

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, NOVEMBER 17, 1997**

The November Work Session of the Colonial School Board of Directors was convened by Vice President Pinheiro at 8:42 p.m. in the auditorium of the Colonial Elementary School on November 17, 1997.

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

Board Members Absent: Stuart Kessler, Rich Connolly

Also Attending: Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent,; Dr. Ann Stormes, Director of Curriculum & Instruction; James M. Bell, Director of Operation/Board Secretary; R. Scott Klinger, Director of Personnel; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Joseph Bickleman, Controller/Treasurer; Frank O'Hara, Solicitor; and 200 individuals, including teachers and other district staff, district residents, and media representatives, who signed the attendance logs. All individuals who addressed the Board and participated in discussions of matters before the Board during the meeting are identified by name in these minutes.

Mr. Pinheiro led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session to discuss legal and personnel matters before the meeting from 7:30 p.m. to 8:35 p.m.

Minutes: Mr. Pinheiro asked for comments or questions on the minutes of the Special Meeting of 10/6/97, the Work Session of 10/13/97, the Community Relations Committee of 10/15/97, the General Meeting of 10/16/97, the Curriculum Committee of 10/27/97, the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 11/12/97, and the Personnel Committee Meeting of 11/13/97, listed as Enclosures #1 through #5, #32 and #33, respectively. No issues were raised.

Financial Reports: Mr. Pinheiro asked the Board if there were any comments or questions on the Budget Transfer Report of November 1997; the Capital Reserve Fund Report For the Month Ending 10/31/97; Food Service Bills and Reports as of 9/30/97; the Outstanding Investment, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes Collected, Real Estate Escrow Reports for the month ending 10/31/97, the Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the months ending 9/30/97 and 10/31/97, and the Budgetary/Deficit Status and Treasurer's Reports of 10/31/97, as shown in Enclosures #6 through #15. Mr. Mandelbaum inquired whether the Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 9/30/97 was based on an updated bank statement, as requested at the October 16th meeting of the Board. Mr. Bickleman indicated that it was. In response to a question from Mr. Yunker, Mr. Bickleman noted that some of the figures contained in the preliminary reconciliation report

before the Board in October had changed as a result of his subsequent review and reconciliation. Mr. Orlow inquired about the purpose of funds for the Goals 2000 Educate America Project #40-8091, as outlined in the Treasurer's Report. Dr. Durtan reported that the project supported technology and staff development initiatives. Mr. Bickleman pointed out that there were some clerical errors in the list of bills presented to the Board and that they would be corrected prior to Board action on November 20th.

Old Business: Mr. Pinheiro noted a proposed policy on behavior management would be presented for Board consideration on second reading at the general meeting on Thursday. The policy is shown in Enclosures #16. Mr. Shipman distributed updated copies of the proposed policy highlighting changes which incorporated recommendations made by the solicitor as a result of his review of the policy. Mr. Shipman indicated that administration was still planning to move forward with its recommendation to adopt the revised policy at Thursday's meeting.

Correspondence: Mr. Pinheiro advised that the Board had received correspondence from Ray McMahon, a teacher at Plymouth Whitmarsh High School, requesting an opportunity to address the Board on the subject of merit pay at the work session. Mr. Pinheiro recognized Mr. McMahon, who addressed the board on the subject of merit pay and announced a Parents' Forum for Wednesday, November 19th in the auditorium of Plymouth Whitmarsh High School at 7:00 p.m. The purpose of the forum is to allow parents to raise questions and concerns about the issues surrounding the negotiation process. Mr. McMahon explained the position of the Colonial Education Association (CEA) on the subject of merit pay and noted his belief that a merit pay system was already in place in the district. He advised that teachers who received ratings lower than professional were not eligible for salary increases until the situation was remedied. He felt that teaching was an art and noted that teachers received formal observations less than one percent of their teaching time. He believed that this percentage of observation time represented a poor foundation upon which to base a merit pay program. Mr. McMahon expressed concern about the impact of a merit pay plan which is based on last year's observations and was coming during a period when a shift to block scheduling was planned. He advised that the CEA proposed a three-year evaluation of merit pay which included the development of a plan jointly by administration and teachers in year one, a trial test by a representative sample of staff in year two, and a review and refinement of the program in year three. He stated that there was no working merit pay system in place in any district in Pennsylvania. He expressed the opinion that the Board plan would destroy cooperation and harmony among teachers and suggested that the Board remove the subject from the bargaining table. Mr. Pinheiro asked Board members if they had any questions of Mr. McMahon. Mr. Orlow noted that the Board had heard many of these objections to merit pay before and asked why incentives could not be used to provide positive incentives to teachers. Mr. McMahon stated that some administrators at all levels were not in favor of merit pay. Mr. Orlow and Mr. Yunker questioned the assertion. Mr.

McMahon took the position that one could not put a price tag on teaching a child. Mr. Orlow noted that sharing and cooperation among teachers were addressed in the Board plan. Dr. Durtan noted that administration was concerned about the logistics of implementing merit pay but was ready to implement any plan adopted. Scott Brown, teacher at the high school, offered brief clarifying remarks and comments. Both sides of the discussion agreed that the work session in progress was not an appropriate forum to continue discussions that could be interpreted as negotiating in public. Mr. Pinheiro returned to the agenda for the evening and noted that there would be time for public comment at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Pinheiro referenced additional correspondence from Ralph McKelvey, Jr., district resident, supporting Mr. Dovberg's letter to the editor on block scheduling; PSBA Executive Director Joseph V. Oravitz notifying the Board of appointments for specific responsibilities to be made at the reorganization meeting; Donald R. Newmeyer, district resident, on abstinence-based sex education; Darilyn V. Moyer, district resident, on the concept of merit pay; the Whitemarsh Republican Committee expressing support for the Board's position on merit pay; and Donald B. Scholl, PWHS faculty member, expressing his opinion on merit pay as shown in Enclosures #17 - #20, #34 and #35, respectively.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan reviewed his personnel report on the current additions, terminations, suspensions, demotions, leaves of absence, promotions, suspensions, transfers and resignations of staff, as shown in Enclosure #21. He noted several additions for Thursday's meeting, including recommendations to confirm Charles Cognato and Susan Incorvia as assistant principals at the middle and high schools, respectively, and the appointment of Thomas Sigafos and Teresa Woodin as principal and assistant principal, respectively, at Colonial Elementary School. Dr. Durtan advised that the appointments to these positions were currently planned for around the start of the new year but that the timing could be affected by other possible changes in administrative staffing. He also noted that he would be recommending routine additions and deletions to the substitute list, as shown in the report listed as Enclosure #22.

New Business: Mr. Pinheiro noted that the Board would be considering on Thursday a resolution authorizing disbursement from the Capital Reserve Account, as shown in Enclosure #23. Ms. Brown noted that the resolution would permit the Board to reimburse itself from the proceeds of the financing for funds advanced from the general fund or other sources pending financing for building programs at the high school and Conshohocken Elementary School. She indicated that she recommended the inclusion of potential projects at Colonial Elementary School in the resolution and would recommend approval of the revised resolution at the meeting of 11/20/97. Mr. Yunker sought and received from Ms. Brown confirmation that the language of the resolution permitted reimbursement for expenditures in support of work not previously undertaken.

Mr. Mandelbaum recommended and Mr. Pinheiro announced a brief break in the proceedings to allow those teachers in the audience who wished to leave to do so without interrupting Board business.

Mr. Pinheiro resumed the meeting and indicated that administration was recommending approval of the submission to the Department of Education Form 731, "Self-Certification Application for Non-Reimbursable Construction Project", as shown in Enclosure #24. Dr. Durtan noted that the form was a routine notification of plans to alter a building without seeking reimbursement under the Plancon process. Ms. Brown advised that the return from Plancon would not cover the time and expense of going through the reimbursement process.

Mr. Pinheiro noted that the Board had a report on the 1996-97 anti-vandalism program and would be considering at its general meeting on 11/20/97 a recommendation to make payments of \$2,315.03 and \$1,397.63 respectively to the student councils of Plymouth Whitmarsh High School and Colonial Middle School under the provisions of the 13-year old anti-vandalism initiative. The payment amounts represent one half of the unspent funds from the 1996-97 anti-vandalism program. He also noted that administration was recommending that the program be re-established for the 1997-98 school year at the same funding level as the prior year, viz. \$5,000.00 for the high school and \$3,000.00 for the middle school, as shown in Enclosure #25. Ms. Brown noted the importance of showing evidence of savings, and Mr. Mandelbaum stressed the importance of linking Board approval to Board agreement on the continuing importance of anti-vandalism efforts.

Mr. Pinheiro advised that the Board had received information regarding the award of bids for computers and associated equipment under a technology lease/purchase program, as outlined in Enclosure #26 and would consider acquiring the equipment at its meeting Thursday evening. Dr. Durtan advised that there were a number of options available for securing additional technology at the secondary level and recommended that board members review them in light of anticipated needs over the next several years. He noted that Charles Graham, the district's Director of Technology, would be in attendance at Thursday's meeting and would be available to address Board questions or concerns. He indicated that the Board could take action as late as the December 1st general meeting without affecting the current timelines for acquiring equipment. In response to a Board query, Dr. Durtan indicated that the administration was currently working on specifications for scanners and monitors and that these items were not on state contract and would be bid by the district.

Mr. Pinheiro noted that the Board would be reviewing the sample resolution shown in Enclosure #27 to authorize Public Financial Management (PFM) to take action in securing a general obligation note from the Emmaus/PLGIT Bond Pool Program. Mr. Glen Willard, Managing Director, PFM has provided the Board with updated written information on the subject, as shown in Enclosure # 36. Ms. Brown advised

that she would be making a motion at the regular meeting on Thursday to approve temporary borrowing of \$10,000,000.00 because the Board had already accepted a 10.5 million-dollar construction project at the high school. She advised that the Emmaus/PLGIT Bond Pool Program was a financial mechanism for borrowing money early and earning interest while getting the project underway. Mr. Mandelbaum noted that the community was under the belief that the Board had not yet made a commitment to the project, but Mr. Pinheiro stated his belief that a Board vote had been taken to accept the project. Ms. Brown requested that the superintendent review Board minutes to confirm that the vote had taken place. Mr. Orlow queried whether an Act 34 hearing would be necessary to approve the project, and Mr. O'Hara advised that such a hearing would not be necessary to take action on the Bond issue. Dr. Durtan advised that bond counsel was prepared to attend Thursday's meeting if the Board had questions. Ms. Brown suggested that board members raise their questions with administration so they could be addressed by telephone prior to the meeting on Thursday.

Mr. Pinheiro noted that the Board had received for its consideration a request for a band trip to Toronto, Ontario, as shown in Enclosure #37. The trip meets district guidelines and is endorsed by the high school administration. He also advised that the Board would be considering at its Thursday meeting the award of a bid for a nine-passenger school van, as shown in Enclosure #38. Mr. Bell confirmed that the Buildings & Grounds Committee had reviewed the results of the bid and was recommending that it be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder.

Solicitor's Report: Mr. O'Hara advised that he would be seeking approval of a Board resolution on Thursday to file a Certificate of Request to Terminate Authority as a final step on terminating the existence of the Central Montgomery County Area Vocational Technical School Authority. This document was not filed when the three school districts in the jointure agreed to dissolve the authority in 1987. He confirmed Mr. Pinheiro's understanding that this was leftover business similar to that taken by the district when it terminated the Colonial school District Authority.

Committee Reports:

Finance: Ms. Brown reported that members of the Finance Committee and administration had attended an exit conference with the independent auditors for the district on the audit for the year ending June 30, 1997. She noted it had been a clean audit, that there had been no new findings of fact and that several older findings had been retired. She felt that it had been the best district audit to date. She congratulated administration on a job well done and indicated that she would be making a motion at the general meeting on 11/20/97 to accept the audit report.

Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro provide a brief recap of negotiations between the Board and CEA. He noted the pending 11/30/97 deadline for deciding whether or not to

proceed with block scheduling, the failed attempts at meet and discuss on the issue, and the full negotiating session on 11/16/97 at which the Board tendered and CEA rejected an offer to remove all items from the table except those related to merit pay, health care co-payments and time issues.

Public Comments: Donald Scholl, high school science teacher, spoke on the issue of merit pay. He expressed the belief that too few observations were being made of classroom activity, summarized a recent experience with evaluation ratings, and expressed the feeling that the rating system did not work.

Al Gambone, high school science teacher, indicated that he was proud to be a rated as professional, worked with low profile students, and had been complimented by administrators for handling difficult problems effectively. He expressed concern about the impact of personalities and prejudicial treatment on evaluations. Mr. Orlow responded by noting that the Board proposal on merit pay contained an appeal system that should be an improvement over the current system.

Richard Coletta, Sr., science teacher at the high school, felt it was unprofessional and unethical to hold one or two teachers up as models of professionalism. He implored the Board to investigate the criteria in each rating category and felt it was a problem to enter a merit pay program at a time when changes in teaching routines were changing. He expressed the belief that the Board was making a mistake and that its merit pay proposal would destroy the faculty.

Sally Abbott, district resident, expressed concern and anger about a uniformed police presence on school grounds at the time of the meeting. She felt such a presence created an atmosphere of distrust. She supported the concept of merit pay, but not necessarily the system proposed by the Board, and suggested that the CEA proposal for a three-year study might offer an appropriate compromise on the issue. Board members noted that they were not aware of any request for police presence at the meeting.

Mary Theiss, district resident, queried whether teachers not involved in activities outside the classroom, such as continuing education and extra duty-extra pay assignments, would be denied an exemplary rating. Dr. Durtan responded that such need not be the case and stated that what happens in the classroom is at the heart of the evaluation system. Ms. Theiss stated her belief that merit pay would not weed out bad teachers and that administrators lacked the courage to give poor teachers the two consecutive unsatisfactory ratings necessary to remove them from their positions. She also stated that the police had told her that the district had called them. Board members reiterated that they were not aware of any such request. Ms. Theiss spoke again later and queried the Board's willingness to fully fund its merit pay initiative. Mr. Pinheiro confirmed the Board's commitment to full funding for the program. Ms. Theiss questioned the cost of funding the program, and Mr.

Pinheiro indicated that that would depend on the salaries included in the contracted currently being negotiated.

Darilyn Moyer, district resident, suggested not using the term “merit pay”. She stressed that what happens in the classroom is more important than activities outside the classroom. She advised the Board to use the same techniques that it had used in developing block scheduling for reaching consensus on performance-based pay and urged those involved in negotiations to be good role models for the students and to bargain in good faith. Mr. Pinheiro noted that Dr. Durtan had explained that it was possible for teachers to get exemplary ratings without being involved in outside activities. Mr. Pinheiro also indicated that the present evaluation system had been developed by a committee composed of teachers and administrators and was reviewed annually. Ms. Moyer later suggested that the Board look at other merit pay systems currently in use elsewhere. She saw no need to rush to a decision on the issue and suggested that all parties work together.

Hugh Lipshutz, district resident, felt that more could be done to improve district schools and that block scheduling and merit pay were two initiatives that would help. He felt that teachers were not created equal and noted that the citizens advisory committee on which he had served had unanimously endorsed the concept of merit pay. He suggested that both the Board and CEA should agree that they could proceed with block scheduling without affecting other terms of the contract. Mr. Lipshutz also urged the Board to stick with its commitment to add technology at the middle and high schools whether or not block scheduling proceeds on a timely basis. Mr. Pinheiro indicated that the Board remained committed to the technology initiative but still had several implementation options to explore.

Allan Dovberg noted that the CEA spokesperson had spoken for more than 11 minutes and that the majority of the teachers had left before others in the room had the opportunity to speak. He displayed the signs that his organization had brought to the meeting and commented on their appropriate tone. He also noted the lobbying efforts of PSEA. Mr. Dovberg provided information on merit pay programs in effect in other states, notably North Carolina and Colorado. He later reminded CEA representatives that parents already knew who the good teachers were and did not need merit pay statistics to make these determinations. He also noted that many successful people in the audience were products of block scheduling and felt that teachers should honor their previous commitment to this initiative. He spoke briefly on his positive experience with the recent “Hop on the Bus” opportunity to visit district schools.

Jane Nunnamaker, district resident, expressed the opinion that not all district teachers were excellent. She felt that the current evaluation and compensation system did not work and noted the presence of both subjectivity and competition in the private sector. She felt that her children were not challenged by their educational programs.

Mr. Brown, teacher at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School, indicated that the vote taken by the teachers on block scheduling was conducted by administration. He stated that, at the time, the administration and Board knew that block scheduling was negotiable and would be part of the final contract. He also pointed out some of the negative aspects of merit pay.

Jeanneane Bozzelli, teacher at Whitemarsh Elementary School, noted the importance of teachers working together and cautioned against pitting people against one another.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Pinheiro adjourned the meeting at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**