

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, NOVEMBER 18, 1999**

President Kessler convened the November meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:10 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on November 18, 1999.

Board Members Present: Stuart Kessler, Marc Orlow, Beverly Brown, Robert Carroll, Rich Connolly, Gary Johnson, 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; Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Esq., Solicitor; Ross Weisbrot and Alicia Fabrizio, Student Board Representatives; Darlene Davis, Principal, CE; Charles Graham, Director of Technology; Brian Gallagher, CEA; William Wells, President, Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation; Melia Bowie; Domenick J. Cosentino; Ron De Rosa; Allan Dovberg, President, Colonial United Taxpayers; Dr. Marion Kaplan; Dr. Hugh Lipshutz; and Dr. Robert Offenber.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance and presented certificates of achievement to commended students in the 2000 annual National Merit Scholarship Program and to student athletes on the softball and baseball teams at Colonial Middle School. He also presented Beverly Brown a certificate of appreciation for her ten years of service as a member of the District's Board of School Directors. A complete listing of certificate recipients is attached to these minutes as Attachment #1.

Mr. Kessler requested Board action on the minutes of the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 09/30/99, the Personnel and Community Relations Committee Meeting of 10/14/99, the Work Session of 10/18/99, the Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting of 10/20/99, the General Meeting of 10/21/99, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 11/01/99, as revised and shown in Enclosures #1 through #6. Mr. Connolly moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Financial Reports: Mr. Kessler requested Board action on the Budget Transfer Report of 11/99; Bond Fund Report for the month ending 10/31/99; the Capital Projects Report for the month ending 10/31/99; the General Fund/Federal Program Bills; the Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 10/31/99; the Outstanding Investment Report, the Cash Flow Summary, the Comparison of Taxes Collected, the Real Estate Tax Escrow Report, and the Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 10/31/99; the Budget

Analysis Report of 11/08/99, and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 10/31/99, as shown in Enclosures #7 through #17. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the reports, as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Public Comments on the Agenda: None.

Staff Report: Ms. Davis, Mr. Graham, Dr. Kaplan and Dr. Offenbergs presented to the Board an evaluation of the full-day kindergarten program at Conshohocken Elementary School. They reviewed the process through which the all-day kindergarten program was implemented as part of a school-wide program aimed at having an early positive impact on student learning. They noted that the goal of the program was to enable students at the school to begin to compete more successfully with their peers at the district's other K-3 elementary schools. Presenters talked of the progress made toward that goal, the additional work that needed to be done, and the positive responses to the program from faculty and parents. Presenters noted clear progress in cognitive areas but reported that results were less clear in social areas. The complete report upon which their presentation was based are included in a written report attached to these minutes as Attachment #2.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Mr. Wells of the Colonial Foundation addressed the Board, presented five mini-grant awards for Board consideration, and introduced Ms. Wilma Spangler, art teacher at Colonial Elementary School, who outlined a program funded by the foundation to preserve and update the district's permanent collection of student artwork by make it more representative of current student efforts. Mr. Wells gave the Board the title and a brief summary of each of the five mini-grants. They were: *Literature Circles/Drama Circles*, a digital camera for the exclusive use of the Genesis program, *Rent-A-Box Insects*, *Jabberwocky Re-Told*, and technical equipment and programming materials for the web page at Whitmarsh Elementary School. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to accept the mini-grants totaling \$1,845.00. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Correspondence containing an opinion from Jerry Kovolchuk, expressions of concern from several parents regarding the planned start of school before Labor Day in the year 2000-01, and information from John Grispon, President of the MCIU Board, as shown in Enclosures #18 through #20, required no Board action.

Mr. Kessler advised that the Board had met at 7:45 p. m. that evening in executive session to discuss student personnel matters and would meet again immediately following that night's meeting.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan briefly reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosure #21. He noted that his report had been updated to reflect a recommendation that Lorraine De Rosa be appointed to fill the position vacated by Curriculum Coordinator, Darlene Schoenly. The recommended appointment called for a

salary of \$69,995.00 and an effective date of 01/03/00. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the report as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Dr. Durtan also reported that the substitute list, as shown in Enclosure #22, contained emergency certifications for some secondary teachers. He again confirmed that it was getting harder to secure substitute teachers at all levels, but especially at the secondary level. Mr. Carroll asked when the substitutes with emergency certifications would be available, and Dr. Durtan responded that they would be available immediately. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the list as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler requested an update of the district's pay-for-performance initiative. Dr. Durtan responded that evaluation criteria required by the initiative had been distributed in time and that all seven district schools were squared away on building goals. He also reported that the district was moving forward with the collection of data that would be analyzed by the contractor for the purpose of establishing the database required under the program. He confirmed that the database would be built on standardized student reading scores.

Board Student Representatives Report: Mr. Weisbrot updated the Board on the most recent accomplishments of the Marching Colonials, including a first-place finish in percussion and a second-place finish overall in the most recent Cavalcade of Bands. He also reported on the Mr. PW Contest and fundraiser, the completion of the fall sports season and the start of the winter sports season. Ms. Fabricio reported to the Board on the successful fall play presented by the Colonial Players; auditions for the spring musical, *The Music Man*; and the winter concert planned for 12/09/99. Both representatives offered very positive reviews of the new science wing at the high school.

New Business: Mr. Kessler noted that two student trip requests were on the agenda. Both trips were for students at the middle school. One involved trips to the Marine Consortium in Wallops Island, Virginia and Cape Cod Sea Camp in Massachusetts. The other involved a trip to Italy. Both met established Board guidelines. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the requests as shown in Enclosures #23 and #24. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried. Mr. Pinheiro lamented the fact that an annual literary field trip to New England would not be scheduled this year because of issues with block scheduling.

Mr. Kessler queried board members on their interest in joining a co-op of growing school districts as suggested in Enclosure #25. Hearing no expression of interest by the Board, Mr. Kessler sought no action on the issue.

Mr. Kessler provided a brief summary of the district's long-standing practice of conducting anti-vandalism programs at the middle school and high school and providing funding incentives that benefited the student councils at those schools when vandalism fell below

historical levels. He noted that funding had not changed since the inception of the program and that administration was recommending awards of \$1,402.17 to the high school and \$1,284.98 to the middle school for the current year. The amounts represented one-half of the unspent anti-vandalism funds for the previous year, as shown in Enclosure #26. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Connolly seconded a motion to approve the awards to the two student councils and to fund the program at the high school and middle school with at the same level for the current school year, \$5,000.00 and \$3,000.00 respectively. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Citing a change in administrators at the high school, Ms. Brown moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to update the Depository Authorization for the school to reflect the current personnel. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Solicitor's Report: None

Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit Board: No report.

CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson advised the Board the Center for Technical Studies had hired a full-time substitute instructor to address the increasing difficulty in securing substitute teachers. He reported that Mr. Slauch had begun the process of transitioning into his new position as Director and that the joint committee had recognized Mr. Connolly for his six years of devoted service to the center.

Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro announced that the Board had voted to accept the fact-finders report for the bargaining unit representing the secretaries and aides of the district and that work was underway on the language of a tentative agreement with the group. He noted that the agreement would provide wage increases of 3.5%, 3.5% and 4.0% respectively in the three years beginning 07/01/99 but that the first increase would not be effective until 01/07/00. He also reported a move to Personal Choice 215 with a \$5.00 co-pay in 2000-01 and a \$10.00 co-pay in 2001-02. Mr. Pinheiro reported that nurse's aides would be recognized as instructional aides effective 07/01/00 and that they would also become full-time employees. Mr. Klinger advised that he was awaiting additional information from the PSEA representative regarding the food service negotiations.

Finance: Ms. Brown advised that the district was still awaiting the solicitor's opinion on the 1998-99 audit report and would probably act on it at the special meeting of 11/30/99. She indicated that the district could expect another perfect audit.

Curriculum and Program: Mr. Yunker reported that the committee had met twice in late October, had reviewed the district's math program, and had taken a look at procedures for making curricular changes. He also advised that the committee had discussed the 5th grade math pilot and parental support of the program and that the committee had raised a number of questions that would be addressed in future meetings. Mr. Yunker noted that the committee would wait for the principal's report to curriculum council before taking any additional action on the subject. Mr. Yunker also shared an update on technology.

He reported that the file server that had been down at Plymouth Elementary School had been restored to service and that the district was still seeking to hire an additional technician for the Technology Department. In response to a Board query, he indicated that the committee had neither heard much about nor discussed computer downtime in classrooms at the middle school. He noted that Mr. Graham and his staff appeared to be responding in a timely fashion to technology issues across the district.

Buildings and Grounds/Transportation: Mr. Orlow raised the issue of moving forward with design development for the condemned property known as the WFIL Tract. He reported that he had talked the previous Monday with Mr. DePallo of DePallo Design and Planning, the firm which had done preliminary design work for the site, and received clarification of a number of items. Mr. DePallo provided these clarifications, which included his firm's plans for contingencies, its involvement in the bidding process, a cap on reimbursables, and project timelines, among other issues, in recent correspondence to the district. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to have DePallo Design and Planning do the design development work for the project, subject to approval of a final contract by the solicitor. Board members raised a number of issues. They included questions about including all of the proposed parking in the projected costs of the project, pinpointing the time that it would take before the district could take full possession of the property, confirming how long the proposed pricing for the project would remain valid, and identifying the dates by which various segments of the planned development would be needed. Several board members expressed reluctance to vote in favor of the motion without these and other details first being addressed. Mr. Sultanik provided information on the processes involved in implementing the eminent domain statutes and noted that the Board had the authority to make prudent business decisions. He also stated that the Board had the option of expressing its intent to secure the services of a design firm for the project while not binding itself until it was completely satisfied with the arrangements. Several board members spoke about the impact of other facilities issues on the timing of the development of the WFIL Tract and about the value in having the Board clearly demonstrate both its need and its plans for the property. Mr. Orlow and Mr. Johnson amended their motion to have the solicitor prepare the necessary contract based upon all of the issues and concerns raised by board members during their discussion that evening. On a roll call vote of the motion as made and amended, all but Ms. Brown in favor. Miss Brown opposed. Motion carried.

Community Relations: Mr. Johnson reported that the committee was continuing to meet with faculty at each of the district's schools and had most recently met with staff at Colonial and Ridge Park Elementary Schools. He also reminded the Board and the community that the ribbon cutting ceremony and formal opening of the new science wing at the high school was scheduled the following day at 3:30 p.m. in cafeteria #7.

Legislative: Mr. Carroll provided an update on a law recently sent to the governor on the issues of continuing professional development and alternative educational placements. He also shared information on a proposal by the Democratic Legislative Caucus on homestead tax reform and data from a recent survey of school safety.

Mr. Kessler recognized Ms. Brown and Mr. Connolly's retirement from the Board at the end of the month. He commended them for their dedicated service to the district and the community over the course of many years and specifically thanked Ms. Brown for her efforts in the area of school finance and Mr. Connolly for his efforts in the facilities and v-tech arenas.

Public Comments: Mr. Gallagher thanked Ms. Brown and Mr. Connolly for their service on the Board. He also reported that CEA and the professional staff were working with Dr. Stormes and the Curriculum Supervisors to revise the curriculum to meet Chapter 4 standards. In addition, he expressed the teachers' continuing dissatisfaction with the design of and process for implementing performance-based pay. He stated his disbelief that reforms based on the concept would not work. He further stated that bonuses were not proven to improve education and that the money devoted to the plan would be better spent on true educational reform.

Mr. Dovberg commented on the mixed emotions that he felt as Mr. Connolly and Ms. Brown prepared to leave the Board. He also expressed concern that the timing of the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new science wing at 3:30 p. m. on a weekday allowed little opportunity for public attendance. He suggested that such events should be scheduled at times when greater public attendance would be possible. Mr. Dovberg asked Mr. Sultanik about the conflict of interest that had led his law firm to withdraw from representing the district on the issue of the condemnation of the WFIL Tract. He queried whether the district would experience additional costs as a result of the change and asked why the district, rather than the other party in the case, had changed counsel. Mr. Sultanik noted that the legal code of professional conduct required that his firm withdraw from the case and expressed his belief that the district would not experience significant increases in cost as a result of the change.

Mr. Dovberg noted that five school districts had voted on Act 50 tax reform proposals on election day and that the three larger districts had approved them. He suggested that the Board watch developments in the area. Mr. Dovberg also reported that he was in favor of the student trip to Italy but expressed doubt that the students would experience language in its authentic form. He inquired about the status of a district contract with Pepsi for exclusive rights to distribute soft drinks within the district. Dr. Durtan reported that the district had received no contract that administration would recommend, that interest in the concept was waning, and that he was pessimistic that a contract would ever be signed. Mr. Dovberg reiterated his earlier suggestion that the Board carefully consider pricing, drink sizes and potential trash problems before deciding whether such a contract was worth it. Mr. Dovberg responded to Mr. Gallagher's earlier comments on performance-based pay by noting that if we wanted performance-based pay to succeed it would succeed and that if we wanted it to fail, it would fail. He challenged the teachers to make it work and noted that it would be the students who suffered if it did not work.

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

Respectively submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**