

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, OCTOBER 21, 1999**

President Kessler convened the October meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:03 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on October 21, 1999.

Board Members Present: Stuart Kessler, Marc Orlow, Beverly Brown, Robert Carroll, Rich Connolly, Gary Johnson, Jack Pinheiro and Thomas Yunker.

Board Members Absent: Robert O'Neill.

Also Attending: Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent; Dr. Ann Stormes, Director of Curriculum & Instruction; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Michael Gordon and Alicia Fabrizio, Student Board Representatives; Brian Gallagher, CEA; Liz Dugan, PWS Student Council; Robert J. Jones, Saul Ewing; Glen Williard, PFM; Domenick J. Cosentino; Stan Coplan; A.J. Daulerio; Leslie Finegold; Tom Gibson; Kristy Goldman; Amy Heleniak; Nancy Langerfeld; Dr. Hugh Lipshutz; Dr. Darilyn Moyer; Donald Newmeyer; and Deborah Sloan.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Kessler asked for Board comment on the minutes of the Community Relations Committee Meetings of 09/08/99, the Work Session of 09/13/99, the Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting of 09/15/99, the General Meeting of 09/16/99, the Special Meeting of 09/21/99, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 10/04/99, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #6. He noted that the changes requested at the work session the preceding Monday had been made. Mr. Connolly moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the minutes as amended. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Financial Reports: Mr. Kessler directed board members to the Bond Fund Report for the month ending 09/30/99; the Capital Projects Report for the month ending 09/30/99; the General Fund/Federal Program Bills; the Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 09/30/99; 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 09/30/99; the Budget Analysis Report of 10/11/99, and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 08/31/99, as shown in Enclosures #7 through #16. Dr. Durtan confirmed that bills and disbursements for asbestos removal work were for work done in conjunction with HVAC modifications involved in the construction of additional classrooms at Colonial Middle School. He also reported that the architect had given the prior approval for a payment to Chowns Fabrication and

Rigging, Inc. for work done on the classroom project. Dr. Durtan also advised that a communications oversight had delayed an update to the Capital Projects Report to reflect reallocation of portions of the Bond Contingency/Capital Reserve Fund to bond issue projects. He advised the Board that the issue would be brought to Mr. Bickleman's attention upon his return to the district the following Monday and that he expected that Mr. Bickleman would consult with the district's auditors to determine the appropriate mechanism and timing for making the requested update. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the reports, as presented, pending the update of the Bond Fund Report. Motion carried 8 – 0.

Public Comments on the Agenda: None.

Staff Report: None.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Thomas J. Gentzel, Assistant Director for Government and Member Relations of PSBA, advised the Board of the outcome of the legislative proposal submitted by the district. No Board action was required.

Mr. Kessler recognized Liz Dugan, a representative of the PWS Student Council who spoke in opposition to the Board policy on "Activities Code of Ethics". She indicated that she was speaking for the council and for herself. She questioned how the Board could justify its position on activities that occurred after school hours and off school property. She felt that the Board had crossed the line between its responsibilities and that of parents and the local police. She also thought that the policy in question violated due process. Ms. Dugan suggested that the district investigate other options for dealing with substance abuse and focus on children in the middle school in an effort to catch potential problems early. She informed the Board that Student Council would be coming up with some ideas on the issue in the near future.

Bond Presentation: Mr. Kessler advised that he was taking this topic out of order and recognized Mr. Williard of PFM who reviewed with the Board his report entitled "Financial Update". The report is attached to these minutes as Attachment #1. Mr. Williard recapped the work that the Board had done earlier to secure a \$10,000,000.00 bond in 1999 and explained how it would be proceeding with the next phase, an additional \$10,000,000.00 bond in 2000. The key summary points of his presentation are contained on page #1 of the attachment. Board members discussed the main advantages of capitalized interest, including the ability to finance the bond without increasing debt service that might then necessitate a tax increase, and the disadvantages, including paying interest on capitalized interest. They also discussed the pros and cons of various timing options. In response to a direct query, Mr. Williard noted that capitalized interest was treated like one of the projects included in the bond and could be increased or decreased during the life of the issue.

He also noted that the bond sale would be conducted over the Internet and explained the precautions in place to guarantee the integrity of the sale. Mr. Kessler also recognized Mr. Jones of Saul Ewing, bond counsel, who recommended that the Board pass a resolution following the outlines presented by Mr. Williard. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the bond as suggested in Mr. Williard's outline. On roll call vote, all in favor except Mr. Yunker. Mr. Yunker was opposed because he felt that the district was capitalizing too much interest. Motion carried.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan briefly reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #18 and #19. He noted that his report had been updated to reflect the resignation of Curriculum Coordinator, Darlene Schoenly. He also reported that the starting dates of the two employees that had been questioned in the personnel report on the proceeding Monday were accurate. He advised that a delay in receipt of some documents had slowed the final processing of the paperwork by that staff had started their positions on the date indicated in his report. Mr. Carroll noted the small number of secondary teachers being added to the substitute lists. Dr. Durtan confirmed that it was getting harder to secure substitute teachers at all levels, but especially at the secondary level. He noted that Colonial was faring better than many districts and briefly outlined some steps that Mr. Klinger was taking to secure substitutes. Mr. Orlow asked if all of the appointments had been budgeted, and Dr. Durtan indicated that they had been budgeted as unallocated slots that were then being allocated. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the reports as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Dr. Durtan noted that board members had received the annual salary employee listing. He advised that Mr. Yunker had questions about three of the entries and that these questions involved the impact of leaves on step movement. Dr. Durtan reported that Mr. Klinger would have answers to those questions when he returned to the district. Dr. Durtan also noted that the Board was being asked to accept rather than approve the list. Mr. Kessler questioned why the Board should take action on the listing at all. Mr. Sultanik advised that action was purely ministerial and subject to adjustment but suggested that the Board approve the listing subject to the clarifications that Mr. Klinger would provide. In response to a query from Mr. Pinheiro, Dr. Durtan reported that the list included base salaries only. After additional discussion, Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the list pending review by Mr. Klinger. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried. Mr. Pinheiro advised that copies of the list would be available for public review in the Personnel Office.

Dr. Durtan directed the attention of board members to a request from Robert Culp, a social studies teacher at the high school, to be permitted to participate in a teacher exchange program with Australia. Dr. Durtan referred to the Board policy on the subject and outlined the key components of the exchange. Board members

discussed the perceived advantages and disadvantages of program participation, focusing on issues of staff control and educational quality. Dr. Durtan noted that the program was directed by the federal government but managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and included a thorough screening process in both countries. Dr. Stormes suggested that Mr. Culp's interaction with reading and language arts teachers in Australia would put him on the cutting edge of well regarded curriculum development initiatives in commonwealth countries. Dr. Durtan suggested that the Board consider approval only if Mr. Culp were required to return to teaching at the high school for a minimum of one year following the completion of the program. He and Mr. Sultanik both noted that the district would retain its discretion over the operation of its educational programs throughout the exchange. Dr. Durtan advised that building administrators would have flexibility in assigning teachers to classes and that the program would not cost the district any additional dollars. Several board members and both Student Board Representatives spoke in favor of the Mr. Culp's participation and of the advantages of having an Australian teacher on staff for a year. Several other Board members expressed concern about a foreign teacher moving into the high school so soon after major changes in the way that the school delivered its educational program. After thorough discussion, Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to permit Mr. Culp to participate in the exchange program if accepted. On roll call vote, all in favor except Mr. Orlow. Mr. Orlow opposed . Motion carried.

Board Student Representatives Report: Mr. Gordon provided the Board with an overview of recent student activities, including student rock concerts and the dinner dance for the Class of 2000. Ms. Fabricio highlighted activities during Spirit Week at the high school, including color wars, Jell-O wrestling, and powder puff football. She also shared some information on other sports events and the fall theater production written by the students.

New Business: Mr. Kessler noted that Dr. Durtan had provided board members with two possible calendars for the 2000-01 school year on the preceding Monday and that they were essentially the same except that one had the first day of school the Monday before Labor Day and the other had the first day on the Tuesday after Labor Day. See Enclosure #20. Dr. Durtan recapped his presentation that evening. He noted that school had opened before Labor for the past two years because Labor Day had been much later than usual and that the openings had gone well. He also reported that Parent Council had expressed considerable support for an opening after Labor Day, that one parent had given a good rationale for starting before Labor Day, and that he agreed with that parent's assessment that a week in August was more educationally productive than a week in June. Board members discussed the pros and cons of each calendar option. The Board Student Representatives agreed that many students would prefer to start after Labor Day but were divided on their personal preferences. Mr. Orlow and Mr. Johnson noted that the primary reason for starting before Labor Day the past two years was no longer an issue this year since Labor Day fell earlier in the month and classes could be completed by the

end of the second week in June. Board members also raised issues surrounding projects scheduled for completion during the summer of 2000 and the impact that the school calendar might have on project scheduling. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to have classes begin on August 28, 2000. On roll call vote, all but Messrs. Kessler, Orlow and Johnson in favor. Messrs. Kessler, Orlow and Johnson opposed. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler noted that the ACCESS Medical Assistance Reimbursement Assurance shown in Enclosure #21 was on the agenda for action that night. He advised that approval was necessary for the district to attempt to recoup funds through the ACCESS Program. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to provide the required program assurance. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler advised that the special education settlement proposal before the Board in Enclosure #22 was recommended by the district's special counsel in the matter of placement of a special education student. He noted that board members had reviewed the settlement in Executive Session the previous Monday. Mr. Johnson moved and Ms. Brown seconded a motion to approve the settlement as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler noted that the Board had received information on fundraising budgets for 1999-2000. Mr. Pinheiro recapped the impact of the efforts of fundraisers by noting that PTO and booster organizations would be raising about \$575,000.00 to support various programs and activities. See Enclosure #23.

Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the bid for electric generation shown in Enclosure #24. He noted that the bid was done under the auspices of the I. U. Energy Consortium and reported that First Energy Services, a new provider, was the recommended lowest responsible bidder. Mr. Bell provided some information on how the current lowest bid compared to last year's lowest bid and to this year's bid from the current provider. In response in inquiries from board members, Mr. Bell noted that the bid was primarily for energy generation and that the increased costs were mainly attributable to rising energy costs. Mr. Kessler noted that the prices shown in Enclosure #24 and given by Mr. Bell for purposes of comparison represented the total price for generation and transmission. Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the bid, as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler directed the attention of board members to a request for a student cheerleading trip to Nationals in Dallas, TX on December 27, 28, and 29, 1999. He noted that the students would bear all expenses and that no school days would be lost. See Enclosure #25. He also highlighted an additional trip request for the wrestling team to attend the Mid-Atlantic Wrestling Tournament at the University of Delaware on December 18 and 19, 1999. See Enclosure #29. Mr. Johnson moved

and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve both trip requests, as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler reported that the district solicitor would not be able to represent the district in the WFIL case because Fox Rothchild O'Brien & Frankel, LLP had a conflict of interest. He noted that the Board had, in the past, employed the firm of Kegel Kelin Amy & Grimm LLP to represent the district. Mr. Connolly moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to appoint that firm as special counsel for the WFIL case and to incorporate in the motion the fee letter received from the firm. Board members expressed their desire to have Clarence C. Kegel, Jr., Esquire handle the case. 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 that the annual open house at the Center for Technical Studies would be held on Thursday, 10/28/99 at 7:00 p. m.

Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro announced that the committee had met with representatives of CASEA in the first of several meetings on the topic of the administrative compensation plan for the upcoming year. He also provided a brief status report on contract negotiations with representatives of the bargaining units representing food service workers and secretaries and aides. He noted that the Board and the secretaries and aides were in fact finding. Mr. Pinheiro also reported that the committee had conducted interviews with candidates for the position of District Engineer. He reminded the community that copies of the salary list for district employees were available in the Personnel Office.

Finance: Ms. Brown took a moment to be sure that board members had understood the comments made by Mr. Williard of PFM on the treatment of capitalized interest as a project on the project list for the bond. There was a brief discussion on the fact that the options to capitalizing interest were spending less on projects or raising taxes to cover a higher debt service. Ms. Brown stressed that the purpose behind capitalizing interest was to maintain a stable level of debt service in order to avoid increasing taxes. Mr. Yunker expressed the opinion that the Board might be better served by making tough decisions on the other options.

Curriculum and Program: Mr. Yunker announced that the committee had met with Dr. Stormes to discuss the latest PSSA scores, which were more current than those recently published in the Philadelphia Inquirer. He noted that the committee was focusing on what the data meant and how it was being used. Mr. Yunker also indicated that the reports did not compare the district to its neighboring districts. He stated that he was trying to track students as they moved up and were tested again in later years. He summarized the reports by saying that, while there had

been some ups and downs in the intervening years, reading scores had risen and math scores had declined. It was noted that this was the first year for testing under Chapter 4 academic standards and the first year for full inclusion. In response to queries about in what form data might be available, Dr. Stormes reported that, for a fee, the vendor could provide the scores in many different ways. She noted that administration had requested the scores in the current format and welcomed the opportunity to review the reasons for that decision with the committee and interested board members. Some board members with children in the schools reported that the current reports told them little about the progress of their children. Dr. Stormes noted that the form sent home was identified by Terra Nova as an appropriate home report. Mr. Orlow asked if the data was reviewed with an eye toward where the district wanted to go. Dr. Stormes indicated that it was reviewed within the context of building goals that involved moving percentages of students from one reading level to the next. Building goals and evaluations are constructed using the same rubric.

Buildings and Grounds/Transportation: Mr. Orlow advised the Board that the district had received a proposal from ENSR for asbestos management services related to renovating the ceiling of the auditorium of the high school. He noted that the scope of the work included design of the project, bidding services, and construction monitoring, including all of the necessary air quality tests. The cost of the services would be \$22,050.00. Mr. Orlow noted that the district did not have to bid professional services and that the company had, as Galson Engineering, provided services to the district in the past with which the district was completely satisfied. Mr. Orlow noted that it was important to move ahead with the planning now in order to have the project ready to start as soon as classes ended for the summer. He moved and Mr. Pinheiro, seconded a motion to approve the awarding of a service contract to ENSR for the work outlined in its proposal of 10/01/99. See Attachment #2 to these minutes. On roll call vote, all in favor except Ms. Brown. Ms. Brown abstained because she had had insufficient time to review the proposal. Motion carried.

Mr. Orlow recommended that the district approve an extension to the construction management contract with Gilbane through 12/31/99 to allow the inspector to be on site until the science wing project at the high school was complete. Mr. Orlow noted that Mr. Bell had received a clarifying footnote to the contract that allowed the district to terminate the contract prior to 12/31/99 and receive a credit of \$2,000.00 for each week that service was not required. The cost of the extension until the end of the year was 12,000.00. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the contract extension as shown in Attachment #3 to these minutes. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Community Relations: Mr. Johnson reported that the first town meeting of the new school year would be on the subject of school safety and was scheduled for 7:30 p.m. at the Whitmarsh Township Building on Monday, 10/25/99. He also reported that

the dedication of the new science wing was scheduled for Friday, 11/19/99, at 3:30 p.m. and that the district's annual report would be mailed to all households that coming Friday. Mr. Johnson further reported that Hop on the Bus was scheduled for Monday 11/15/99 and was to begin at 9:30 a.m. at Colonial Elementary School.

Legislative: Mr. Carroll reported that the monthly Legislative Meeting had been cancelled for lack of a quorum. He reported, however, that not much legislative activity of consequence was expected prior to the election. Mr. Carroll provided a brief update on a professional development bill which might be used as a vehicle for raising issues related to alternative education and a short report on Homestead tax relief proposals and the Pennsylvania legislative platform.

Public Comments: Dr. Darilyn Moyer requested an expedited review of the flexible math program at Colonial Elementary School. She reported a positive reaction from parents to the program and noted that data concerning the program was currently being analyzed. Dr. Durtan indicated that he was awaiting data on the program. He provided a brief recap of the program, noting that students were tested diagnostically and thereafter worked in groups. He indicated that such work was usually handled in the classroom but that last year Colonial Elementary School had gone outside the classroom to group students. He reported that skill groups were done in classrooms throughout the district. Dr. Moyer suggested that the district survey parents on the issue. She also suggested that parents who wanted additional information on their children's performance could contact their guidance counselors and get additional data on the results of the Terra Nova tests.

Dr. Lipshutz suggested that the district move ahead with the flexible math program at Colonial Elementary School and questioned why the successful program should not be continued while administration reviewed data and decided on the program's future. He felt that one reason might be that there were some differences of opinion on the program among district administrators. In reaction to Dr. Lipshutz' comments, Mr. Kessler suggested that administration get feedback from the building principal and that the Curriculum Committee seek additional input from the superintendent on an expedited basis.

Mr. Gallagher thanked the Board for acting positively on Mr. Culp's request for permission to apply for the teacher exchange program. In response to a question from Mr. Kessler, Mr. Gallagher suggested that the district rely on the good judgement of the U. S. and Pennsylvania Departments of Education to select qualified exchange teachers. Mr. Gallagher went on to express concern that the Board appeared to have ignored the input from Parent Council when it decided to start school for 2000-2001 before Labor Day. Board members indicated that they were well aware of the input from the council but believed that it did not necessarily represent the perspective of all parents or best meet the needs of students.

Ms. Langerfeld expressed concern that the Board had chosen not to heed the input from Parent Council when it decided to start classes for the coming school year in August. She also voiced support for the flexible math program and considered it a more practical approach to the issue than a theoretical discussion of heterogeneous grouping.

Ms. Sloan questioned why the district had cancelled the flexible math program while its merits were still being explored. Dr. Durtan responded that it was the district's policy to meet students' needs by following best practice unless data was provided to suggest the advisability of another course of action.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 10:30 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**