

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, JUNE 17, 2002**

President Orlow convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:45 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on June 17, 2002.

Board Members Present: Marc Orlow, Robert Carroll, Thomas Davis, Lynn Glodek, Gary Johnson, Hugh Lipshutz, Susan Moore, and Thomas Yunker.

Board Members Absent: None.

Also Attending: Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; Gerald Berger, Director of Human Resources; Dr. MaryEllen Gorodetzer, Director of Educational Services – Elementary; Dr. Patricia Iannelli, Director of Educational Services - Secondary; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services, Dr. William Ryan, incoming board member; Judge Francis Bernhardt; Rich Connolly, former board member and Tom J. Gentzel, Executive Director, PSBA.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance. He advised that the Board had met in executive session prior to the meeting to discuss personnel matters. He also introduced Dr. Ryan. Mr. Orlow advised that the Board had appointed Dr. Ryan to fill the vacant position on the Board and that he would be sworn in as soon as Judge Bernhart arrived.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the minutes of the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 05/13/02, the Work Session of 05/14/02, the Community Relations Committee of 05/15/02, the General Meeting of 05/16/02, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 06/10/02, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #5 on the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday. Mr. Yunker pointed out one typographical error each in the minutes of the work session and general meeting.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the financial reports that were listed as Enclosures #6 through #17 on the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. They included the Budget Transfer Report for 06/02; the Bond Fund Report, and Capital Projects Report for the month ending 05/31/02; General Fund and Program Bills; the Capital Reserve Fund Report, Food Services Report, Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes, Real Estate Escrow Report and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 05/31/02; the Budget Analyses of 06/02; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 05/31/02. Mr. Orlow inquired about transfers in the area of Pupil Services. Mr. Bickleman reported that they represented monies for the services provided by

the Supervisor of Student Support Programs that were being drawn from a variety of budget accounts and consolidated into one. Mr. Orlow also asked about negative numbers in the bond fund account. Mr. Bickleman reported that, though they reflected the current status of the accounts in question, the district would use funds from the recently approved bond to reimburse the operating budget for monies spent on bond issue projects. Mr. Carroll inquired about taxes paid in protest and Mr. Bickleman explained the 25% escrow requirement for such payments. He advised that the protests usually involved pending appeals of increased taxes for new construction on the properties involved. Mr. Orlow asked Mr. Bickleman to prepare an update on the status of the protests.

Public Comments on the Agenda: None

Staff Report: None.

Old Business: Mr. Orlow recognized Mr. Gentzel of PSBA who gave an overview of the history and function of the PSBA and an overview of its services to member districts. He explained the PSBA budget, 40% of which is funded by dues and 60% is funded by fees for special services. He outlined the services available, noting research, outreach efforts, advocacy, lobbying, special services such as insurance and consensus building on a shared vision for public schools. Mr. Yunker inquired about the PSBA lobbying effort. Mr. Gentzel outlined the association's activities. He reported that PSBA was not a PAC and preferred to work directly with the legislator on its legislative agenda. Mr. Yunker asked about PSBA's position on the changes in the retirement system. Mr. Gentzel responded that the association had always opposed increases in retirement benefits because they cost the member districts money. He indicated that PSBA had been officially neutral on the issue of the change in the retirement multiplier but had supported districts in their desire to come up with a compromise on the dramatic, single-year increase in district contributions to the retirement fund. The association hoped to buy time to come up with a more reasonable permanent solution. Mr. Yunker expressed dissatisfaction with the PSBA recommendation. Mr. Orlow thanked Mr. Gentzel for his visit and advised the Board that it would be taking action on PSBA dues on Thursday evening.

Mr. Orlow noted that Judge Francis Bernhardt had arrived and advised that the Board would take a brief break in handling old business to have Judge Bernhardt swear in Dr. Ryan as the Board's newest member. Judge Bernhardt administered the oath of office and thanked the Board both for his opportunity to serve and the Board's ongoing efforts on behalf of the district and the community.

Mr. Orlow directed the attention of board members to proposed changes to the district discipline and non-discipline codes and the CMS/PWHS Handbooks. Mr. Yunker raised the issue of changes to the high school grading policy and the weight assigned to both honors and advanced placement (AP) courses. He outlined what he

considered to be unsound mathematics in the weighting formula that resulted in not enough credit being given for honors courses in the individual marking periods. Board members listened to and commented on his observations. These comments centered on whether the appropriate weight for each semester grade was a multiplier of 4 or 8. Dr. Iannelli reported that she was awaiting an explanation from the high school but noted that there was general agreement on giving more weight to AP courses. Mr. Orlow suggested that the principle involved in developing different weights for honors and AP courses was the real issue at hand. Dr. Cotter felt that the Board needed to move forward on the subject in order to get the handbooks printed on a timely basis. He suggested that Ms. Campbell, the building principal, be on hand Thursday evening to answer technical questions with the weighting formula. Mr. Yunker went on to review briefly the other changes being proposed for the handbooks. See Enclosure #19 of the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. He pointed out that the district might be skewing its curriculum toward math and science because there seemed to be more AP courses in these fields. Mr. Orlow requested a complete list of AP courses so that the Board could look at other options for AP instruction, such as virtual schools and satellite programs. Board members agreed that it would be a good idea to have the building principals highlight the changes for their students at the start of the new school year.

Mr. Orlow noted that textbook titles for grade 6 and grades 9 – 12 would be on the agenda for Board action on Thursday evening as Enclosure #20. Dr. Lipshutz walked through the summary of the costs involved in purchasing the texts. He noted those involved in implementing the LaSalle math program in grade 6. Dr. Iannelli advised that the Thursday agenda would include yellow page updates that amended administrative recommendations on web scripting. Mr. Carroll noted that many of the texts carried an \$80 price tag. Dr. Iannelli reported that the costs were estimates and that the board would later authorize the payment of the actual bills. Board members asked that the requests come forward on Thursday evening with the required signatures.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow noted that district resident Mary Theiss had forwarded a letter encouraging the Board to include middle school girls soccer in the 2002-03 budget. See Enclosure #21 for Thursday evening.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #22 through #24 on the agenda for Thursday evening. He briefly explained that the routine personnel actions, additions to the substitute lists, completion of long-term substitute assignments, and recommendations for summer school personnel. Mr. Orlow inquired about the process of filling vacancies with those on the substitute list who had performed well. Dr. Cotter reported that the district could offer positions to those substitutes who had received strong recommendations but also noted that many would go through the regular interview process. Mr. Yunker asked if non-professional substitutes were needed now. Dr.

Cotter and Mr. Berger responded that they were not needed immediately during the summer months but that some had worked for the district in the closing weeks of the school year and that the administration was seeking Board approval for these individuals retroactively.

New Business: Mr. Orlow noted that the Board would be adopting a final budget for the 2002-03 school year at its general session the following Thursday. He highlighted some of the basic components of the proposed budget. He noted that the Board had originally been considering a budget of \$63,225,000 that called for a 9.85% increase in spending and a 4.84% increase in real estate taxes. He advised that, after review, the proposed budget was \$61,115,695 and called for a 7.92% increase in spending and a 2.96% increase in real estate taxes. Mr. Orlow indicated that all changes recommended by Board committee were in the current proposal and the big question before the Board on Thursday evening would be whether to use some portion of the current fund balance for a capital reserve fund. After some discussion during which Mr. Bickleman confirmed that he had budgeted for the retirement of eight professionals and Mr. Carroll questioned the need for two funding sources for capital projects, the Board reached a consensus to have Mr. Bickleman prepare two budget options, one with and one without an allocation of \$250,000 for a capital reserve fund.

Mr. Orlow noted that the annual appointment of school physicians and dentists would be on the agenda for the general meeting of 06/20/02. He confirmed that administration was recommending the reappointment of Dr. Marc H. Neiberg, D.O., Dr. Glenn Miller, D.O. and Dr. Arnold Randel, DMD at rates 3% higher than those for the current school year. Mr. Shipman reported that all three of the providers were doing a good job.

Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to a series of annual contract renewals shown as Enclosures to be provided in Enclosures #25 through #30 on the agenda for the general session the following Thursday. These included contracts with Progression Group for homebound education services at a rate of \$23.00/hour, the same rate as the current year and Montgomery County MH/MR for four days per week - 816 hours of services at \$49.03 hours for a total of \$40,008.48. Mr. Orlow asked if the district paid for the hours as they used them. Mr. Shipman replied that it did and that it generally used all of the hours. Ms. Glodek asked about the funding source for the MH/MR work. Mr. Shipman indicated that one of the four days had been funded by a safe school grant in the current year but noted that this arrangement would not be possible in the coming year. He recommended that the district pick up funding for that day. He also noted that there was an increased demand for social services and that the extra help freed up the district's Home and School Visitor to focus on her primary assignment.

Mr. Orlow noted that administration was recommending agreements with Carol Scheuerman, PT for physical therapy needs at a rate of \$57.70/hour and Kim

Hartranft, OT for occupational therapy services at \$57.70/hour, a 3% increase over current rates. Mr. Shipman estimated the cost of the services at approximately \$60,000 and \$80,000 per year respectively. He indicated that the district was nearing the break-even point on occupational therapy and might need to look at bringing a therapist on as a district employee in the future.

Mr. Orlow advised that Board action would be requested Thursday evening on the annual Montgomery County Services Agreement, Carbon-Lehigh Data Processing Contract and the Montgomery County Head Start for the lease of classroom space. Mr. Orlow noted that the cost of the I.U. agreement had declined slightly. Mr. Shipman reminded the Board that the agreement was a cost plan that fluctuated throughout the year and was reconciled at the close of the year. He and Mr. Bickleman also confirmed that the annual budget contained some contingency funds for potential increases in service costs. Mr. Orlow noted that data processing services from Carbon Lehigh I. U. would increase by an average of 1.8% under the new contract. He asked if the district was satisfied with the services it received from Carbon Lehigh. Dr. Cotter indicated that it was. He noted briefly the issues and concerns on both sides and highlighted the steps that Carbon Lehigh was taking to upgrade its services. Mr. Orlow asked if the district could do the data processing in-house. Dr. Cotter responded that it would be expensive to do so because of the need to hire in-house programmers. Mr. Yunker asked about the ability to retrieve student data after it had been archived. Mr. Bickleman advised that it could be retrieved at a cost. Dr. Iannelli indicated that the district would be warehousing its data and would be able to retrieve it from its own records. Mr. Yunker asked for the data rollover date for student records. Dr. Cotter said that he would get the date for the Board. At Mr. Orlow's request, Mr. Bell quickly reviewed the Head Start lease and its annual rate of \$3,500.00, an increase of 3% over current lease rate. He noted that the program would be housed at Conshohocken Elementary School but that the district could house it at any of its K-3 elementary schools, if necessary.

Mr. Orlow referred the Board to proposed changes in three district policies, as shown in Enclosures #31 through #33 in the agenda for Thursday evening. Dr. Cotter explained that the district was tightening up its procedures for families who are applying for the admission of students residing with adults other than their natural parents. He noted that additional documentation would be required to confirm residency and that a fact-finding hearing could be required if necessary. He responded to Board queries with additional information on documentation for support, including tax reports, and some details and history on the process that had been piloted and was now recommended for adoption. He indicated that it followed state guidelines. Mr. Carroll asked for some idea of the number of cases pending. Dr. Cotter indicated that approximately 50 cases were under investigation. He also reported that the policy would be #202 and/or 202.1. Mr. Orlow referred board members to information on an update to Board Policy #917 that dealt with the Senior Citizens Gold Card that permitted free admittance to district events and

activities. Mr. Johnson advised that the last sentence in the policy requiring advance pick-up of tickets for ticketed events with reserved seating was the biggest change. Mr. Orlow asked and Mr. Bickleman confirmed that the proposed new policy on fixed assets was required by GASB regulations. In response to Board queries, Mr. Bickleman reported that the regulations and the proposed policy were designed to give bond agencies and others looking at the districts' assets a standard system for their depreciation. After some additional questions and discussion on the impact of the GASB regulations and the policy, Mr. Orlow asked Mr. Bickleman to check with bond counsel and PFM about the effect of GASB regulations on the district's bond ratings. Mr. Bickleman indicated that he would check with the district's auditors as well. He felt that it would have little or no impact on credit ratings because the regulations would be applicable to all districts. Dr. Cotter advised that the solicitor had reviewed the proposed policy and recommended that the policy include only sections I through IV and that the remainder of the proposal become administrative regulations.

Mr. Orlow directed the attention of board members to the field trip request shown in Enclosure #34 of the agenda for the general meeting the following Thursday. The requests from the high school cheerleading coach was for approval for the varsity squad to participate in the U. S. Open National Cheerleading Competition in Orlando, Florida from 02/28/03 through 03/03/03. Mr. Orlow asked about the class time that the students would miss. Dr. Cotter indicated that the participants would miss one day of class.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board would be taking action Thursday evening on three bids, as shown in Enclosures #35 and #36. Mr. Bell briefly explained the bid for student pictures, noting that the recommended vendor, LifeTouch, provided what the review committee believed to be the best quality package to the families and the most comprehensive administrative package to the schools. He also noted that there was no cost to the district for the bid. Mr. Bell also highlighted the student insurance coverage options provided under the I. U. bid for student accident insurance. He indicated that Boston Mutual provided the lowest cost option to the district for all-sports coverage and a very reasonable package to students and their families for school-day or all-day student accident coverage. He reminded the Board that the district encouraged parents to seriously consider this low cost insurance option, especially if they had no other health care coverage.

Solicitor's Report: None.

Committee Reports: None.

Public Comments: Mr. Connolly took the opportunity to comment on the fine work that Dr. Ryan had been doing for the community before he joined the Board that evening and to express his belief that he would be a great asset to the Board and the Community. He also commented favorably on the Gold Card for senior citizens and

supported Ms. Theiss' comments in support of girls soccer at the middle school level. Mr. Orlow explained that the Board supported the soccer program and that beginning the program in the coming school year was not a budget issue but a facility issue.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 10:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**