

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, JANUARY 17, 2008**

President Orlow convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:01 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on January 17, 2008.

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

Board Members Absent: Mitch Zimmer.

Also Attending: Dr. MaryEllen Gorodetzer, Assistant Superintendent; 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; John Quinn, Director of CITV; David M. Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator/Board Secretary; Lawrence Ogunkua and Simon Wong, Board Student Representatives; Joel Hoffman, Lafayette Hill Journal; Robert Franz; Jill Forster; Maria R. Conway; Roni Berman; Kevin Welde; Ric Sucio; Sam Swetkewski; Michele Yavorski.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on December 13, 2007; December 20, 2007; January 9, 2007 and January 14, 2007 to discuss informational, legal and personnel matters.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow sought Board action on the minutes of the Reorganization Meeting and Special Meeting of December 3, 2007; Facilities Management and Transportation (FMT) Committee and the Community Relations and Student Life (CRSL) Committee of December 6, 2007; the Finance Committee and Special Meeting of December 20, 2007; the FMT and CRSL of January 3, 2008; the Human Resources Committee of January 9, 2008 and the Curriculum Committee of January 14, 2008. See enclosures #1 through #7 and #44 through #46. Mr. Bickleman noted that Board members had a blue page of updated Finance Committee minutes before them as a separate attachment.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow asked Board members to act on the financial reports on the list for approval. The reports include 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. See enclosures #8 through #19. Mr. Orlow noted that all of the financial reports were for the months of November and December, 2007. Mr. Bickleman confirmed for Mr. Orlow that the only changes from Monday evening were two additional December bills added to the Bond Fund Report, enclosure #9.

Mr. Orlow asked Mr. Yemm if the \$13,822.47 bill from Chowns Fabrication & Rigging, Inc. was bid or if it was part of a larger contract. Mr. Yemm stated that it was part of a change order for the roof truss framing on Colonial Elementary School (CES).

Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the financial reports. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Public Comments on the Agenda: Mr. Franz referred to the FMT minutes of December 6, 2007 and asked for clarification as to what the three man traps to be installed at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS) were. Mr. Yemm explained they were security doors that included electronic locking systems. Mr. Franz referenced the New Business item related to public opinion research and asked if any Board members had accepted political contributions from the recommended vendor. Mr. Orlow explained that the company was located in St. Louis and that no Board member had accepted monies from the proposed vendor. Mr. Franz asked about the feasibility of completing a 400-sample survey with so many homes having unlisted numbers. Mr. Orlow explained that with approximately 40,000 residents in the District, the proposed vendor was confident it could complete that many surveys using various phone lists at its disposal.

Staff Report: Colonial Middle School (CMS) Principal Robert Fahler made a PowerPoint presentation on various academic and social interventions that are available to students in the school. He also spoke to the various reward programs in place for students who model appropriate behavior.

Responding to a question from Mr. Orlow, Mr. Fahler explained that parents, teachers, counselors, administrators and even the students themselves recommend students for the intervention programs.

Old Business: Mr. Orlow directed Board members' attention to five drafts of the 2008-2009 school calendar. See enclosure #20. He noted there was a yellow page for draft #5 that updated the date for the May 2009 Primary Election. He stated that the Board focused on drafts #4 and #5 on Monday evening. Dr. Gorodetzer confirmed for Mr. Orlow that the teachers' union had reviewed the drafts. Mr. Davis stated that there was an advantage to not having students attend school on the primary election day.

There was agreement that the May primary date would become a snow make-up date if needed, though there was some discussion as to the order of the make-up dates.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve draft #5 as the official school calendar for the 2008-2009 school year. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Correspondence: Mr. Orlow asked the Board to act on a request to accept a donation to Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS) athletics from Dennis Donahue of Odyssey Fastpitch Softball. See enclosure #21.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to accept the donation. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Superintendent's Report: Mr. Orlow noted that Dr. Cotter was attending a conference and Dr. Gorodetzer was reporting on his behalf. Dr. Gorodetzer noted that the Superintendent's Report included the Personnel Report and Substitute List and the Adult Evening School Instructors List. See enclosures #22 and #23. She added that there were a number of changes to the Personnel Report since Monday evening, including one resignation, one new hire, five returns from maternity leave, eight changes in assignment and the addition of an instructional aide.

Mr. Orlow was happy to note that Chris McWilliams was hired to return to PWHS as a teacher. Responding to a request from Mr. Orlow, Dr. Gorodetzer explained that permanent substitutes were assigned to the secondary schools where there has been some difficulty in finding class coverage. She added that the District realized a cost savings and the added benefit of having permanent substitutes who were familiar with the schools and the students. She stated that there were two permanent substitutes at PWHS and one at CMS with the possibility of adding more.

Mr. Davis moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the Superintendent's Report. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Board Student Representatives Report: Mr. Wong reported on the National Honor Society Induction Ceremony, preparations for the spring musical *Les Miserables*, a Photography Club exhibition, the Gay and Straight Alliance annual Open Mike Concert, a Santa Breakfast hosted by the sophomore class and the Winter Concert. He also noted that the entire school saw a video on the warning signs for violence. Mr. Ogunkua stated that the Snow Ball Dance was cancelled and an open house and concert was held for senior citizens on December 14. He also reported on Course Planning Night, Course Selection Day, a cheerleading competition, the College Financial Aid workshop and the National Art Honor Society Induction.

New Business: Mr. Orlow sought Board action on a request to authorize the employment of Unicom-ARC to conduct benchmark public opinion research on the District and its operation. See enclosure #24. Mr. Orlow noted that the District spends considerable resources on communications and wants to ascertain if the initiatives such as newsletters and the Web site are making an impact. He stated that the research would help the District to better direct resources in the future. Mr. Orlow noted that the CRSL Committee reviewed the issue on at least two occasions. He added that the administration sought competitive bids and Unicom represented the low bidder. Responding to a question from Mr. Orlow, Mr. Sherman stated that if approved, Unicom representatives would be on site before the end of the month.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the agreement with Unicom-ARC. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Orlow asked Board members to act on a request to approve an agreement to continue using PA Reap Technology Services for personnel recruitment support. See enclosure #25.

Mrs. Luken moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the agreement. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Orlow asked the Board to consider amending a contract with C & K Therapy Associates to include additional services in the areas of physical and occupational therapy. See enclosure #26. He noted that by approving the new agreement, the Board was authorizing the use of additional hours if needed.

Dr. Ryan moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the amended agreement. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Orlow sought Board action on a tuition agreement with the Mill Creek School at a per diem rate of \$180 per day. See enclosure #27. He noted that specifics of the agreement are covered under confidentiality regulations and that the item was discussed in executive session. He added that the District has had a positive experience with the institution.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the tuition agreement. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Orlow asked the Board to act on a professional conference request for PWS College Counselor Pat Tamborello to attend the College Board Middle States Regional Meeting in Atlantic City, NJ from February 13-15, 2008. See enclosure #28. He noted that the registration fee is paid for because Ms. Tamborello is a former president of the organization.

Mr. Davis moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the conference request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Orlow asked the Board to act on a number of student trip requests in one motion. See enclosures #29 through #33. Dr. Gorodetzer pointed out that a new trip was added since Monday. See enclosure #47. Mr. Orlow noted that first trip is the annual senior class trip to Disney World from April 16-20, 2009. Costs are the responsibility of the participants. The second trip is for two students to attend the Pennsylvania

Music Educators Association District Orchestra Festival in Pottstown, Pa., from January 24-26, 2008. The third trip is for 30 students to attend the annual State DECA Competition in Hershey from February 27-29, 2008. The fourth trip is for approximately five students to attend the National DECA Competition in Atlanta, Ga., from April 25-30, 2008. The fifth trip is for members of the Colonial Middle School (CMS) eighth grade Art Show Activity Club to travel to Hamilton, N.J., on April 25, 2008. The additional trip involves the AP English Seminar class traveling to Washington, D.C. Dr. Gorodetzer confirmed for Mr. Orlow that it was a day trip.

Dr. Ryan expressed the opinion that the \$1,000 cost of the Senior Class Trip represented a lot of money and feared that a number of students and their families are not able to afford it. He said the same amount of money could pay for a semester at Montgomery County Community College. Mrs. Moore noted that students have four years to raise funds for the trip so that it does not have to be an out-of-pocket expense. Responding to a question from Mr. Orlow, Mr. Ogunkua noted that students are informed of many fund raising opportunities as soon as they begin their high school careers. Mr. Orlow added that while the cost of the trip has increased, the length of the trip has also increased by a day.

After considerable discussion, Mr. Orlow asked Dr. Ryan if he wanted to vote on the trip separately. Dr. Ryan declined.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the student trip requests. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Orlow sought Board action on a bid for the replacement of fire alarms throughout the District. See enclosure #34. He asked Mr. Yemm to highlight the project. Mr. Yemm stated that the existing systems were not compliant with the American Disabilities Act and were original to their buildings. He noted that the new systems would include strobe lights as well as alarms. Responding to a question from Mr. Orlow, Mr. Yemm reported that the contractor could begin the installation within 30 days of the bid award. He added that the job is to be completed by August 1.

Mr. Slutsky asked if Mr. Yemm was concerned with the disparity in the bids. Mr. Yemm stated that the recommended vendor did a great deal of on-site research before submitting a bid. He also noted that the District has had a positive experience with the vendor.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the bid award. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Solicitor's Report: Mr. Sultanik sought Board approval of Disciplinary Stipulation #98178 as presented and reviewed in executive session. Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the disciplinary stipulation. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Sultanik asked the Board to approve two documents related to the Hill at Whitmarsh Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement in one motion. See enclosure #48. The documents include an amendment to the PILOT Agreement and a First Amendment to the Project Plan. Mr. Orlow noted that Board approval should be subject to solicitor and administration review.

Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the amendments to the TIF agreement subject to solicitor and administration review. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit: No report.

CMTHS: Mr. Johnson noted that the Central Montco Technical High School 2008-2009 Budget was attached for Board review. See enclosure #36. He stated that the Board did not need to take action on the budget until February. Mr. Orlow noted that the District's share of the budget is down significantly from

last year. Mr. Johnson confirmed that the decrease was based upon the three-year average of student participation.

Human Resources: Mrs. Luken noted that the committee met on January 9. She added that the enrollment report was steady and the committee received an update on the search for a Human Resources Director. Mr. Orlow added that the District was in the final year of its agreement with the contracted secretaries. He said that in accordance with Act 88, the two sides held their first bargaining session on January 10.

Finance: Mr. Slutsky reported that there was a possibility that homeowners could see some Act 1 property tax relief for the 2008-2009 school year. He added that homeowners needed to check that they had filed their Homestead Exclusion paperwork with the county. He added that the state was reducing rates for the employees' retirement system.

Curriculum and Instruction: Mr. Davis stated that the committee met on January 14 and reviewed five major items including a summer academy for incoming freshman, the continuing technology integration, the K-5 Social Studies budget proposal and an update on English as a Second Language programs. At Mr. Davis' request, Dr. Gorodetzer explained that the summer academy was a new program for freshmen entering the high school. She stated that the school plans to identify students who may have difficulty transitioning into the ninth grade. The three-week program will expose students to the teachers and text books they will have and let them ease into the high school.

Facilities Management and Transportation: Mrs. Moore noted that the committee met twice since the last Board meeting. Information was provided on the District's new transportation software program VersaTrans. The software will enable the Transportation Department to upgrade its route and should be operational for the 2008-2009 school year.

Community Relations: Dr. Scoles reported that the committee heard from members of the PWHHS Post Prom Committee and agreed to continue financial support of the event. He added that the committee discussed a desire to place more of an emphasis on community service and especially connecting service to Martin Luther King Day.

Safety and Wellness: No report.

Legislation: Dr. Ryan began to give his report with his back facing the audience to illustrate what he termed the backwards thinking of the State Department of Education. He stated that a costing out study revealed that the state was \$4.4 billion short of the funding needed to provide a basic education for the Commonwealth's children. Despite that, he noted that the state has approved the implementation of graduation competency exams.

Public Comment: Mr. Franz asked for an update on the roof construction at CES. Mr. Yemm reported that the District was in the process of meeting with the planners and architects to work out the staging for the project. He stated that the District hoped to have the Boardroom and library moved to the courtyard in the first phase of the project, but the architect wants to use the courtyard as the staging area for the construction. Mr. Yemm added that bids for the next phase of the project are expected in February.

Mr. Franz stated that he did not believe a Philadelphia Inquirer article that reported 44.9 percent of Colonial School District students did not pass PSSA Math and Reading tests last year. He asked for an explanation. Dr. Gorodetzer reported that the test results used were two-years old, did not include results of re-testing and included results of special education students. She noted that the District has changed its math curriculum in recent years and added that 75 percent of current seniors had passed the PSSA exam after re-testing. Dr. Gorodetzer stated that the District was still not satisfied with the results and needs to improve.

Dr. Ryan added that the state will not research how success on the PSSA exam relates to success in life. He stated that one test does not define a person.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 8:14 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 initial "D".

David M. Sherman
Board Secretary