

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, OCTOBER 13, 1997**

The October Work Session of the Colonial School Board of Directors was convened by President Kessler at 8:50 p.m. in the Board Meeting Room of the Colonial Elementary School on October 13, 1997.

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

Board Members Absent: Rich Connolly

Also Attending: Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent,; Dr. Ann Evans Buhman, 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; Carol Cohen, CEA; Sally Abbott; Robert Carroll; Allan Dovberg; Naila Francis; Hugh Lipshutz; Mike Muraninch; Donald Newmeyer; and Mary Thiess.

Mr. Kessler lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: Mr. Kessler asked for comments on the minutes of the Community Relations Committee Meeting of 8/21/97, the Work Session of 9/15/97, the General Meeting of 9/18/97, and the Personnel Committee Meeting of 9/22/97, and the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting listed as Enclosures #1 through #5. Several Board members and attendees suggested changes to correct typographical and content discrepancies.

Financial Reports: Mr. Kessler asked the Board if there were any comments or questions on the Budget Transfer Report of October 1997; the Capital Reserve Fund Report For the Month Ending September 30, 1997; Food Service Bills and Reports as of August 31, 1997; and the Outstanding Investment, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes Collected, Real Estate Escrow, Reconciliation of Cash Accounts, Budgetary/Deficit Status and Treasurer's Reports of September 30, 1997, as shown in Enclosures #6 through #15. Mr. Pinheiro noted the recent publicity surrounding losses that certain school districts had had on some of their investments and received assurances from Mr. Bickleman that district funds were placed in investments which were permitted by the school code and had sufficient collateral to keep the funds safe.

Staff Report: Dr. Durtan noted that Dr. Stormes and staff would provide information on the district's sex education curriculum at the general meeting on Thursday.

Old Business: Mr. Kessler noted that two proposed policies would be presented for Board consideration on second reading at the general meeting on Thursday. The policies deal with Copyright Guidelines and Use of School Facilities and Equipment, as shown in Enclosures #16 and #17.

Correspondence: Mr. Kessler noted the correspondence from Carol Cohen, CEA, requesting an opportunity to address the Board on a mini-grant recipient, Donald R. Newmeyer, district resident, on abstinence-based sex education, and Hugh Lipshutz, district resident, on banning door-to-door fundraising activities in the district, as shown in Enclosures #18 through #20.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan reviewed his personnel report on the current additions, terminations, suspensions, demotions, leaves of absence, promotions, suspensions and transfers of staff, as shown in Enclosure #21. He noted the possible addition of a school psychologist to the list of new hires for the General meeting on Thursday. He also noted that he would be recommending additions and deletions to the substitute list, as shown in the report listed as Enclosure #22 and indicated that the Board had received a list containing the salary of each Colonial School District employee. Copies of the list will be available for public review in the Personnel Office.

Dr. Durtan reported that he would be recommending that the Board suspend planning for block scheduling as of November 30, 1997, the last date for effective planning purposes if no agreement was reached with the CEA on implementation. He noted that planning would continue through that date on two tracks, one that would lead to a course guide for block scheduling and another which would lead to a course guide for a traditional schedule, but that one option or the other would be selected at that point. To continue with a two-track course selection process beyond November 30th would be too confusing for students and their parents.

New Business: Mr. Kessler noted that the Board would be considering on Thursday a request from Colonial Middle School for trips to Wallops Island, VA and Cape Cod Sea Camp, as shown in Enclosure #23. Dr. Durtan advised that a request for a trip by the high school lacrosse team to St. Petersburg, FL and a request from a teacher at Colonial Middle School for Board authorization to sponsor a trip to Russia, both during Spring Break, would also be on the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. He noted that all three trips conformed to district guidelines.

Mr. Kessler indicated that a bid award for computer hardware was on the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. Dr. Durtan distributed information on the subject but indicated that he had just received it and had not yet had the opportunity to review it carefully. He noted that he would advise the Board on Thursday evening whether or not the proposed purchase was ready for Board action or should be deferred until the general meeting in November.

Mr. Kessler noted that the Board had an information report on fundraising budgets for all district schools. Board members noted that the report listed approximately \$378,000.00 in proposed fundraising and that a budget for Conshohocken Elementary School had not yet been included. Dr. Durtan advised that the report was for information purposes and did not represent a request for Board action. He also indicated that the report from Conshohocken Elementary School would be included on the agenda for Thursday evening. In a response to a Board query, Dr. Durtan that the anti-vandalism funds set up at the high school and middle school would be on the agenda for the Board's December meeting and the Board would decide at that time whether to continue to fund the anti-vandalism initiative.

Mr. Kessler noted that a Corporate Resolution to Maintain a Deposit Account would be coming forward on Thursday for Board Action. Dr. Durtan explained that the resolution was needed to change signatories on an account at the high school to reflect changes in building administrators.

Mr. Kessler indicated that a proposed policy on Behavior Management would be on the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday for first reading. Dr. Durtan advised that Mr. O'Hara had reviewed the draft, that some changes would be made in the language of the document to address the issues which Mr. O'Hara had raised, and that the handbook supporting the policy would be incorporated into the policy, as had been done in other policies recently adopted by the Board.

Mr. Kessler inquired about administration's recommendation that the district replace the sound system in the high school auditorium. Mr. Bell indicated that the current system was old and no longer functional. He pointed out that the high school staff and activities sponsors were providing minimal sound support for events held in the auditorium by borrowing equipment from other areas and programs and by renting or using the personal sound equipment of staff for theater and music productions in the facility. Mr. Bell noted that the high school administration, the CITV Director and the sponsor of the school theater group had identified \$3,500.00 to help pay for the purchase of a two-part sound system that would support routine events in the auditorium during the school day as well as extra-curricular theater and concert productions. Administration was seeking Board approval to use funds from the capital reserve fund to pay the balance of the approximate \$10,600.00 purchase. Board members questioned why the project had not been included in budget requests for the current budget year. Dr. Durtan and Mr. Bell explained that the purchase request had been made several years ago but had been withdrawn from the proposed budget because the district was then considering renovating the auditorium and the sound system could have been part of that renovation. Since the renovation is not currently under consideration and the sound system has failed, administration is raising the issue again. Board members requested clarification of the projected lifetime of the newly proposed system and its usefulness in the future. Mr. Bell indicated that he would seek

additional information on these issues and report back to the Board on Thursday evening.

Mr. Kessler asked for an update on the status of planning for the funding of co-curricular activities. Mr. O'Neill reported that the Curriculum Committee needed to review material presented by Dr. Stormes and that a meeting would be scheduled in the near future for that purpose. Several Board members noted the need to give advance warning to organizations if they were not to be funded in the future under current practices. Dr. Durtan advised that such notification should be provided as soon as possible. Mr. Kessler requested that the Curriculum Committee report back to the Board by the general meeting in November.

Mr. Pinheiro reminded the Board that several Board members and Dr. Durtan had attended a workshop on the subject of charter schools. He suggested that the Board prepare a policy in the near future for dealing with applications for charter schools and asked that the Board give the superintendent and solicitor direction at the Thursday meeting. Ms. Brown opposed the suggested and noted that the problem was not one that required the immediate attention of either administration or the Board. She felt that there were more pressing educational issues before the Board and that the district would have time to draft a policy if and when a request to form a charter school was received. Mr. Yunker inquired what projects administrators would be unable to complete if they took time to develop a policy on charter schools. Mr. Kessler thought that the project could probably be handled expeditiously since sample draft policies were available. Dr. Durtan noted that administration had received no inquiries on establishing charter schools in the district, although a request was being processed in the Souderton School District. Mr. O'Hara advised that it would be practical for the Board to develop a policy on charter schools and noted that PSBA had a draft upon which such a policy could be modeled.

Mr. Pinheiro provided an update on the status of negotiations between the Board and the CEA. He noted that both sides had met at least once each month through June, at which point two smaller, informal meetings took place on June 4th and 8th. The Board felt that an agreement was close and considered delaying budget adoption so that any additional monies needed as a result of a contract could be incorporated. The Board met with the CEA on June 9th and presented a proposal based on the understandings. At this point, the CEA team walked out of the meeting without offering a counter-proposal and asked the state mediator to join the talks. The mediator, Board and CEA were unable to find a common date for another meeting until September 3rd. He advised that two small meetings were held late in September and early in October, when the mediator advised that she saw no hope for a contract. The Board remains willing to meet with the CEA. The issues on the table remain the same as they were at the start of contract negotiations: Compensation, benefits and time. Mr. Pinheiro commented on the Board's belief that its proposal for performance-based pay would have a positive impact on the educational process by encouraging teachers to continue to improve professionally.

He stressed that it is not a cost issue and noted that over 59 percent of the teachers would have received larger increases the previous year than they actually did if performance-based pay had been in effect. The remaining 40 percent would still have received salary increases, albeit somewhat less than before. He reviewed other steps that the district had taken to address the issues of time, evaluations and block scheduling at the high school. He noted that the CEA would not consider block scheduling until a contract agreement was reached and expressed the dismay of the Board that the CEA was unwilling to move forward with an educational improvement which had earned wide community support. He ended his presentation by noting that he did not expect a walk-out and believed that the teachers, on an individual basis, would continue to provide their students a good education. He expressed the intent of the Board to continue to work toward the improvement of the district.

Solicitor's Report: No report.

Public Comments on the Agenda: Mr. Dovberg spoke on several issues before the board. He noted that there were state criteria in place for charter schools and addressed the time lines for Board response to any applications for Charter schools. He supported Ms. Brown's position that it was not necessary for the Board to address this issue now. He expressed a hope that the activity report for the high school would be on the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. He read excerpts from an article in the Times Herald on the action by CEA to put a hold on the implementation of block scheduling and noted that money had already been spent to put some processes in place to support the block scheduling initiative. He suggested that community members write to the Curriculum Committee to express their concerns on this issue.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 9:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell
Board Secretary