

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

President Orlow convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:03 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on April 17, 2008.

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

Board Members Absent: Dr. William Ryan and Steven Slutsky.

Also Attending: Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; 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; Richard Hartz, Director of Human Resources; Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Solicitor; John Quinn, Director of CITV; David M. Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator/Board Secretary; Matt Bretzius; David Reppert; Stephanie L. Brennan; Robert Franz; Carol Cohen; Paul Marro; Melina Henry; Karen Fondots; Cathy McQuade; Tanya Prickitt; Joy Miernicki; Rachel Weiss; Cynthia Cox; Julie Pustilnick; Cathy Greenly; Stacey Baker; Judy Keely and students receiving awards, their families and friends.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on March 26, April 9 and April 14 to discuss informational, legal and personnel matters.

Awards/Recognition: Mr. Orlow asked Dr. Cotter to present those receiving awards from the School Board. Dr. Cotter recognized Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) Wrestling Coach Bob Lorence, noted that Coach Lorence was retiring and congratulated him on an outstanding career. Dr. Cotter reported that Coach Lorence had earned his 300th career victory during the season and was recognized by the Board previously for being inducted into the Pennsylvania Wrestling Hall of Fame. Coach Lorence presented All-State wrestlers Eric Powell and Gavin Reilly to the Board for acknowledgment.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow asked the Board to act on the minutes of the combined Work Session/General Meeting of March 17; the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee and the Community Relations and Student Life Committee of April 3; the Finance Committee of April 8; the Curriculum Committee of April 14 and the Human Resources Committee of April 11. See enclosures #1 through #3 and #40 and #41.

Mr. Davis moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Financial Reports: Mr. Orlow sought Board action 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 for the month ending March 31, 2008. See enclosures #4 through #15.

Mr. Orlow noted that there were yellow pages for the Budget Transfers, the Bond Fund Report and the Capital Reserve Fund. He reported that one of the changes to the Bond Fund Report was the addition of \$147,600.00 for Elmos, projectors and technology equipment upgrades. Mr. Orlow asked Dr. Cotter to explain the need. Dr. Cotter stated that the technology was necessary for the school district to be where it wanted to be instructionally with all classrooms equipped as classrooms for the

future. He explained that an Elmo was similar to an overhead projector but could digitally store presentations for future use. He stated that Elmos were highly utilized by the teachers who had them. He also noted that the electronic white boards were beneficial in high school and middle school classrooms. Dr. Cotter concluded that the administration wished to expedite the process of having all classrooms equipped with the cutting-edge technology. Mr. Orlow added that this is a significant investment and the result of a process that began two years ago. He added that Board members had received positive feedback from teachers as to the impact of the technology in the classroom.

Mr. Orlow also inquired why a \$1,758.00 item "Cabling, Technology Equipment Upgrades" appeared on the Bills for Approval List as part of the Bond Fund Report. Mr. Boegly explained that the expense was related to the larger technology upgrade.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the financial reports. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Public Comments on the Agenda: Mr. Robert Franz asked if a Bond Fund expenditure of \$13,570 for artificial turf on Victory Fields #1 was to be reimbursed by Chestnut Hill College. Mr. Bickleman confirmed that the expense was covered under the Chestnut Hill agreement and would be included in their payment schedule.

Old Business: None.

Staff Report: Conshohocken Elementary School (CE) Principal Julie Pustilnick, along with school nurse Cathy Greenly and instructional aides Stacey Baker and Judy Keely, presented a video of "Family Fun Night" initiatives at the school designed to incorporate parent and community participation. Highlighted events included Bowling Night, a Celebration of Diversity, the March Madness Math Fair, and more.

Correspondence: None.

Budget Report: At Mr. Orlow's request, Mr. Bickleman explained that the 2008-2009 Preliminary Budget totals \$89,765,000. He stated that the budget represents a 5.83 percent increase over the previous year's spending plan. The real estate tax rate is 16.61 mils or 3.9 percent above the 2007-2008 fiscal year rate of 15.99. Mr. Bickleman added that under the preliminary budget, real estate taxes will increase \$92 on the Colonial School District's median residential assessment of \$146,990. Real estate taxes will increase \$62 for every \$100,000 of assessed value. He said that salaries and benefits comprise 68 percent of the budget or nearly \$62 million. The budget includes 12.23 additional positions including 9.23 teachers and three support staff. Mr. Bickleman stated that local revenues, the majority of which comes from real estate taxes, account for 82.5 percent of the budget. The District's tax base rose just .92 percent during the past year. The 2008-2009 Preliminary Budget also utilizes \$4.4 million of the District's projected fund balance of \$11.2 million for June 30, 2008.

Mr. Bickleman reported that the state will inform school districts how much funding they will receive for tax rebates on May 1, the same day that the county will inform districts how many approved homesteads are eligible for rebates. Mr. Bickleman estimated each approved homestead will receive a reduction of between \$60 and \$90 on their real estate bill from state gaming revenue.

Mr. Orlow commented that unfunded state mandates continue to take a toll on the budget. He added that the state only reimburses the District 20 cents on the dollar for mandated transportation costs and 17 cents on the dollar for special education expenses. He noted that originally, the state planned to cover 50 percent of special education costs but that has never happened and the disparity grows larger each year.

Mr. Orlow explained that the state established index capping school district budget increases is 4.4 percent. He added that the public has at least 30 days to review the budget before it is formally passed.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the 2008-2009 Preliminary Budget as presented by Mr. Bickleman. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter stated that his report encompasses five attachments including the Personnel Report and Substitute List, the Extra Duty/Extra Pay list, information on the summer music program, a report on staffing for the summer reading program, a report on staffing for the secondary summer school and a recommendation regarding the substitute pay rate for nurses. See enclosures #17 through #21 and #43. He stated that the Personnel Report and Substitute List contained eight additions since Monday evening and that the Board members had a blue page in front of them with the latest updates. He noted that the Extra Duty/Extra Pay list included one assistant lacrosse coaching position at the high school. He stated that the Music Department is proposing to hold summer music lessons again this year at a cost of \$12 per lesson. Band lessons are for students in grades three to five and orchestra lessons are for students in grades four through eight. Dr. Cotter reported that staffing lists for the summer school programs are provided. He noted that there are two directors listed for the secondary summer program, one each at the high school and middle school. Dr. Cotter stated that the request regarding the nurses' salary rate coincides with the current District practice and that formal Board action is requested to secure the rate of \$110 per day. He stated that the rate is the same as the substitute teacher rate.

As she did on Monday, Dr. Gorodetzer confirmed for Mr. Orlow that teachers recommend the students who attend the summer reading programs at CE, and that the registration cost will not be an issue if ability to pay is a concern.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded a motion to approve the Superintendent's Report. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Board Student Representatives Report: None.

New Business: Mr. Orlow noted that a series of annual contract are up for Board review. He asked the Board to consider a recommendation to retain Jeffrey T. Sultanik as the District's Solicitor effective July 1, 2008. See enclosure #22. Mr. Orlow stated that the rate for retainer services will be increased by 3.5 percent. He added that the attachment clearly delineates what is and what is not covered under the retainer agreement. He noted that the Board reviewed the contract in executive session.

Dr. Scoles moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the solicitor's contract. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Orlow directed the Board to act on a contract with the Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit for data processing services. See enclosure #23. He stated that the District has been happy with the services the IU has provided.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the contract. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Orlow asked the board to consider two special education contracts in one motion. He stated that the first contract was the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit (MCIU) Special Education Cost Plan. See enclosure #24. He stated that the \$529,263.44 plan covers students already identified as needing special education services. Dr. Scoles wished to clarify that although the contract represents a 10 percent increase, the figure is misleading because four students were added to the program this

year and five additional students are included for the coming year. Mr. Orlow added that needs change throughout the year and the District can't control the number of students needing support. He added that this was an example of an unfunded state mandate.

Mr. Orlow noted that the second agreement is the alternative education contract with the Lincoln Center. See enclosure #25. Mr. Orlow stated that the agreement provides for community counseling services and the operation of the Genesis program at PWHS. He added that the Lincoln Center has provided those services quite well for a number of years.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve both special education contracts. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Orlow sought Board action on a lease contract with the Montgomery County Head Start Program. See enclosure #26. He stated that the agreement covers rental of one elementary classroom in the District. Dr. Cotter confirmed that the contract is the same as the current contract and that the rent has not increased.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the contract. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Orlow asked the Board to consider handbook revisions as submitted by the secondary principals. See enclosure #27. Dr. Cotter noted that the high school changes will require changes to Board policies which will be presented at next month's meeting. Dr. Cotter added that the middle school changes were included simply to make the Board and community aware that the school will have a number of early dismissals in the coming year to allow for staff collaboration time. In response to a query from Mr. Orlow, Dr. Gorodetzer explained that the staff collaboration time provides teachers with an opportunity to examine lessons and share best practices with other peers who teach the same courses or teach in similar content areas. She added that the practice has been very positive at the high school.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to approve the handbook changes. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Orlow sought Board action on a professional conference request for PWHS AVID Director Edward Swetkowski to attend a Northeast AVID District Directors meeting in Brooklyn, N.Y. from May 13-14. See enclosure #44. At Mr. Orlow's request, Dr. Cotter explained that Colonial is the first District in Pennsylvania to implement the AVID Program. He stated that AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination and that the program targets students in the academic middle. He noted that the program provided mentoring and assistance with specific study skills to assist their learning. Dr. Gorodetzer added that the program assists students with organizational and note-taking skills. She stated that a goal of the program is to have students enroll in honors level courses to prepare them for college. She confirmed for Mr. Orlow that AVID students are not students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs).

Mr. Zimmer 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, 7-0.

Mr. Orlow asked Board members to act on a number of student trip requests in one motion. The first is for the PWHS Indoor Guard to participate in a championship in Wildwood, NJ from May 2-4. See enclosure #28. The second request is for CMS students to travel to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC on May 14. See enclosure #29. The third request is for two PWHS students to attend the All-State Concert Band and Wind Ensemble in Hershey from April 16-19. See enclosure #30. The fourth request is for a fifth grade class trip to the Trenton Thunder Ballpark in Trenton, NJ on May 14. See enclosure #31. The final request is for a fourth grade trip to the Adventure Aquarium in

Camden, N.J. on May 20. See enclosure #45. Dr. Cotter reminded Mr. Orlow that the Board had taken action on the All-State Concert Band and Wind Ensemble request on Monday.

Dr. Scoles moved and Mr. Davis seconded a motion to approve the student trip requests. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Orlow directed the Board to take action on a bid for a 24-passenger school bus. See enclosure #32. He noted that Rohrer Bus Sales submitted the lowest of four bids at \$47,780.00 and that the bus replaces one that is quite old.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the bid request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Orlow sought Board action on a bid for PWHS athletic equipment. See enclosure #33. He noted that this is an annual bid for a wide variety of small items.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded a motion to approve the bid. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Solicitor's Report: None.

Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit – Mr. Zimmer reported that a number of positions on the IU Board were open. He added that the Board reappointed Mr. Sultanik as the IU's solicitor. Mr. Zimmer reported that the 2008-2009 budget was passed.

CMTHS – Mr. Johnson reported that the Central Montco Technical High School 2008-2009 budget was approved by a vote of 25-1.

Human Resources – Mrs. Luken noted that the committee reviewed staffing needs and discussed recent job fairs. She added that negotiations continue with members of the support staff. Mrs. Luken welcomed the new Director of Human Resources, Mr. Hartz, to the District.

Finance – Mr. Orlow noted that the Finance Committee's report was the preliminary budget presentation.

Curriculum and Program – Mr. Davis noted that the committee heard from PWHS Career Counselor Stacy Anderson at its recent meeting. She provided an update on the Career Pathways and Job Shadowing programs. Dr. Gorodetzer added that Mrs. DeLong and the Pupil Services staff reported on the summer special education extended school year programs. She added that the committee reviewed the handbook changes and conference requests. She also reported that Mathematics Curriculum Supervisor Nancy Acconciamesa distributed a summary of the National Math Panel Report and discussed a collaborative venture between the District and the Math Science Partnership of Greater Philadelphia to support students who experience difficulty with math before they reach high school.

Facilities Management and Transportation – Mrs. Moore reported that the committee took a bus trip to Marple Newtown High School to view a Musco Lighting installation. She noted that Musco Lights are under consideration for installation on Victory Fields #1, the tennis courts and Colonial Field. She commented that the lights directed illumination onto the playing surface only and greatly limited any spill effect on adjacent areas. She added that Musco provides a 25-year warranty that included a minimum of two site inspections per year.

Mr. Orlow explained that the District is in the midst of the review and approval process with Whitemarsh Township.

Community Relations and Student Life – Dr. Scoles reported that the district will hold its annual student art show from May 13-16 in Colonial Elementary School with an opening reception at 7:00

p.m. on May 13. Art from students of all grade levels will be on display. He added that District staff will have a tent at Whitemarsh Day on Saturday, April 26 from noon to 5:00 p.m. Dr. Scoles reminded everyone that the District will not hold classes on primary election day, April 22.

Safety and Wellness – Mr. Zimmer deferred to Mr. Orlow who spoke highly of the National School Safety and Security Services provided by Kenneth Trump. Mr. Orlow and Mr. Davis attended a presentation by Mr. Trump while attending the National School Boards Association conference in Orlando, Fla. Mr. Orlow stated that Colonial has done a good job in the area of student safety. However, he added that just as with the curriculum, the District wishes to be sure nothing is being missed. Mr. Orlow proposed contracting with Mr. Trump to conduct a review of the District’s security procedures and meet with the local police chiefs, the District Attorney and community members to ensure that the District is doing all it reasonably can in the area of student safety. He noted that the safety audit costs of \$37,900 include all of the expenses for two people. Mr. Orlow stated that if, approved, the audit will occur in May.

Mr. Davis moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded a motion to approve the safety audit. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Legislative – No report.

Public Comment: Mr. Franz suggested that the District explain the cost of transportation and special education to tax payers when they mail tax bills. He added that the average citizen does not understand how unfunded mandates affect the budget and as a result their tax bills.

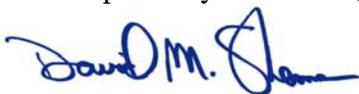
Mr. Franz also commented on the *Philadelphia Inquirer* “Report Card on the Schools” and the decreased reading scores at PWHS. He asked what programs are being implemented to correct the decline. Dr. Gorodetzer commented that high school language arts curriculum in general are based more on literature and not the skills set that are addressed in the PSSA. She said that there is a focus on addressing that in the PWHS curriculum design. Dr. Cotter stressed the great progress the District has made the past several years. He also noted the increased professional development time provided to teachers as a way to improve curriculum delivery. Mr. Franz stated that he liked hearing that the District is not just teaching to the test.

Mr. Franz also expressed concerns about the proposed development of high-density townhouse complexes in the area of Plymouth Road and Butler Pike and how that could have an adverse effect on the District. It was noted that elementary aged students in that area are assigned to Ridge Park Elementary School which has some rooms available.

Mr. Franz stated that he thought the installation of lights on the tennis court was an excessive and unjustified expense to benefit only a few people. He also expressed concerns over the lighting in general in respect to providing students additional time to play and less time to study.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Sherman
Board Secretary