

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, JUNE 19, 2000**

President Kessler convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:47 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on June 19, 2000.

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

Board Members Absent: None.

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; Allan Dovberg, President, Colonial United Taxpayers and the Montgomery County Taxpayers Consortium; staff, parents and students from Colonial and Ridge Park Elementary Schools; and local media representatives.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the minutes of the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 05/04/00, the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 05/15/00, the Work Session of 05/15/00, the General Meeting of 05/18/00, and the Personnel Committee Meeting of 05/30/00, and the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 06/01/00, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #6 on the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday. Mr. Carroll asked that the comments that he had made during the work session be revised to more closely reflect his statements. Mr. Marchozzi pointed out an inaccuracy in reporting a board motion during the general meeting. Mr. Johnson noted that he, Mr. Orlow and Mr. Pinheiro had not been listed as attendees at the meeting of the Curriculum Committee. Mr. Bell and Dr. Stormes were to undertake the necessary revisions prior to Board action on the minutes at the meeting on 06/22/00.

Financial Reports: Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the financial reports which were listed as Enclosures #7 through #17 in the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. They included the Budget Transfer Reports for 06/00; the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report, and Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 05/31/00; General Fund and Program Bills; the Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes, Real Estate Escrow Report and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 05/31/00; the

Budget Analyses of 06/12/00; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 05/31/00. Dr. Lipshutz had a question about the costs for advertising bids for asbestos removal and Mr. Bell and Mr. Bickleman indicated that they would look at the paperwork and report back on the nature of the costs.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Mr. Kessler reviewed on four items of correspondence on the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday, including Enclosures #18 through #20. He noted that Bradley J. Sandella, Athletic Trainer at the high school reported on student involvement in athletic training and requested Board support for the annual attendance of two students going to a summer training camp. Dr. Durtan confirmed that the Board had provided the same level of support in recent years but noted that the cost of the summer camp had risen slightly.

Mr. Kessler noted that William Wells, Chairperson of the Colonial Foundation for Education Innovation, would be presenting a mini-grant recipient to the Board at the meeting on 06/22/00.

Mr. Kessler took note of a number of letters and petition from parents and staff regarding the work assignment of Mr. Tom Sigafos, Principal, Colonial Elementary School. Dr. Durtan reported that he had received additional letters from parents and distributed copies to board members. Mr. Kessler advised that Carol L. Clopp, Finance Director of Plymouth Township, had requested a waiver of transfer tax on a property that the township had purchased. Mr. Bickleman confirmed that the township routinely requested and the district routinely granted such requests. He also confirmed for Mr. Kessler that there was time to take action on the request at the general meeting the following Thursday.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #21 through #23 on the agenda for Thursday evening. He briefly explained some changes to the report before the Board and then took several minutes to comment on some of his recommendations. First he advised that he hoped to be able to recommend a new assistant principal for Colonial Elementary School on Thursday evening. He then went on to describe the framework within which he had come to the decision to recommend the assignment of Tom Sigafos as Principal of Ridge Park Elementary School and the assignment of Mary Ellen Gorodetzer as Principal of Colonial Elementary School. He spoke of the importance of attracting competent professionals to key administrative posts within the district and reported that there was nothing punitive in his recommendation. He stated, in fact, that the recommended change was coming with the full consent of both principals and at the request of Mr. Sigafos. Dr. Durtan reported that he had considered personal issues, professional goals, educational leadership skills, and the issue of continuity within the schools. He indicated that he had also evaluated parent and teacher reaction to the moves.

Dr. Durtan characterized additions to the substitute list as routine and noted that faculty summer school appointments were subject to adequate enrollment. He responded to a query about Mr. Thompson's ability to supervise the program after his retirement by noting that Mr. Thompson could work up to 95 days in public schools each year without it affecting his retirement pay.

Finally, Dr. Durtan explained that service had ended for the long-term substitutes listed and that they would be considered for any vacancies that might be available in the coming year.

New Business: Mr. Kessler noted that the Board would be adopting a final budget for the 2000-01 school year, setting real estate and Act 511 taxes and the billing date for real estate taxes at its general session the following Thursday. He asked if board members had budget related issues that they would like to raise that evening. Mr. Marchozzi indicated that he would like to discuss the language lab at the high school on Thursday. Mr. Orlow suggested that the Board consider adjusting the revenue side of the budget upward. He noted that the district had received a state grant for performance-based pay for the current year and would be eligible for a grant in the coming year. He advised that the state had increased funds for such programs in the year to come. He also reported that the district had annually averaged \$750,000.00 in interim taxes in recent years but had budgeted only \$600,000.00 for the coming year and reminded the Board of the \$400,000.00 unallocated fund balance that was not included in the preliminary budget. He suggested that the Board consider including some of the above in the revenue side of the budget. Mr. Marchozzi said that he had questions about the fund balance for Thursday night. Dr. Lipshutz and Mr. Kessler wondered about the appropriateness of budgeting grant money before a grant had been awarded. Dr. Lipshutz asked if such a procedure was prohibited. Mr. Bickleman responded that it was not prohibited but that he traditionally budgeted only monies for which receipt had been assured. Dr. Lipshutz proposed that the Board not budget the \$300,000.00 grant but be aggressive on the application of the \$400,000.00 unallocated fund balance. Mr. Orlow suggested that the Board consider budgeting as revenue some of the \$850,000.00 that he had mentioned earlier. Mr. Marchozzi strongly disagreed with that approach. In response to Board queries, Mr. Bickleman outlined the procedures that he had followed in determining probable interim taxes. Mr. Kessler requested updated information on the proposed foreign language lab at the high school.

Mr. Kessler noted that the annual appointment of school physicians and dentists would be on the agenda for the general meeting of 06/22/00. Dr. Durtan confirmed that administration was recommending the reappointment of Dr. Marc H. Neiberg, D.O., Dr. Glenn Miller, D.O. and Dr. Arnold Randel, DMD at rates 3% higher than those for the current school year were.

Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to a series of annual contract renewals shown as Enclosures #24 through #32 on the agenda for the general session the following Thursday. These included contracts with: Central Montgomery County MH/MR Center for psychiatric services and a cost of \$28,005.12, a 3% increase over the current year; Progression Group for homebound education services at a rate of \$23.00/hour, the same rate as the current year; Montgomery Early Learning Center for the lease of space at Colonial Elementary School at \$34,845.00, an increase of 3% over the current year; Carbon-Lehigh Data processing Center for business related services at rates that represent a 3% increase for business services and a 1% increase for student services over the current year; Davidson School for an instructional aide at a cost of \$16,698.50, a 7% increase over current costs; Carol Webster, PT for physical therapy needs at a rate of \$53.77/hour, a 10% decrease on costs over the current year; Montgomery County Head Start for the lease of classroom space at \$3,300.00, an increase of 4% over current lease rate; Kim Hartranft, OT for occupational therapy services at \$53.77/hour, a 10% decrease over current rates; and Kristen Rapher for itinerant vision services at \$65.00, the same rate as the current year.

Dr. Durtan walked the Board through several corrections to the contract information contained in the agenda. Mr. Pinheiro asked if the solicitor had reviewed the contracts. Dr. Durtan responded that the solicitor had reviewed them in prior years but not in the current year. He also noted, however, that the basic terms of the contract had not changed. Mr. Yunker asked if the district was happy with data processing services from Carbon-Lehigh I. U. and raised some issues with report cards. Dr. Durtan and Mr. Bickleman responded affirmatively, and Dr. Durtan reported that the issues had been resolved after communications improved between the schools and Carbon-Lehigh. Mr. Orlow asked how long the district had been dealing with Carbon-Lehigh and if services had ever been re-bid during the service period. Mr. Bickleman responded that the district had been dealing with Carbon-Lehigh since the mid-1980's. He also reported that the arrangement had never been formally re-bid and that vendors who had expressed initial interest in providing the service never followed through once they learned what the district received from Carbon-Lehigh and the costs involved. Mr. Kessler inquired whether it might now be appropriate to do in-house some of the tasks performed by Carbon-Lehigh. Mr. Bickleman advised that it would be more expensive to do so because the district would have to hire additional staff. Mr. O'Neill asked about the final cost. Mr. Bickleman reported that an analysis was then underway and that the costs would be in the \$70,000.00 range. He also noted that the contract language was the same as in prior years and that he would have the updated costs for the general meeting on Thursday.

Mr. Kessler advised that continued participation in the Consortium for Drug, Alcohol and Violence Prevention would be on the agenda for Board action at the Thursday meeting. Dr. Durtan noted that the district got a little less money this year but received substantial value by participating in the consortium.

Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to bids for caulking at Plymouth Elementary School and for custodial equipment district-wide. Mr. Pinheiro inquired about the timing and funding for the caulking work, and Mr. Bell advised that it would start prior to the end of the current fiscal year and continue into the next. Funding would come from both years. Dr. Lipshutz inquired about, and Mr. Bell explained, the purpose of battery operated auto-scrubbers (cleaning floors) and burnishers (polishing floors). Mr. Bell also noted that the purchase would be part of an on-going program to upgrade equipment annually in order to make certain facility tasks less labor intensive while improving the appearance of our schools. See Enclosures #34 and #35 on the agenda for the meeting of 06/22/00.

Dr. Durtan reported that the bids for contracts for general construction and electrical construction services in connection with the development of the WFIL Tract would also be on Thursday evening's agenda for Board action. Mr. Bell reported that analysis of the bids would be on hand the following day and that projected costs were basically in line with earlier estimates.

Mr. Kessler reported that there would be a student trip request on Thursday's agenda for the PWHS cheerleaders to attend a national competition in Orlando in March 2001. Participants were to bear the cost of the trip. See Enclosure #37 on the agenda for that meeting.

Dr. Durtan advised that there would be two additional trip requests on the agenda that night: a request from the FBLA for students to attend a leadership academy and a Spanish Exchange Program which would be held during a ten-day period at the end of the first semester at the high school and the beginning of the second. Participants would bear the cost of the trips. Plans were to be in place for make-up and catch-up work for participants in the exchange program.

Dr. Durtan reported that a request for the approval of a tuition student would be added to the agenda for the meeting of 06/22/00.

Solicitor's Report: None.

Committee Reports: Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro provided a brief overview of the compensation issues that would be on the agenda for the Thursday meeting. These included salary increases for cabinet members and administrators on the CASEA group, non-bargaining unit salaries, and the substitute rate for the coming school year. Mr. Marchozzi requested information on the percentage increases for district administrators.

Buildings & Grounds: PDE Forms 731 for the development of the WFIL Tract and all-weather track were listed on the agenda for action the following Thursday.

Additional Information: Mr. Kessler announced that the Board had met in executive session from 6:30 p.m. to the start of the meeting. The Board had interviewed candidates for positions and discussed other personnel issues. Mr. Kessler advised that the Board would meet at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, 06/22/00 to discuss personnel and legal matters.

Public Comments: More than a dozen individuals addressed the Board on the subject of the recommended transfer of Tom Sigafos, Principal, Colonial Elementary School to the position of Principal, Ridge Park Elementary School and the transfer of Mary Ellen Gorodetzer, Principal, Ridge Park Elementary School to the position of Principal, Colonial Elementary School. The speakers included representatives of the Colonial Elementary School staff, parents of district students, students and other concerned citizens. The speakers noted the positive changes that the principals had made at their respective schools, their strong leadership and good rapport with their staff and students, and the need for educational continuity for the children, especially at Colonial Elementary School where the assistant principal would also be leaving. The vast majority of the speakers focused on their concerns about Colonial Elementary School and what they believed would be the negative impact of Mr. Sigafos' departure on the staff and students of the school. Several expressed doubt that Mr. Sigafos was willing to move to another school. Many felt that his departure would have a negative impact on the educational program at the school and slow or reverse some of the gains that they felt had been made during his tenure as principal. A number of speakers mentioned flexible grouping in math and parent involvement in the school as improvements that might be lost in the transition. Several speakers characterized both principals as exceptionally capable and strong positive influences in their buildings. However, they went on to suggest that, since the schools were operating effectively under the present principals, no changes in staffing were necessary. All speakers recommended that both principals remain in their current schools and that their transfer requests be denied. A couple of speakers presented letters to the Board and one presented petitions, all of which recommended that Mr. Sigafos remain as Principal of Colonial Elementary School.

Mr. Dovberg expressed the hope that at least five board members would support the recommendations of the previous speakers and leave the principals in their present schools. He suggested that the Board reflect on its responsibility to serve with fidelity and remember that it reported to the community. Mr. Dovberg also asked about the status of the Act 50 Committee. He restated his long-standing position that a committee meeting should be scheduled to explain Act 50 to committee members and that the committee should be allowed to get on with its work without the negative influence of groups that were opposed to the act. He suggested that, if Finance Committee Chair, Mr. O'Neill were not able to schedule a meeting, someone else should do so.

Mr. Kessler thanked those who had come to the meeting and had provided input to the Board on the recommended transfers of two principals. He appreciated the

favorable comments about Mr. Sigafos that they had shared. He noted that, as a parent, his own interactions with Mr. Sigafos had been positive ones. He stated that the issue of the proposed transfers would be hard to decide.

Dr. Durtan and Mr. Kessler, on behalf of the Board, thanked Dr. Stormes for her many years of dedicated service to the district and noted that that meeting would be her last as Director of Educational Services. Dr. Stormes thanked the Board for its support over the years and briefly reminisced about her years with the district.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**