

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, MAY 13, 2002**

President Orlow convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:34 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on May 13, 2002.

**Board Members Present:** Marc Orlow, Robert Carroll, Thomas Davis, Lynn Glodeck, Gary Johnson, Hugh Lipshutz, Thomas Marchozzi, 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, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services and Nancy Acconciamesa, Curriculum Supervisor.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Minutes:** Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the minutes of the Building and Grounds Committee Meeting of 04/15/02, the Work Session of 04/15/02, the General Meeting of 04/18/02, and the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 04/29/02 the Personnel Committee Meeting of 04/29/02, and the Finance Committee Meeting of 05/01/02, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #6 on the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday. Board members had no questions or comments.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the financial reports which were listed as Enclosures #7 through #18 on the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. The reports included the Bond Fund Reports, Capital Projects Reports, and Capital Reserve Fund Reports for the month ending 04/30/02; General Fund and Program Bills; the Food Service Report for 04/02; the Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes, Real Estate Escrow Report and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 04/30/02; the current Budget Analysis; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 04/30/02. Board members had no questions or comments on the reports.

**Staff Report:** Dr. Cotter reported that Mr. Bickleman would be making the required formal presentation of the 2002-03 preliminary budget. He also indicated that Dr. Iannelli and Dick Brickley, Educational Consultant, would be providing an update on the district's strategic plan. Mr. Orlow received confirmation that the budget had been discussed at the last town meeting, the most recent parent council

meeting and several committee meetings. He asked the administration to check with the solicitor to see if the Board could adopt its budget for the coming year at the same Board meeting at which the formal budget presentation was made.

**Old Business:** None.

**Correspondence:** Mr. Orlow noted that Mr. Wells of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation would introduce Amy Kahl, a teacher at Plymouth Elementary School. Ms. Kahl was to discuss her project that was funded by the foundation. Mr. Orlow also reported that Mr. George Gunning, Jr. would speak on the subject of the name of the high school. See Enclosure #19 on the agenda for Thursday evening. He also noted correspondence from Thomas J. Gertzel, PSBA Director, that included an invoice for PSBA dues for 2002-03. Several board members questioned or commented on the value of the services that PSBA provided to the district. After some discussion, board members reached a consensus to schedule a meeting with a PSBA representative to discuss how the district could make the most of the services that PSBA offers.

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Cotter briefly reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #21 through #23 on the agenda for Thursday evening. He highlighted the recommended personnel changes, additions and deletions to the substitute list and the recommendations to fill summer school positions in the "Read to Succeed" program at Conshohocken Elementary School. Board members had no questions or comments on the report.

**New Business:** Mr. Orlow noted that the annual election of a treasurer would be on the agenda for action at Thursday's meeting and that Mr. Bickleman was recommended to continue serving in the position at an annual rate of \$7,280.00.

Mr. Orlow reported, for information purposes only, that Barbacane, Thornton & Co. was serving as the district's independent auditor for a three-year period at an annual fee of \$12,500.00 for the past year, \$13,000.00 for the current year and \$13,500.00 for the coming year.

Mr. Orlow noted that the annual appointment of the district's solicitor would be on the agenda for Board action at the general meeting on Thursday. He noted that the Board would need to act on Enclosure #24 of the agenda for Thursday evening to reappoint Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Esq. of Fox, Rothschild, O'Brien & Frankel as solicitor. He noted the 3.08% increase in the retainer to \$20,100.00 plus out-of-pocket expenses and litigation rates of \$145.00 per hour, effective July 1, 2002. Mr. Johnson asked if the Board would be appointing Mr. Sultanik or the firm as its solicitor. Mr. Orlow responded that it would be appointing Mr. Sultanik as its solicitor but would be using various attorneys in the firm for the services that were their specialties.

**Mr. Orlow reported that the district would be naming a depository for district funds during the 2002-03 school year at its general meeting on 05/17/01 and that First Union had been recommended. Mr. Orlow asked if the district would be dealing only with First Union. Mr. Bickleman reported that the bank would be its main depository. Mr. Orlow inquired about benefits and fees associated with banking with First Union. Mr. Bickleman shared some general information on fees and interest earned. Mr. Orlow asked for information on the costs, and Mr. Bickleman advised that he would put the information together for the Board. Board members discussed the advantages of going out to bid or quote on banking services. They reached a consensus to refer the issue to the Finance Committee and to have it set a date to take a look at competitive costs and services.**

**Mr. Orlow also reported that a list of investment banks, trusts, and savings and loans would be on the agenda for Board consideration on Thursday. It was noted that district investments would be subject to confirmation of bank maintenance of legally required collateral. See Enclosure #25 on the agenda for the general meeting of 05/16/02.**

**Mr. Orlow advised that the Board had interviewed two candidates for a position as Student Board Representative and would be taking action at its Thursday meeting to appoint Stephanie Cousounis or Sara Rosenberg to the position.**

**Mr. Orlow noted that the Board had previously reappointed Mr. Bell Board Secretary for a four-year term starting 07/01/01 and was being asked to set the annual compensation for the 2002-03 school year at \$5,823.00.**

**Mr. Orlow noted that the 2002-03 MCIU Special Education Services Agreement was scheduled as action item on the agenda for the meeting on the following Thursday. Mr. Shipman and Dr. Cotter advised that the agreements might not be ready for action on Thursday because changes in the way in which IDEA funds were being handled had caused a delay at the I. U. level. They noted that the district would be receiving certain funds directly and would have more freedom in deciding which services it purchased from whom. Mr. Shipman also reminded the Board that the agreement was a fluid one that could increase or decrease over the course of the school year depending on the services provided and was reconciled at the end of the year. Dr. Cotter noted the possibility that the agreements might be ready by Thursday.**

**Mr. Orlow indicated that the annual Allocation for Federal Programs would be up for Board consideration at Thursday's general session as Enclosure #26. Dr. Cotter and Dr. Gorodetzer confirmed for Mr. Orlow that there was to be an increase in Title I funding as part of the "No Child Would Be Left Behind" initiatives. They also noted that there would be changes in how the district conducted business in this area. Dr. Gorodetzer reported that the funds were targeted for Conshohocken and Colonial Elementary Schools. She also indicated that the district was looking at**

ways to use the resources to provide better services. Mr. Bickleman confirmed that the recently received numbers had not yet been included in the preliminary budget. He also reported that he could have a final version of the budget including these and other changes ready for the Board on Thursday evening.

Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the list of textbooks contained in Enclosure #27 on the agenda for Board action at Thursday's meeting. He asked if the Board was required to approve the textbooks. Dr. Cotter indicated that the Board has always approved the texts for use within the curriculum. Dr. Iannelli noted that the social studies curriculum was on cycle and that the proposed textbooks were aligned with state standards. Dr. Cotter indicated that approving the purchase of the textbooks indicated approval of the curriculum that the texts supported. He suggested that the exemplary math program was a good example of this connection. Dr. Gorodetzer and Ms. Acconciamesa led a discussion of the math program and the materials that were used in connection with it, the Investigations Math Model and the Scott Foresman Program. Board members asked about the timing and the publication dates of the textbooks proposed for use in AP European History. Dr. Iannelli noted that the texts were the most recent edition available, that they were aligned with the curriculum and that the department was looking for a full set of the same books for all of the students taking the course.

Dr. Lipshutz asked about in-service training to prepare teachers to use the new math texts. Dr. Gorodetzer explained the flex in-service training planned to assist staff in implementing the new strands of instruction and using the new materials as resources. She noted that the materials are not completely new in K-5 buildings. Ms. Acconciamesa indicated that decisions on which modules to use would be based on student performance data and would be rolled out over the next few years. She noted that the two tools were commonly paired. Dr. Lipshutz asked about a pilot math program for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Acconciamesa reported that there was a teacher consensus on a connected math program for regular students. She shared preliminary data on an assessment test given to pre-algebra students at the middle school. She noted that she had to tabulate test results for two more classes. The test was linked to state math standards. The preliminary data showed some areas of concern, particularly in the area of abstract reasoning. After the presentation, Dr. Cotter noted that it was important to teach children to reason abstractly earlier in life and to help them carry that skill forward as they move up through life. There was considerable discussion on the preliminary findings and the connection between math programs at the middle school and high school, particularly in algebra. Dr. Cotter noted that algebra was a gateway to higher math skill and higher SAT scores. Dr. Iannelli reported that there were four levels of algebra at the high school. Dr. Cotter noted the national trend away from general math to algebra. Several speakers noted the need to see that pre-algebra classes were well aligned with state standards, that there was a process in place to communicate test findings with teachers and focus on staff development. They noted the importance of meeting fundamental needs and undertaking the restructuring and changes in

practice that were necessary to do so. Dr. Cotter indicated that the district was using student performance data to identify needs and would be taking a step-by-step process to implement programs to address those needs. Mr. Orlow thanked Dr. Gorodetzer and Ms. Acconciamesa for their report. Dr. Gorodetzer indicated that she would be sharing the final results of the testing with the Curriculum Committee.

Mr. Orlow reported that Board would be taking action on Thursday evening on a three-year contract with the Lincoln Center for Family and Youth which operates the Genesis Program at the high school and provides community-counseling services. See Enclosure #28 of Thursday's agenda. Mr. Shipman reported that the cost increases had been negotiated down to an average of 3% over the three years of contract that began in the 2002-03 school year. He also indicated that the program for the current year has been the best in the ten years that the district has had an alternative program at the high school.

Mr. Orlow advised that the Board would be considering a renewal of its contract with Montgomery Early Learning Center for the before and after school and kindergarten enrichment programs at the districts elementary schools. He noted that the increase called for a 12% increase in the lease rate and contained a new hold harmless clause that brought it in line with other district leases. See Enclosure #29 on Thursday's agenda.

Mr. Orlow noted that the Board would be considering increases in the cost of school lunches Thursday evening. He reported that Enclosure #30 of Thursday's agenda recommended an increase in the cost of elementary lunches to \$1.90, the cost of secondary lunches to \$2.20 and the cost of adult meals to \$4.30. The new prices represented increases of \$0.10. Mr. Orlow asked if student lunches subsidized staff lunches. Mr. Bell responded that they did not.

Mr. Orlow advised board members that a General Obligation Bond Resolution authorizing the issuance of a fixed-rate, 15-year bond would be an action item at the general meeting the following Thursday. Mr. Orlow inquired about the date and time for the sale. Mr. Bickleman reported that it would be done over the internet between 1:00 p.m. and 1:15 p.m. on Wednesday, 05/15/02. Mr. Yunker inquired about a list of projects with their life expectancies. Mr. Bickleman indicated that the list in question was related to GASB concerns and not the bond sale.

Mr. Orlow directed the attention of board members to the proposed changes in the 2002-03 handbooks at the middle and high schools. Dr. Cotter noted that what was in the agenda had been recommended by the high school administration but was still under review. He noted that there was a committee meeting the following Wednesday and that there would be an update on Thursday evening. Mr. Orlow noted that certain concepts were still under consideration. He suggested the main purpose of taking a look at the handbooks at that time was to make the public aware that changes were being considered. He felt that the committee could

continue to review and work on the handbooks while the Board went through the process of approving it on two readings. Dr. Lipshutz noted that there was some consensus on the need to weight AP courses higher than honors course but advised that discussions were still underway in the Curriculum Committee on actual percentages. Mr. Yunker suggested that the Board provide direction on Thursday evening and not have a first reading. Mr. Orlow noted that the Board could make changes along the way. Mr. Yunker did not see the point of voting on the handbooks if some issues were still up in the air.

Mr. Yunker raised a series of questions about the handbooks. He questioned the extent to which details of the drug and alcohol policy were included. Dr. Iannelli felt that the schools felt the need to explain the process. He asked the reason that stipulations were applied but not limited and suggested that they be listed only as examples. He questioned dropping references to the Activity Code of Ethics. Others suggested that it was an administrative prerogative and that acceptance of the handbook meant acceptance of the particulars in the handbook. He sought clarification of the references to cheating. Dr. Lipshutz noted that plagiarism was a form of cheating. Mr. Yunker also sought clarification of the differences among grades of “N”, “I” and “F”. He was advised that “N” meant passing grades, excessive absences, and credit denial. It was not factored into GPA and could not be made up. “I” meant incomplete. “F” meant that the student failed to get the work done. Mr. Yunker expressed concern that student could stop going to classes near the end of a semester to avoid a low grade. Mrs. Moore believed that such a tactic would get the student suspended. Mr. Yunker raised issues with the rules surrounding the wearing of ID badges. Dr. Cotter reported that he was discussing the matter with high school administrators and recognized the enforcement issues involved. He also explained the potential positive uses for a bar-coded ID. Mr. Yunker noted that the procedures for students reporting to class late had come full circle and once again had students going directly to their first block class. He wondered why that procedure would work now if it had not worked before. He sought clarification of the ability of students to retake PSSA tests and received assurance that the proposed wording was accurate. Mr. Yunker was asked about diploma seals and was advised that the issue of diploma seals had not yet been resolved at the state level. He inquired about the policy for taking courses in summer school and learned that students had to pass two of the four course grades to be eligible.

Mr. Orlow reported that a number of bids would be on the agenda for Board action on Thursday evening. These included the bid for elementary and secondary art supplies, general supplies, industrial arts supplies and science supplies in Enclosure #32. They also included the bids for high school health education supplies and high school and elementary school physical education supplies in Enclosure #33, middle school athletic, health education and physical education supplies in Enclosure #34 and janitorial supplies in Enclosure #35. Mr. Orlow went on to note the bids for a series of facility projects. These included the renovations to Plymouth Elementary

**School in Enclosure #36, renovations in the pool locker rooms in Enclosure #37, carpeting in the high school in Enclosure #38, rewiring of Whitmarsh Elementary School in Enclosure #39, partial roof replacement at Colonial Elementary School, and telephone upgrades at all K-3 schools. Mr. Bell gave brief explanations of some of the facilities bids in response to questions from board members.**

**Solicitor's Report: None.**

**Committee Reports: Mr. Orlow asked that committee chairs hold their reports until Thursday evening because of the lateness of the hour.**

**Public Comments: None.**

**There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 10:55 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**James M. Bell  
Board Secretary**