

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, APRIL 17, 2006.**

President Orlow convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:37 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on April 17, 2006

**Board Members Present:** Marc Orlow, Gary Johnson, Tom Davis, Hope Luken, Susan Moore, William Ryan, Pascal Scoles and Mitch Zimmer.

**Board Members Absent:** Steven Slutsky

**Also Attending:** Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent, MaryEllen Gorodetzer, Assistant Superintendent; Gerald Berger, Director of Human Resources; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Chief Financial Officer/Board Treasurer; Andrew Boegly, Chief Information Officer; David Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator; John Quinn, Director of CITV and Thomas Gale.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on 03/29/2006, 04/12/2006 and 04/17/2006 to discuss informational, legal and personnel matters.

**Minutes:** Mr. Orlow directed the attention of the Board Members to the minutes of the work session of 03/13/2006, the general meeting of 03/16/2006, the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of 04/06/2006 and the Community Relations and Student Life Committee of 04/06/2006. See enclosures #1 through #4 of the agenda for Thursday evening. Mr. Orlow noted that the minutes of the Personnel Committee of 04/12/2006 and the Curriculum Committee of 04/17/2006 may be available for Board review and approval on Thursday evening as well. Mr. Bell advised the Board that a sentence regarding the cost of artificial turf installation appeared in the wrong paragraph in the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee minutes and that he would make the correction before Board action on Thursday.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Orlow reviewed the financial reports on the list for approval on Thursday Evening. The reports included the Budget Transfers, the Bond Fund Report, the Capital Projects Report, the General Fund/Federal Program Bills, the Capital Reserve Fund, the Food Service Bills/Cafeteria Report, the Outstanding Investment Report, the Cash Flow Summary, the Comparison of Taxes Collected, the Real Estate Tax Escrow Report, the Reconciliation of Cash Accounts and the Budgetary/Deficit Status Report for the month ending 03/31/2006, as shown in enclosures #5 through #15. Mr. Orlow inquired as to the number of Budget Transfers for "Transcript Conversion to CDROM" on enclosure #5. Mr. Boegly stated the transfers were necessary to convert data from microfilm to digital format to better manage the data. He also noted the project was completed. Mr. Orlow asked if the project was put up for bid given the cost being greater than \$10,000. Mr. Boegly stated that the bid was not necessary as a service was provided and no software or other product was purchased.

Mr. Orlow asked if renovations to the District Office were complete. He noted several minor charges for furniture and building supplies on the Bond Fund Report, enclosure #6. Mr. Bell stated that the district office renovations were complete and that the building supply charge was related to the installation of a piece of carpet in the hallway outside of the district office reception area. He noted that not enough carpet was left over from the renovation of the district office and that a remnant from the PWHS library was used outside the DO reception area. Mr. Orlow noted that this small expenditure should not be paid from the bond fund.

**Public Comments on the Agenda:** None

**Staff Report:** Mr. Orlow announced that Ms. Lipson would report on programs and initiatives at Plymouth Elementary School on Thursday evening. Dr. Cotter added that her report would focus on multicultural initiatives at the school.

**Correspondence:** Mr. Orlow stated that Elizabeth McKeaney, district liaison to the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation, would be in attendance on Thursday to request Board approval of a CFEI grant and acceptance of funds for disbursement. Mr. Orlow asked if communication with the CFEI had improved. Dr. Cotter stated that an understanding of the approval process had been achieved.

Mr. Orlow redirected the meeting back to the Financial Reports and questioned the payment for Plymouth Elementary playground equipment. Mr. Bickleman noted that the payment represented the total cost of the project and that the school's PTO paid the majority of the expense and the district only paid a predetermined portion of the cost. Mr. Bickleman confirmed that the district's allocation was normal for such a project in collaboration with a PTO.

**Budget Reports:** Mr. Orlow reported that, in light of Mr. Slutsky's absence, Mr. Bickleman would report on the 2006-2007 School District Preliminary Budget. Mr. Bickleman stated that Mr. Slutsky would be on hand to present the Finance Committee's report on Thursday Evening. Mr. Orlow asked Mr. Bickleman to give a review of the preliminary budget. Mr. Bickleman referred the Board Members to page 11 of the Preliminary Budget booklet. He noted that the budget totaled \$80,238,000, an increase of \$4,800,000 from the previous year. The real estate tax mil rate was established at 15.47, which represents a 3.84% increase in real estate taxes. The annual increase was \$57 on every \$100,000 of property assessment or \$85.50 on the median assessed value of \$150,000. Mr. Bickleman noted that salaries, benefits and contracted educational services accounted for the majority of the budget. He also stated that the original tax increase was projected to be 13.64% but by prioritizing projects, using a portion of the projected fund balance and transferring \$900,000 of Technology and CITV costs to the Bond Fund, the district was able to keep the increase to a minimum.

Mr. Orlow noted that school districts were likely to change their philosophy for preparing annual budgets if property tax legislation including back-end referendum became a reality. He felt that many districts would face spending limits from time to time and noted that they would consider it prudent financial management to raise taxes up to the fixed limit each year whether the funds were necessary in any given year or not.

Mr. Bickleman stated that copies of the preliminary budget were available on the district website by clicking on “Our District,” then “Administration,” and then “Finance.”

**Old Business:** Mr. Orlow noted that Jerry Shively, Executive Director, Montgomery County Intermediate Unit, was requesting Board approval of the 2006-07 IU Budget and that Board action was needed at that time. Dr. Ryan stated that the IU budget included a 3.59% increase to offset higher administrative and legislative services costs. He said Colonial’s share of the budget actually decreased by \$205. Dr. Ryan also noted the IU has provided CSD with an itemized list of IU services used by the district over the past year.

Mr. Orlow stated the he and Dr. Cotter met with IU administrators to express concern with IU support and learned about efforts the IU had made and continued to make on behalf of its member districts. Dr. Cotter added that the IU has sought feedback from districts to ascertain which services were most useful. He added that CSD used the IU mainly for Technical and Special Education support.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Dr. Scoles seconded a motion to approve the IU budget. The motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Bell passed out ballots to the Board Members in attendance. Dr. Ryan noted that any absent board member could fill out his ballot and mail it to the IU.

**Superintendent’s Report:** Dr. Cotter guided members through his report outlining personnel actions, changes to the substitute list, proposed extra duty/extra pay assignments and plans for a summer music lesson program. See enclosures #18 through #21 on Thursday’s agenda. Mr. Orlow asked if priority was given to staff members over outside applicants for extra duty/extra pay positions. Dr. Cotter said a priority was placed on hiring within the district since those individuals were better able to interact with students on a daily basis. Mr. Berger added that inside candidates must also possess the necessary credentials and experience to fill the positions.

**New Business:** Mr. Orlow stated the Board’s desire to extend the attendance area of Conshohocken Elementary School from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue in order to include the entire borough. He noted that the town meeting that the Board held at Conshohocken Elementary on 04/04/2006 was well attended and thanked the administration for anticipating questions and concerns that community members might have had, including transportation and “grandfathering” student attendance to other schools. He noted the board should take action on the proposal on Thursday as kindergarten registration is underway. Mr. Orlow asked if any administrators or Board Members had received feedback since the town meeting. Dr. Ryan noted he spoke with three families at a borough council meeting and they were positive about the plan. Dr. Ryan also mentioned a summer basketball program at Sutcliffe Park for young children as a way to get to know other students in the borough.

Mr. Orlow called the Board’s attention to two policies for review on a first read. Dr. Ryan was under the impression that the first policy, #217 involving the district’s Diploma Policy, was an update of a policy approved in February. Dr. Cotter said he would check the dates of review. He thought the policy had been discussed before but was withdrawn pending Colonial Education Association and building representative review. He said the current policy reflected changes pertaining to dual enrollment. Dr. Ryan mentioned the policy was fine in its current state.

Considerable discussion followed on the weighting of college courses and amount of credit earned by taking a college level course. Additional discussion focused on equating college courses to AP courses or Honors courses. Dr. Gorodetzer stated that the program provided an opportunity for students, who may not otherwise have a chance, to take college level courses while in high school. These courses are to be weighted as Honors courses.

Mr. Orlow directed the Board's attention to the second policy, #816 on Cellular Telephone Utilization. He stated that a policy was necessary given the size of the district and the number of individuals now using cellular phones and other electronic communication devices. Mr. Boegly noted typographical errors in the policy that would be corrected before Board review on Thursday. Mr. Orlow suggested that the policy define what a "cellular phone" encompassed given the variety of devices available.

Mr. Orlow called attention to two contracts up for Board review and approval. The first contract for Solicitor's Services for 2006-2007 provided for a 2.3% increase over last year's retainer of \$22,103. Mr. Orlow mentioned the contract also called for separate costs for two different types of litigation fees. Dr. Cotter brought to the Board's attention supplemental material provided by Mr. Bickleman detailing various types of litigation in which the district had been involved. Mr. Orlow mentioned the Board would be holding an executive session prior to Thursday's meeting and that the solicitor would be present to discuss the contract with Board Members at that time.

The second contract referred to Child Care Leases for office space for the Montgomery Early Learning Centers. Mr. Bell noted that the reference to the Head Start Program would be removed as that request would be brought before the Board in May. Mr. Orlow asked if the contracts were consistent with those between the district and MELC in the past. Mr. Bell indicated the contracts were similar but that a slight rate change had been included to cover increases in energy and administrative costs. He stated that MELC had been notified of the increases.

Mr. Orlow directed the Board to revisions to the PWS Student Handbook found in enclosure #28 of Thursday's agenda. Dr. Cotter noted the changes had been discussed in the Community Relations and Student Life Committee and were in the areas of Eligibility, Health & Medical and Discipline. The eligibility component focused on athletics. Dr. Scoles noted that the high school would conduct a survey throughout the coming school year to determine whether or not to expand the requirements to all extra-curricular activities. Dr. Cotter stated that the discipline component featured the Restorative Practices Program that had been piloted at the high school and would supplement current practices.

Mr. Orlow reported that the Board would take action at Thursday's meeting on two professional conference requests from the high school as per enclosures #29 and #30 in Thursday's agenda. He asked that both requests, which had the support of the high school and district administration, be considered together. The first request was for Assistant Principal Karen Gebhardt to attend a summer institute for administrators in Florida from June 28-30, 2006. The second request was from science teacher Jim Muscarella to attend a Science Olympiad Summer Institute in Arizona from July 17-21, 2006.

Mr. Orlow called the Board's attention to a request from CMS technology education teacher Clint Rickert for student participation in a Technology Student Association (TSA) competition at Champion, Pennsylvania, from April 19-22, 2006. The request was found in enclosure #31 of Thursday's agenda. Dr. Cotter noted that the request included funding for student registration and was consistent with the funding of similar school organizations. He noted that, given the timeline, immediate Board action would be appropriate. Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion that the request be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Orlow stated that the final item of new business before the Board was a series of bids for approval. The bids, found in enclosures #32 and #33 of Thursday's agenda, were for a roof replacement at Ridge Park Elementary School and a purchase of athletic equipment at PWHS. Mr. Orlow noted that the Ridge Park roof replacement was the last in a series of roof replacements undertaken by the district in recent years. He asked if any summer programs were held in the building. Dr. Gorodetzer noted that there was a summer reading program held at Ridge Park and said that she would check the timing of the program. Dr. Cotter stated that the athletic equipment would be purchased from the 2006-2007 budget but needed Board action in April given the timing of the purchases. Mr. Bell noted that a bid listed on the agenda for a lighting retro-fit in the CES Gymnasium and PWHS Cafeteria 100 would be delayed for Board action until May because trade magazines had not run advertising in the expected time frame. He noted the delay would not affect the work schedule.

**Solicitor's Report:** None.

**Committee Reports:** Mr. Orlow asked if any committee chairs wished to present their reports. Dr. Ryan gave a brief legislative update on the General Assembly's Conference Committee on Property Tax Legislation. He noted that the two sides still had not reached a compromise.

**Public Comment:** In response to Mr. Orlow's request for public comments from the floor, Mr. Thomas Gale of Whitmarsh Township commended the Board for its proactive approach to informing and involving the public in the property tax debate.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

James M. Bell  
Board Secretary

(Sherman)