

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, JULY 9, 1998**

President Kessler convened the July Meeting of the Colonial School Board of Directors at 8:17 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on July 9, 1998.

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

Board Members Absent: Beverly Brown, Rich Connolly.

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; Allan Dovberg; Kim Clemente; Tom Gibson; Lynn Glodek; Hugh Lipshutz; Amy Stohner; and Bob Thompson.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to corrected minutes of the Work Session of 6/15/98 and the General Meeting of 6/18/98, as shown in Enclosures #1 and #2 and asked board members if they had any additional questions or comments. There were none. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the minutes as amended. All in favor. Motion carried.

Financial Reports: Mr. Kessler noted that the financial and treasurer's reports for June would be submitted for Board approval at the regular meeting in August. He also noted that the Board was being asked to authorize the payment of June bills in July. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the June bills. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Staff Report: Mr. Shipman provided an update on the use of funds involved in district participation in the Drug Free Schools Consortium and highlighted related violence prevention initiatives. He advised that the district received over \$24,000.00 and that the purchasing power of those dollars was enhanced by the pooling of resources and economies of scale involved in participation in the consortium. He reminded the Board and the community of recent cases of school violence and noted that no district was immune from possibility of such violence occurring in its schools. Mr. Shipman highlighted for the Board a number of programs and initiatives funded by Drug Free School programs in past years. These included

parent education, prevention, curriculum development, staff training, peer mediation, faculty mentoring and DARE programs. He noted the focus on high risk groups and the positive impact of the “Hands On The Future” drug task force. He advised the Board and the community that more resources would be channeled in the future toward school violence prevention and anticipating violence and identifying students in need of violence prevention programs. Mr. Shipman advised that the district had a program in place to identify students in need of assistance and refer them to appropriate resources.

In response to a question from Mr. Orlow, Mr. Shipman advised that the overwhelming majority of students identified as in need of assistance came from staff referrals. Mr. Kessler asked for a brief overview of trends in the areas of substance abuse, and M. Shipman cited state statistics that noted a dip in reported use of certain drugs but also reported a rise in under-age drinking, cigarette use, and experimentation with controlled substances by younger children. Mr. Orlow commented that the “Hands on the Future” task force would be conducting a survey of these issues early in the school year, and Mr. Pinheiro received a confirmation that the survey would be the same as a survey also planned for Council Rock School District. Mr. Newmeyer asked a series of questions about how students accessed services and how they felt about them. Mr. Shipman noted that many students later appreciated referrals and that few felt stigmatized by using the resources made available to them. Mr. Newmeyer also asked if faculty mentors worked on a volunteer basis and if their work was very time consuming. Mr. Shipman confirmed the volunteer nature of the mentorship program and advised that it did not require a lot of time because it was more like “a shoulder to lean on” than a prolonged counseling session. When he was asked whether students were referred to religious agencies, Mr. Shipman responded that referrals to services were usually not handled by the district directly but through the Montgomery County mental health system.

When questions were answered, Dr. Durtan reminded the Board that administration was seeking Board approval for continued participation in the Drug Free Schools Consortium. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve continued participation in the consortium. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Shipman recognized Ms. Glodek of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation who, in turn, introduced Ms. Clemente and Mr. Thompson who gave a brief presentation on their mini-grant program at the middle school. Ms. Clemente, Mr. Thompson and Ms. Slagle used the funds that they received for the foundation for the culminating event of the Family Heritage Program. The program lasted four months and involved all academic committees. The finale of the program was a day-long event which included a Family Heritage Brunch with ethnic foods provided by participants and a gifted African storyteller who told tall tales from his native land and played music on native African instruments. The program supports the

district's strategic plan by teaching respect for different cultures and allowing students to experience first hand the differences and similarities among cultures.

Old Business: Mr. Kessler proposed the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on the Funding of Student Trips to assist the Board in developing a policy and procedure for handling the approval of attendance for and funding of student trips. He advised that several board members and community members had expressed interest in serving on the committee. Mr. Kessler moved and Mr. Johnson seconded the nominations of Ms. Brown, Dr. Lipshutz and Mr. Dovberg as members of the committee and Mr. Yunker as chairperson. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. O'Neill briefly recapped earlier reviews of the issue by the Curriculum Committee and offered to provide documentation developed by the committee to Mr. Yunker. He also echoed comments made earlier by Mr. Kessler that the Board was currently handling field trip requests on a case-by-case basis and provided an brief update on fundraising efforts by the DECA Club. Mr. Kessler noted that the charge given the ad hoc committee was a difficult one.

Correspondence: None.

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; and formalization of summer school faculty appointments, as shown in Enclosures #3 through #5. He noted some additions to his report because of recently received requests for child-rearing leave. He also notified the Board that counsel had proposed settlement of a special education placement suit, and he advised that the Board had received revised legal documents on case 97-7316 prior to the meeting. He recommended acceptance of the proposed agreement and noted that details of the settlement had to remain confidential. Mr. Kessler asked Mr. Shipman to briefly review the process for resolving issues of placement of special needs students. Mr. Shipman outlined the various stages of the appeals process culminating in action in state or federal court if earlier attempts at resolving differences failed. Mr. Kessler received confirmation from Dr. Durtan that the action before the Board represented an out-of-court settlement of the dispute in question.

Mr. Kessler suggested that the Board take action on the personnel actions separately from the resolution of the special education placement suit. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the personnel actions contained in Enclosures #3 through #5. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the proposed settlement of the special education placement suit as outlined in documents presented to the Board. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Board Student Representatives Report: None.

New Business: Mr. Kessler directed the Board's attention to a request for early admission to school. Mr. Pinheiro asked Mr. Shipman how many similar requests the district received annually, and Mr. Shipman estimated the number at between 12 and 15. He also confirmed Mr. Pinheiro's assumption that the screening process involved in determining whether a student would or would not be admitted to school early was a strenuous one. Mr. Shipman stressed that successful students had to be further advanced than their chronological age and demonstrate an ability to compete and be successful in school programs. Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to grant the request for early admittance as outlined in Enclosure #6. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler raised the issue of student accident insurance, as outlined in Enclosure #7. Mr. Bell confirmed that administration was recommending securing insurance coverage for students participating in football and offering families the option of purchasing student accident coverage on their own under insurance plans underwritten by Trustmark Insurance Company, the same company who provided these services last school year. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to have Trustmark Insurance Company continue providing accident insurance to district students, as shown in Enclosure #7. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler noted the proposed contract with Sague Auto Service, Inc. for transportation services, as shown in Enclosure #8. In response to Board queries, Dr. Durtan confirmed that Mr. O'Hara had made some corrections to the document, that the contract represented a small piece of the total transportation program of the district, and that costs and term paralleled the district transportation contract with Romano. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the contract as presented to the Board. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler initiated discussion of a proposed bid award to Jostens for publication of the high school yearbook for the next three years. Board members asked if the yearbook was totally funded by sales of the yearbook and received an affirmative answer from Mr. Bell. Mr. Kessler then asked why the Board would take action on a bid for publishing the yearbook if no district funds were used. Dr. Durtan noted that, while sales receipts had covered costs in the past, he could see the possibility that, if sales receipts should one day not cover costs, the Board might have to cover outstanding expenses until the organization could make them up. Board members asked if awarding the bid resulted in the district signing a contract, and Mr. Bell indicated that he had not received a contract from either vendor responding to the bid request. Mr. O'Hara indicated that the language of the recommendation contained in Enclosure #9 on yearbook publication stated that the Board was

endorsing the award of the bid for publication of the high school yearbook to Jostens, not awarding the bid. He explained that the reason behind the language was that the Board had no need to award a bid for something for which it would not be paying directly. Mr. O'Hara likened the case of the yearbook to the case of voluntary school accident insurance for which parents contracted and paid directly rather than the district paying. In both cases the Board oversaw arrangements for a qualified vendor to offer services within the district. Mr. Bell noted that he had checked district records and that the Board had taken action on similar yearbook publications in the past. Mr. O'Hara saw no legal requirement that the district expend funds for yearbook publication but noted that the district could choose to make such payments in the future if requested to do so because of an unanticipated shortfall in sales receipts. In this latter case, the Board would take action on the request when the request was received. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to endorse the award of the bid to Jostens for publication of the high school yearbook in 1999, 2000 and 2001. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler raised appointments to the Performance Based Pay Committee as added item of new business. He noted that the Board was obligated by its collective bargaining agreement with the CEA to appoint four members to the committee. He had originally planned to ask for Board approval of four appointments to the committee but, after receiving an opinion from Mr. O'Hara that the appointments were his prerogative as Board President, he named Dr. Durtan, Mr. Orlow, Mr. Yunker and himself to the committee.

Solicitor's Report: Mr. O'Hara strongly recommended that the Board approve a proposed settlement of a tax assessment appeal filed by Cedar Grove Realty for 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 at an assessment of \$1,000,000.00 for each of the four years. He noted that Cedar Grove had gotten a recent appraisal of \$800,000.00 and that the most recent appraisal by the county was \$1,029,000.00. He explained that, when the cost of litigating the issue was considered, it made sense to settle the issue at \$1,000,000.00 rather than go to court. He noted that the county and local municipalities had already done so. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to accept the settlement as outlined by Mr. O'Hara. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Committee Reports:

Intermediate Unit Board: Mr. Pinheiro notified the Board that he had been reelected to the I. U. Board.

CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson advised that the Joint Committee would be meeting the following week.

Personnel: No report

Finance: No formal report. Mr. Pinheiro asked Mr. Bickleman if the tax collector had received a lot of calls after tax bills had gone out. Mr. Bickleman estimated that 20-30 calls had come in during the first week and that Ms. Ottaviano had addressed them appropriately. Mr. Carroll and Mr. O'Neill commented that residents of Conshohocken were concerned about the increases in their tax bills. Mr. Kessler noted that residents would not necessarily have experienced tax increases if the new county reassessment had not come into play.

Curriculum and Program: No report.

Buildings & Grounds/Transportation: No formal report. In response to a Board query, Mr. Bell reminded the Board and the community of a Buildings & Grounds Committee meeting on July 23rd to review briefly the responses to the bid for structural steel and to allow the Board to interact with the architect on construction drawings for the science wing at the high school. He also reminded everyone of the special Board meeting on July 28th to award bids for structural steel. He reported that both meetings would be held at 4:30 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School. Dr. Durtan noted that construction drawings would be available for Board review from July 15th and that Mr. Breslin was seeking a list of Board questions on the drawings by July 20th so that he could assemble staff to address those questions at the B&G meeting on July 23rd.

Community Relations: No report.

Legislative: Mr. Kessler advised that he had been selected again to represent Montgomery County at the state level and requested Board comments on the legislative platform that he would pass out so that he could appropriately represent the region. He indicated that he would need Board input by the end of the summer.

Public Comments: Mr. Dovberg noted that taxes had increased 50% in his neighborhood. He also reported that \$1,800.00 left over from the recent technology meeting held last May and funded by Bell Atlantic would be distributed to the participating schools and could be used to purchase hardware and/or software. He expressed the hope that the technology event could be scheduled again next Spring and that more schools would participate. Mr. Dovberg asked Dr. Durtan if a school activity were to run short of funds one year and then received funding help from the district, would that organization have to make up, i.e. repay, the difference the following year. Dr. Durtan responded that, in the case of organizations like the yearbook, it would.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell
Board Secretary