

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, JANUARY 20, 2000**

President Kessler convened the general meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:05 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on January 20, 2000.

Board Members Present: Stuart Kessler, Marc Orlow, Robert Carroll, Gary Johnson, Hugh Lipshutz, Thomas Marchozzi, Robert O'Neill, and Thomas Yunker.

Board Members Absent: Jack Pinheiro.

Also Attending: Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent; R. Scott Klinger, Assistant to the Superintendent for Administrative Services and Personnel; Dr. Ann Stormes, Director of Educational Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Esq., Solicitor; Charles Graham, Director of Technology; Charles Forster, Activities Director – PWHS; Kelly Brown and Carolyn Worrell-Brown, Family Services; Melia Bowie; Domenick J. Cosentino; and Ron Rosen.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the minutes of the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 12/06/99, the General Meeting of 12/06/99, the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 12/16/99, the Personnel Committee Meeting of 01/03/00 and the Community Relations Committee Meeting of 01/05/00, as amended and shown in Enclosures #1 through #5. Mr. Bell confirmed that the minutes had been amended as requested by the Board the previous Tuesday evening. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the minutes as amended. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Financial Reports: Mr. Kessler noted that the financial reports for the months of December 1999 and January 2000 were on the agenda for Board consideration. The reports included the Budget Transfers for those months; the Bond Fund Reports, the Capital Projects Reports and the Capital Fund Reports for the months ending 11/30/99 and 12/31/99; the Food Service Reports for the months ending 09/30/99 and 10/31/99; the Outstanding Investment Reports, the Cash Flow Summaries, the Comparisons of Taxes Collected, the Real Estate Tax Escrow Reports, and the Reconciliations of Cash Accounts for the months ending 11/30/99 and 12/31/99; the Budget Analyses of 12/13/99 and 01/08/00; and the Treasurer's Reports for the months ending 11/30/99 and 12/31/99, as shown in Enclosures #6 through #17. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the reports as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Public Comments on the Agenda: None

Staff Report: Mr. Kessler recognized Kelly Brown of Family Services of Montgomery County who presented information on the FAST Program. A written summary of Ms. Brown's remarks is attached to these minutes as Attachment #1. At the conclusion of her presentation, Ms. Brown introduced Ms. Worrell-Brown, resident of the district working with Family Services and a parent of four district students. Ms. Brown noted that Colonial School District and Colonial and Conshohocken Elementary School had been recognized nationally as FAST participating organizations with remarkable records of accomplishment in working with students and their families.

Mr. Kessler took a number of agenda items out of order.

Old Business: Mr. Kessler reminded his fellow board members that Dr. Durtan and Mr. O'Neill had attended a meeting of the Pennsylvania Association of Growing School Districts. He noted that Mr. O'Neill had provided a brief overview of the organization and expressed the view that it offered little to the district. Following Mr. O'Neill's recommendation the previous meeting, the Board took no action on Enclosure #19.

Correspondence: Mr. Kessler noted that there were five items of correspondence on the agenda. He did not ask for any Board action on Enclosures #20, #22 and #23 which were expressions of opinion on educational vouchers and flexible grouping and a recognition of the community service efforts of several district students. He asked for a motion to accept a gift from the trust of Joshua Morris, as outlined in Enclosure #21, noting that the award had almost become an annual gift to the district. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to accept the gift of \$2,200.00 to the district to be used for the education of district students. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried. Mr. Kessler went on to suggest that board members might want to reconsider the first day of school for 2000-01 as requested in Enclosure #43. He noted that, while he originally supported a starting date after Labor Day, he thought that reconsidering the start date was ill advised and that he would vote against any change. Several other board members echoed his concern that it was not a good idea to reconsider the date. They noted that the Board had taken action on the start date for 2000-01 school year early for the express purpose of giving parents as much advance notice as possible of the first day of classes so that they could plan appropriately. The Board took no action on Enclosure # 43. Board members sought confirmation that the students participating in town watch activities, as noted in Enclosure #23, would receive appropriate Board recognition at a later date. Dr. Durtan indicated that Mrs. Johns would undoubtedly include the students in an upcoming Board recognition program. The Board took note of the fact that members of Mr. Marchozzi's family were among those participating in the town watch program.

Mr. Yunker took the opportunity to advise the community that the curriculum committee had studied the flex program in math at Colonial Elementary School and that it had been reinstated, effective the first day of the new semester. He recapped the review process that had led Dr. Durtan to recommend reinstatement and advised that flexible grouping would be intra-class in the 4th grade and intra-team in the 5th grade. Mr. Yunker indicated that

the pilot would be in place for the balance of the current school year and continue throughout the next year as well. He reported that there would be pre and post-chapter tests to determine appropriate grouping and monitor results. He noted the need for additional resources for students who needed additional help and reported that they would be in smaller groups. Mr. Yunker also reported that homeroom teachers would be key players in the process and noted that there was nothing in the program to preclude a teacher from spending additional time on math. He also advised that there would be no appeals process and that test result would determine student placement. Chapter tests and the Terra Nova (4th grade) and PSSA (5th grade) would be used as assessment tools. Mr. Orlow noted that many of the parents signing the recent petition were residents of Lafayette Hill and Whitemarsh. He asked Dr. Durtan if there were math issues at Whitemarsh Elementary School. Dr. Durtan advised there were none that he knew. In response to queries from board members about parent satisfaction with educational programs, he reviewed statistics garnered from the annual parent surveys in recent years. They reflected a consistently high degree of satisfaction with the educational programs in the district's elementary schools, including Whitemarsh Elementary.

Old Business (Continued): Mr. Kessler recognized Mr. Graham who provided the Board an overview of the elementary school technology issues that led to the recommendations contained in Enclosure #18. He recapped some of Dr. Stormes earlier comments on the process that the technology committee had followed in developing its recommendations and re-emphasized that the committee had first assessed the need for hardware and software to support meeting Pennsylvania standards, five-year reading goals and national technology standards. Mr. Graham noted the importance of a common vision of learning, on-going staff development, and technical resource support. He outlined hardware recommendations for four Pentium III computers, one color desk-jet printer and a 32" monitor in each classroom and one black and white laser printer and one video projector in each building. He noted that the hardware costs included expanding the existing servers. Mr. Graham went on to report that the committee was recommending productivity, creativity and curricular software that contained some ILS elements and some stand-alone elements. He noted that the software focus was on reading but indicated that much of the software could be used across disciplines. Mr. Graham summed up his comments by noting that the current ILS system was obsolete and was no longer supportable. He also expressed his belief that some action to replace it was necessary. He also recommended the employment of a full-time technology integration staff person to support the district's technology program. Board members asked a series of questions and then reviewed and discussed the finance options involved in the upgrade of technology, particularly the pros and cons of leasing versus purchasing the equipment. After considerable discussion, they sought advice from the solicitor and reached a consensus to separate a commitment to the upgrade of the technology from the eventual financing to put it in place. Dr. Lipshutz moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to proceed with the upgrade as outlined in Figure 3 of Enclosure #18 and to direct administration to research financing options and report back to the Board the following month. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan briefly noted that his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #24 and #25 was unchanged from the work session the previous Tuesday. He also pointed out that his recommendation to appoint adult evening school staff, subject to enrollment, was attached to the agenda as Enclosure #46. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the three enclosures as submitted. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

New Business: Mr. Kessler referred board members to a request from Plymouth Township to obtain state income tax information. See Enclosure #26. Mr. Kessler asked for the solicitor's opinion of the request. Mr. Sultanik advised that the Board was not legally obligated to provide the requested material to the township. He also expressed some concern over whether the district was legally authorized to do so. He suggested that the township had other ways to get the information. Mr. Sultanik noted that the district did not have an earned income tax and that information on such taxes could be shared only under certain circumstances. Mr. O'Neill wondered why the township was requesting the information now when it had not done so in the past. Mr. Kessler asked that the matter be tabled pending further clarification of the issues. He asked Mr. Bickleman to contact the township manager and suggest that she consult with the township's solicitor about alternative ways for securing the desired information. He also expressed the district's willingness to be cooperative within the bounds of what was legal and appropriate.

Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the routine transportation contract in Enclosure #27. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the contract as presented. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler briefly recapped a series of requests for authorization for students to attend band and DECA competitions, participate in the annual senior trip and travel to Vermont with the Ski Club, as outlined in Enclosures #28 through #31 and Enclosure #44. He noted that the Board had reviewed the requests at its work session two days earlier and commented on a date correction made to the request for the 2001 senior class trip. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the trip requests as presented. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler moved on to a list of policy additions and changes as shown in Enclosures #33 through #37. Dr. Durtan reported that a proposed policy on medical management of anaphylaxis had been withdrawn and would be rewritten in more general terms and resubmitted for Board consideration in February or March. In the interim, the provisions in the original policy would be issued as administrative regulations.

After a quick Board review of Enclosures #33 through #35, Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to adopt as a first reading the recommendations resulting in a new, more generic policy on student records as shown in Enclosure #33. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Board members reviewed Enclosure #36, the latest revision of the activities code of ethics. Dr. Durtan reported that two changes had been made to page 4 of the document since the work session. The first one removed athletics from the paragraph labeled *Third Offense – Drug Use*. The second was a rewording of the paragraph labeled *Third Offense – Anabolic Steroids* not only calling for permanent expulsion from activities for participants in PIAA athletics but also requiring that sanctions against those participating in non-PIAA athletics would be as outlined in the previous paragraph covering drug use. Board members noted that the primary focus of the policy revisions was to eliminate references to tobacco and to change the sanctions for third offenses to permit an opportunity for reinstatement after one year in activities other than PIAA athletics. After a brief discussion, Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to adopt the revised policy as a first reading. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

The Board revisited Enclosure #37 on possession of weapons prohibited. Dr. Durtan noted that the district looked at intent when deciding punishment and that the last lines of the policy allowed the superintendent some discretion in applying the provisions of the student code of conduct. In response to questions from board members, the solicitor stated his belief that the district could not deviate in its policy from the state’s definition of a weapon. Further discussion did not produce a consensus for action on the policy. No motion was made to act on the proposed policy and no additional direction on the policy was given to administration.

Mr. Kessler advised that bids for marker boards and carpeting were on the agenda for Board action. See Enclosure #45. Mr. Bell confirmed the funding source for the projects, and delineated the areas of the building in which the products would be used. He noted that the renovations were bond-issue projects. He also reported that the marker boards were for former science rooms not yet renovated and that the carpeting was for those areas and the remainder of the third floor of the east wing and the auditorium as well. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. O’Neill seconded a motion to approve the bids as recommended. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Solicitor’s Report: Mr. Sultanik reviewed the work done by Ms. Rothstein of his firm to negotiate settlements in four tax assessment appeals. Mr. Kessler sought additional information on the proposed settlements and confirmation that discovery was done in each of the cases. Mr. Sultanik and Mr. Bell provided additional background information. In response to questions from board members, Mr. Sultanik indicated that the firm was re-evaluating appraisal firms as part of its on-going efforts to represent the district as effectively as possible. It was decided that the Board would briefly recess and go into Executive Session at the end of its regular business for the evening in order to consult with the solicitor on the tax appeal cases before it.

Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit Board: No report

CMCAVTS: No report.

Personnel: No report.

Finance: Mr. O'Neill reported that the district was in receipt of the independent audit report for the 1998-99 school year. He moved and Mr. Marchozzi seconded a motion to accept the report. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried. Mr. O'Neill recognized Mr. Bickleman for his fine work in managing the budget and preparing for the audit. He also reported that the budget schedule for the upcoming school year was being prepared and would be available shortly.

Curriculum and Program: Mr. Yunker briefly summarized remarks that he had made earlier on the flex program in math at Colonial Elementary School and noted that the committee would be meeting again later in the month to review budget proposals for the coming school year.

Buildings & Grounds/Transportation: Mr. Orlow reported that the district was moving forward with drafting a contract with E. I. Associates to provide full architectural services for the development of the WFIL Tract and that it would shortly sign a contract with Stephen Parks and Associates for design work on the all-weather track at the high school.

Community Relations: Mr. Johnson reported that the next town meeting would be held on 02/01/00 from 7:30 to 9:30 p. m. at the Plymouth Township Building on the subject of block scheduling at the high school.

Legislative: Mr. Carroll reported on bills dealing with professional development and standards, special education, rehabilitating schools and on a proposal by the State Democratic Caucus on a program called Home Star to refund half of all surpluses in the budget back to districts to offset property taxes.

Public Comments: None.

Mr. Kessler recessed the meeting and took the Board into executive session to consult the solicitor on proposed settlements of tax assessment appeals.

The Board returned from executive session. Mr. Kessler suggested that the Board accept the proposed settlement with James and Paula Longo but defer action on the other issues pending additional review. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the proposed settlement with James and Paula Longo at an assessed amount of \$274,074.07 for tax years 1998, 1999, and 2000. On roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion carried. Action on the remaining settlement proposals was postponed pending further review.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 11:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell
Board Secretary