

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, JUNE 15, 1998**

Vice-President Orlow convened the June Work Session of the Colonial School Board of Directors at 8:42 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on June 15, 1998.

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

Board Members Absent: Stuart Kessler.

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; Steve Muldoon and Avi Ghosh of Gilbane; Susan Dryburgh; Hugh Lipshutz; Michael Macaninch; Amy Stohner; and Gail Sutton.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Orlow noted that the Board would present a number Certificates of Achievement to district students and staff at its June meeting. He then directed Board attention to the minutes of the Work Session of 5/18/98, the General Meeting of 5/21/98, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 6/8/98, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #3 and asked board members if they had any questions or comments. Mr. Johnson noted that Enclosures # 1 and 2 were reversed in the packets distributed to the Board and that several lines appeared to be missing for the second page of Enclosure #3. Mr. Bell indicated that he would see that the necessary corrections were made. Mr. Yunker asked if the sequence of snow make-up days had been part of the motion to approve the school calendar for 1998-99. Mr. Bell responded that he believed that the snow day make-up schedule had not been included in the motion. The Board requested that Mr. Bell review the tape of the meeting of 5/21/98 to confirm his belief.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow asked the Board if there were any comments or questions on the Budget Transfer Report of 6/98; the Bond Fund and the Capital Reserve Fund Reports for the Month Ending 5/31/98; Food Service Bills and Reports for the Month Ending 4/30/98; the Outstanding Investment, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes Collected, and Real Estate Escrow Reports, and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the months ending 5/31/98; the Budget Analysis of 6/8/98 and the Treasurer's Report for Month Ending 5/31/98, as shown in Enclosures #4 through #14, and the General Fund/Federal Program Bills. No issues were raised with the reports.

Public Comments on the Agenda: None

Staff Report: Dr. Durtan noted that there were two items on the agenda that evening under staff reports and suggested that the Board first hear a presentation from Mr. Muldoon and Mr. Ghosh from Gilbane on the subject of the structural steel work involved in the construction of the science wing at the high school. Mr. Connolly provided a brief summary of the issues that were first raised in the Buildings & Grounds Committee and then turned to Mr. Muldoon and Mr. Ghosh for their presentation. Mr. Muldoon outlined the first of two issues, a contract strategy for structural steel based on bidding it as separate prime instead of including it in the bid for the prime contractor. The advantages of the proposal were two-fold: Putting the district in charge of the structural steel contractor and getting an early start on bidding and fabrication of the steel. The latter will make it possible for the district to avoid construction downtime because of delays in receiving the structural steel at the construction site. Mr. Muldoon presented charts showing that the early award of the steel bid would eliminate a 2.5 months gap in construction which could mean the difference between a September 1999 occupancy versus a December 1999 occupancy. (See Attachment #1 to these minutes.) Mr. Muldoon went on to explain the advantage of relocating home economics classes housed in the “sewing room” for the 1998-99 school year so that steel work in that area could be completed during the initial structural steel phase. The main advantages involved doing the work when the crane was on site and removing the classes from a noisy area adjacent to the construction. Mr. Muldoon and Mr. Ghosh then responded to Board questions.

Mr. Pinheiro asked if having a separate prime for structural steel could result in increased change orders. Messrs. Muldoon and Ghosh explained steps that could be taken to minimize this risk, namely tightening up the bid specifications and calling for unit pricing for the work. He noted that much of what might appear to be change orders would actually involve doing the work once but at a later stage in an accelerated process rather than doing it twice. Dr. Durtan confirmed that Mr. Breslin considered having structural steel as a separate prime both doable and desirable. He asked Mr. Muldoon if there was any way to protect the district from damage claims from contractors for any unplanned delays. Mr. Muldoon noted that damage claims could arise in any scenario. Mr. Ghosh explained that the bid specifications would be written to make the steel fabricator responsible for damages if the steel were not ready on time. Ms. Brown asked if it would be possible for the district to cancel the structural steel if the bids for other work came in high and the district did not go forward with the construction project. Mr. Muldoon explained that the Board would be liable to pay for the drawings necessary to proceed with the work and that the specifications for the steel bid would make the district responsible for a small cancellation charge if it did not proceed with the project. He also noted that the Board would know its exposure before it awarded the steel bid and could choose to proceed or not proceed based on that knowledge.

Mr. Connolly asked what the district could do if Mr. Breslin's estimate of the cost of the project was off significantly. Mr. Muldoon noted that the Board had asked that a series of alternates be bid and that it could pick among those alternates to keep costs under control. Ms. Brown asked if Gilbane could provide her a construction schedule that could be used when making final financing arrangements, and Mr. Ghosh indicated that he could do that. Mr. Orlow asked what action Gilbane wished the district to take that night. Mr. Muldoon asked that the Board direct the architect to complete the construction documents for structural steel by June 26th and the balance of the construction documents for the project by the end of July. He also asked that the Board decide shortly whether it wished to do the structural steel work in the area where the entrance to the science wing would break through an existing home economics room during the initial structural steel phase while a crane was still on sight or at a later date, probably the summer of 1999.

Mr. Yunker asked several questions related to the timelines and deadlines set for the architect on construction documents. Dr. Durtan indicated that he would look that information up and have it available at the meeting the following Thursday. He noted that an important issue in this area was the time required for Board review of and feedback on the construction documents. Mr. Yunker asked if Mr. Breslin's construction drawings would look different as a result of moving on structural steel earlier in the process. Mr. Muldoon responded that the building would not be changing structurally as a result of the process but that some details related to structural steel tie-ins could change as the steel work moved forward. Mr. Orlow inquired about Mr. Breslin's commitment to have the steel drawings ready by June 26th and the remaining drawings by the July meeting of the Board. Dr. Durtan noted that the Board meeting came early in July and bid documents were currently scheduled to be ready by the end of July. He indicated, however, that he would confirm Mr. Breslin's schedule and present the information on Thursday. In response to a question from Mr. Yunker about refunds of sales tax on construction work, Mr. O'Hara indicated that he would be providing the Board some information on how to avoid the taxes.

Dr. Durtan advised the Board that Ms. Davis, Principal of Conshohocken Elementary School, and several other administrators would present information at the meeting on 6/18/98 about Conshohocken Elementary School's School-wide Title I Project scheduled for implementation during the 1998-99 school year. He provided a brief synopsis of key aspects of the project. He reported that the program would focus on raising the academic achievement levels of students at the school so that they could compete more effectively with their peers when they enter grade 4 at Colonial Elementary School. He noted that it would bring sweeping changes to the education program at the school, include a full-day kindergarten program and contracted services after school for additional tutoring, and provide additional resources in support of student learning. Dr. Durtan stressed that the program would be fully funded by \$204,371.00 of federal Title I funds and would

not adversely impact the district's budget. He also noted that Conshohocken Elementary School was the only district school eligible for a Title I School-wide Project, that eligible students at Colonial Elementary School would continue to receive Title I support, and that the program would not have a negative impact on other district students. He reported that the program would have established baselines and that data would be collected to measure and report student progress. Dr. Durtan asked the board members to review the information which they had been given on the program prior to the scheduled Thursday presentation on the initiative.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow recognized Gail Sutton of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation, who introduced Susan Dryburgh, a mini-grant recipient. Ms. Dryburgh, a speech specialist at Plymouth Elementary School, shared information with the Board on her program, Literature Links. She noted that one of the best predictors of student success was the amount of time that parents and children read together. She outlined a program in which she trained parents in reading and provided books and related activities that parents and students could do together at home to encourage reading and talking about the books that they read together. Ms. Dryburgh noted that the reading supported themes covered in the classroom and exposed readers to a wide range of cultures. She also reported that follow-up programs such as certificates and a party for successful participants were positive experiences for those involved in the program.

Mr. Orlow noted that Betty Wilson, Single Audit Coordinator of the Bureau and Fiscal Management of the Commonwealth Department of Education, had informed the district that the district's Single Audit Report covering the Federal Financial Assistance Programs funded by her agency had been approved. No Board action was necessary. See Enclosure #15.

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; additions and deletions to the substitute list; summer school faculty appointments; and the completion of long-term substitute assignments, as shown in Enclosures #16 through #19. He noted that there would be some additions to his report at the meeting of 6/18/98 when he expected to recommend, after confirming credentials, the appointment of a Coordinator of Special Education. Board members asked and received from Mr. Klinger some clarification of the number of retirements. Mr. Klinger also advised that several music teachers would be added to the list of summer school faculty. Mr. Orlow asked whether long-term substitutes in 1997-98 who might return to work in 1998-99 would be considered new employees. Dr. Durtan responded that he would seek a legal opinion and update the Board at its meeting on 6/18/98.

New Business: Mr. Orlow recognized Ms. Brown who gave a brief overview of the 1998-99 School District Budget as proposed at \$19,281,133.00. She noted that funding of this budget would require a real estate tax rate of 12.53 mills (a 4.74% increase from the prior year) as well as Act 511 taxes. She reported that the billing date for taxes would be set as 7/1/98. She reminded the Board and the community that the Board would take action on the budget at its meeting of 6/18/98 and expressed her dismay that district residents had not raised any questions concerning the proposed budget. Mr. Pinheiro queried the increase in the I. U. contract in the updated budget draft. Mr. Bickleman noted a projected increase in early intervention cost estimates, and Mr. Shipman reported a rise in the number of new early intervention recipients. Ms. Brown reported that the district did not compare its annual budgets to its actual budgets for the prior year and that this practice produced year-end fund balance larger than necessary. In response to Board inquiry, Dr. Durtan reported that Mr. Bickleman had documentation supporting all the figures used in the budget and urged board members to contact him if they had any questions or required additional information. Mr. Pinheiro asked Mr. Bickleman if he projected revenues from interim taxes based on historical data, and Mr. Bickleman responded that he did. Mr. Carroll asked if increases in the latest draft of the budget were attributable to the teacher's contract, and Mr. Bickleman indicated that the contract had resulted in an increase in personnel costs in the latest draft. Mr. Orlow and Ms. Brown urged their fellow board members to contact Mr. Bickleman if they wished to see alternatives to any parts of the current budget draft so that Mr. Bickleman could illustrate for the Board the impact of any proposed changes.

Mr. Orlow noted that the annual appointment of school physicians and dentists would be on the agenda for the meeting of 6/18/98. He asked if administration's recommendations were reappointments and queried the amount of any increase proposed. Dr. Durtan indicated that administration was recommending the reappoint of the practitioners indicated at an increase of 3%.

Mr. Orlow reported that a series of contracts would be up for renewal at the meeting of 6/18/98, including Psychiatric Consultation Services (MH/MR), Progression Group, Montgomery Early Learning Center, Inc., Carbon Lehigh I. U. (Data Processing), Davidson School/Instructional Aide, and Physical Therapy, as shown in Enclosures #20 through #25. In response to Board questions: Mr. Bickleman confirmed that Carbon Lehigh's data processing support was year 2000 compliant. Mr. Shipman advised that he would reconfirm the dates of service in several contracts in support of student needs. Dr. Durtan reported that there had been no significant changes in contract language.

Mr. Orlow advised that a series of annual supply bid awards would be agenda items for the meeting on 6/18/98, including elementary and secondary art supplies, general supplies, industrial arts and science supplies, and janitorial supplies.

Mr. Orlow recognized Mr. Connolly who reviewed the deliberations of the Buildings & Grounds Committee on the subject of a needed roof replacement over Gym 20 at the high school. He reported that the original roof was coal tar pitch over a wooden deck and that 16 years ago a light foam roof with a warranty of five years had been placed on top of the original roof. Mr. Connolly also reported that the foam roof had failed and that water had found a way between the outer membrane and the deck. He advised that a bid to replace the roof had been on the agenda of the meeting of 5/21/98 but was later referred back to the committee. He noted that the committee had reviewed options for the roof and that there was little support for an option to put a slight pitch in the roof by using additional insulation below the outer layer. Ms. Brown asked why the roof could not be rebuilt with a greater pitch and suggested that some additional up-front costs may be warranted if the roof were less problematic in the long run. After considerable discussion, the Board directed that Jim Berneski seek professional input on the viability and cost of framing out a new pitched roof for Gym 20. Mr. Bell said that he would contact Mr. Berneski and bring his findings back to the Board at its 6/18/98 meeting.

Solicitor's Report: No report.

Committee Reports:

Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro reported that non-bargaining unit salaries, cabinet salaries and, perhaps, the language of the final contract with the CEA would be on the agenda for the meeting of 6/18/98. He noted that the Board and the CEA had different interpretations of the language in the fact-finding report upon which the contract would be based. He indicated that any contract language coming before the Board for action at its next meeting would reflect the Board's interpretation and that the CEA might sign a contract containing that language and then grieve it. Mr. Carroll asked what would happen if the CEA did not sign the contract. Mr. Orlow responded that the CEA had accepted the fact-finding report, the practical equivalent of a contract, and was bound by its provisions. He considered it likely that the CEA would sign the contract.

Additional Information: Mr. Pinheiro asked about the disposition of leftover activity funds raised by 8th grade students in the middle school and asked if the funds followed them to the high school. Dr. Durtan advised that they did not and were used for making a donation or gift to the school. He advised that the same practice was followed for the senior class at the high school. Mr. Pinheiro asked if the district was charged for checks from others that were returned for non-sufficient funds. Mr. Bickleman and Ms. Brown noted that the district did not pay any direct charges but were affected in a minor way through its compensating balance.

Public Comments: Dr. Lipshutz asked if the Title I report on the Conshohocken program was available. Dr. Durtan indicated that it was and advised Dr. Lipshutz that he could pick up a copy at the close of the meeting. Dr. Lipshutz suggested that the Board look into expanding standardized testing. Dr. Durtan responded that Dr. Stormes would be happy to share information about the district's testing program. Several board members expressed an interest in the direction in which the district would be moving on standardized testing. Dr. Durtan briefly reviewed calls at the state level for more standardized testing, the Board's commitment to additional testing in connection with the performance-based compensation program that would be part of its new contract with the CEA, and recent district initiatives in this area. He reported that these initiatives included the Stanford Achievement Tests currently given to students in the 7th grade and the PSAT's given to all juniors at the high school earlier in 1997-98 school year. He encouraged the Board to provide direction to administration if it wished a comprehensive review of standardized testing in the district. Dr. Lipshutz also voiced his hope that the district would not move away from programs to which it had committed in order to fund the teachers' contract. Ms. Brown noted that the district had not cut any programs in the process of preparing its budget for the coming year. Mr. Orlow reported that the district had budgeted a very conservative figure for computer purchases and suggested that the district take any surplus funds after all planned purchases had been made and use them to fund other items in the district's technology plan that had not yet been funded. Dr. Durtan indicated that that process had always been the district's intent.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 10:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell
Board Secretary