

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, January 18, 2007.**

President Orlow convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:08 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on January 18, 2007.

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

Board Members Absent: None.

Also Attending: Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; MaryEllen Gorodetzer, Assistant Superintendent; Gerald E. Berger, Director of Human Resources; Joseph P. Bickleman, Chief Financial Officer/Board Treasurer; Cassandra DeLong, Director of Pupil Services; Andrew Boegly, Chief Information Officer; Terry Yemm, Director of Operations; David M. Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator/Board Secretary; John Quinn, Director of CITV; Philip Weisgold and Angela D'Alessandro, Board Student Representatives; Robert Franz; M. J. Gourke; Brian Weiner; Jennifer Nemchek; Paula Paxson; Jeff Yeakel; Kristy Langis; Caitlin Szymanik; Elise Glatter; Julie Horwitz; Michele Stingle; Liz McKeaney; Denise Marks; Terese Boegly; Roe Overcash; Jenna Rufo; Claire Meashey. Jeffrey T. Sultanic, Solicitor, joined the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on 12/14/2006, 12/20/2006, 01/10/2007, 01/16/2007 and 01/18/2007 to discuss informational, legal and personnel matters.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow sought Board approval of the minutes of the Work Session of 11/13/2006, the General Meeting of 11/16/2006, the Reorganization Meeting and the Special Meeting of 12/04/2006, the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of 12/07/2006, the Curriculum Committee, the Community Relations and Student Life Committee and the Special Meeting of 12/14/2006 and the Special Meeting and the Personnel Committee of 12/20/2006. See enclosures #1 through #10. He noted that minutes from the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of 01/10/2007 and the Community Relations and Student Life Committee of 01/11/2007 were available as yellow pages. See enclosures #46 and #47. Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the minutes as provided. On a roll call vote, all voted in the favor. The motion was carried.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow sought Board action on the financial reports on the list for approval. 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, the Budgetary/Deficit Status Report and the Treasurer's Report for the months ending 11/30/2006 and 12/31/2006, as shown in enclosures #11 through #22. Mr. Orlow noted the reports were for November and December 2006.

Mr. Orlow questioned furniture expenses for the Facilities Management Center (FMC) listed on the Bond Fund Report. Mr. Yemm reported that the expenses were part of the budgeted costs and were now paid in full. In response to a question from Mr. Orlow, Mr. Yemm explained that the department's furniture in the old high school offices was custom built and did not fit the new spaces

in the FMC. Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Slutsky 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: Mr. Franz, Wildflower Drive in Plymouth Meeting, questioned the Bond Fund expenditures for Victory Fields in light of the district's agreement with Chestnut Hill College to pay for turf installation on Victory Fields #1. Mr. Orlow noted that the district is paying the up front costs but that the College will reimburse the district for the turf installation costs with interest over the life of the 10-year agreement.

Staff Report: Terese Boegly, Colonial Elementary School Principal, autistic support teacher Jenna Rufo and 4th grade teacher Roe Overcash used a power point presentation to explain the school's new autism class and inclusion program. See Attachment #1. They explained how the program uses differentiated instruction and co-teaching and discussed the benefits to special education and regular education students. Mr. Orlow noted that the program was new this year at the recommendation of the district's Special Education Task Force. He stated that the course provided a win-win situation for all students and opened opportunities within the district that were previously unavailable. Ms. Ruffo confirmed for Mr. Slutsky that she has received positive feedback from parents of both special education and regular education students and that she has seen progress in the students.

Budget Report: Mr. Orlow stated that it was commonplace for Board committees to present budget reports prior to the adoption of the preliminary budget but noted that the Board was not used to presenting those reports in January. The accelerated budget timeline mandated in the new property tax law Act 1 made the early reports necessary. Mr. Bickleman confirmed for Mr. Orlow that the Board would act on the 2007-2008 Preliminary Budget on Feb. 12. Mr. Orlow noted that the Curriculum and Facilities Management and Transportation Committees gave their reports on Monday. He noted that the Personnel Committee is giving its report tonight.

Mr. Berger stated that the district's enrollment is projected to increase by 70 students or 1.5%. He reported that the budget incorporated a net increase of 3.7 staff positions and an additional nine support staff positions, including six special education instructional aides. Mr. Berger noted that the budget included a 3.68% increase in employee salaries, an 8% increase in employee healthcare costs, and a 13.67% increase in state mandated retirement contributions.

Responding to a question from Mr. Davis, Mr. Berger stated that there are presently 72 classroom aides district-wide. In response to a question from Mrs. Luken, he noted that the nine new aides represented a significant increase.

Mr. Orlow questioned how many retirements were projected, and he noted that the new budget timeline made it much harder to predict retirements this early in the year. Mr. Berger stated that three retirements were projected and confirmed that employees usually don't make retirement decisions this early. He noted that no one has come forward with a retirement announcement at this time.

Mr. Orlow again recounted the difficulties involved with preparing a budget so early in the year as required by Act 1. He also noted the difficulties of not knowing what employee costs would be based upon the current teacher contract negotiations.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow stated that Thomas J. Gentzel, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) estimates the district's PSBA dues for the 2007-2008 school

year at \$12,000 which is roughly the same cost as last year. See enclosure #23. Mr. Orlow noted that the estimate was for informational purposes only and no Board action was need at this time.

Mr. Orlow reported that Plymouth Elementary School art teacher Laura Gojeski had received Board-approved funding from the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation to decorate a wall in the school's cafeteria and was present to update the board on her project. Mrs. McKeaney stated that the Colonial Foundation wished to show ways in which teachers were using the grant monies they received and introduced Ms. Gojeski. Ms. Gojeski explained the mosaic tile project in which each student in a selected grade level hand painted a 4-inch by 4-inch tile. All tiles are combined into a mural with a finished size of 60.5-inches by 48-inches. The finished murals are mounted on the wall in the school cafeteria. She noted that two grade levels had completed a tile and several more would participate in the project in the coming years. She shared samples of the individual student tiles with board members.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter outlined his report which included the Personnel Report and Substitute Additions, the proposed Extra Duty/Extra Pay List, a list of New Activities and their corresponding Unit Value and the Adult Evening School Instructors list for the Spring 2007 semester. See enclosures #24 through #27. He noted that the Personnel Report included five additional actions from the 26 he reported on Monday. He noted one of the new actions was for the emergency placement of a second grade teacher at Ridge Park Elementary School, details of which were before Board members on a blue sheet. Dr. Cotter reported that the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List included seven new actions for the positions that were created on Monday. He reminded the Board that Adult Evening School classes were not held without sufficient enrollment to support the class.

Mr. Orlow inquired as to the reason the emergency placement was needed. Dr. Cotter reported that there was an unexpected medical situation.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the Superintendent's Report. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Board Student Representatives Report: Miss D'Alessandro reported on the high school winter concert, an Amnesty International concert, a course planning meeting for parents of eighth graders, a financial aid night hosted by the college counselor, and the National Art Honor Society induction ceremony. Mr. Weisgold informed the Board about rehearsals for the spring musical "Annie," a class ring breakfast, a semi-formal snowball dance in which all four classes participated, course selection for ninth through 11th graders, a Saturday SAT prep course and the progress of the high school winter sports teams.

Mr. Orlow asked if the students had heard any feedback from the Board's student town meeting held in November. Miss D'Alessandro reported the event was a good opportunity for students to learn what was going on and to present feedback to the Board. In a response to a question from Mrs. Luken, Miss D'Alessandro said she thought student attendance would be better if the event was held during I-Block or some other time during the school day.

Mr. Slutsky reported that he had received positive feedback from parents regarding the course selection night for eighth grade parents. Mr. Davis added that he had attended the special session that was held specifically for parents of private and parochial school students. Dr. Cotter and Dr. Gorodetzer explained the district's objective is to reach out to those parents to ensure they are aware of the quality of education and facilities in the district.

New Business: Mr. Orlow informed the Board that action was needed on a series of policies before the Board on a first-read basis. He noted that major revisions were proposed for two existing policies. First, changes are requested to the By-Laws, #001, to reflect current practice and an amendment is requested to the Committee Functions, #004, to establish a new Safety and Wellness Committee of the Board. See Enclosure #28. Mr. Orlow spoke to the high priority given to both areas and the importance of having a centralized committee dedicated to addressing related topics on a regular basis.

Mr. Orlow also referenced a proposed change to Policy #707, Use of School Facilities and Equipment. See enclosure #30. The revision to the policy updates the applicable timeframe and inserts a provision regarding municipality utilization. Mr. Orlow stressed that the policy included specific language to ensure equitable consideration regarding the district's relationship with the local municipalities and the equitable waiving of fees.

Dr. Ryan inquired that if the By-Laws state the Board holds a meeting every month, do they actually have to hold a meeting every month? Mr. Sultanik confirmed that a monthly meeting is required to be held and stated that the Board may add language allowing the Board President to waive the meeting. Considerable discussion ensued as to whether or not the By-Laws should be reviewed on a first and second read basis as they are regular policies. The consensus was that the By-Laws should be reviewed in the same manner as policies.

Mr. Orlow asked that the Board consider the two discussed policies as one item. Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve both policies on a first-read basis. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow sought Board action on the District Wide Parent Involvement Policy, #121, which also was before the members on a first-read basis. See enclosure #29. He stated that the policy was required by Title I. Mr. Davis moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the policy on a first-read basis. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow asked Board members to consider a Special Education Solicitor Contract for the 2007-2008 school year. He noted that a contract from the law firm of Sweet, Stevens, Katz and Williams, LLP was presented and added that it was reviewed in executive session. Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the contract. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow requested Board action on a series of four special education settlement and contract agreements. He noted that the agreements were reviewed in executive session and that student names were not released for privacy reasons. The agreements are with Shortridge Academy, Therapy Source, Austill's Rehabilitation and an EH – Visually Impaired/FAPE Waiver. Mr. Orlow noted that two of the agreements were for visually impaired students. Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Slutsky seconded a motion to approve the settlements and contract agreements. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow asked that the Board consider two professional conference requests as one item. The first request is for PWSHS counselor Pat Tamborello to attend the College Board Middle States Regional Meeting in Baltimore, Md., from Feb. 14-16, 2007. See enclosure #31. The second request is for PWSHS counselor Martin Grouke to attend the American School Counselor's Association Annual Conference in Denver, Colo., from June 22-26, 2007. See enclosure #32. Mr. Orlow noted that both requests had the support of the PWSHS administration and were to be funded through budgeted

professional development funds. Mr. Davis moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the conference requests. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow requested Board action on three student trip requests. He asked that the first request, regarding the PWHs Class of 2008 trip to Disney World from April 11-15, 2008, be considered apart from the others. See enclosure #33. He noted that questions were raised at Monday's work session regarding the timing and cost of the trip. Dr. Cotter stated that students were scheduled to leave on a Friday morning instead of Friday afternoon, which was a slight departure from similar trips in the past. He reported that the change was made to enable students to get the most from their money. He added that PWHs Activities Director Charles Forster informed him that five to seven fundraising opportunities were available to help defer costs for any student who had difficulty affording the trip. Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the Class of 2008 trip to Disney World. On a roll call vote, all but Dr. Ryan voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow asked that the two remaining trips be taken as one item. He noted that one trip request was for 40 students to attend the Annual State DECA Competition in Hershey, Pa., from Feb. 28-March 2, 2007. See enclosure #34. He added that the final trip request was from Colonial Middle School art teacher Julie Horwitz to take members of the 8th Grade Art Show Activity Club to participate in a field trip to the "Grounds for Sculpture" in Hamilton, N.J., on May 11, 2007. See enclosure #35. Mr. Orlow noted that both trips were routine. Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the trip requests. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow asked the Board to consider the approval of a bid award for the installation of roofing trusses related to the enclosure of the CES courtyard. See enclosure #48. He noted that this was the first piece of an extensive renovation project. He stated that the Board Room and CES library would be moved downstairs to the courtyard which will be enclosed. Mr. Orlow added that substantial energy savings were expected with the project which will include the replacement of outside windows and installation of air conditioning on the second and third floors. Mr. Yemm confirmed that the bid from Chowns Fabrication and Rigging, Inc., included the materials, rigging and installation. Responding to a question by Mr. Sultanik, Mr. Yemm explained that the district was still awaiting township approval. Mr. Sultanik noted that the motion to approve should include such language. Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the bid contingent upon receipt of all government approvals. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Sultanik requested that the Board approve two settlement proposals regarding assessment appeals. The first is to change the assessment of Parcel 49-00-03889-301 to \$7,429,200 effective Jan. 1, 2006 and Jan. 1, 2007. The second is to reduce the assessment of Parcel 49-00-04927-00-1, originally valued at \$25,000,000 to \$22,937,212 effective Jan., 2006 and to \$20,156,050 effective Jan., 2007. Mr. Orlow noted that these settlements represent a substantial reduction in revenue for the district. He also noted that many more properties were also seeking reduced assessments. He stated that while the district had historically enjoyed a high growth rate in its tax base, they were beginning to see a negative growth. He added that the district would aggressively contest these assessment appeals. Mr. Slutsky moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the assessment appeals. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Sultanik recommended Board approval of student disciplinary stipulations #93538 and #92347. Mr. Orlow noted that they had been reviewed in executive session. Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the student disciplinary stipulations. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit: Mr. Zimmer asked Board members to review the MCIU General Operating Budget for 2007-2008. See enclosure #36. The budget consists of departmental budgets for general administrative services; curriculum, instruction and professional development services; state and federal legislative services and instructional materials services. Mr. Sultanik confirmed for Mr. Orlow that the IU budget is not subject to Act 1 because the majority of the revenue comes from contracts and service fees. After some discussion, it was decided that the board would take formal action on the budget in February.

CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson reported on the 2007-2008 Center for Technical Studies Budget. See enclosure #37. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the budget. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Personnel: Mrs. Luken reviewed the extra duty/extra pay positions that were approved Tuesday evening and noted that two additional days per week of music instruction at CES had been recommended.

Finance: Mr. Slutsky stated that the district had received its independent audit report from Barbacane and Thornton which revealed no issues with any aspect of the district operation. He commended Mr. Bickleman and his staff for a job well done. Mr. Slutsky spoke to the accelerated budget schedule imposed by Act 1 and the difficulty it places on the budget process. He noted the difficulties in projecting enrollment and retirements so far in advance as well as not knowing what government subsidies will be available. Mr. Slutsky stated that the district's 2007-2008 preliminary budget would be available for public inspection on Jan. 23, and the board will take action on the budget on Feb. 12. He stated that the Board must adopt a resolution regarding the mandate tax shift question in March and would be seeking public input on the topic.

Mr. Orlow reminded the audience of the district's Local Tax Study Commission recommendation of a 0.6% EIT increase and urged public feedback on the issue.

Curriculum: Mr. Davis reviewed the minutes of the December 14 meeting. See enclosure #6. He asked Dr. Gorodetzer to recap the Jan. 16 committee meeting. Dr. Gorodetzer reported that Dr. Monica Sullivan and Dr. Miki Garlin provided an update on the progress of the PWPrEP initiative including presenting the recommendations of the five action teams. Dr. Gorodetzer summarized those recommendations for the Board. Dr. Cotter informed the Board he had received a letter of thanks from the Springfield School District for supporting them in dealing with the aftermath of their recent crisis.

Facilities Management and Transportation: Mrs. Moore asked the Board to consider the donation of a number of obsolete cell phones to the PWHS DECA chapter's community service project. The project involved the collection of used cell phones to be recycled with the proceeds to benefit efforts to end domestic violence. Mr. Moore moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the donation of the obsolete cell phones. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mrs. Moore reported that the facilities portion of the district's preliminary 2007-2008 budget increased less than 3.0% from last year. She noted that the lighting retrofit for the CES gymnasium was completed as was the installation of area lights at PWHS. She noted that the district has moved from a six-year to an eight-year schedule for the recycling of buses. The move will save the district \$45,000 over the next two years and will not affect bus safety.

Community Relations: Dr. Scoles showed members a display of district informational materials which are being distributed to locations throughout the community. He reminded senior citizens of the upcoming senior matinee and luncheon and noted that the next Parents' Council meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, January 30.

Legislation: Dr. Ryan reviewed a list of districts that had made their Local Tax Study Commission recommendations available with EIT increases ranging from 0.5% to 1.5%. He noted that there were no PIT recommendations listed. He stated that NCLB legislation was re-authorized with no changes and that Pennsylvania ranked 10th in the nation in student achievement and 14th in property tax level.

Public Comment: Mr. Franz referred to the note in the district's 2006 Annual Report that more than 16% of the PWHS Class of 2006 had graduated with grade point averages of 4.0 or higher. He made reference to a CNN/USA Today article which dealt with grade inflation in the state of Wisconsin. He expressed a concern that it was becoming a nationwide problem.

Considerable discussion ensued about grading, the review of the grading process and competition among students for class rankings. Dr. Cotter stated that PWHS had some of the most challenging courses of any high school in the country and added that the education today is far superior than that delivered 25 years ago.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Sherman
Board Secretary