

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 21, 2006.**

President Orlow convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:05 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on September 21, 2006.

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

Board Members Absent: William Ryan and Steven Slutsky.

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; Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Solicitor; David M. Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator/Board Secretary; John Quinn, Director of CITV; Philip Weisgold and Angela D'Alessandro, Board Student Representatives; Leigh Stuart; Courtney Byelock, Tom Walsh; John Alexander Spotila; Jennifer Bollinger; Robert Franz; Linda Chmielewski; Patrice Bobyock; Alinda Wood; Tom Kuestner; Chad Murray; Barbara Grugan; Nicole Kenney; Jan Canterbury; Donna Sturm; Erin McKelvey; Alan Mizgorski; Deb Quaco; Marna Caintic; students receiving certificates of achievement, their families and friends.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on 08/17/2006, 08/30/2006, 09/13/2006, 09/18/2006 and 09/21/2006 to discuss informational, legal and personnel matters.

Mr. Orlow recognized Dr. Cotter who introduced the presenters of the student awards. Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) Principal Dr. Monica Sullivan presented the school's three National Merit Scholarship semifinalists, Ankit Vartak, Michael Wang and Theresa Wise. Dr. Sullivan explained that the students were among the top one% of students nationwide who took the SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Laura Gojeski, Plymouth Elementary School (PE) art teacher presented Emily Bluhm with a certificate. Ms. Bluhm had several pieces of art and an essay published in *Arts and Activities*, a national art education magazine.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow asked for Board approval of the minutes of the Work Session of 08/14/2006, the General Meeting of 08/17/2006 and the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of 09/08/2006, the Personnel Committee of 09/13/2006, the Community Relations and Student Life Committee of 09/14/2006 and the Curriculum Committee of 09/18/2006. See enclosures #1 through #3 and #27 through #29. Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the minutes. On a roll call vote, all voted in 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 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 month ending 07/31/2006, as shown in enclosures #4 through #14.

Dr. Cotter noted that there were changes to the Bond Fund Report and the Capital Reserve Fund Report before the Board as blue pages separate from the agenda. Mr. Orlow questioned playground expenses for Conshohocken Elementary School (CE) and Colonial Elementary School (CES) that appeared on the Capital Reserve Fund Report. He asked what portion of the costs the district was responsible for and what was covered by the schools' Parent Teacher Organizations. Mr. Bickleman stated that the amounts shown for the CES project was the gross amount of the project and did not include the PTO contribution. He stated that the PTO contribution would be \$29,000. He also confirmed for Mr. Orlow that the amount shown for the CE playground was the total amount and did not include the PTO contribution.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Mrs. Luken 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 of Wildflower Drive in Plymouth Meeting invited everyone to attend a public hearing on Act 1 at 7:00 p.m. in the board room. He stated that he was a member of the district's Local Tax Study Commission (LTSC) which had been reviewing the legislation as required by Act 1 in advance of a May primary ballot question asking residents if they wish to raise income taxes to provide property tax relief. He noted that the tax shift would have a direct impact on residents' wallets. Franz said residents who rent would see an increased income tax but would not reap the benefits of property tax relief. He reported that according to the 2000 census 25% of the district residents were renters. Mr. Franz stated that the LTSC had not come to any conclusions or decisions on what type or rate of tax it will recommend that the school board propose. He again encouraged residents to attend the September 25 public hearing to voice their opinions.

Mr. Orlow stated that Mr. Franz was correct. He noted that property tax legislation began two to three years ago as Act 72, then took on another number and finally became reality as Act 1. Mr. Orlow stated that the legislation includes referendum and the possibility of the public voting on school budgets. He explained that the district was entitled to appoint three, five, seven or nine members to the LTSC and chose to appoint the maximum number to ensure that as broad a cross section of the district as possible was represented. He reiterated that the LTSC was to study the pluses and minuses of an Earned Income Tax and a Personal Income Tax and recommend that the school board place one on the May primary ballot at a rate within the minimum and maximum provided by law. Mr. Orlow said that there would be winners and losers if a tax is enacted and encouraged the public to attend the hearing on the 25th and voice an opinion. He said that ultimately whether or not to implement a tax would be the voters' decision.

Staff Report: Mr. Orlow stated that the School Board met with the district administration during a retreat each summer to set district-wide goals for the coming school year. He asked Dr. Cotter and Dr. Gorodetzer to outline the district goals for the 2006-2007 school year. Dr. Cotter noted that Colonial's successful Above and Beyond plan for continuous student improvement included long range goals but within that there were annual goals to be set each year. He stated the current years goals centered around three main areas, student achievement, systemic reform at PWHS and public relations. Dr. Cotter reported that all CSD schools had met or exceeded Adequate Yearly Progress targets as established by the No Child Left Behind legislation and that several schools had made impressive improvement. He singled out Colonial Middle School which

realized a 16% increase in the number of students who scored at the proficient level or above in mathematics and Ridge Park Elementary School which saw a double-digit increase in the percentage of students who scored at the proficient level or above in reading. He added that all buildings were making improvement and that most regular education students were proficient or advanced in reading and math. He reported that disaggregate groups were also making improvement, though not as much as the district would like. He stated that a concentrated goal for the year was to focus on student achievement in disaggregated groups. Dr. Cotter noted that while the district would continue to push for improvement among the regular education students, it would double its effort with special education students.

Dr. Gorodetzer spoke to the reform initiative at PWHS called PWPrEP, which stands for Plymouth Whitmarsh students Prepared for Every Possibility. She detailed committees which were already at work focusing on school-wide instructional practices, grading, a review of I-Block and ninth grade interventions, support for underperforming students and college and career counseling. She stated that the high school administration was to report to the school staff on November 7 and have a formalized action plan developed by December 1.

Dr. Cotter said the district recognized that it needed to double its efforts in the area of public relations in light of the Act 1 legislation. He stated that the amount of student achievement growth in recent years has been outstanding and that everyone inside of the district knew that. However, he noted that 80% of district residents don't send children to CSD schools and aren't as aware of the district's positive qualities. He said the administration will work harder to get the good word out.

Mr. Orlow agreed with the improvements the district has made in recent years and stated that the improvement would not have been possible unless all aspects of the program had been well implemented at all levels of the district.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow asked the Board to consider a request by Francis Marabella, Conshohocken Borough Manager, to consider five properties as exempt for the 2006-2007 tax year. See enclosure #15. Mr. Orlow stated that in the past the Board had granted similar requests to Plymouth and Whitmarsh Townships. He explained that the requests sought property tax exemptions on properties which were acquired by the townships during the tax year and noted that the properties were automatically exempt in future years. Mr. Bickleman confirmed for Mr. Orlow that the amount to be waived was \$1,945.98. Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow noted that Board approval was sought to accept a gift of 30 TI-84 calculators valued at \$3,500. See enclosure #30. Dr. Cotter stated that this had become an annual request and that the district would send a letter to the donor commending him for thinking of the district's students. Mr. Orlow asked if a request was made for the donor to remain anonymous. After Dr. Cotter stated that there was no such request Mr. Orlow publicly thanked Michael Schwab for his gift. Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to accept the gift. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter outlined his report which included the Personnel Report and Substitute List, the proposed Extra Duty/Extra Pay Assignments/Changes List, and the Enrollment Report. See enclosures #16 through #18. He stated that there were two additional resignations and three additional replacements since his report at Monday's Work Session. There were also five additional extra duty/extra pay assignments requested for approval and that there was no change in the enrollment report. He noted that the changes also included a recommended salary for new CE principal Julie Pustilnick. Mr. Orlow noted that Mike McKenna was recommended to move into Ms. Pustilnick's vacated reading specialist position and asked about the transition for a new teacher into his classroom. Dr. Cotter stated that there would be some overlap time with the new teacher for Mr. McKenna's class and that the new teacher may already have familiarity with the students in the class. Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Davis 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: Mr. Weisgold reported that freshman orientation was successfully held on the first day of school, and he thanked the advisors of the program. He stated the 9th Grade Parent Orientation was held on September 7 and that there was a good turnout for Open House on September 14. He noted that three student car washes had been held.

Ms. D'Alessandro reported that auditions for the Colonial Players fall production of *Winners* were held on September 11 and that both she and Mr. Weisgold were chosen for the cast. She stated that student pictures were taken on September 13 and that the Back to School Dance hosted by the senior class on September 15 was well attended. Ms. D'Alessandro stated that the Marching Colonials placed third in a competition held the weekend of September 15 and added that PWHS celebrated Constitution Day on September 18 with each student receiving a personal copy of the constitution. She concluded by stating that the first senior class trip meeting had been held, and the students were excited to learn they would be arriving in Florida earlier than past classes. Dr. Cotter confirmed for Mr. Orlow that the trip cost was consistent with past trips despite the earlier time frame.

New Business: Mr. Orlow asked the Board to consider six special education placement agreements that were reviewed at the September 18 Work Session and discussed in executive session. He noted that the agreements were not enclosed with the agenda for confidentiality purposes. He reported that the agreement with Ambler Day School was an alternative education placement and that the contract for the Perkins School for the Blind was a renewal. He stated that contracts with the Woods School and Millcreek School were new placements for students with IEPs and that the two other agreements were settlement agreements. Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the special education placements. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow requested that the Board take action on a professional conference request from PWHS Principal Dr. Monica Sullivan who is requesting permission for a social studies teacher to attend the National Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference in Washington, DC from December 1-3. See enclosure #19. He noted that building professional development funds will be used to pay for the conference. Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded a motion to approve the conference request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Orlow stated that the Board had been asked to approve two trip requests for the PWHS cheerleaders to attend competitions in Johnstown, Pa., in November and Williamsburg, Va., in

March. See enclosures #20 and #21. Dr. Scoles moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a request to approve the trips. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Solicitor's Report: No report.

Committee Reports: Mr. Orlow noted that Mr. Slutsky had given the Finance Committee report on Monday and that the Board had appointed a replacement for a member who had resigned from the LTSC. He stated that the Board also needed to appoint new officers to the Commission. Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to appoint Mr. Jack Pinheiro as Chairman of the LTSC and Mrs. Leslie Finegold as Secretary. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Intermediate Unit: Mr. Zimmer reported that the IU Board approved a number of appointments and salary adjustments at its last meeting. He noted that the IU also accepted a \$21,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency for the DARE program and a \$72,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the Adult Basic Literacy Project. Mr. Zimmer also stated that the IU planned to hold a Casino Night to raise money for the Montgomery County Special Needs Children's Foundation. The event is on October 13 at the Hilton Valley Forge Hotel.

CMCAVTS: No Report

Personnel: Mr. Johnson moved and Dr. Scoles seconded a motion to accept the Labor Relations Board Mediator Proposal for an agreement with the Teamsters Union which was representing the district custodial, maintenance and turf management staffs. The agreement calls for raises of 3.5%, 3.5% and 3.75% with increased employee share of medical contributions. Mr. Orlow noted that the Board had been in negotiations with the Teamsters since January. He stated that several times the parties had been close to an agreement but could not settle. He noted that if the board approved the mediator's proposal, they would have a contract with the union.

Mr. Orlow stated that this was the first of many tough choices that lie ahead under Act 1. He stated that all three years of this contract would fall under the guidelines of Act 1 which restricted school district spending to a state index that was tied to average weekly wages. He noted that the index for the 2007-2008 school year had been set at 3.4%. Mr. Orlow reminded members that the Board needed to approve a preliminary budget by February and that if the budget called for an increase of greater than 3.4% then the voters would be asked to approve or not approve a higher tax increase. If not approved, the budget would have to be cut; however, the board will not be able to cut items to which they are legally and contractually bound. He noted that approving contracts that otherwise may have been fairly easy will no longer be under Act 1. For that reason Mr. Orlow stated that he would vote no on the contract proposal.

Dr. Scoles said that he would vote in favor of the proposal because he felt the Board needed to honor an agreement it had already negotiated and that even in transition to Act 1 he felt the Board needed to keep its word. Mrs. Luken added that she did not think a more favorable contract would result from further deliberations. On a roll call vote, all but Mr. Orlow and Mr. Davis voted in favor. The motion passed 5-2.

Curriculum: Mr. Davis deferred to Dr. Gorodetzer who reported that the committee reviewed an extensive report on SAT scores that was compiled by Elizabeth McKeane, Director of

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, and Dr. Sullivan. Dr. Gorodetzer stated that more than 90% of the PWHS Class of 2006 took the SAT. She said that this was the first year that a writing section had been added to the exam. PWHS mean scores were higher than the state and national averages, with the scores of the top 100 students being significantly higher. Dr. Gorodetzer also mentioned that Dr. Sullivan had reported on a new SAT prep course being implemented at the high school.

Facilities Management and Transportation: Mrs. Moore reported that the roof replacement at Ridge Park Elementary School was completed before the start of the school year. She noted that should be the district's last roof replacement for a long time. Mrs. Moore stated that boiler replacements scheduled for CES and PE will be up and running by the end of September and that substantial fuel savings are expected once the boilers are operational. She added that the lighting retrofit at PWHS East Cafeteria had been completed. She noted that the retrofit will increase light output 40% and save 60% on utility costs. Mrs. Moore stated that the HVAC installation in the PE and Whitmarsh Elementary School libraries was completed prior to the start of the school year as was the expansion of the storage facility at the football stadium complex.

Mrs. Moore asked Mr. Yemm to report on a community meeting he held on Sept. 20 to address residents' concerns about the proposed turf and lighting installation on Victory Fields #1. Mr. Yemm reported that 35-40 residents attended the meeting. He stressed the curriculum, athletic and financial benefits of the collaboration with Chestnut Hill College, discussed storm water management and field usage. He stated that to address residents concerns the district would enter an agreement with the township to not use the lights past 10:00 p.m. on weekdays. He said that it was recommended that the district explore upgrading the lighting on the football field. He said he was also asked to consider raising the level of the retention wall higher than the level recommended by the township. He said he would work with the township on that request. Mr. Orlow inquired as to the technical specifications of the lights and the quality of the turf to be installed. Mr. Yemm detailed the state of the art lighting employed by Musco Lighting which limited the spillage of light to within 50 feet of the playing surface. He also detailed a computer program which could control the intensity of the lighting depending on the situation. Mr. Yemm also spoke to the safety features of the artificial surface which he said eliminated joint injuries by 60% as compared to natural turf.

Community Relations: Dr. Scoles spoke to his long relationship with the Plymouth Township Youth Soccer Program. He moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve a Presidential Proclamation decreeing September as Youth Soccer Month in the Colonial School District. See Attachment #1. Considerable discussion followed on the long standing relationship between the district and the youth soccer program. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor of approving the proclamation. The motion was carried.

Dr. Scoles also invited the community to attend Conshohocken Day festivities on Saturday, October 7.

Legislation: No Report.

Dr. Cotter reported to the Board that the district was among the first to receive a "Classrooms for the Future" grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The \$202,539 grant is among the largest issued to a Montgomery County school and will be used to purchase wireless laptops for classroom use by students in the Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) Social Studies

Department as well as provide staff development and training. Dr. Gorodetzer wished to thank Chief Information Officer Drew Boegly, Ms. McKeaney, Supervisor of Secondary Curriculum Sergio Anaya and Dr. Sullivan for assisting in the grant preparation.

Dr. Cotter reported that PWHS was one of just 103 schools statewide to receive the grant. He noted the significance of the grant award given that Colonial was competing against many schools with lower socioeconomic ratios, which often granted them priority. He said the administration was quite proud to receive this very, very competitive grant.

Public Comment: None.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David M. Sherman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" at the end.

David M. Sherman