

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, APRIL 19, 2001**

President Orlow convened the general meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:02 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on April 19, 2001.

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

**Board Members Absent:** None.

**Also Attending:** Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; R. Scott Klinger, Assistant to the Superintendent for Administrative Services and Personnel; Patricia A. Iannelli, 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; Steven Moore and Michael Fazzini, Student Board Representatives; William Wells, Chairman of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation; Ron Stoud, middle school teacher; Fred Citron, Executive Director of Montgomery Early Learning Centers; Denise Caplan; Susan Freed; Marjorie Gardner; Bob Grieshober; Scott Helfand, Benita Hoortar; Darilyn Moyer; Cindy Rawling; Kathleen Valentine; Lisa Weinstock; Abby Weiss and Lyle Weiss.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then recognized administrators, professional staff members and coaches who presented certificates of achievement to district students for outstanding performance in poetry writing at Colonial Elementary School, girls basketball at Colonial Middle School and DECA state qualifiers and state award winners at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School. The Board, administrative team and assembled staff, parents and friends congratulated the students on their accomplishments. A complete listing of all those recognized can be found in Attachment #1 to these minutes.

**Minutes:** Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the minutes of the Work Session of 03/12/01, the Community Relations Committee of 03/13/01, the General Meeting of 03/15/01, the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 03/15/01, the Personnel Committee Meeting of 03/29/01, the Finance Committee Meeting of 04/02/01, the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 04/02/01, and the Community Relations Committee Meeting of 04/17/01, as shown as Enclosures #1 through #6, #30 and #31. Board members had no questions or comments on the minutes. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to approve the minutes. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Orlow asked for Board action on the financial reports for the month of March 2001 would be on the agenda for Board consideration the following Thursday. The reports included the Budget Transfers dated April 2001; the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report, General Fund/Federal Program Bills and Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 03/31/01; the Food Service Report for the month ending 2/28/01; the Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes

Collected, Real Estate Tax Escrow Report, and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 03/31/01; the Budget Analysis through 03/31/01; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 03/31/01, as shown in Enclosures #7 through #18. Mr. O'Neill moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded a motion to approve the financial reports. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Public Comments on the Agenda: None.

Staff Report: None.

Old Business: Mr. Orlow reminded his fellow board members that Montgomery Early Learning Centers (MELC) was seeking a 4% increase in tuition for the programs it offered in the district and had, in accordance with its lease of space at Colonial Elementary School, requested Board approval of its request for the increase. Mr. Orlow also noted that Mr. Citron had made a presentation to the Board at its meeting the previous Monday. Board members had no questions or concerns. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the requested increase. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow advised that Susan Freed and Lisa Weinstock had requested the opportunity to address the Board on the subject of foreign language instruction at the elementary level. (See Enclosure #20.) Ms. Freed and Ms. Weinstock noted that their presentation was a follow-up to a presentation at a meeting of the Curriculum Committee earlier in the year. They provided research information on the benefits of language education and highlighted studies that showed that students learning another language got higher grades, had higher level cognitive skills, improved in English and got higher SAT scores than those who did not take language courses. They reported on the interest in the program in the community. They also noted that they had met with Dr. Cotter who had told them that it was not possible to put foreign language in the elementary curriculum at that point because the district was in the process of aligning its current curriculum. Ms. Freed and Ms. Weinstock reported that he had suggested a pilot after-school program and that they had accepted the suggestion and forwarded a budget proposal to him. They noted that the proposal called for a district contribution of \$9,500.00 that would offset costs beyond what parents would pay to enroll their children. They also indicated that there would be scholarship funds available for families that could demonstrate need. Board members had a series of questions for Ms. Freed, Ms. Weinstock and Dr. Cotter.

The following facts came in response to these questions. The initial language offering would be Spanish. \$8,000.00 had already been included in the proposed budget for the coming year for the pilot program. The program was to operate under the direction and jurisdiction of the district. Depending on enrollment, there could be one or two classrooms in each elementary school. The district would establish measures for evaluating the pilot program and determine what the outcomes were. The district would seek to verify the spillover benefits of learning a foreign language into other fields of study. The Board would be able to decide on an annual basis whether to continue to fund the after-school language program. The fees for the first year of the program were anticipated to be \$65.00 for the school year. The program would begin at grade levels 1 through 3 depending on

enrollment. Teachers would not have to be certified in the language but would be required to be fluent in it. The solicitor confirmed that that would be the case as long as the language program was not part of the district's regular curricular offerings. Transportation home from the program would be the responsibility of the parent(s). The presenters were unable to comment on an earlier after-school language program. Mr. Carroll hoped that the district would work to determine evaluation measures before the new classes began. The sponsors hoped to hire one staff person to oversee the programs going on in the individual schools. Though he expressed support for the pilot program, Mr. Kessler wondered if it might not be more appropriate to fund remedial programs to meet identified needs before funding after-school programs. Dr. Cotter supported such programs, too, and advocated a summer reading program. The consensus of the Board was to approve the pilot foreign language program. Mr. Orlow indicated that funding for the pilot program would be considered for the upcoming budget.

Mr. Orlow sought a Board motion to accept foundation funding of the five new mini-grants. (See Enclosure #19.) A complete list of these grants is attached to these minutes as Attachment #2. Mr. Shipman pointed out that the list had been highlighted in Board Notes. Mr. Kessler moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to accept foundation funding for the mini-grants. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Cotter briefly reviewed his Superintendent's Report for the General Meeting noting that most of recommended actions were matters of routine. He highlighted a recommended extension of a request for unpaid leave and a retirement. Mr. Klinger confirmed that the leave involved no salary or benefits but did guarantee the teacher a position upon the teacher's return to school. Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the Superintendent's Report, as presented in Enclosure #21. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Board Student Representatives Report:** Mr. Fazzini gave a brief summary of activities of the freshman, sophomore and junior classes. He reported on PSSA testing, a blood drive, the Teacher Appreciation Breakfast, the spring musical, *Working*, the freshman talent show, spring sports and a volunteer program teaching Spanish at Whitmarsh Elementary School. Mr. Moore provided an update on senior class activities, including the senior trip, the prom, graduation projects, AP testing, Survivor Weekend, and a planned recycling program. Both students responded favorably to the Board's Town Meeting at the high school and talked positively about the idea of a suggestion box in the school.

**New Business:** Mr. Orlow noted that the district's preliminary budget for 2001-02 was on the agenda for Board. He noted that the budget called for expenditures totaling \$57,511,291.00 and a real estate millage rate of 13.78, a 6.57% increase over the current year. He noted that adoption of the preliminary budget would be the beginning of discussions on the subject. Mr. O'Neill advised that the public presentation of the budget would be at the Board's regularly scheduled meeting on 05/14/01 and that final approval was scheduled for 06/21/01. He also reported that Board committees would be meeting to refine sections of the budget. Mr. Carroll noted that dividing the total projected expenditures in the preliminary budget by the total number of students in the district meant that the district would be spending \$12,250.00 per student. Mr. O'Neill moved and

Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the preliminary budget. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow moved on to the two trip requests on the agenda for Board. In the first, Mr. Frank Whitehead, PWHS teacher and DECA co-advisor, had requested board authorization to take two DECA students to a national competition in Anaheim, California from 04/25/01 to 04/29/01. (See Enclosure #22.) Mr. Orlow asked Dr. Cotter for the updated report that the Board had requested on time missed because of field trips. Dr. Cotter reported that, compared with earlier years, the frequency of field trips this year was identical to that of last year and lower than that of the years before block scheduling. The Board took note that the district was to incur no expense beyond the cost of providing substitute coverage. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the request to permit Mr. Geoff Oxbury to participate in the American Regions Math League at Pennsylvania State University on 06/01-02/01. High school administrators supported his participation. (See Enclosure #23 on the agenda.) Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Bid Awards:** Mr. Orlow noted that bid awards were scheduled for Board action for the high school athletics, health and physical education and elementary physical education; middle school athletics, health and physical education; and an electrical upgrade project at Conshohocken Elementary School. Mr. Bell provided some background information on the bids. Mr. Kessler noted that the electrical upgrade at Conshohocken Elementary School would be necessary to support air conditioning and additional technology in the building. He inquired about wider distribution of bid documents. Dr. Cotter reported that the district's consultant would be bringing ideas to administration and the Board for contacting more local vendors. Dr. Lipshutz moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the bids with the exception of the high school swimsuits which were listed as *To Be Announced*. (See Enclosures #24, #25 and #26.) On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Solicitor's Report:** Mr. Sultanik referred the Board to a request from Springfield Township for a tax exemption on parcel #0000727009 and suggested a Board motion not to oppose a tax exemption for the parcel. Mr. Kessler moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion not to oppose a tax exemption for the parcel. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Committee Reports:** Intermediate Unit Board: Mr. Pinheiro gave no formal report but announced that there was still time to take part in the annual golf fund-raiser sponsored by the I. U. foundation.

CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson requested Board action on the resolution that would authorize the borrowing of \$698,343.00 for roof repairs at the Center for Technical Studies. He summarized comments made the previous Monday on the cost of the project and its funding in accordance with the center's Articles of Agreement. He also reported that the

**district's annual payment would be \$31,745.37. (See Enclosure #24.) Mr. Kessler reported that he had been on the roof and that the work was necessary. Mr. Orlow inquired if funding the roof would affect the district's ability to borrow in the future. Mr. Sultanik indicated that it would. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve to authorize the borrowing. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.**

**Mr. Yunker briefly reviewed the background information that he had shared at the meeting the previous Monday on the proposed operating budget for the Center for Technical Studies for 2001-02. He noted that the total cost to the district would be up \$137,000 in the coming year based on average enrollment over a three-year period. (See Enclosure #25 on the agenda for the meeting of 04/19/01.) Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the budget. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried. Note was taken that the annual dinner at the Center for Technical Studies would be coming up the following Tuesday evening.**

**Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro reviewed the proposed addendum to the CASEA Meet and Discuss Agreement formalizing the move from Personal Choice 5 to Personal Choice 215 that took place in January and allowing administrators to use funds from unused vacation days to fund approved tuition reimbursements. (See Enclosure #26.) Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the addendum. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried. Mr. Pinheiro advised the Board that he would present a final Tax Sheltered Annuity proposal in May. Mr. Sultanik confirmed that information on the TSA would be coming forward to the committee within the next several days.**

**Finance: No report.**

**Curriculum and Instruction: Mr. Yunker reported that the committee had been meeting to work on budget items and the proposed foreign language program discussed earlier in the meeting. He advised that committee members were also taking a look at the math curriculum district wide, but especially at the middle school, and considering a roll-out plan of from three to five years to address identified needs. He reported that the committee was also reviewing a five-year plan for technology and looking into an SAT Prep program in the summer. Mr. Carroll read from an article in a local newspaper reporting that 40% of school students were reading below grade level and noted the district's efforts to improve in this area.**

**Buildings & Grounds: Mr. Kessler reported on a meeting with the architects for the renovation project in the high school auditorium. He noted that the project, which would be bid in May, was on schedule. He also highlighted work on the acoustics in the facility. He went on to provide some information gathered at a job meeting with the architect and contractors for the development of the WFIL Tract and reported that the project was moving along well. Mr. Kessler stressed the importance of the district always remembering the big picture as it undertook capital projects and cited an example of planning ahead and allowing for the future installation of electrical lines beneath the parking lot of Colonial Elementary during renovations connected with the development of the WFIL Tract. He also reported on the committee's walks through district schools, efforts to enhance district response to building needs, and the resulting positive response from staff. He had some**

questions about how the district processed work orders and accounted for work activities. Dr. Cotter noted that the district would be meeting with its consultant to review procedures and develop a long-range plan for the upkeep of district facilities.

**Community Relations:** Mr. Johnson reported that the new all-weather track at the high school would be dedicated on Saturday, 04/28/01 for the community and on Tuesday, 05/08/01 for the students. Mr. Pinheiro reminded board members of the distinguished graduates' luncheon the following afternoon.

**Legislative:** Mr. Carroll provided information on an assessment from State Representative Lita Cohen on happenings in Harrisburg. He noted that there was a battle going on between the governor and the legislature on the issue of school vouchers. He also reported on legislative interest or activity on pensions for legislators, the open records law, PSSA and PASA testing, and a 30 and out retirement bill. Mr. Carroll indicated that many felt that the House of Representatives was moving to the right.

**PSBA:** Mr. Kessler invited board members to attend the PSBA convention in October and reported that he had been successful in getting the topic of public relations on the agenda. He reported that school boards across the state were generally very conservative and inflexible in their approach to current issues. He felt that their approach was one of the reasons why some Pennsylvanians were so interested in charter schools and voucher programs.

**Public Comments:** None.

**Additional Comments:** Mr. Pinheiro expressed thanks to State Representative Lita Cohen and her office for the help in securing new U. S. and Pennsylvania flags for the district. He also noted that there were still high school funds for earlier high school graduating classes and asked how those funds would be handled. Mr. Bickleman indicated that he would contact class officers and discuss how the funds could be put to good use on projects that would benefit the school. Finally, Mr. Pinheiro requested that the Board have Dr. Cotter finalize arrangements for the after-school foreign language pilot program at the elementary level and budget for the proposed funding for it. Mr. Orlow sought and received Board assurance that it would move forward with the program and fund it as requested.

An announcement was made that the Board had met in Executive Session that evening from 6:45 p.m. to just before the meeting to discuss legal and personnel matters.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell  
Board Secretary