

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

President Orlow convened the general meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:40 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on November 20, 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 Accountability and Compliance; Gerald Berger, Director of Human Resources; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; and Joseph P. Bickleman, Chief Financial Officer/Board Treasurer; Stephanie Cousounis and Ryan Moore, Board Student Representatives; Pascal Scoles, incoming board member; Monica Sullivan, Principal, PWHs; Sandra Newman, Principal, CMS; Jerome Joyce, Teacher, CMS; David Sherman, Administrative Assistant for Community Relations; Jim Muscarella, President, CEA; Larry Bily; Paul Bily; Dante Del Vecchio; Robert Franz; Ian Higgins; Joseph Higgins; Kris Kostelny; Nancy Mortimer O'Brien; Katua B. Rivera; Harrison Sims; Maed Simms; Steve Slack; Amanda Stewart; David Stewart; George Wadlin; and the 2002 field hockey team, their coaches, family and friends.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in Executive session to discuss personnel matters just before the meeting.

Awards/Recognition: Mr. Orlow recognized Maryann Papparone, Field Hockey Coach who in turn introduced her assistant coaches and team who were recognized for an undefeated season and a solid performance in the post season championship rounds. A complete list of those awarded certificates of achievement is attached to these minutes as Attachment #1.

Mr. Orlow also recognized Thomas Yunker, a board member that would be retiring from service on the Board at the end of the month and had served the Board and the community with distinction for many years. Mr. Orlow presented Mr. Yunker with an engraved clock and thanked him for always providing his honest opinion on the issues before the Board.

Dr. Cotter presented Mr. Orlow with a certificate from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association honoring him for ten years of service on the Board.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow directed Board attention to the minutes of the Work Session of 10/13/03, the Personnel Committee of 10/16/03, the General Meeting of 10/16/03, and the Community Relations and Student Life Committee of 11/06/03, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #3 and

#41. 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 directed Board attention to the financial reports. They included the Budget Transfer Report for 11/03, the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report; General Fund and 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 10/31/03; and Treasurer's Report for the month ending 10/31/03, as shown in Enclosures #4 through #15. Mr. Johnson moved and Ms. Glodek 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.

Staff Report: Mrs. Newman and Mr. Joyce presented a staff report on how technology had been integrated into the educational programs at the middle school. Mrs. Newman highlighted the use of the mobile lab in the connected math program and how the use of computers in the classroom helped students stay focused and on task in the Writer's Workshop in Language Arts classes. She also noted the part that technology played in fostering reading in content areas.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: None.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter recapped and updated his report from Monday. He noted the employment of a temporary Tech Ed teacher at the middle school and additions to the list of temporary professional employees and extra-duty/extra-pay roster. Mr. Orlow asked how salaries of extra-duty/extra-pay recipients were handled if the occupants left their positions early. Mr. Berger indicated that pay for the outgoing and incoming staff was prorated. Dr. Cotter announced a number of vacant extra-duty/extra-pay positions and encouraged qualified local residents to apply. Dr. Cotter requested Board action on Enclosures #16 through #20 together. Mr. Yunker moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded a motion to approve the first five enclosures. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Dr. Cotter reported that the Resolution for Termination that was on the agenda for Board action had been reviewed in executive session and contained both a resolution and a notice. Mr. Orlow noted that Board action would begin due process for the employee involved. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve resolution and notice. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried. Dr. Cotter reported on the Board interview that evening of a candidate for a soon-to-be-vacant position for an Assistant Principal at the middle school. He noted that the Administration was recommending the candidate for the position at an annual salary of \$78,100.00. Mr. Orlow asked if there would be an opportunity for a transition between the current and new assistant principals. Dr. Cotter indicated that there would. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the hiring of the new assistant principal. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Board Student Representatives Report: Ms Cousounis provided an update on the Student Counsel Blood Drive, the National Honor Society Induction, the last football game, the college meeting for juniors, and the anti-vandalism program. She also congratulated the Field Hockey Team on its outstanding season. Mr. Moore highlighted the Helping Hands concert, parent conferences, the art auction in support of the rock wall, the Principal's Advisory Committee, the state band competition, the multi-cultural lecture series, the fall production of the Roaring Twenties, the fall recital, the Thanksgiving Dance and the Best Buddies Concert.

New Business: Mr. Orlow noted that the Board had been looking at a number of draft calendars for the 2004-05 school year and opened up discussion of calendar options with an eye toward setting a start date for the coming school year. He noted the options of starting before and after Labor Day and the variety of facility projects that might have an impact on the Board's decision. See Enclosure #21. Mr. Davis noted that the Administration had recommended starting after Labor Day because of the many projects slated for the coming summer. Mr. Orlow stated that the key issue was the construction of classrooms at Ridge Park and Whitemarsh Elementary Schools in support of all-day kindergarten. Dr. Lipshutz expressed his belief that classes during the last week in June had little educational value and voiced his support for a start date before Labor Day, a full spring break and a last day of school in the second week of June. He also noted that construction always seemed to finish at the last moment. Mr. Johnson moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded a motion that set the start date for classes for the 2004-05 school year on August 30, 2004 and a school year with a full spring break. On a roll call vote, all but Mr. Davis and Dr. Ryan voted in favor. Mr. Davis and Dr. Ryan voted in opposition. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow briefly reviewed the district's long-standing anti-vandalism programs at the middle and high schools and noted that the program had been discussed on Monday evening. Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to award the Student Councils of both schools the funds as recommended in Enclosure #22 and to renew the program for the current year at last year's funding levels. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow summarized Board discussion on Monday evening on a resolution dealing with the covenants, conditions and restrictions that were a part of the district taking ownership of Whitemarsh Meadows, the tract of land behind Colonial Elementary School, in lieu of additional acreage adjacent to Victory Fields. Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the resolution that gave the land to the district as open space to be used for active and passive recreational purposes by district staff and students. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow requested Board action on a transportation contract in Enclosure #24 to transport one student from the Lincoln Center for Family and Youth at a cost of \$5.75 per day. Mr. Davis moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the contract. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow noted that the Board would be taking action on a number of Board policies on first reading. He advised that Board policy required two readings that were normally 30 days apart. He noted that the Board could shorten the time frame and would notify the community in advance if it took that step so that community members could have input into the policies. He briefly recapped earlier discussions on Policy #207, Military Recruiters, noting that it was drafted to comply with “No Child Left Behind” legislation regarding the access of military recruiters to the high school student population. See Enclosure #25. Mr. Shipman noted that the policy was consistent with current district practice. Dr. Lipshutz 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 noted that “No Child Left Behind” required districts to develop a parental involvement policy for parents of children participating in language proficiency programs. He requested Board action on Enclosure #27, Board Policy #209, English Language Learners. Dr. Cotter noted the policy updated current district practice and that the major change in the policy was that ESL teachers would have to be certified in that specialty. He also noted that, while the district did not have a large ESL population, it would be required to survey its students each year to determine their primary language. He also advised that the district had participated in an ESL audit the previous day and that the language of the policy had been reviewed and found acceptable. Mr. Davis asked if the district’s ESL teachers were certified in the specialty. Dr. Cotter reported that the district would have to encourage its current teachers to become certified or recruit those who were already certified. Mr. Davis 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 reported that two proposed policies, #217, Diploma Policy and #217.1, Promotion and Graduation were on the agenda for Board action as Enclosures #28 and #29. Dr. Gorodetzer noted that the policies were an outgrowth of activities by the School Improvement Team. She explained that data indicated that achievement levels had to improve and that the high school administrative team wanted to give time to increase 9th grade English to two semesters, one each for literature and composition, and to require Algebra II of all students. She also reported that data indicated that students taking AP courses for a full year did significantly better in AP tests than those who took one semester courses. As a result, the high school wanted to increase the AP courses in English and Social Studies from one semester to two. Dr. Gorodetzer also reported that the logical outcome of taking these steps would be to increase the number of credits for graduation from 28 to 30. Board members and members of the District Office and high school administrative teams discussed the pros and cons of these recommendations. Dr. Lipshutz indicated that he would vote for the policies on first reading in order to keep discussions going but expressed concern that the changes could make it more difficult for students to take courses in art, music and physical education at a time when colleges and universities were expressing more interest in well-rounded candidates for admission. Several other board members echoed these concerns. Mr. Orlow asked what the state required for graduation. Dr. Sullivan reported that the state did not require a certain amount of time in class or number of credits but instead required that students be proficient at certain levels according to state standards. She noted that almost 50% of the high school curriculum was in the area of electives and that students would

still have choices after the proposed changes were made. Mr. Yunker noted that the issues in question were not of an emergency nature and that the Board should take the time to consider the issues carefully. He did not support shortening the time period between the first and second readings of the policies.

Dr. Cotter noted that Dr. Sullivan would need a decision by mid-December in order to get course materials for the following year out to students and families on a timely basis. Mr. Orlow asked the Administration to do research on how to make space in the schedule for electives. He also asked the Curriculum Committee of the Board to have a meeting on the issue at the high school and to seek student input. Ms. Cousounis asked what would happen to teachers if students could not take their courses. Dr. Sullivan walked the group through a typical schedule for music majors and noted the difficulty involved in their taking music classes in the upper grades. Mr. Johnson reported that he would vote against any plan that made it difficult for students to take advantage of a number of good physical education programs. Mrs. Moore stated that more study was needed before the Board raised the credit requirements for graduation. Mr. Orlow noted that the data from PSSA clearly showed that students needed more help in language arts and Algebra II. Dr. Cotter advised that the Administration's recommendations were data driven and that there was a real need to increase student proficiency. He cited the lack of merit scholars and student scores on AP tests as indicators of that need.

The Board and Administration continued discussion on the issues. Mr. Orlow noted upcoming changes in SAT tests to require student essays. Ms. Glodek sought and received assurance from Dr. Sullivan that high school staff had provided input into the discussion of graduation requirements. Speakers noted that the issues had also been raised in Curriculum Council. Dr. Cotter stated that there were equity issues in how AP classes were being scheduled. He and Dr. Sullivan noted the need to right the ship and give students what they needed to graduate and not to lose sight of the fact that the district had to give all students what they needed to succeed. Dr. Gorodetzer advised that the district had a policy on graduation requirements not on AP courses. Dr. Lipshutz asked all to be thoughtful and careful during deliberations that would be difficult but very important. Mr. Orlow suggested a Board Town Meeting at the high school as well as the Curriculum Committee Meeting to give students and parents ample opportunity for input. Mr. Yunker moved Dr. Ryan seconded a motion to approve on first reading the draft policies on diplomas and graduation requirements including the revised graduation requirements based on a reduction in physical education credits beginning with the Class of 2005. Mrs. Moore and Mr. Johnson sought and received clarification of the motion. On a roll call vote, all except Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Moore and Ms. Glodek voted in favor. Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Moore and Ms. Glodek voted in opposition. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow requested Board action on the Spanish Exchange outlined in Enclosure #31. Dr. Lipshutz asked if students who signed up for the trip realized that it could be cancelled if international problems arose. Dr. Cotter reported that the district would meet with parents to discuss the international climate if problems arose and would reach a decision based on parental input. Mrs. Moore moved and Dr. Lipshutz seconded the motion to approve the trip. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow sought Board action on two teacher conference requests that had been discussed on Monday evening. Enclosure #32 was a request from T.C. Boegly and Julie Pustilnick of Colonial Elementary School to attend the National Council of Social Studies Educators Conference in Chicago from 11/13/03 through 11/16/03. Enclosure #33 was a request from Maureen Haegle of the high school to attend the Annual Conference of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development in New Orleans from 03/18/04 through 03/22/04. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the former. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried. Mr. Yunker moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the latter. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow requested Board action to approve the Administration's response and action plan to the Auditor General's Audit Report for the years ending 06/30/1999-2000-01-02. See Enclosure #24. Dr. Lipshutz moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the response and action plan. Mr. Bell polled the board members. All voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Solicitor's Report: Mr. Sultanik requested Board approval of two requests for appraisals to be performed by the firm of Coyle and Lynch. The first was for a limited proposal for \$1,500.00 and, if required for court representation, a full appraisal for \$5,000 on parcel #65-00-10614-00-4. The second was for a limited proposal on parcel #65-00-11065-00-3. Mr. Yunker moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the appraisal requests, as presented to the Board. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Committee Reports: **Intermediate Unit Board:** Dr. Ryan noted that the Board would not be meeting in November. He reported that the Board had given an award to Montgomery Hospital for its employment programs for individuals with special needs. He also reported on the hiring of 40 staff to meet the needs of IEP's and an increase in the number of early intervention students being served by 10% last year and 20% this year. Dr. Ryan advised that the I.U. had hired another case manager to deal with the increase and was searching for a new Executive Director. He also reported that four members of the Board had not been re-elected.

CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson reported that the Joint Committee had recognized Mr. Yunker for his years of service on the committee. He also advised that the Center for Technical Studies would be sending the district a resolution for Board action in December and that Mr. Sultanik would receive a copy for review shortly.

Personnel: Mr. Davis advised that the committee had met on 11/17/03 and had reviewed the need for a residency investigator, the budget for an ESL teacher, the issue of having a department liaison for the nursing staff and, in executive session, grievance and contract issues.

Finance: No Report.

Curriculum and Program: Dr. Lipshutz noted that the committee had reviewed the graduation and diploma policies that had been discussed earlier in the evening.

Buildings and Grounds/Transportation: Mr. Johnson reported that the Committee had met earlier in the week and that the district hoped to break ground on new classrooms at Whitemarsh and Ridge Park Elementary Schools late in December. He also reported that the replacement of the curtain wall at Conshohocken Elementary School would begin in June 2004. Dr. Cotter noted that the curtain wall was almost 50 years old and that the district had considered many options for replacing it before choosing to relocate the entire school to Colonial Elementary School for the first half of the 2004-05 school year. Dr. Cotter noted that the school would occupy much of the area currently occupied by the District Office and that District Office Administrators would move temporarily to modular office space adjacent to the building. He reported that the district would hire movers to relocate the school and that the District Office would move back into the building once Conshohocken Elementary School returned to its renovated building and the space that it had occupied in Colonial Elementary School had been renovated for District Office use. He reported on the advantages involved in keeping the staff and students of Conshohocken Elementary School together while they were away from the building during construction and the amenities that Colonial Elementary School had to offer them. Dr. Cotter reported that a number of details had to be worked out. He noted that District Office Administrators had spoken with the staff of Conshohocken Elementary School and would be working diligently to get everything in place for the multi-phase transitions that would take place for all concerned. He noted that transportation service for elementary students to Colonial Elementary School was already available.

Legislative: Dr. Ryan reported that the PSBA legislative group had met with Connie Williams who was not expecting any immediate action on the budget. Mr. Orlow asked Mr. Bickleman how much the district should have received from the state. Mr. Bickleman estimated that the district would have received about \$400,000.00 if August and October payments had been received. Mr. Orlow noted that the district would not experience a financial crunch until March or April of next year but was losing interest on the missing state funds. Mr. Sultanik suggested that the district might be better off without a quick receipt of funds if they came with legislation requiring budget referendums.

Additional Public Comment: Mr. Franz raised a number of issues. He reminded the Board of his earlier recommendation that the Board require those traveling to seek the lowest available air fare. He also commented on the difficulty involved in getting meals in New Orleans for a few dollars per day. He, to, sought an “opt in” rather than an “opt out” policy on military recruiters. Mr. Sultanik reiterated the requirements of the “No Child Left Behind” legislation. Mr. Orlow gave examples of the information that the high school provided parents on the recruitment issue. Mr. Franz felt that many science teachers took the joy out of learning. He felt that “Meet the Candidates” programs should be televised. Mr. Orlow noted the difficulties involved in satisfying the divergent points of view in the community on this issue but reported that, now that the elections were over, the Board would consider the issue and attempt to find a legitimate balance among the proposals for and against the district televising political debates. Mr. Franz questioned the timing of committee meetings and suggested that they be held at times convenient for members of the community. Many Board members noted the difficulties involved in meeting the needs of all those who might wish to attend such meetings.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**