

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, MARCH 15, 2001**

President Orlow convened the general meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:30 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on March 15, 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; Patricia A. Iannelli, Director of Educational Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; Michael Fazzini and Steven Moore, Student Board Representatives; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Thomas Sigafos, Principal of Ridge Park Elementary School; Charles Graham, Director of Technology; Charles Forster, PWHS Activities Director; Ray McMahon, PWHS teacher; Tom Gibson and Chris Leleonthal.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the minutes of the Work Session of 02/12/01, the Community Relations Committee of 02/13/01, the Regular Meeting of 01/15/01, and the Buildings & Grounds Committee of 03/07/01 as shown as Enclosures #1 through #3 and #27 on the agenda. Mr. Yunker inquired about the status of facility rentals as discussed in Enclosure #27. Mr. Bell advised that administration had recommended changes to some of the rentals and that the committee was considering them. He noted that any change in the rentals would require formal Board action. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Kessler seconded a motion to approve the minutes, as amended. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow noted that the financial reports for the month of February 2001 were on the agenda for Board consideration that evening. The reports included the Budget Transfers dated March 2001; the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report, General Fund/Federal Program Bills and Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 2/28/01; the Food Service Reports for the month ending 1/31/01; the Outstanding Investment Reports, Cash Flow Summaries, Comparisons of Taxes Collected, Real Estate Tax Escrow Reports, and Reconciliations of Cash Accounts for the month ending 02/28/01; the Budget Analysis through 02/28/01; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 01/31/01, as shown in Enclosures #4 through #15 on the agenda for Thursday evening. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Marchozzi seconded a motion to approve the reports. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Budget Report: Mr. Pinheiro provided an overview of the personnel recommendations included in the initial planning for the 2001-02 district budget. These recommendations included an increase of 7.9 professional employees, 3 instructional aides, 3 Buildings & Grounds employees, 5 curriculum-based administrators, and 3 secretarial positions. Mr. Pinheiro explained that the additional personnel were needed to meet the five goals that the Board had set to meet the present and future needs of the district. The complete text of Mr. Pinheiro's presentation is contained in Attachment #1 to these minutes. Mr. Pinheiro summarized his presentation by reporting that the total cost of the district's personnel recommendations would total \$895,530.00 in salaries plus 25% to 30% more for contracted benefits. Mr. Kessler asked Mr. Pinheiro what funds were included in the initial budget projections for salary increases that might result from a new contract with the teachers. Mr. Pinheiro reported that it was the Board's practice not to allocate funds to cover a contract until the contract was settled and not to pay salary increases retroactively.

Mr. O'Neill presented an overview of factors during the 2000-01 and 2001-02 fiscal years that would have an impact on the development of the 2001-02 budget. Mr. Bickleman had drawn up the factors and divided them into two categories: positive and negative. The factors included tax collections higher than anticipated in some categories and lower than expected in other, higher than anticipated expenditures in some areas, anticipated savings in other areas, and a number of unknowns, including the outcome of labor negotiations. The complete outline of the factors discussed is contained in Attachment #2 to these minutes. Mr. Carroll noted that state adoption of a 30-and-out retirement plan might not become a reality, and he cautioned the district not to count on savings based on retirements until formal documentation was available. Mr. Bickleman and several board members noted that the district's practice was to list these savings as they actually materialized. Several board members had questions about benefit costs, severance pay, and methods for forecasting costs for such items. Mr. Bickleman noted that estimates were based on known costs or savings plus an estimate for additional as yet unknown cost or savings based on past history and current expectations. Mr. Pinheiro asked when the district would be required to book accruals such things as severance pay. Mr. Bickleman noted that the district was already doing this but that it would be required under GASB regulations in 2003. Mr. Marchozzi inquired about additional staffing needs in the current year's budget. Mr. Bickleman indicated that they were related to additional special education services required for the year. Mr. Kessler asked what impact changes in the state subsidy might have on the coming year's budget. Mr. Bickleman estimated that changes in the basic and special education subsidies might net the district an additional \$120,000.00. Mr. O'Neill reported that the Finance Committee would be meeting during the first week in April to review projects for the coming year.

Staff Report: Mr. Orlow noted Mr. Sigafos, Principal, Ridge Park Elementary School, made a presentation to the Board on Kid Pix, a new software package in use in all of the district's K-3 Elementary Schools. Mr. Sigafos demonstrated how students in the first grade were able to use the software for creative writing and meet many of the state proficiency standards for creative writing that the PSSA tests are designed to assess. Mr. Carroll had questions about the standards and Mr. Sigafos outlined the process of

backing up from the standards set for third grade students to arrive at standards for the lower grades. Mr. Carroll asked if all teachers at Ridge Park were using the new software and Mr. Sigafos confirmed that they were. He also reported that he had personally observed most of the teachers' work with the program in their classrooms. Mr. Orlow asked if the software had been purchased with the new computers and Mr. Sigafos responded that it had. He also noted that there were a number of other useful software programs in use in the classrooms. Mr. Kessler asked how Mr. Sigafos felt things were going with his new assignment to Ridge Park Elementary School. Mr. Sigafos indicated that things were going well and that he was enjoying working with the K-3 students and meeting the younger siblings of the children with whom he had worked at Colonial Elementary School. He said that he missed the older children but enjoyed the fine staff and wonderful community at Ridge Park.

Old Business: None

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to correspondence from Dennis Harken, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit, that provided information on the proposed 2001-02 I.U. budget. (See Enclosure #16 on the agenda.) He and Mr. Pinheiro summarized comments made at the work session on Monday on the four budgets in the areas of administration, instructional materials, legislative activities and curriculum and development. Mr. Pinheiro repeated that there would be no increase in the district's contribution to fund these budgets. Mr. Orlow reminded board members that they would have to vote on the budgets as a Board and as individuals. Mr. Bell distributed voting documents to each board member. Mr. Pinheiro noted that the I.U.'s total operating budget exceeded \$72,000,000.00 but that the four budgets before the Board totaled approximately \$2,500,000.00 and that the district's contribution would be \$83,788.00. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Kessler seconded a motion to approve the budgets as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow noted that Mr. Pinheiro would be leaving his post on the I.U. Board and asked if there were any board members interested in serving on the board. Mr. Kessler raised the possibility of Mr. Pinheiro running for the seat even though he would be leaving the Colonial Board at the end of his current term. Mr. Sultanik noted that it was possible for him to serve on the I.U. Board until he left the Colonial Board. Board members discussed the pros and cons of such a move. Mr. Kessler noted Mr. Pinheiro's outstanding service on the I.U. Board for many years and the fact that incoming Board members might be interested in replacing him when he had to leave the Board later in the year. Mr. Kessler moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to renominate Mr. Pinheiro to the I.U. Board. On a roll call vote, all except Mr. Pinheiro voted in favor. Mr. Pinheiro voted in opposition. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow summarized correspondence from Fred Citron, Executive Director of Montgomery Early Learning Center (MELC), requesting Board approval of proposed tuition increases of 4% for the before and after school programs and the kindergarten enrichment programs housed in the district's K-3 schools. (See Enclosure #31.) Dr.

Lipshutz spoke against approving the increases because he felt that other schools offering kindergarten programs offered more affordable programs. Other board members raised a number of issues concerning MELC's costs. Mr. Pinheiro felt that many parents sent their children to more expensive programs. Mr. O'Neill wondered if the district had any indication that MELC might cease to operate in the district if it were unable to increase tuition rates. Dr. Cotter and Ms. Iannelli reported no interaction with MELC on the subject. Mr. Orlow reminded the Board that the previous vendor had had great difficulty in keeping staff because of its low compensation rates and that the current program enjoyed a level of stability that had been missing in the former program. Mr. Kessler felt that he needed more information on whether MELC rates were competitive. Dr. Lipshutz wondered if the organization would accept a smaller increase in tuition rates. Mr. Orlow noted that there was some time sensitivity with the issue because MELC and the schools would like to have tuition set before kindergarten registration the following week. After additional discussion, Mr. Kessler referred the request to district administration and asked that Dr. Cotter and Ms. Iannelli secure the additional information necessary to answer all of the questions raised by board members.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter briefly recapped his comments on Monday concerning his Superintendent's Report. (See Enclosure #17.) He again highlighted the fact that administration was moving to fill internally and on an interim basis the vacancy created by the departure of Dr. Cognato at the middle school. He also noted that his report included his request that the Board authorize administration to begin planning the 2001 summer school program. He noted that Ms. Iannelli was working on revisions to the program to make it consistent with block scheduling at the high school and was planning on including an SAT preparation program. Mr. Kessler moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the Superintendent's Report. On a roll call vote. All voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Student Representatives Report: Mr. Fazzini and Mr. Moore provided brief updates on activities at the high school. Mr. Moore highlighted the first week of spring sports, the grand opening of the track, adventure weekend, the spring musical, DECA students qualifying for nationals, the sophomore dance, and swimmers and wrestlers qualifying for state championships. Mr. Fazzini provided commentary on the junior class fashion show, post-season efforts by the boys and girls basketball teams, the foreign language competition, the senior class trip and dinner and the basketball fundraiser at the middle school. Dr. Cotter suggested that the opening ceremony for the track be conducted later in the day. He and Mr. Forster agreed to discuss the possibilities.

New Business: Mr. Orlow noted that there were two trip requests on the agenda for Board action. (See Enclosure #19.) Board members had a number of questions on the scope and impact of the trip. Mr. Yunker asked if the presence of the trainer at the weekend site would adversely impact on sports events on campus. Mr. Forster believed that the sports season should be over by that time. Mr. Yunker also thought the student-to-chaperone ratio would be about 20-1. Mr. Forster advised that many PWHS faculty and administrators would be participating over the weekend and that the ratio would be closer

to 4-1. Mr. Orlow asked if alternates would be able to fill in for students who might not be able to participate in the planned activities at the last minute. Mr. McMahon assured him that there would be no shortage of students interested in going if others were unable to do so. Dr. Cotter went on record that the safety of the participating students was paramount and that no students would go hungry, be forced to stay wet for long periods, or be without shelter during inclement during the event. He stressed that good judgment would be expected of all involved. Mr. McMahon and Mr. Forster outlined procedures that were being put in place to insure that all participants were suitably equipped to participate in the weekend-long event. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Kessler seconded a motion to approve the trip. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow noted that Ms. Asel, PWHS Band Director, had requested permission for the 2001 Band Trip to Cleveland, Ohio on May 18th through May 21st. (See Enclosure #20.) Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the trip. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow advised that bids for pool shower replacement, a light panel for the Colonial Elementary School Auditorium and carpet replacement at three schools and the district office were on the agenda for Board action. Mr. Kessler reported that the Buildings & Grounds Committee had not reviewed the bid results but reported that the bids were reasonable. He noted that the bid for the lighting equipment represented a considerable saving over what had been bid during an earlier round of bidding. He recommended approval of the three bids. Mr. Bell confirmed for Mr. Orlow that labor was included in the carpet bid but not in the shower or lighting bid. Mr. Kessler noted and Mr. Bell confirmed that the district would be receiving some outside assistance with the shower installation. Mr. Marchozzi questioned the impact of not including labor in the bid, particularly in light of a proposal to augment the maintenance crew by adding two utility personnel to the payroll. Mr. Bell responded that the utility people represented an opportunity to use trained technicians more effectively and deal with the mounting number of routine maintenance issues in our older buildings. Mr. Kessler moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded a motion to approve all three bids. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Solicitor's Report: Mr. Sultanik recommended that the Board accept a proposed tax assessment settlement for parcel number 49-00-05404-00-1, 500 Gravers Associates LP that would set the new assessment at \$3,100,000.00 subject to conditions outlined in a letter from the solicitor's office dated 02/20/01. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to approve the settlement. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit Board: No report.

CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson announced that the Center for Technical Studies would be requesting the approval of the sending districts for funding for roofing repairs to the school. Mr. Sultanik noted that the center had to rely on the district for capital

expenditures and offered two financing options. Mr. Johnson advised that Mr. Yunker would be bringing the center's budget to the district next month. Mr. Yunker noted that the district would be tapped for additional funds as a result of the annual reconciliation process for student funding.

Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro advised that he was postponing consideration of amendments to the CASEA Agreement because some details on vesting had to be confirmed. He indicated that he would raise the issue at the meeting in April and noted that any changes to the agreement would be retroactive.

Finance: No report.

Curriculum and Program: No report.

Building & Grounds/Transportation: No report.

Community Relations: Mr. Johnson advised that the spring newsletter would go to print the following day and that any board member with suggestions should get them to Mr. Sherman early in the morning.

Legislative: Mr. Carroll reported that Representative Cohen had been forced to cancel her planned meeting with the committee and that legislative activity in Harrisburg would not pick up again until next week. He expected to have a report in April.

PSBA: Mr. Kessler sought Board reaction to his negative vote on the PSBA Board on its plan to fight the Department of Education on the issue of requiring PSSA writing assessments. Most board members who responded supported Mr. Kessler's stand. Mr. Carroll noted that district superintendents at the I.U. had issued a memorandum on PSSA testing and suggested that the Board support the memorandum and send it to its local legislative representatives. Dr. Cotter supported the leveling of the playing field as reflected in the superintendents' memorandum. He stated that he had no problem with the writing assessment and noted that one of the best ways to improve reading was to support writing. Dr. Cotter stressed, however, that standardized testing took time away from normal classroom activities and he argued for a balanced approach to testing.

Public Comments: None.

Additional Comments: Mr. Orlow reported that the Board had met in executive session for one hour before its Monday work session and for approximately 15 minutes before that night's general meeting to discuss legal and personnel matters.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell
Board Secretary