

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 18, 2008.**

Board President Marc Orlow convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:04 p.m. in the library multi-purpose room in the Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS).

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

Board Members Absent: Hope Luken.

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; Dr. Liz McKeane, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Solicitor; John Quinn, Director of CITV; Student Representatives Jessica Piergiovanni and Sarah Corcoran; Robert Dambman; Kathy Dunn; Susan Gondek; Barbara Grugan; Carolyn Koch; Ron Lopresti; Vickie Lopresti; Janet McGuire; Audrey Schwenger; Matt Bretzius and Frank Whitehead.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on August 27, September 10 and September 15 to discuss informational, legal and personnel matters.

Dr. Cotter introduced Mr. Ron Lopresti, retired teacher, who is retiring from his coaching duties at PWHS. Dr. Cotter recognized his 40 years of dedicated service coaching track and 20 years coaching football. Mr. Lopresti thanked the Board for their support and the outstanding facilities that have been provided throughout the years. Mr. Orlow stated that in addition to his coaching duties, Mr. Lopresti had provided valuable input on the design of the new track.

Dr. Cotter then introduced Mr. Frank Whitehead, teacher, who has received Pennsylvania's first Governor's Institute on Financial Banking's "Ripple Effect Award." Dr. Cotter noted that Mr. Whitehead was a major influence in establishing a branch of the Tru Mark Federal Credit Union in PWHS. Mr. Whitehead stated that he attended the Governor's Institute and was challenged to make an impact on students and their experiences with the financial world around them. He also thanked the Board for their support in establishing the Tru Mark branch.

Minutes: Mr. Orlow sought Board action on the minutes of the Board Work Session of August 18, the Board General Meeting of August 21; the Board Special Meeting of August 27; the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee, the Human Resources Committee, the Community Relations and Student Life Committee and the Safety and Wellness Committee of September 4; the Finance Committee of September 9; and the Curriculum Committee of September 15. See enclosures #1 through #6 and #34 through #36.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded a motion to approve the minutes. 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 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 Treasurers Report for ending August 31, as shown in enclosures #7 through #17.

Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Davis seconded the 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: None.

Staff Report: Dr. Cotter provided an overview of District goals in the four categories of Student Achievement, Systemic Reform, Community Relations, and Security.

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

Cassandra Delong, Director of Pupil Services and Dr. Elizabeth McKeane, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, presented a report on the literacy, mathematics, and special education summer programs.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Denise Marks, Principal of Conshohocken Elementary School, seeks Board approval of a donation, in the form of a digital camera and memory card, to the Conshohocken Elementary School. The equipment is being donated by a CSD parent and owner of D & H Calculators.

Mr. Slutsky moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded the motion to approve the acceptance of the donation. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0. Mr. Orlow stated that the donation is greatly appreciated.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter led Board members through his report which includes the Personnel Report and Substitute List and the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List. See enclosures #21 and #22. Dr. Cotter stated that there were two additional items from the Personnel Report that was presented at Monday night's work session. The Extra Duty/Extra Pay List should be moved for Board action without the revised stipend amount for the 7th grade girls' volleyball coach.

Mr. Johnson moved and Mrs. Moore seconded the 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: Jessica Piergiovanni reported that a meeting was held to discuss the senior trip to Florida. Fall athletics are underway and that the fields are in great condition. She commented that students are becoming accustomed to the new cafeteria procedures that require students to eat lunch in the cafeteria that is on the side of the building in which they have their last class before lunch. She noted that there was a back to school dance on Friday and that the National Arts Honor Society held a meeting.

Sarah Corcoran reported that there was a 9th grade orientation held on September 4th and a high school open house on September 11th. School pictures were taken on September 17th and auditions were held for the fall play entitled "Talking to Yourself in Public."

Mr. Slutsky noted that being a parent, he also attended outstanding back to school night functions at the middle school and the high school. He interacted with caring teachers and congratulated all District employees for a job well done on the opening of the school year.

New Business: Mr. Orlow stated that under the advice of the District's financial advisor, Public Financial Management, the bond refinancing proceedings will be tabled until a future date due to the turmoil in the financial markets. Mr. Slutsky agreed and stated that the District would not incur any new debt and that the District will realize estimated savings in excess of \$90,000.

The MCIU Internet Agreement was presented for Board approval. The agreement will provide internet service with the capability for additional bandwidth. Mr. Orlow questioned the language in the contract at the bottom of page 1 which states, "The scope and extent of the Internet Services provided for herein shall be determined by the MCIU in its sole discretion that would allow the IU to direct the scope and extend of the basic Internet Services provided by the MCIU to similarly situated school districts." He also questioned the language on page 2, paragraph 3 which states, "the charges assessed by the MCIU shall include those charges set forth in Schedule 'A' hereto, as well as other charges as are imposed by the MCIU upon similarly situated school districts for similar services." Mr. Boegly stated that the agreement is for three years and will provide the District with 10-20MB of bandwidth which is required for District operations. Dr. Cotter noted that school districts are charged different prices depending on their location and distance from the IU. Mr. Orlow requested that the contract

should be reviewed by the District solicitor and that the language should be clearer on the discretion that the IU would have under the terms and should include the charge list in the agreement. It was noted that the District solicitor is also the IU's solicitor. Dr. Cotter informed the Board that he will have the contract reviewed by the solicitor and will bring the agreement for Board consideration at a future meeting.

Mr. Orlow asked the Board for consideration of the special education settlement agreements for the placement of four students as the result of negotiated settlements. Due to issues related to student confidentiality and student privacy, these agreements were previously reviewed in executive session. It was noted by Mr. Orlow that these agreements are based on the parents waiving their rights under FAPE.

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

Mr. Orlow requested that the Board act on three special education contracts for the 2008-09 school year. The contracts are with The Perkins School for the Blind for \$247,766.50, The Horsham Quaker School for \$26,880 and The Elwyn Davidson-West Chester Connections for \$154.64 per day. Mr. Orlow asked Mrs. DeLong if these placements were based on the IEP for the students. Mrs. DeLong concurred.

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

Mr. Orlow asked for Board action on a professional conference presented by Monica Sullivan for three teachers to attend the Career Counseling, Science and Technology Education Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio from October 22 to October 25, 2008. Costs for the conference are provided through grant funds.

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

Mr. Orlow requested Board action on a student field trip presented by Tonia Kaufman for the Marching Colonials to participate in the Bands of America Regional Competition at Towson University on Friday, October 17, 2008 through Sunday, October 19, 2008. While students are responsible for the cost of participation, the parent band boosters will provide assistance to defer costs through seasonal fund raising.

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

Solicitor's Report: Mr. Sultanik asked the Board to approve the filing of two additional real estate tax assessment appeals with the Montgomery County Board of Assessments. The two parcels are #49-00-09313-01-6, 1008 Plymouth Road, Plymouth Township, and #49-00-08011-06-7, 303 Julian Court, Plymouth Township.

Dr. Scoles moved and Mrs. Moore seconded the motion to approve the filing of the appeals. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Sultanik requested that the Board act on a Mutual Settlement and Release Agreement with Scott Contractors.

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

Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit: Mr. Zimmer reported that the MCIU Board met on August 27th and that Sonia Wynn, special education teacher, was presented with the Ann Sullivan Award. The award is presented to a caring teacher who exhibits innovative techniques with the disabled students five to eight years old. He noted that the IU Board dealt with personnel and business items. He mentioned that a new special education director and new legislative liaison were appointed. Mr. Zimmer also pointed out the recent successes of the Anderson School.

CMTHS: Mr. Davis reported that the Senior Competency Testing Program conducted at CMTHS yielded positive results with 28 PW seniors excelling in skills demonstrations and written competencies.

Human Resources: Mr. Hartz stated that the committee discussed staffing plans and remaining vacancies, reviewed a modified format for the monthly enrollment report and discussed the need for additional secretarial support for the high school attendance office and district curriculum office.

Finance: Mr. Slutsky reported that the District received the state index by which the District can increase real estate taxes for 2009-010. Mr. Slutsky stated that he was shocked to hear that the index was 4.1% considering the rise in gasoline and oil prices in recent months. He had called PDE and inquired as to the rate calculation and discovered that the formula that PDE uses is based on increases in the cost of labor and is primarily based on increases in the State Average Weekly Wage (SAWW). Mr. Slutsky noted that the District recently refunded 08-09 real estate taxes totaling \$256,000 as a result of the unfortunate fire at the Riverwalk Apartments located in the Borough of Conshohocken. Mr. Orlow inquired to Mr. Bickleman as to any estimates on the loss of earned income tax revenue associated with the fire. Mr. Bickleman said that he would obtain those figures and distribute to the Board.

Curriculum and Program: Mr. Davis reported that the committee met on September 15th at which time Dr. Sullivan presented the results of a post-graduation survey which showed that 86 percent of the 2008 graduating class continued their education in a two or a four year school or have jobs. She mentioned that 90 percent of the students reported. Mr. Davis noted that Eileen Spector reported on the success of the Colonial Middle School's Summer Learners Academy and the ESY Program for special education students. The results of pre and post assessments were positive. Mr. Davis stated that the committee was presented textbooks for adoption and that Mr. Boegly provided a demonstration of the District's HUB. Student achievement reports associated with PSSA, AP, ACT, and SAT testing were presented to the committee. The number of students receiving a score of three or above on the high school's AP tests has increased and there has been a notable increase in the math SAT scores.

Facilities Management and Transportation: Mrs. Moore reported that the District will be receiving a \$14,000 grant from the Montgomery County Conservation District to improve the tree health and re-establish native vegetation along the south side of Victory Fields. She also stated that the stadium renovations have been completed. Stadium seats complying with ADA standards have been installed. The old press box has also been replaced. Door security hardware and cameras have been installed at the high school lobby and courtyard. Asphalt was removed from the Conshohocken Elementary play area and a natural grass field was installed. New lighting has been installed at the stadium which greatly reduces the amount of light spillage to the surrounding neighborhoods.

The committee also approved the disposal of 22 sewing machines. The machines will be shipped to Cameroon, Africa and be used in a vocational school for instruction.

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

Community Relations and Student Life: Dr. Scoles reported that there has been a successful effort to increase the District's community e-mail distribution list and those senior citizens that receive gold cards. The committee addressed the concerns of the high school students related to the new cafeteria procedures in which the student is required to proceed to the cafeteria they are in closest to at the time they are scheduled to eat lunch. Dr. Scoles mentioned that there is a request to air condition the entire high school. Mr. Orlow noted that this has been an ongoing request and it has been studied in the past and is cost prohibitive. Dr. Scoles noted that Philadelphia Magazine ranks Colonial School District number 16 in the top 100 school districts in the area which is a statement to the fine teachers and administrators we have at Colonial.

Safety and Wellness: Mr. Zimmer briefed the Board that the committee met on September 4 and discussed the state's Safe School Initiative Grant for 2008-09. The grant totals \$34,000 and is primarily used to fund the District's Family and Schools Together Program (F.A.S.T.). The committee also prioritized a list of security initiatives which originated from the recently conducted security audit. There was also a meeting with the police chiefs of Plymouth and Whitmarsh Townships to discuss the communication procedures related to school events. Mr. Zimmer also noted that the Crisis Response Flip Charts are being reviewed and revised by the committee and representatives from local law enforcement.

Public Comment: Mrs. Audrey Schwenger, representing the parents of Norwood Fontbon Academy, addressed her displeasure at the length of time that the academy students had to ride the bus during the first week of school. She noted that there have been improvements but requested that the Board review the transportation department's procedures related to customer service. Dr. Cotter and Mr. Yemm both mentioned the transition to a new transportation software package that was implemented during the summer and that adjustments were being made to runs when issues like this arise. Mr. Orlow agreed with Mrs. Schwenger that the lengthy run with the academy should have been detected. Mr. Orlow asked Mrs. Schwenger to consider that the District not only transports to its own seven schools but to over 120 private schools. The transportation department coordinates over 90 bus runs handling 6,000 students on a daily basis. Mr. Orlow, in addition to mentioning the software transition, stated that Romano's Bus Service was sold to First Student which could have contributed to the problem as a result of new drivers. Mrs. Schwenger also reported to the Board that she could not access the minutes online. Dr. Cotter stated that the District transitioned to the HUB from the prior website and encountered some glitches. Dr. Cotter thanked Mrs. Schwenger for bringing the issue to his attention and directed Mr. Boegly to correct the problem.

Mr. Dampman, Whitmarsh Township Resident and Upper Darby High School Teacher, thanked the Board for the disposition of the sewing machines to the vocational school in Cameroon, Africa. Mr. Dampman is coordinating this effort and the machines will be greatly appreciated by the students there.

There being no further business to be brought before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:24 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph P. Bickleman
Chief Financial Officer/Board Treasurer