Correspondence:** Mr. Kessler reported that the district had received several pieces of correspondence, as shown in Enclosures #15 through #18. Three required Board action.

He noted Ms. Biasi's request in Enclosure #16 that the Board reauthorize the inclusion of one dollar for the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School scholarship fund in the price of picture packages for the 1998-99 school year. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Ms. Brown seconded a motion to reauthorize the charge. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler recognized Mr. Davis, a representative of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation, who introduced two teachers who were mini-grant recipients. Lisa Rohdamer of Conshohocken Elementary School outlined a summer reading program which provided students who were reading below level with an opportunity for additional instruction during the summer months. She indicated that the program allowed more instruction time with the students and resulted in some additional progress for all participants. She also felt that students participating in the program made easier adjustments to school the following September.

Fran Miller of Ridge Park Elementary School described the Wee Deliver Postal Program which encouraged children to write and handle letters in much the same way as they would if they used the U. S. Postal Service to send mail. She noted that the program integrated the language arts and math curriculum at the elementary level and gave volunteers an opportunity to experience new responsibilities. Mr. Davis announced that the foundation was requesting Board approval for the award of six new mini-grants totaling \$2,548.00.

**Mr. Orlow noted that he had spoken to Mr. Davis to clarify some concerns that he had had with one of the proposed grants and thanked Mr. Davis for his on-going support of the district. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Pinheiro seconded a motion to accept the grants. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.**

**Mr. Kessler raised Ms. Harlow's request in Enclosure #18 for financial support for continued student participation in the athletic training program. Mr. Pinheiro asked Student Board Representative Katy Swetkowski, who has participated in the athletic training program to comment on her experience. Ms. Swetkowski spoke of the things she had learned and the self-confidence she had gained as a result of participating in the program. Mr. Connolly moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the expenditure of \$530.00 to send two students to the Cramer Advanced Camp during the summer. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.**

**Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan briefly reviewed his personnel report containing routine recommendations on additions, terminations, suspensions, demotions, leaves of absence, promotions, suspensions, transfers and resignations of staff, as shown in Enclosure #19, and additions and deletions to the substitute list, as shown in Enclosure #20. He noted the pending retirement of Faith Cullen, the secretary to the Personnel Director and an employee of the district for many years. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to approve the superintendent's report as shown in Enclosures #19 and #20. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.**

**Dr. Durtan briefly reviewed plans for the annual Parent School Survey and again encouraged parents to participate because their inputs affected decisions made by the district.**

**Board Student Representatives Report: Mr. Lukens announced the formation of a Big Brothers/Big Sisters program at the high school in which upperclassmen and women served as mentors for freshmen students. Students meet weekly after school, at lunch or during activity period. He noted the upcoming Jazz Band Cavalcade and the Drum Line Cavalcade on the following two Saturdays, the issuing of report cards, an upcoming SADD concert featuring pop and rock musicians from the high school, and the elections for senior class officers. Ms. Swetkowski provided information on the Senior Class Trip, the Junior Flea Market, the Soph Hop, and the Freshman Island Paradise Dance. She also highlighted the Distinguished Graduates Presentation, the Freshman-Senior Talent Show, the five school mixer hosted by Springfield High School, the 1998 AP exams, and Mark Twain's (Mr. Wills') visit to the high school. Mr. Lukens congratulated Ms. Swetkowski and Mr. Schaller on their fine performances in Bye Bye Birdie.**

**New Business: Mr. Kessler noted that the 1998-99 school calendar, as shown in Enclosure #21, was on the agenda but advised that action would be deferred until**

the May meeting. He also reminded those watch the meeting that classes for the 1998-99 school year would begin before Labor Day, probably on September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Kessler briefly reviewed the need for a design for the expansion of the electrical distribution systems at both the middle and high schools in order to handle technology initiatives beyond those already in progress at the two schools. He noted that administration's recommendation that the award of the design be made to Joseph A. Mercadante, P. E. Mr. Bell reviewed the proposed system, as outlined in Enclosure #22, and noted that it would provide dedicated, isolated, 20-amp circuits in 141 rooms in the two schools as well as the associated panel box upgrades. He also confirmed that the design was flexible enough to handle differences in the number of computers and peripherals from room to room and that extra slots in panel boxes would permit district electricians to add additional lines if they were needed to service new installations such as computer labs. Mr. Connolly moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the award of the design project to Mr. Mercadante, as the lowest responsible vendor meeting specifications, at a cost of \$12,800.00. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler noted several bid awards requiring Board action:

Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the award of bids for athletic, health and physical education supplies at all schools as recommended in Enclosure #23. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown recommended and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the purchase of band uniforms for the Colonial Middle School band as recommended in Enclosure #23. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to approve the award of a bid for TV monitors with converter cards and wall mounts as shown in Enclosure #23 and to finance the purchase with payments from the general fund in the amount of \$195,236.19 and from the 1998 bond fund in the amount of \$353,743.17. Ms. Brown advised that the district would reimburse the 1998 bond fund through inter-fund transfers of \$195,236.19 in July 1998 and \$158,506.98 in July 1999. She noted that handling the financing in this manner made good use of available funds and would have little impact on the district's ability to borrow in the future at reasonable rates. Mr. Bickleman noted that the district would save money using this funding mechanism because it would lose far less interest earned on the investment of the bond funds than it would pay on a lease for the acquired technology. Mr. Kessler thanked Ms. Brown for her work on the financing, and Ms. Brown thanked Mr. Bickleman for his initiative on the matter. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler asked Ms. Brown to review the development of the preliminary budget for 1998-99 and provide an overview of the steps to follow. Ms. Brown reviewed the

regulatory requirement for placing a preliminary budget on the table for public review and comment, and she reminded those watching the meeting that a vote to approve it was not a vote for the final budget. She advised that the Board and district administration would continue to review and refine the data in the weeks before adoption of the final budget. She encouraged the public to secure copies and comment on the budget. Ms. Brown also noted that the budget expenditures listed in the document totaled \$47,749,255.00, a 2.28% increase over the previous year, and advised that the preliminary budget did not contain any additional dollars for increases in teacher salaries. Several board members commended Mr. Bickleman on a fine job in assembling the preliminary budget, and he acknowledged the cooperation and assistance of his fellow administrators in developing the document. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the preliminary budget. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

**Solicitor's Report:** No formal report. In response to a query from Mr. Kessler, Mr. O'Hara provided a brief update on the status of the WFIL property. He noted that the district and Whitmarsh Township had secured a professional appraisal of the property which was in the same range as the recent township reassessment and the last purchase price. He also advised that the district and township were taking a look at surveying the property and dividing it for condemnation purposes should they fail to reach an agreement to purchase the property at fair market value from the current owners. Mr. O'Hara also briefly reviewed the steps involved in resolving any appeals of district and township action to condemn the property and confirmed that the district and township could condemn all or part of the property.

**Committee Reports:** Mr. Kessler recognized committee chairpersons for their reports.

**Intermediate Unit Board:** No report.

**CMCAVTS:** Mr. Johnson reported that the name of the vo-tech school had formally been changed to the Center for Technical Studies of Montgomery County. He also advised that the school's preliminary budget was available to the Board and the public and that he would have a formal report on the budget at the May meeting. Mr. Johnson acknowledged the contributions made by Mr. Connolly during the development of the vo-tech budget and reminded board members of the upcoming annual dinner at the Center for Technical Studies. Mr. O'Hara briefly reviewed with the Board some concerns which Norristown Area and Upper Merion School Districts had with the Joint Committee's recommendation to renew the Articles of Jointure for an additional 30 years. He indicated that Dr. Woodall was working on phraseology to address the issues. In response to a query from Mr. Kessler, Mr. O'Hara reported that there were no substantive problems with the revised articles already approved by the Colonial School Board.

**Personnel:** No formal report. Mr. Pinheiro noted that the Board and CEA had participated in six hours of fact-finding in an effort to reach a contract. He advised that the Board was waiting for a fact-finding report and then would have to vote to accept or reject the report. He also noted that personnel costs in the preliminary budget now reflected a total of four new professional staff who would address additional needs in special education.

**Finance:** No report.

**Curriculum and Program:** No report.

**Buildings & Grounds/Transportation:** Mr. Connolly directed board members' attention to material that Mr. Bell had prepared in advance of a committee meeting scheduled for 4:30 p.m. on April 27<sup>th</sup> to interview representatives of three construction management firms which had responded to the district's recent RFP. He encouraged all board members to attend the meeting.

Mr. Connolly also encouraged board members to read through the minutes of the committee's March 30<sup>th</sup> meeting and re-familiarize themselves with the creature comfort issues at Colonial and Conshohocken Elementary Schools and the high school. He advised those watching the meeting that district maintenance personnel would be adjusting controls on HVAC systems in the schools to purge hot air overnight to make the buildings more comfortable in hot weather the following day. He noted that this step was the initial attempt to alleviate some of the comfort problems and that other potential solutions, including work on curtain walls at Conshohocken Elementary School and the high school, would be revisited once the results of control adjustments were evaluated.

Mr. Connolly reviewed a design originally created by the architect to address staff concerns about ventilation in the home economics rooms affected by the addition of the new science wing. He noted that the proposed change would add windows and an outdoor courtyard for supervised play of children who might attend a proposed child care program that could become part of the home economics curriculum. Mr. Connolly told the Board of the architect's assurance that the HVAC system in the area would provide more than adequate ventilation even without the windows and highlighted an idea offered by Mr. Yunker to modify the suggested courtyard to create a spare room for future use. In response to Board queries, Mr. Bell briefly elaborated on Mr. Connolly's remarks. Dr. Durtan pointed out that the design suggested by Mr. Yunker still allowed for windows in one home economics classroom and an area outside where children could engage in supervised play. Mr. Connolly noted that the architect estimated that site costs for the annex would be less than originally estimated and that the spare room could be built without any increase to the estimated cost of the new annex. He also advised that it was important to decide the issue then so that appropriate construction drawings could be done without further delay. Mr. Bell advised that preliminary design drawings

were being presented to the township that same evening, and that final drawings might be submitted in May, construction and bidding documents distributed in June and construction bids handled in July. Ms. Brown asked for a written schedule leading up to the bids, and Dr. Durtan advised that he had already requested the schedule from Mr. Breslin. Mr. Connolly moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the design change. On roll call vote, Mr. Orlow opposed. All remaining board members in favor. Motion carried.

**Community Relations: No report.**

**Legislative: No report.**

**Board Comments:** Mr. Pinheiro gave prepared remarks outlining his experiences at the NSBA convention in New Orleans. He noted that the trip reaffirmed his long-held belief that such conventions offered no information or insights not available in Pennsylvania. He urged the Board to reconsider his suggestions of earlier years to limit attendance at national conventions to no more than three board members at a time. He indicated that he would submit a proposal for Board consideration after the annual budget process was complete.

**Public Comments:** Mrs. Marinelli outlined her concerns with the district's programs for learning disabled children and chronicled what she felt was an uncaring response from the district when she raised concerns about her son's educational program. She expressed her willingness to proceed to mediation if it was necessary to secure what she felt was proper care for her son and urged other parents to do the same if they felt it necessary.

Dr. Lipshutz questioned the 184-day student schedule in the proposed 1998-99 school calendar. Dr. Durtan noted that it was a one-time exception to district practice to avoid the final day of school being on a Monday. He also noted that the calendar was still subject to review and revision. In response to a question from Dr. Lipshutz, Ms. Brown confirmed that the preliminary budget contained no extra dollars of salary increases for teachers, including the step.

Ms. Theiss invited board members to attend the annual school carnival at Ridge Park Elementary School on May 15<sup>th</sup> from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. She noted that it was a great fundraiser and that volunteers were still needed.

Mr. Newmeyer brought to the attention of the Board "Freedom to Learn", an organization supporting informed choice/pro-life instruction in public schools. He read from an article in the Washington Times and gave Mr. Bell a copy to pass along to board members.

**There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 9:58 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**James M. Bell  
Board Secretary**