

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, NOVEMBER 16, 2000**

President Kessler convened the general meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:00 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on November 16, 2000.

**Board Members Present:** Stuart Kessler, Marc Orlow (late), Robert Carroll, Gary Johnson, Hugh Lipshutz, Jack Pinheiro and Thomas Yunker.

**Board Members Absent:** Thomas Marchozzi and Robert O'Neill.

**Also Attending:** Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent; R. Scott Klinger, Assistant to the Superintendent for Administrative Services and Personnel; Patricia Iannelli, Director of Educational Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Solicitor; Alicia Fabrizio and Ashley Kurtz, Student Board Representatives; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Deputy Superintendent; Brian Gallagher, CEA President; Scott Helfand; Anthony Colantonio, PWHS Student Council President; and Ravi Jani, and Jessica Klein, CMS Student Council President and Vice President.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Minutes:** Mr. Kessler asked board members if they had any comments on the minutes of the Finance Audit Committee Meeting of 08/15/00, the Personnel Committee Meeting of 10/16/00, Work Session of 10/16/00, the General Meeting of 10/19/00, the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 11/01/00, the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 11/09/00, or the Community Relations Committee Meeting of 11/14/00, shown in Enclosures #1 through #5, #36 and #37. Board members had no questions or comments. Mr. Carroll moved and Dr. Lipshutz 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. Kessler asked board members if they had any comments or questions on the financial reports that were listed as Enclosures #6 through #16 on the agenda. They included the Budget Transfers for 11/00, Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report, and Capital Reserve Fund Report, the Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes, Real Estate Escrow Report and amended Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 10/31/00; General Fund/Federal Program Bills; the Budget Analyses of 11/07/00; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 10/31/00. Board members had no comments or questions. Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Pinheiro seconded a motion to approve the financial reports, as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Public Comments on the Agenda:** None

**New Business Taken Out of Order:** Mr. Kessler recognized that there were student council representatives in the audience and moved to consideration of Enclosure #28. The enclosure was a recommendation to pay the student councils at the high school and middle school \$1,750.00 and \$1,000.00 respectively, amounts equal to one half of the unspent funds in the 1999-2000 anti-vandalism program. Mr. Kessler gave a brief history of the program and noted that administration was recommending funding the program for the 2000-01 school year at present levels, i.e. \$5,000.00 at the high school and \$3,000 at the middle school. Dr. Durtan reported that the cost of handling repairs caused by vandalism included the actual cost of materials and an estimated cost for labor. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to approve the awards to the student councils and to fund the program at the recommended levels for the coming school year. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried. Mr. Johnson and Dr. Lipshutz, members of the Community Relations Committee of the Board, presented the checks to the student council representatives.

**Old Business:** None.

**Correspondence:** Mr. Kessler returned to the regular agenda. He referred to correspondence on the issue of the start date for the 2001-02 school year. He noted that it was evenly balanced between those who preferred a start date before Labor Day and those who preferred a start date after Labor Day. See Enclosures #17 and #18. He advised the Board and the community that the issues raised would come up for Board deliberation later in the meeting.

Mr. Kessler directed the attention of board members to correspondence from Carol L. Clopp, Finance Director of Plymouth Township, requesting a waiver of current year real estate taxes on three properties acquired by the township. See Enclosure #19. Mr. Kessler noted that the district and its local municipalities had a long history of cooperation on such issues. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Kessler reported that Mr. and Mrs. Joel Sloane, district residents, had provided a donation to be used for library books at Whitmarsh Elementary School. See Enclosure #20. Dr. Lipshutz moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to accept the donation. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried. Mr. Kessler asked Mr. Bell to send Mr. and Mrs. Sloane a letter acknowledging the gift.

**Superintendent's Report:** Mr. Kessler noted that Dr. Durtan's report would be his last as superintendent. Dr. Durtan reported that his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #21 and #22, had not changed since the work session the previous Monday. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to

approve the report, as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Dr. Durtan took the opportunity to speak of his eleven years as superintendent. He called them a positive experience. He noted that they had not always been easy but felt that he had always given his best. He felt that, by working together with the Board, district personnel and the community, he had accomplished some good things. He spoke of working with 19 board members over his eleven years of service and noted that three board members who were currently serving had been on the Board when he started as superintendent. In response to a query from Mr. Kessler, Dr. Durtan reported that he had served with only two Board Presidents during those years – Don Mattson for three months and the remaining time with Mr. Kessler. He considered these facts an indication of the remarkable stability on the Colonial School Board over a period of many years. Dr. Durtan advised that he had worked closely with Dr. Cotter over the course of a two-week transition period and had every confidence that Dr. Cotter's transition would continue smoothly in the weeks to come. Mr. Kessler thanked Dr. Durtan for his contributions to the district and expressed his opinion that the community owed Dr. Durtan a debt of gratitude. On a personal note, Mr. Kessler said that he had enjoyed the insights that he had received from Dr. Durtan, especially in the field of education. He noted that Dr. Durtan would be sorely missed but was leaving the district in wonderful condition.

Mr. Orlow entered the meeting at 8:10 during Dr. Durtan's farewell.

**Board Student Representatives Report:** Ms. Fabricio reported on fall theater production and the upcoming spring musical. She noted that winter sports were starting and described a mock on-line presidential election in which PWHS students participated and a number of similar election-related activities held in classes. She also thanked the Board for funding the new student planners and provided an insight into how they were affecting the lives of PW students. Ms. Kurtz thanked the Board for the money allocated to the student council from the balance of the anti-vandalism fund and outlined several programs that the money could support, including several charitable activities and a school beautification program. She highlighted a basketball fundraiser and offered her thanks to Dr. Durtan for all that he had done for the district during his tenure. Later, in response to a question from Mr. Kessler, both student representatives commented favorably on starting school during the last week in August. They also relayed student comments to the Board on the new grading system at the high school, particularly the lack of an A+ grade to balance the A- grade at the top end of the scale. Board members supported the representatives undertaking a survey of student opinion on subject of plus and minus grades and the lack of an A+ at the top of the scale, in particular.

**New Business:** Mr. Kessler directed the attention of board members to two trip requests on the agenda for Board action. Mr. Johnson moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded a motion to approve a trip by the high school lacrosse team to Florida during spring break from Sunday, April 8, 2001 to Saturday April 14, 2001, as

shown in Enclosure #23. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Pinheiro seconded a motion to authorize Amy LaRue, PWHS Music Director, to accompany Maxine Sharansky, a high school student, to the MENC All-East choral competition from March 1 through March 4, 2001 in Pittsburgh. He noted that the Music Department had budgeted monies for the trip. Dr. Durtan confirmed Mr. Kessler's understanding that both teacher and student would miss two days of school. He also noted that few students went beyond state-level competition and that the event included a beneficial educational conference. See Enclosure #33. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Kessler asked the Board to consider a transportation contract with the Lincoln Center for Family and Youth, as outlined in Enclosure #25. Dr. Durtan explained that part of the contract was for a.m. transportation only because the district was able to cover p.m. transportation with one of its own drivers. He also noted that Mrs. Johns had explored several options and that the enclosed contract represented the most efficient and cost-effective ways of meeting the need. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the contract. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Kessler directed the attention of board members to a request to set the starting date for the coming school year. Dr. Durtan confirmed that the request was to set the start date only. He noted that the district had contractual obligations with the Colonial Education Association that precluded establishing the school calendar at that time. Board members and student board representatives offered a variety of opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of starting the school year before and after Labor Day. Mr. Kessler noted that no matter what decision the Board made approximately equal numbers of parents and students would be pleased and displeased. Several board members spoke in favor of starting after Labor Day. They noted that a post-Labor Day start was traditional in the area. They also pointed out that the original move toward an early start had come when Labor Day had fallen much later than it would next year. They believed that the idea that days at the end of the school year in June were less educationally productive than days in August would be true for the last few days of school regardless of when they fell. Mr. Kessler moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to give notice of intent to start school after Labor Day. Mr. Yunker felt that the public wanted a post-Labor Day start. On a roll call vote, Mr. Kessler and Mr. Yunker voted in favor. All other board members voted in opposition. The motion was defeated. Mr. Pinheiro spoke in favor of starting classes August 27<sup>th</sup>, the Monday prior to Labor Day. He expressed the belief that students were ready to return to school in August and noted that most schools across the state started before Labor Day. Dr. Lipshutz noted that he preferred a start date after Labor Day but was not in favor of having students in class during the third week in June. He advised, that given the options, he would support Mr. Pinheiro's position. Mr. Johnson suggested a start date later

in the week on August 29<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Cotter spoke about concerns for early summer programs at colleges, and Dr. Durtan mentioned possible early starts for summer camps as factors to consider. Student Board Representatives spoke in favor of starting classes during the last week in August. Mr. Orlow suggested starting after Labor Day and shortening the number of student days to 183 for one year only to avoid scheduling classes in the third week in June. There was no interest on the part of other board members for this last option. Mr. Gallagher, CEA President, suggested that any In-service activities created in connection with adjustments to the calendar could be handled as flextime rather than full In-service days. He also spoke in favor of having just two days of class in the last week of August in order to handle the start-up work that was necessary before regular instruction got underway. The Board considered these options and variations of them for some time before Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion of intent to start classes on Monday, August 27<sup>th</sup>. On a roll call vote, Mr. Kessler, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Yunker voted in opposition. All other members present voted in favor. The motion was carried by a 4-3 vote. Mr. Sultanik advised that, while a simple majority of the board members present had been sufficient to pass a vote on a notice of intent to start classes, a majority of the full Board would be required to set the final calendar for the coming school year. Several board members voiced their expectation that the Board would follow past practice and not change the start date once it had been set.

Mr. Kessler noted that a discussion on assigning a new residential development to an attendance area was being deferred until after the district received a Pennsylvania Economy League study of development patterns in the district.

The Board received an addition to the high school's Activity Report for the 2000-01 school year for information purposes only.

**Solicitor's Report:** Mr. Sultanik recommended a settlement of a tax assessment appeal involving a PURTA property owned by Verizon (Bell Atlantic). He noted the difference between the assessed value of the property and the estimate of the value offered by the taxpayer's appraiser. He noted that the property was subject to addition and that, once the addition was done, the Board of Assessment would reassess the property. Mr. Sultanik asked the Board to accept an assessment of \$975,000.00 for the 1998 tax year and beyond, subject to the right to challenge if the property is reassessed. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the settlement as outlined by the solicitor. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Sultanik requested a meeting of the Board in executive session immediately following the current meeting to discuss an arbitration matter. Mr. Kessler advised that the Board would honor the request and meet after the current meeting had adjourned.

**Committee Reports:** Intermediate Unit Board: Mr. Pinheiro advised the Board that the I.U. Board had approved a four-year early bird contract with the I.U. teachers that called for salaries at the mid-point of the county average for teachers, two additional work days in year two of the contract and one more each in years three and four. He also reported that the contract doubled the health care contribution of the teachers over the length of the contract and called for additional workdays for first-year employees.

**CMCAVTS:** Mr. Johnson reported that the Joint Operating Committee had recognized Dr. Durtan for his years of service as superintendent of record. He also reported that Mr. Yunker had been elected treasurer of the committee and that he, Mr. Johnson, had been named chairmen of the committee effective in December.

**Personnel:** No Report.

**Finance:** No report.

**Curriculum and Program:** Mr. Yunker reported on the balanced literacy program presented by Curriculum Supervisor Lorraine DeRosa. He referred to committee minutes approved earlier in the meeting, noted that the program would require an investment in new materials, and advised that the committee was looking into ways to secure parental input and accelerate adoption of the program even though the program was not currently on cycle. Dr. Lipshutz expressed his belief that the program would better meet the needs of students. Mr. Carroll noted that the program had 17 levels and was not a "one-size fits all" effort.

**Buildings & Grounds:** Mr. Orlow noted that the all-weather track was nearing completion. He advised that the rubberized coat had been installed and that the final colored coats would probably be applied the following week. Mr. Orlow explained security measures in place for upcoming games. Dr. Durtan and Mr. Bell advised that the games had been shifted to other locations and that there would be no activity on the field over the weekend.

**Community Relations:** Mr. Johnson advised that the committee had discussed a web page policy at its last meeting. He announced that, pending formal adoption of a policy, no pictures of students would be posted on the web without the written approval of the parents.

**Legislative:** Mr. Carroll reviewed pending legislation in the state legislature. He noted that the composition of the new senate would be 28 Republicans and 20 Democrats and that the new House would have 104 Republicans and 99 Democrats. He also reported that the current session of the legislature would end the following week and that measures dealing with training in CPR in schools, the cost of charter schools, an expansion of adult education and retirement issues could come up for a vote. Mr. Carroll indicated that "30 and out" retirement proposals were off the table but that changes in the multiplier, increases in health insurance and decreases

in vesting time were still being discussed. He also recapped the composition and timetable of the Pennsylvania Athletic Oversight Council.

**Public Comment:** Mr. Gallagher suggested that, during the discussion of the school calendar, speakers should not refer to any days spent in school as wasted days because productive activities occurred on those days. He also relayed to the Board some information on problems with Adelphia Cable internet connections at the middle school. Dr. Cotter indicated that he would discuss the issue with Mr. Graham when he returned from bereavement leave. Mr. Gallagher also praised Dr. Durtan for his service to the district and welcomed Dr. Cotter as the new superintendent.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell  
Board Secretary