

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 15, 1997**

The September Work Session of the Colonial School Board of Directors was convened by President Kessler at 8:40 p.m. in the Board Meeting Room of the Colonial Elementary School on September 15, 1997.

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

**Board members Absent:** Allen Mandelbaum

**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; James P. Berneski, Director of Maintenance; Carol Cohen, CEA; Robert Breslin and Michael Ackerman, Breslin Ridyard Fadero Architects; Frederick Reese and Lee Snyder, Snyder Hoffman Associates; Russell Benner, Boucher & James, Inc.; Sally Abbott; Hugh Lipshutz; Mary Thiess; Robert Carroll; Linda Chmielewski; Allan Dovberg; John Muranski; Donald Newmeyer;

Mr. Kessler lead the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in Executive Session from 7:30 p.m. to 8:35 p.m. to discuss personnel and legal matters. The Board also received information on a request for support of the Conshohocken Parking Authority for a tax exemption.

**Minutes:** Mr. Kessler asked for comments on the minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting of 8/18/97, the Work Session of 8/18/97, the General Meeting of 8/21/97, and the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 9/2/97, listed as Enclosures #1 through #4. Mr. Orlow requested a correction to page 2251 of the minutes of the General Meeting of 8/21/97. Dr. Durtan noted that approval of the minutes of the Community Relations Committee Meeting of 8/21/97 would be on the agenda for Thursday night's meeting.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Kessler asked the Board if there were any comments or questions on the Financial Reports of August 1997, Enclosures #5 through #15. There were none.

**Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Kessler noted that the Treasurer's Report, Enclosure #16, would also be on the agenda for Thursday night's meeting.

**Staff Report:** Mr. Robert Breslin of Breslin, Ridyard, Fadero Architects presented to the Board design development drawings pertaining to the expansion of Plymouth Whitemarsh High School. He explained the process, including the interaction between the firm and the Board, in developing options for the science addition and the Board decision to go forward with one of those options. Mr. Breslin noted that once the Board has approved design development drawings, his firm has six months to develop construction documents. Bidding on the construction would follow, and the goal is to begin construction in June 1998 and have the new facility ready for the start of classes in September 1999. Mr. Breslin noted that the drawings which he would be explaining and an accompanying booklet on design specifics and estimated construction costs had been in the hands of the Board for several days. He also briefly covered the firm's plans and timetable for taking the drawings before the Whitemarsh Township Planning Commission.

Mr. Breslin walked those in attendance through the basic design development drawings pointing out the major components of the design. He noted that total estimated construction costs were as originally proposed but that fewer dollars than originally estimated would be spent on new construction and more would be spent on renovations. After completing his presentation, Mr. Breslin answered questions from those in attendance, beginning with questions from members of the Board.

Mr. Orlow questioned whether a single corridor into the science addition was sufficient to handle expected traffic. Mr. Breslin reviewed the decision making process that concluded with the single corridor, noted that it was wider than other corridors in the building, that staff and students could access the addition from the outside as well as through the proposed corridor, and that planned lockers along one side of the corridor may prove unnecessary and permit a smoother flow of traffic through the area. He expressed the opinion that the planned corridor was adequate but that an additional corridor could be provided if the district were to later undertake an addition to the school library.

Ms. Brown raised questions about planned retention basins to accept and meter the flow of storm water run-off from two locations at the high school. Mr. Breslin explained that the township could set standards but not dictate how the standards were met. He noted that the planned basins would retain water on site and permit its slow release over time so that there would be no sudden surges of water off site. The retention area at the front of the addition would be below ground and would not mar the appearance of the site in any way. Ms. Brown also queried the rerouting of sewer lines and the use of cast iron rather than PVC pipe. Mr. Breslin deferred the question to engineers on hand for the presentation who explained that the sewer lines tied into existing lines and that, though they preferred cast iron pipes, both cast iron and PVC could be bid and a decision then made on which to use.

Mr. Pinheiro noted that the designs called for fewer student desk-chair combinations than positions at lab tables and sought an explanation for the apparent discrepancy. Mr. Breslin advised that teachers felt that one row of students would remain at the lab tables during lecture sessions while the remaining students would be seated at the desk-chair combinations. He noted that the design added some flexibility to room use.

Mr. Kessler sought an explanation of the overflow parking plan mentioned in the presentation, and Mr. Breslin responded that the plan was developed by the district to direct overflow parking at large school events to designated grassy areas. He presented that plan to the township on the district's behalf. Mr. Kessler questioned the specification of an EDPM roof because the district had had poor experience with this type of roof. Mr. Breslin explained that the roofing material was not as important as the design which called for a light concrete sloped roof which directed water to the roof drains. He indicated that several roof coverings could be specified and a decision made at the time that bids were received. Mr. Kessler felt that the facade of the addition appeared rather institutional and asked if other options had been considered. Mr. Breslin responded that other options had been considered but that the proposed design would blend into the existing structure of the high school and should present a low-key, aesthetically pleasing appearance which complemented the existing structure and was in harmony with the auditorium facade further east along the building. Mr. Kessler received an explanation of the gently rising ramps which were a part of the designed addition and a confirmation from the engineers that the specifications for insulation exceeded the minimum requirements. Mr. Kessler asked if the addition could be moved further out to permit a double-loaded corridor. Mr. Breslin indicated that the current design was the most efficient and cost effective and preserved much of the landscape fronting the school.

Mr. Connolly asked Mr. Breslin to comment on the planned landscaping. He responded by saying that most of the existing large trees would be preserved and pyramidal beeches would be used to soften the look of the building near the library.

Several members of the community posed questions. Ms. Abbott commented favorably on the air quality standards for the addition and noted that the plans called for air conditioning the addition. Mr. Breslin responded that most new buildings were built to current standards but that the Board would be able to choose whether or not to air condition the new science area. Ms. Abbott also asked about access to the stairwells of the addition from the outside, which Mr. Breslin confirmed, and exterior lighting, which Mr. Breslin indicated had not yet been designed but would be unobtrusive.

Mr. Dovberg queried the availability of windows that open and received a confirmation from Mr. Breslin that the design included them. He also asked for a comparison of the cost effectiveness and life cycle of the proposed roof. Mr. Breslin

stated that the great advantages of the light concrete sloping of the proposed roof were its longevity and cost effectiveness. The proposed roof would have an extended life-cycle which allowed resurfacing to take place without adversely affecting the underlying insulation. Mr. Dovberg suggested the district reconsider the concept of placing standard classroom furniture in the labs and instead have students stay at the lab tables for lectures. Mr. Breslin stressed that the design was based on district input, and Dr. Duran advised that the design addressed educational need by helping classes keep focused and that the decision was based on course and class-size issues. Mr. Dovberg suggested that the corridor leading to the science classrooms be kept as wide as possible to enhance access and queried what furniture composition was used to determine projected costs in the labs. Mr. Breslin acknowledged what seemed to be a consensus on keeping the access corridor wide and free of obstacles and noted that corian was the surface used when cost estimates were made. He also indicated, however, that the furniture and cabinetry could be bid with alternates so that the Board had choices when deciding the final set-up of the labs.

Mr. Carroll asked about a large room at the entrance to the access corridor to the science wing, and Mr. Breslin advised that it was the HVAC equipment room which supported the air handling and climate control for the addition. In response to a follow-up question from Mr. Carroll, Mr. Breslin confirmed that there were hoods included in the classroom design which were vented through the roof.

Board members advised that there were copies of the design development drawings available for review in the District Office.

Old Business: Mr. Kessler asked for comments on the policy pertaining to copyright guidelines, as shown in Enclosure # 17. The policy was being presented for a second reading. Dr. Duran noted that the hand-written comments on the draft included with the packet incorporated the ideas of a Board member and would integrate the handbook as a component of the policy. He noted that making this change would require that the policy be presented a second time for a first reading and, if adopted in that form, would make Board action necessary anytime the handbook was revised. Mr. Kessler instructed Dr. Duran to present the policy in its original form for a second reading at the Thursday night meeting and noted that revisions to the draft could be considered at that time.

Correspondence: Mr. Kessler noted the correspondence from Thomas R. Gentzel, Assistant Executive Director of PSBA for Governmental and Member Relations notifying the Board of the 1997 PSBA Legislative policy Council Meeting and providing the opportunity of the Board to elect three delegates to attend the meeting, as shown in Enclosure #18. He asked Board members if they were interested in attending the meeting. He, Mr. Orlow and Mr. O'Neill expressed interest. Mr. Kessler also noted a request from Karen Tucker, Plymouth Whitemarsh High School PTSO President for an opportunity to address the Board

on an ongoing PTSO project; correspondence from Donald R. Newmeyer, district resident, presenting specific information on programs for abstinence-based sex education, as shown in Enclosure # 18; and correspondence from Bruce and Ellen Majer, district residents, expressing support for an abstinence-based sex education program, as shown in Enclosure #20. Dr. Durtan provided a brief update on the district's health and sex education programs and noted that Board members had received a written report which indicated that the district's health education program was substantially and factually abstinence-based. He advised the Board that his plan to have health teachers available at Thursday's meeting to discuss the district program was in conflict with an open house at the middle school and requested that the planned interaction on the subject be deferred until the October Board meeting. He distributed available copies of the written report to the audience and noted that additional copies would be available on Thursday evening.

**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 shown in Enclosure #21.

Dr. Durtan presented routine additions to the district's substitute lists as shown in Enclosure #22, extra-duty/extray assignments as shown in Enclosure #23, adult education appointments as listed in Enclosure #24, and a contract with an approved private school for the service of an instructional aid as shown in Enclosure #25. Mr. Pinheiro inquired about the inclusion on the agenda of the name of the student who would be supported by the instructional aide. Dr. Durtan noted that the inclusion was inappropriate and would be removed from the agenda for Thursday. Mr. Orlow inquired about the hiring of a psychological intern, and Dr. Durtan advised that the hiring would allow the district to continue to provide psychological services while it was trying to fill staff vacancies in the field.

Dr. Durtan also provided a brief enrollment update, noting that a full report as of the 10<sup>th</sup> day of school would be available on Thursday evening. In response to Board queries, he indicated that the current known enrollment was down from projections by about 40 students, primarily at 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and that a grade-by-grade report would be presented at the Thursday meeting.

**New Business:** Mr. Kessler noted that the request for Board approval of the District's submission of the 1997-98 Safe and Drug-free Schools and Community Grant application, as shown in Enclosure #26, would be on the agenda for Thursday. The allocation for the coming year would be \$23,908. The attached memo from Mr. Shipman delineated planned usage of the funds.

Mr. Kessler advised that student trip requests from the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School Ski Club and the Adventure Club (for white water rafting) would be considered at the Thursday Board meeting. The requests have been endorsed by the high school administration and are in compliance with district guidelines.

Mr. Kessler noted that bid awards and the probable rejection of bids for a transportation van, approval for a tuition student, a first reading of a proposed revision of Board policy 2-050, Use of School Facilities and Equipment, and a contract for physical therapy services would also be on the agenda for Thursday. In response to Board queries, Mr. Bell briefly explained that the policy revision was being proposed to correct policy language to reflect current district practice, to establish a formula for calculating personnel expenses, to adjust rental charges to cover district costs for both immediate and long-term maintenance of the facilities and to insure equitable billing for facility use.

**Solicitor's Report:** Mr. O'Hara outlined a request made by the Conshohocken Parking Authority for support of its petition before the Board of Assessment for an exemption from taxes on the parking area which it leases at 2 Tower Bridge. The authority wants the Board Of Assessment to assign a separate parcel number to the area and make it exempt from taxes because the authority is a public entity conducting public business. At Board request, Mr. O'Hara suggested the wording of a letter to the Board of Assessment acknowledging the public service of the authority. After a brief discussion during which community members queried the impact of the possible exemption on the district and Board members stressed that it was the Board of Assessment which would rule on the merits of the authority's petition. Mr. O'Neill made a motion, seconded by Mr. Johnson, that Mr. O'Hara forward the suggested letter to the Board of Assessment. The Board members present voted unanimously in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

**Committee Reports:** Mr. Connolly, Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, raised the issue of the appointment of a Geo-technical Consultant. He noted that Mr. Breslin had recommended three consultants and that Mr. Berneski, after confirming that each had the credentials required to handle the job, recommended that the contract be given to the lowest responsible bidder. In answer to a question posed by Mr. Kessler, Mr. Connolly suggested that the Board not take action on this item. Instead, he suggested deferring action until after a Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting to be held within the next several weeks to present an overview to and seek input from the public on the design development drawings presented by Mr. Breslin that evening and possible feasibility studies for renovations in the east wing of Plymouth Whitemarsh High School and at Conshohocken Elementary School.

**Public Comments on the Agenda:** Dr. Lipshutz requested an update on computer installations at the secondary level and the status of block scheduling at the high school. Dr. Durtan indicated that the district was working on full compliance with the state bids on computer equipment and hoped to have recommendations for the October Board meeting and that a CSDAC meeting was scheduled for 9/22/97 on block scheduling.

**Mr. Dovberg** noted that the recent minutes adhered more closely to the activity taking place at the meetings and hoped that the trend would continue. He expressed a concern that the minutes referred to the DECA Club as a “co-curricular” activity though the district had no clear definition of “co-curricular”. He asked that the timing of speakers be consistent and even-handed, noted that he had sent correspondence to State Senator Greenleaf advising him that C.U.T. opposed binding arbitration for settling contract disputes involving school districts, and requested an update on his request that the DECA Club refund monies to the school district. Dr. Durtan addressed this last issue by advising that he had no plans to ask for a refund. He noted that Dr. Buhman had researched the issue and that funds were necessary to re-stock the school store and cover start-up fees for DECA participation in local and state-wide competitions. He stated his belief that a refund had not been stipulated at the time that the grant had been made. Mr. Dovberg expressed his concern that funding an organization which had marketing in the real world as its goal was sending the wrong message. Mr. Dovberg had words of praise for the district’s various extra-curricular teams and urged continued support for their efforts. He questioned the inclusion on a substitute list of an individual who had provided inaccurate statements to the press and suggested that this individual should not be given a position with the district unless she issued a public apology. He raised the question of how the district could have lost computer records to a lightning strike if district staff had followed common practice on backing up records and holding them at a safe off-site location. He hoped that such situations could be avoided in the future. Dr. Durtan explained that the problem occurred while the district was in the process of installing software at a new lab in the high school.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 10:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell  
Board Secretary**