

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, APRIL 21, 2003**

President Orlow convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:43 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on April 21, 2003.

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

**Board Members Absent:** Steven Slutsky.

**Also Attending:** Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; MaryEllen Gorodetzer, Assistant Superintendent; Patricia Iannelli, Director of Research, Assessment and Technology; Gerald Berger, Director of Human Resources; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Chief Financial Officer/Board Treasurer; Charles Graham, Director of Technology; Donna Drizin, Principal, Whitmarsh Elementary School; Sue Castle, Chairperson, Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation; Michelle Mowad; Diane Smith-Hoban and Betsy Wells.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance. He also announced that the Board had met in executive sessions on 03/26/03, 04/09/03, and 04/21/03 for informational purposes and 04/21/03 for personnel and legal matters.

**Minutes:** Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the minutes of the Community Relations Committee Meeting of 03/13/03, the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 03/17/03, the General Meeting of 02/20/03, the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 03/26/03, the Personnel Committee Meeting of 04/02/03, the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 04/04/03, the Finance Committee Meeting of 04/10/03 and the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 04/21/03, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #8 of the agenda for the general meeting the following Thursday. Mr. Bell and Mr. Yunker noted several corrections that needed to be made to the minutes of the General Meeting. Mr. Bell indicated that he would make the changes.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the financial reports that were listed as Enclosures #9 through #20 of Thursday's agenda. They included the Budget Transfer Report for 04/03, the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report; General Fund and Program Bills, General Fund/Federal Program Bills, Capital Reserve Fund Report; Food Services Bills/Cafeteria Report, Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes Collected, Real Estate Escrow Report and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 03/31/03; the Budget Analysis of 04/03; and Treasurer's Report for the month ending 03/31/03. Board members had no questions or comments on the reports.

**Public Comments on the Agenda: None.**

**Staff Report:** Mr. Orlow recognized Mrs. Drizin, Principal of Whitemarsh Elementary School, who highlighted a number of special projects underway at the school. At the start of her presentation Mrs. Drizin took the opportunity to thank Dr. Cotter and Dr. Gorodetzer for their innovations in the area of curriculum and the Board of School Directors for its ongoing support. She then highlighted some of the many things that she learned and the opportunities that she had to showcase district curricular initiatives while attending her first national principals' conference. She reported that Colonial School District was at the top of the wave in the area of innovative curriculum and that interest was high among other delegates at the conference in the district's Above and Beyond program.

Mrs. Drizin outlined a number of programs that had resulted in positive, infectious change at Whitemarsh Elementary School, not only in the language arts and reading programs but in students' self-esteem and parental involvement. She spoke of assessment-driven instruction, the involvement of children in school-wide, start-of-day announcements; parent participation in open lunches; observations of both teachers and students; calls home to parents to give them positive feedback on student achievement; birthday lunches, and other initiatives that had a positive impact on daily student life. Mrs. Smith-Hoban, a Whitemarsh parent, introduced the school's ITTT (*I can share my Time, Talent and Treasure*) program, an effort to involve students in service learning. In closing Mrs. Drizin noted the district's efforts to provide increased safety and security at the school by installing cameras and doors that electronically protect students from intruders.

**Adjustment to the Agenda:** Mr. Orlow recognized Mrs. Castle, Chairperson of the Colonial Foundation, who introduced mini-grant recipient, Betsy Wells of Colonial Middle School. Ms. Wells spoke on behalf of herself and fellow teacher, Tracey Blannet and showcased her effort to incorporate the use of age-appropriate picture books into the language arts curriculum at the Colonial Middle School. She reported that she and Mrs. Blannet had purchased books that could be used to help students understand and incorporate the domains of effective writing into their written work. Ms. Wells provided several examples of how the picture books could be used to meet curricular goals and thanked the foundation for the financial support that led to their purchase.

**Old Business:** Mr. Orlow noted that the Board would be taking action on Thursday evening on the second reading of several proposed Board Policies.

**Enclosure # 21, Board Policy #004 – Board Committee Functions (Student Life):** Mr. Orlow suggested that matters pertaining to the general health, medical and dental welfare of students move to the Community Relations and Student Life Committee.

**Enclosure #22, Board Policy #004.1 – Membership – Student:** Mr. Yunker noted that the Board had voted the previous month to have the Student Board Representatives serve on the Community Relations & Student Life Committee as well. Dr. Cotter reported that the

committee had originally selected the Alternate Student Board Representatives for that assignment. Board members discussed the advantages of each of the options. Members of the committee favored the appointment of the alternate representatives because it gave them an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in Board activity. Mr. Yunker supported the assignment to the regular Student Board representatives. After some discussion, Mr. Orlow asked Mr. Bell to review the record of the March meeting to determine which option the Board had approved on first reading of the policy. Mr. Bell advised that he would check the videotape of the meeting and provide a brief report.

**Enclosure #23, Board Policy #404.1 – Recruitment and Selection:** Board members: Dr. Lipshutz asked why the date for eligibility had been set at the July following the expiration of the board member's term of office rather than a defined length of time such as one year. Mr. Orlow reported that the timing represented a compromise over several options discussed and set eligibility at the start of the new fiscal year.

**Enclosure #24, Board Policy #701 – Care and Maintenance of Flags:** Dr. Lipshutz asked if the policy implemented law and learned that it did.

**Correspondence:** The agenda noted a request from Bill Lukens, a student at the high school, for an opportunity to address the Board on using natural gas as a fuel for district school vehicles and correspondence from the Bureau of Budget and Financial Management that the single audit report for the year ending 06/30/02 had been approved as being substantially in compliance with federal and state policies. No action was taken on the correspondence that evening.

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Cotter briefly recapped his report as it was shown in Enclosures #26 through #28 of the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday. He noted that the report contained seven terminations (six resignations and one retirement), seven leaves and twelve promotions and transfers. He also reported that an update to the substitute list and staffing recommendations for summer reading programs were included in the report. Dr. Cotter also advised that an extra-duty/extra-pay adjustment and the appointment of a summer school director would be added to the list for Board action on Thursday evening.

**New Business:** Mr. Orlow advised that the preliminary budget for 2003-04 would be on the agenda for Board action on Thursday as Enclosure #29. He noted that the budget called for expenditures of \$67,412,000 and a real estate milage rate of 14.53. He indicated that the milage represented a 1.96% tax increase or \$28 for each \$100,000 of assessed value. Mr. Orlow also stated that projected expenditures included significant increases in the cost of health benefits and special education and the addition of \$750,000 to the district's capital reserve. He also noted that adoption of the preliminary budget was the first step in public discussion of the budget and that final adoption of the budget would come in June. Mr. Davis asked what had been left out of the preliminary budget. Dr. Cotter and Mr. Orlow noted a number of reductions from the original proposal. They included reductions of \$200,000 in technology, \$174,000 for possible instructional aides in kindergarten

classrooms, and some reduced funding for musical instruments and band uniforms. They also indicated that the technology budget was now in line with previous years at \$600,000 and that the reduction would have no impact on what was currently going on in district classrooms. Dr. Cotter and Mr. Orlow reported that kindergarten aides had been suggested as an alternate, short-term option for all-day kindergarten and that the Board was still considering an all-day program in the future. They advised that the other reductions in equipment reflected revised estimated costs for that equipment.

Mr. Orlow advised that a revision of Board Policy #810 – Transportation was on the agenda for Board action on first reading as Enclosure #30 of the agenda for Thursday. Mr. Yunker sought and received confirmation that the policy references to hazardous roads reflected a prohibition against students walking along hazardous routes to get to bus stops. In response to Board queries, Mr. Bell reported that the proposed changes were an effort to update the policy to reflect current practice, reinforce the goal of the original policy to set up a bus program based on equitable service and reasonably located bus stops, and address the changing traffic conditions in the community. Mr. Johnson noted that the policy changes would not change the number of students that the district transported. Mr. Bell advised that the changes would allow the district to make service more efficient and get students to school in a timelier manner.

Mr. Orlow advised that the Board would be considering on first reading a new Board Policy #440 – Military Leave of Absence. See Enclosure #31 of Thursday's agenda. Mr. Orlow asked if the policy was being proposed to cover a gap in district directives. Dr. Cotter advised that was, indeed, the case and noted that the lack of a policy on the issue had come to light as a result of recent American military activity overseas. Board members had a number of questions about the benefits afforded under the policy. Dr. Cotter and Mr. Berger explained that many of the provisions in the policy were statutory in nature. Dr. Cotter advised that the policy was boiler plate in nature and had been reviewed by the solicitor. Mr. Berger noted that the policy set minimum responses to staff absences as a result of a military call-up of reserve and/or National Guard troops. Board members had questions about the nature and timing of the health benefits called for in the policy. Dr. Lipshutz asked Dr. Cotter to find out about health coverage for military personnel after the mandated 90 days of free coverage required of the district. He felt that the military provided fairly comprehensive coverage for an employee on active duty and his or her family. Mr. Berger responded to questions from Mr. Yunker about employees losing rights and privileges by reporting that the law mandated no loss of employee rights and privileges while the employee was on active duty. Dr. Cotter reported that the district had no district employee currently on active duty.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board would be taking action on Thursday evening on Enclosure #32, a proposed fee schedule for groups who wanted to use the high school track. He asked Mr. Bell to provide some background on the fee structure. Mr. Bell reviewed the classes of users and the proposed fees. He noted that the Buildings and Grounds Committee had discussed the issue and set high fees for the use of the facility in order to protect the district's considerable investment in the track and discourage overuse of the

facility. Committee members confirmed that approach. Mr. Yunker felt that fees should be set based on the number of people using the track. Mr. Bell felt that tracking that information and verifying its accuracy would be difficult and burdensome. Board members discussed the possibility of finding a simpler way to address the issue and asked Mr. Bell to provide details on Thursday evening on the pending facility use requests for the track.

Dr. Ryan left the meeting.

Mr. Orlow advised board members that they would be acting on Thursday evening on a lease of office at Conshohocken Elementary School by Montgomery Early Learning Centers. Mr. Bell reported that the lease called for the payment of \$150 per month for the equivalent of one half of a classroom at a rent of one half of what Head Start paid to rent a full classroom. He noted that the lease was retroactive to MELC's occupancy of the space beginning in January 2003. Refer to Enclosure #33 for Thursday evening.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Administration was requesting Board action on Thursday on a proposal to have Industrial Appraisal Company conduct a physical inventory of all district fixed assets in preparation for the district implementing the provisions of GASB 34. See Enclosure #34 of the Thursday agenda. He noted that the Finance Committee had reviewed the proposal. Mr. Bickleman confirmed Mr. Yunker's understanding that the proposal included developing a current value for district real estate.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board would be acting at the general meeting on Thursday on a request for approval of the attendance of Cyndi Slagle at the 2003 Middle-Atlantic Planetarium Society Conference in Lanham, MD from 05/05/03 to 05/10/03, as outlined in Enclosure #35.

Mr. Orlow noted that there would be two trip requests on the agenda for Board action on Thursday evening. Enclosure #36 was a request for retro-active approval for a high school student to attend the PMEA All-State Orchestra in Hershey, PA from 04/09/03 through 04/12/03. Dr. Cotter noted the difficulty in scheduling a meeting in advance of the event on short notice and pledged to work on more timely notice in the future. Mr. Yunker asked if the trip might be the same one approved the previous month. Dr. Cotter reported that last month's request was for attendance at a state choral event and that this month's was for an instrumental event. Enclosure #37 was a request for approval for the boys' basketball team to participate in a holiday tournament in Orlando, FL from 12/16/03 through 12/31/03, as has been the custom in recent years.

Mr. Orlow advised board members that there would be six bids on the agenda for action on Thursday evening. Enclosure #38 was a bid to relocate the middle school chiller. Mr. Bell confirmed that the relocation would be on grade and that there had been only one bidder. Mr. Bell confirmed the scope of the computer lab air conditioning project in Enclosure #39 and the timing of the concrete work at Colonial Elementary School in the summer in Enclosure #40. Board members asked for a confirmation of the targeted completion date

for the concrete project for Thursday evening. Mr. Bell also provided information on the design of the accessible ramp at the front of Colonial Elementary School (Enclosure #41) and the need to replace the leaking roof of the Victory Field storage building (Enclosure #42). Board members requested copies of the ramp design.

**Solicitor's Report:** No report.

**Committee Reports:** No reports. Dr. Cotter advised that Mr. Graham was present in case board members had questions about the district's Technology Plan. My Orlow asked about the expected life of computers and the replacement of the district's machines. Mr. Graham reported that, with few exceptions, both the life and the replacement cycles were estimated at five-years. Mr. Davis asked what effect the removal of the mobile lab for the high school would have on the technology program. Mr. Graham noted that under the budget plan Colonial Middle School would get a mobile lab and that both the high school and the middle school would then have one. He also reported that no replacements had been eliminated from the budget but noted that additional computers and some peripherals had been cut. Mr. Graham indicated that after the Board approved the Technology plan, it would still be able to make changes and annual funding decisions. Mr. Yunker suggested that the plan be revised to show what was currently planned for 2003-04, the first year of the plan. Mr. Orlow agreed. Dr. Cotter emphasized that the plan did not bind the Board financially and that reductions proposed in the budget for the coming year did not adversely impact instruction.

**Additional Public Comment:** None.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell**  
**Board Secretary**