

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, MARCH 20, 2003**

President Orlow convened the general meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:10 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on March 20, 2003.

Board Members Present: Marc Orlow, Thomas Davis, Gary Johnson, Hugh Lipshutz, William Ryan, Steven Slutsky and Thomas Yunker.

Board Members Absent: Susan Moore and Lynn Glodek.

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; Colleen Dougherty and Stephanie Cousounis, Board Student Representatives; Judi Lipson, Principal, Plymouth Elementary School; Sue Castle, President, Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation; Bob Slagle, President, CEA; Carol Bucci; Heather DiRienzo; Susan Dryburgh; Robert Franz; Denise Holland; Conchetta Lupo; and Michelle Mowad.

Dr. Lipshutz arrived as the meeting was getting underway.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance. He also announced that the Board had met in executive session prior to the meeting to discuss legal and personnel matters. Mr. Orlow took a moment to note American military activity overseas and to pass along the thoughts and prayers of the Board and the district community to our service men and women, all those who might be in harm's way, and their families. Dr. Cotter provided an update on district initiatives to enhance safety and security in district schools and address the subject of the conflict in the Middle East appropriately in classrooms.

Dr. Lipshutz was called out of the meeting for an emergency.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow requested Board action on the minutes of the Community Relations Committee Meeting of 02/11/03, the General Meeting of 02/20/03, the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 02/24/03, the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 03/05/03, and the Personnel Committee Meeting of 03/05/03, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #5. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the minutes. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow requested Board action on the financial reports that were listed as Enclosures #6 through #17 of the agenda. They included the Budget Transfer Report for 03/03, 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 02/28/03; the Budget Analysis of 03/03; and Treasurer's Report for the month ending 02/28/03. Mr. Bickleman indicated that he was awaiting final disposition of land transfers before requesting that Whitmarsh Township return escrowed funds related to the development of Victory Fields. Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the financial reports. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Public Comments on the Agenda: None.

Dr. Lipshutz returned to the meeting.

Budget Reports: Mr. Orlow asked Mr. Davis and Mr. Slutsky for the Personnel and Finance Committee reports on the 2003-04 preliminary budget. Mr. Davis noted a slight decrease in enrollment across the board and a notable decrease at Conshohocken Elementary School. He reported an 8.3% increase in salaries, primarily due to contractual obligations and highlighted some added positions. Mr. Davis also reported a 24% increase in the cost of health care benefits. Mr. Slutsky reported a 5.8% increase in assessed value in the district since 06/01/02 and an estimated fund balance of \$3,200,000. He reported that the fund balance was the result of the district's management of expenditures and an increase in revenues. Mr. Slutsky indicated that the preliminary budget called for using \$2,500,000 of the fund balance to fund the 2003-04 budget and \$700,000 to fund the capital reserve. He also noted the over 200% increase in the contribution rate to the state retirement program for the coming year and additional increases in the years to follow. The outlines for Mr. Davis and Mr. Slutsky's reports are attached to these minutes at Attachments #1 and #2.

Staff Report: Mr. Orlow recognized Ms. Lipson, Principal of Plymouth Elementary School who, together with several members of her teaching staff, provided a report on the school's *STAR*, *Take a Book Home*, *Earobics*, and *Under My Wing* programs which were designed to focus on student needs in language arts. Ms. Lipson noted that the programs were the result of the Success and School Improvement Committees working within the framework of the district's *Above and Beyond* program to address student needs. The *STAR* program provides tutors to help students who are nearly proficient in reading become proficient. The *Take a Book Home* program allows students to share books with their parents and read at home. *Earobics* provides inter-active games to help students learn the sounds of language. *Under My Wing* helps students set academic, social and emotional goals for

themselves and take responsibility for learning. Board members had a number of questions about the scope of the programs. Presenters reported that all kindergarten students participated in *Earobics*. Their hope was to extend the program to 1st graders next year. They also reported that 2nd and 3rd graders participated in the *Take a Book Home* program and that students in the *STAR* program took pre and post-unit tests to identify current skills and monitor progress toward learning additional skills.

Old Business: Mr. Orlow noted that the Board had reviewed the second reading of proposed Board Policy #801 – *Public Record* on Monday evening. Mr. Yunker initially advised that he would not vote for the policy because it did not spell out test results as public documents. Mr. Orlow indicated that the district would continue the practice of making aggregate test scores available to the public. Mr. Sultanik noted that the district was already obligated to release student performance data in the annual district report card. Suggestions were made to have the Community Relations Committee look into and report to the Board on a second policy outlining what public records included and to have Administration produce a list of information normally provided to the public. The Board requested both items by the end of the school year. Mr. Johnson moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded a motion to approve Policy #801 on second reading. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow called upon Mrs. Castle of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation. Mrs. Castle introduced Ms. Bucci who spoke on her own behalf and for Amy Romani about a mini-grant in support of children's literature at the middle school. She reported that the mini-grant supported the purchase of reading material for a program designed to provide learning support to students who were working on becoming better readers. Mrs. Castle requested that the Board accept one major and two mini-grants from the foundation. The major grant was \$2,500 to set up a speaker's forum, an evening series of presentations open to the public on topics in the area of social studies. See Enclosure #19. Dr. Iannelli reported that the district was very excited about the grant and the program. She noted that it would support the district's cultural awareness efforts. Mr. Orlow asked how the public would be made aware of the forum. Dr. Iannelli indicated that Mr. Quinn and Mr. Sherman would place notices on CITV and the district web site and in the local media. Mrs. Castle also reported that the foundation was requesting acceptance of two \$500 mini-grants, one to support the *Earobics* program at Plymouth Elementary School and the other to support the opening of a sports camp at the high school. Mr. Davis moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to accept the grants. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow noted that the Board had reviewed on Monday evening a request from the Executive Director of Montgomery Early learning Centers for a 5% tuition increase in all MELC programs based in district schools. See Enclosure #20. Mr.

Yunker moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the increase. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board had reviewed on Monday evening a request from the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit for Board approval of the I.U.'s annual administrative budgets as shown in Enclosure #21. He briefly recapped his comments on Monday. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the budgets. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried. Mr. Bell distributed blank ballots to record the votes of board members and collected completed ballot shortly thereafter

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter briefly summarized his report as it was shown in Enclosures #22 through #26. He highlighted some updates to the report and recapped the memorandum of agreement related to the proposed appointment of a writing clinic specialist at the high school. Mr. Yunker inquired about how credits were given for summer school classes and learned that the credits were based on the length of the program and the level of participation and grade of the student. He asked if the requirement for perfect attendance was new and Dr. Iannelli responded that it was. She indicated that the concept had been tested the previous year. Dr. Cotter noted that there would be some consideration given to students who were absent because of very unusual situations. Mr. Yunker also sought and received assurance from Mr. Berger that the termination date for one of the employees on the personnel report was accurate. Mr. Orlow confirmed with the solicitor that it was acceptable for the Board to vote on all four enclosures at one time, if it wished to do so. Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the report. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Board Student Representatives Report: Ms. Dougherty provided highlights on the activities of the school's SADD chapter, the volleyball tournament, the mock trial, the senior dinner and the parent meeting on the senior trip. Ms. Cousounis provided updates on the Montgomery Foreign Language Competition, spring sports, and the spring musical, *Footloose*. She also reported that sports teams really liked the new soccer and softball fields and she mentioned some potential dates for dedicating the Victory Fields complex.

New Business: Mr. Orlow noted that the Board had reviewed proposed amendments to Board Policies #004 – *Board Committee Functions* and #004.1 – *Membership - Student* on Monday evening. See Enclosures #27 and #28. Mr. Yunker noted that changes still needed to be made to the draft to take some tasks, such as reviewing the student handbook, off of the list assigned to the Curriculum Committee and add them to the Community Relations and Student Life Committee. Several board members and administrators noted the need to change the titles of some of the administrative liaisons as well. Dr. Lipshutz moved and Mr. Johnson

seconded a motion to approve the policies on a first reading. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board had reviewed Enclosure #29, a proposed change to Board Policy #404.1 – *Recruitment and Selection* on Monday evening. Mr. Yunker advised that he would be voting against the proposed policy because he did not want to have to turn down any candidates otherwise qualified simply because they had recently served on the Board. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the proposed change to the policy on a first reading. On a roll call vote, all except Mr. Yunker and Dr. Ryan voted in favor. Mr. Yunker and Dr. Ryan voted in opposition. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board had reviewed a proposed Board policy on the care and maintenance of flags. Policy #701 was outlined in Enclosure #30 and granted the authority to implement the Act 157 to the superintendent or his designee. Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the policy on a first reading. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow advised that there was a resolution before the Board on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and a new Board Policy #128 – *Privacy of Medical Records* to implement it. He asked Mr. Sultanik to provide some history on the matter. Mr. Sultanik noted that the act was written to provide employees the opportunity to take health care coverage with them from one place of employment to another and to spell out privacy regulations. He reported that the act had several levels of compliance and involved students as well as employers and employees. Mr. Sultanik reported that the district was required to establish a structure for implementing the act and designate a privacy officer or group. He noted that the district may need to make some computer upgrades to come into full compliance with the act. Mr. Orlow asked if there would be staff development related to the act. Mr. Sultanik indicated that training would be a major issue and reported that his firm would be training coaches. Board members had a number of questions on the act itself, the timing of Board action on the policy, and some of the language in that policy. After some discussion, Mr. Sultanik suggested that the documents be amended to say that contracts could be made only following Board approval. He recommended that the Board approve the resolution and adopt the policy on a single reading in order to comply with the deadlines for having a policy in place. He also noted that the Board could approve both the resolution and the policy in a single motion. Mr. Davis moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded a motion to approve both documents. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board had reviewed Enclosure #32, a request for two students to attend the PMEA All-State Choral Festival in Hershey, PA from 04/09/03 to 04/12/03 on Monday evening. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Yunker

seconded a motion to approve the orchestra trip. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow requested Board action on two bids, the installation of air conditioning in six computer labs in the high school and the relocation of the CMS chiller. Mr. Bell provided information requested by Mr. Yunker on the possibility of purchasing a larger chiller and air conditioning additional rooms in the west wing. Upon receiving this information and briefly discussing earlier studies that indicated that costs might be very high and the power supply might be insufficient to support extensive air conditioning, the Board reached a consensus to refer the bid and the concept of air conditioning additional space in the high school to the Buildings and Grounds Committee for review and a recommendation. See Enclosure #43 for the bid results.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Slutsky seconded a motion to reject Enclosure #44, the bid to relocate the CMS chiller on grade. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Solicitor's Report: Mr. Sultanik asked for Board approval of a proposed settlement of a tax assessment appeal on parcel #65-00-10615-003 that would raise the assessment from \$452,490 to \$1,125,000 for the period from 01/01/02 until 07/30/02. Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Davis 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: Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to nominate Dr. Ryan for a position on the I.U. Board. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

CMCAVTS: Mr. Yunker advised that the Joint Operating Committee would be meeting the following week to finalize the budget which would then come to the home districts in April. He reported a 13% increase in the budget and a 25% increase in enrollment but a decreasing cost per student. Mr. Bickleman reported that the preceding statistics would have minimal impact on the upcoming district budget. He advised that the district costs would be lower than what the percentages seemed to indicate because a reconciliation in the three-year average used to compute district costs would reduce Colonial's contribution. Mr. Yunker also reported on a new 40-slot bio-tech program from which Merck had expressed a willingness in hiring successful graduates. He noted that the starting salary for graduates was well over \$50,000.

Personnel: Mr. Davis reported that the committee minutes approved earlier in the meeting covered recent committee activities.

Finance: Mr. Slutsky reported that the preliminary budget would be on the agenda for the April Board meeting.

Curriculum and Program: Dr. Lipshutz reported that the committee had met twice since February and had taken a number of actions. He noted that the committee signed off on moving forward with the feasibility study on renovating the high school library, looked at curricular programs on cycle, and reviewed the roll out of the middle school math program. Dr. Lipshutz also advised that the committee was awaiting information from the high school on changes to the handling of graduation projects and would be meeting the following week to discuss the district's technology plan and funding.

Buildings and Grounds/Transportation: Mr. Johnson moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded a motion to have Polatnick Zacharjasz Architects complete a feasibility study on renovating the high school library at a cost of \$11,750 plus a maximum of \$100 of out of pocket expenses. See Enclosure #33. Mr. Davis indicated that he would vote no on the motion because he believed that the district should get more than one proposal for the study. Mr. Yunker agreed. Mr. Orlow noted that the district already had options and ideas from earlier studies. He reminded those in attendance that the board had postponed awarding the study to allow the Curriculum Committee to look at the curricular needs in the library and that the committee had recommended moving forward earlier in the evening. Mr. Orlow felt that PZA's extensive experience in renovating libraries made it a good choice for the project and that the hiring of PZA as the district's on-call architect was approved with the idea of having the firm handle such routine studies for the district. Mr. Johnson noted that the Buildings and Grounds Committee had interviewed several firms before recommending PZA as the district's on-call architect. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor except Mr. Davis and Mr. Yunker. Mr. Davis and Mr. Yunker voted in opposition. The motion was carried.

Community Relations: No report.

Legislative Committee: Dr. Ryan reported on legislation on state subsidies, educational support services, a 227% increase in retirement budgets, grant programs for all-day kindergarten, and chaperones. He also highlighted a proposed resolution of support for PSBA's outreach program, *Pride and Promise*. See Enclosure #45. Mr. Yunker spoke in opposition to the Board approving such resolutions and stated his belief that the Board should focus on student achievement. Dr. Ryan felt that supporting the resolution would show support for quality education that focused on student achievement. Dr. Ryan moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the resolution. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor except Mr. Yunker. Mr. Yunker voted in opposition. The motion was carried.

Additional Public Comment: Mr. Franz raised a number of issues with the Board. He suggested that the district should look at what had been asked for and not provided when dealing with public documents. He suggested that the district stop referring to the library by that name and recognize that, in today's world, the

library was an information resource center and the librarian an information resource person. Several board members noted that the district was already moving in that direction. Mr. Franz noted that bio-tech employees were being paid generous starting salaries but that these salaries often reached a plateau quickly.

Mr. Franz referred to a recent educational report card in the Philadelphia Inquirer and raised a number of questions about the district's focus and its performance. He expressed his opinion that the district's reported points of pride were not appropriately focused. Dr. Gorodetzer replied that the district had submitted information that focused on student achievement but that the paper had edited that information. Several board members and administrators commented on the district's efforts under its *Above and Beyond* program to improve student achievement. They noted the district's efforts to roll out curricular initiatives starting at the elementary level and moving into the secondary level. They also noted the trends that had been developed and the efforts that were already underway to improve achievement at all levels over time. Several noted the need to pay special attention to demographic data when looking at the reports in the Inquirer. Several also noted the district's efforts with remedial programs for students that needed additional help to reach their full potential. Dr. Cotter summed up the comments by noting that the district's focus on achievement was documented on its website and by stating that all teachers and administrators had embraced the belief that all students could learn and were working hard to see that they did. Mr. Slagle thanked Dr. Cotter for his remarks. Mr. Slagle noted that teachers had played a part in the initiatives embodied in the district's *Above and Beyond* and *Pathways to Excellence* initiatives and expressed his pride in their efforts.

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