

COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
GENERAL SESSION MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 17, 2009

President Johnson convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:02 p.m. in the Colonial Instructional Television (CITV) studios in Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) on September 17, 2009.

Board Members Present: Lenore Bruno, Tom Davis, Gary Johnson, Susan Moore, Dr. William Ryan, Steven Slutsky and Mitch Zimmer.

Board Members Absent: Kelly Jowett and Hope Luken.

Also Attending: Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; Dr. MaryEllen Gorodetzer, Assistant Superintendent; Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Solicitor; Karen Berk, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education; Andrew Boegly, Chief Information Officer; Terry Yemm, Director of Operations; Richard Hartz, Director of Human Resources; John Quinn, Director of CITV; Kim Newell, Assistant Director of CITV; David M. Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator/Board Secretary; Stacey Wong, Jessica Piergiovanni and Stephen Pepper, Board Student Representatives; Dr. Elizabeth McKeane, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Bob Hart; Susan Gondek; Beth Suchsland.

Mr. Johnson led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on August 26, September 9 and September 14 to discuss legal and personnel issues.

Mr. Johnson asked Dr. Cotter to introduce the individuals to be recognized by the Board. Dr. Cotter stated that District teachers go through an extensive application process and review by administrators and their peers before being named Master Teachers. He asked Dr. Gorodetzer to introduce the current Master Teachers to be recognized. Dr. Gorodetzer welcomed those serving as Master Teachers for the period 2008 through 2010. They include Sandy Connelly, Linda Colantonio, Jennifer Esmonde, George Hankins, Carrie Litz, Erin Secker and Amy Venkus. Not in attendance was Suzanne Williams. Dr. Gorodetzer also presented Master Teachers serving for the period of 2009 through 2011. They include Brian Adams, Marna Caintic, Michele Gilbert, Gina Nelson, Jane Rush and Laura Yeakel. Not present were Kim Clemente and Hope Garfinkle. Dr. Cotter and Dr. Gorodetzer praised the Master Teachers for their work in induction planning, curriculum review, data analysis and more and stated that they were an integral part of the District's success.

Minutes: Mr. Johnson asked Board members to act on the minutes of the Work Session of August 17, the General Meeting of August 20; the Special Meeting of August 26; the Finance and Audit Committee of August 26; the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee and the Community Relations and Student Life Committee of September 2; the Human Resources Committee of September 3 and the Curriculum and Program Committee of September 14. See enclosures #1 through #7 and #32.

Mrs. Bruno moved and Mr. Davis 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. Johnson sought Board action on the financial reports on the list for approval. They 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 August 31 as shown in enclosures #8 through #18.

Mr. Slutsky moved and Mrs. Moore 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: None.

Staff Report: Mrs. Berk reported on the District's summer programs for special education students including the extended school year (ESY) program and a summer learning academy. She stated that the K-5 program was expanded to four classes, two autistic support and two learning support. She noted that classes met for 24 instructional days over a period of six weeks. She added that all IEP goals for students were increased or maintained for the learning support students and 99 percent of the IEP goals for autistic students were increased or maintained. The Secondary Life Skills ESY Program served 14 students in grades 6-12. The class met for 20 instructional days over a period of five weeks. All IEP goals were increased or maintained. Mrs. Berk stated that the summer learning academy was for sixth, seventh and eighth graders who did not qualify for the ESY program. The program included 20 instructional days over a period of five weeks and students realized an increase in reading comprehension. Dr. McKeaney reported on the PWHs credit retrieval program and summer bridge program, the Colonial Middle School (CMS) remediation program and the elementary reading programs. She stated that 45 students attended the PWHs credit retrieval program and 19 students were in the CMS program. Responding to a question from Mrs. Moore, Dr. McKeaney stated that participation in the PWHs credit retrieval was definitely decreased from previous years.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: None.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter reviewed his report that included the Personnel Report and Substitute List, the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List, the Enrollment Report and a Delaware Valley Health Care Coalition (DVHCC), Inc. agreement. See enclosures #19 through #21 and #33. He stated that there are five additional actions to the Personnel Report and Substitute List since Monday evening. The new items include two leaves of absence, one replacement, an extension of assignment and one instructional aide added to the Substitute List. Dr. Cotter noted that the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List included three new position appointments, two resignations and a revised appointment since his report on Monday. Dr. Cotter stated that the Enrollment Report indicated average class sizes of 17 to 23 in the K-3 buildings, 17-22 at Colonial Elementary School and 16-22 at Colonial Middle School. He noted that the average high school class is 22 but could be lower depending upon the course. Dr. Cotter stated that the agreement with the DVHCC provides for reduced healthcare rates and discounts for employees. Mr. Hartz added that the agreement is retroactive to the 2008-09 school year and that the District will realize healthcare cost savings of \$186,693 for that year and \$165,331 for the current school year. Mr. Slutsky stated that the move was a good one and provided a great return on the District's initial investment of \$700 to join the coalition.

Mr. Slutsky 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: Ms. Piergiovanni reported that approximately 600 people, including 320 of 370 freshman, took part in freshman orientation. She noted that the orientation included an activities fair. Ms. Piergiovanni also reported on tryouts for the fall production of Aladdin, the Open House and the first meeting regarding the senior class trip to Florida. Mr. Pepper stated that the freshman class elections are scheduled for the following day and that the fall sports season was well underway. Ms. Wong reported that all of the student representatives met with Activities Director Charles Forster and Assistant Principal Dan Balek to discuss expectations for the year.

New Business: Mr. Johnson sought Board action on an Act 183 eFund grant application for technology. See enclosure #22. The grant involves the HUB and would provide a technology connection to the Angus Tract facility.

Mr. Davis moved and Mrs. Bruno seconded a motion to approve the grant application. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to consider a consulting services agreement in the area of Autism for the 2009-2010 school year. See enclosure #23. He noted that the agreement is with Cathy Grayson and asked Mrs. Berk to provide details. Mrs. Berk spoke highly of Mr. Grayson and stated that she worked with Ms. Grayson for five years in her previous district.

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

Mr. Davis asked the Board to act on a request to approve a textbook adoption for a two semester, online Advanced Placement (AP) Human Geography course. See enclosure #24. He noted that the request was reviewed by the Curriculum and Program Committee. Responding to a question from Mr. Slutsky, Dr. Gorodetzer explained that Advanced Human Geography was the fastest growing AP course in the country. She added that the course is aligned with the District's Cultural Anthropology curriculum. She stated that her review found the text to focus on real-world applications, be high-level and engaging.

Mr. Davis moved and Dr. Ryan seconded a motion to approve the textbook adoption. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Johnson sought Board action on three special education settlement agreements. He noted that the agreements were reviewed in executive session because of student confidentiality and privacy.

Mrs. Bruno moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the special education settlement agreements. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Zimmer asked the Board to consider two students trips in one motion. The first is for Colonial Elementary School fifth grade students to travel to the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware on October 13, 14, 15, and 16. See enclosure #25. He noted that costs associated with the trips are shared between the parents and the PTO. The second request is for the PWHS wrestling team to participate in a scrimmage in Hammonton, New Jersey on Friday, December 5 at the St. Augustine Preparatory School. See enclosure #26.

Mr. Zimmer 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. Davis asked the Board to act on a professional conference request for two PWHs teachers to attend the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference in Boston, Massachusetts from October 21-23. He noted that building funds are used to cover expenses associated with the conference.

Mr. Davis moved and Mr. Slutsky seconded a motion to approve the professional conference request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Mr. Slutsky noted that there was a blue page regarding a financial matter before Board members. He stated that the page was a resolution to open a Certificate of Deposit account with Susquehanna Bank. Mrs. Bruno inquired as to the interest rate. Mr. Bickleman stated that the rates a little over one percent on the \$2 million to be invested.

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

Solicitor's Report: Mr. Sultanik asked the Board to ratify his firm's filing of the nine real estate assessment appeals as listed in the agenda.

Mr. Slutsky moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to ratify Fox Rothschild's filing of the appeals. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit: Mr. Zimmer reported that the IU Board welcomed a new member at its August meeting. He added that an IU special education teacher was recognized as the recipient of the Anne Sullivan Award and that the Board approved a number of personnel transactions and educational grants.

CMTHS: Mr. Davis reported that Ed Ward, a Norristown School District board member and member of the CMTHS Joint Operating Committee, passed away the previous day. The Board and those in attendance joined Mr. Davis in observing a moment of silence in honor of Mr. Ward.

Human Resources: Mr. Hartz stated that the committee reviewed the following at its last meeting: the proposal to contract with Cathy Grayson for autistic support, the enrollment report and two insurance issues, including the DVHCC agreement. He stated that the committee then entered an executive session to discuss contract negotiations.

Finance: Mr. Slutsky stated that the District remains committed to being good stewards of the taxpayers' money by maintaining one of the lowest tax burdens in Montgomery County. He added that the Finance Committee reviewed a report from Public Financial Management regarding the possible refinancing of debt to lower the District's debt burden by \$250,000 to \$500,000.

Curriculum and Program: Dr. Gorodetzer reported that, in following the District's continuous improvement model, an internal math and language arts curriculum review was conducted during the 2008-09 school year. She stated that the review revealed a high degree of quality throughout all grade levels but that further refinement was needed in the transition grades. She noted that approximately 70 teachers and administrators participated in the review. Dr. Gorodetzer reported that new science curriculum coordinator Maria Bellino conducted a needs assessment of the science curriculum during her first six weeks with the District. She added that Sergio Anaya provided a report on a project based learning initiative targeted for social studies and elective classes. She said that Mr. Anaya also reported on changes to the curriculum pages on the District Web site and on initiatives in the English as a Second Language program. Mr. Davis highlighted the District's success on the recent Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Davis showed a PowerPoint highlighting the District's improvement on the exams from 2005 through 2009. Colonial third graders jumped from sixth in Montgomery County to first in math and from

seventh to first in the county in reading. Fifth graders have moved from 12th in the county to third in math and from 15th to third in reading. The most noticeable jump was in the high school, where 11th graders went from 19th in the county to fifth in math.

Facilities Management and Transportation: Mrs. Moore stated that traffic control initiatives implemented at Whitemarsh Elementary School had improved the congestion problem. She thanked the District administration, Whitemarsh Township Supervisors and Whitemarsh Township police for their efforts in addressing the issue. Mrs. Moore also reported that the renovation of all classrooms in Colonial Elementary School was completed and that the library should be open in a week to 10 days. Mr. Yemm added that the new Board room will be ready for the first parents council meeting on September 29.

Community Relations and Student Life: Mr. Zimmer reported that the District would staff a table and tent at the Conshohocken FunFest on September 19. He added that the event has a new location this year as it will be held at the A Field on 11th Street. Mr. Zimmer also welcomed all students back to school.

Safety and Wellness: No report

Legislative: Dr. Ryan stated that the Bucks-Mont Chapter of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA), of which Colonial is a member, has realigned. He added that he will attend next month's PSBA Leadership Conference and participate as a voting member of the organization's legislative policy council. Dr. Ryan also discussed a report by the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit's Division of Legislative Services and asked that the report be included in the minutes. See Attachment A. Dr. Ryan also touched on House Bill 138 which attempts to address a state-wide health insurance plan for school employees.

Public Comment: None.

Mr. Slutsky wished to thank the administration on a successful opening to the school year. He added that, in attending back to school nights at the high school and middle school, he was impressed with the enthusiasm of the teachers and the creativity they are exhibiting with all of the new technology that has been integrated into curriculum delivery.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Sherman
Board Secretary