

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462**  
**GENERAL SESSION MINUTES, JANUARY 21, 2010**

President Johnson convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:09 p.m. in the District Office General Meeting Room on January 21, 2010.

**Board Members Present:** Bernie Brady, Gary Johnson, Hope Luken, Susan Moore, Kathleen Oxberry, Tom Sigafos, Beth Suchsland, Alan Tabachnick and Mitch Zimmer.

**Board Members Absent:** None.

**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; David M. Sherman, Community Relations Coordinator/Board Secretary; Lauren Stern, Board Student Representative; Brian Weiner; Kelly Jowett; Mary Thiess; Jeff Cooper; Robert Franz; Michele Elkes; Michele Yavorski; Michelle Pfeil; Melissa Sterling; Thomas P. Davis; Nathan Orfe; Nina Pratkowski and Jon Fitzgerald.

Dr. Cotter noted that January is School Board Recognition month. On behalf of the administration and entire Colonial Community, he thanked the Board members for their voluntary service and attributed the District's recent success to the quality and commitment of the Board. Dr. Cotter then introduced a video tribute to the School Board produced by CITV.

Mr. Johnson led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on December 16, 2009, January 13, January 19 and January 21 to discuss legal and personnel issues.

**Minutes:** Mr. Johnson asked Board members to act on the minutes of the Work Session of November 16, 2009; the Finance and Audit Committee of November 17, 2009; The Curriculum Committee of December 2, 2009; the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of December 4, 2009; the Board Reorganization Meeting and the Special Meeting of the Board of December 7, 2009; the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of January 6 and the Community Relations and Student Life Committee, the Human Resources Committee and the Finance and Audit Committee of January 7; and the Curriculum Committee of January 19. See enclosures #1 through #11 and #50.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Tabachnick seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Johnson requested that the Board consider the financial reports on the list for approval. He noted that each of the reports were for the months of November and December. They included 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 Reports for the months ending November 30, 2009 and December 31, 2009 as shown in enclosures #12 through #23.

Mr. Sigafos moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded a motion to approve the financial reports. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Public Comments on the Agenda:** Mr. Franz spoke against the installation of lights on Victory Fields. He stated that there is no real need for the lights and that tax payers are angry over unnecessary spending by the Board. He said that the voters spoke at the polls in November by electing a new Board, and he urged the Board to vote no on unnecessary spending. He asked the Board to table the agenda item regarding the lighting bid. Mr. Franz reiterated that the lights are not necessary, and they will be intrusive on the neighbors.

Ms. Thiess spoke in favor of the lighting project. She pointed out that the lights are not just for township programs but also for the high school. She stated that her children have all played high school sports and would have benefited from the opportunity to practice and play under the lights as other high schools in the area do. She said that she knows a number of people who live near fields in the Upper Dublin and Hatboro school districts who are not adversely affected by the lights. She also stated that the lights would eliminate the safety concern of playing games that end at dusk or later.

Mr. Johnson confirmed for Ms. Thiess that the lights would not be on after 9:30 p.m. He also noted that the installation of lights is still contingent upon Whitemarsh Township Approval.

**Staff Report:** Colonial Middle School (CMS) Principal Robert Fahler discussed the student-produced morning announcement program at the school and showed a video of the production. Dr. Cotter and Dr. Gorodetzer commented on the quality of the production and stated that they were impressed with the way the students took ownership of the production. Mr. Fahler explained for Mrs. Suchsland that the students who produce the announcements are in the technical education class. All students have the opportunity to participate in that class during their three years in the middle school.

**Old Business:** Mr. Johnson sought Board action on Policy #201.2 Student Admissions. See enclosure #24. He stated that the policy is mandated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. He reminded Board members that they reviewed the policy last spring before it was tabled during the second reading. He noted that since revisions to the policy have been made, the Board action this evening is on a first-read basis.

Mrs. Suchsland moved and Mr. Tabachnick seconded a motion to approve the policy on a first-read basis. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Correspondence:** Mrs. Moore asked the Board to consider a number of donation requests. They included donations by the Do Gooders in the amount of \$2,280 to support a Conshohocken Elementary School (CE) field trip, \$500 from GlaxoSmithKline in honor of a CE second grade parent volunteer, \$150 from Odyssey Softball to the Plymouth Whitemarsh High School (PWHS) Athletic Department, calculators valued at \$1,500 from D&H Calculator Distribution Company to Colonial Elementary School and \$1,600 from ArcelorMittal in support of technology at CMS. See enclosures #25 through #29.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Tabachnick seconded a motion to accept the donations. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Cotter reviewed his report that consists of the Personnel Report and Substitute List, the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List and a list of Adult Evening School instructors for the spring semester. See enclosures #30 through #32. He stated that the Personnel Report and Substitute List is unchanged from Monday's meeting. It contained 29 actions, including three resignations, seven leaves of absence, five returns from leave, eight replacements, one transfer and five completed assignments. Dr. Cotter reported that the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List included three appointments and five resignations. The appointments included a stage manager at PWHS, an

assistant football coach at CMS and a Best Buddies Advisor at PWHS. He noted that the Adult Evening School classes are self sustaining and are held only if enrollment supports the class. Dr. Cotter stated that an addition to his report is a Separation and Release Agreement LN1-1043200V3 that was reviewed in executive session.

Mrs. Suchsland moved and Mr. Sigafos seconded a motion to approve the Superintendent's Report. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Board Student Representatives Report:** Ms. Stern welcomed the new Board members to the Colonial family on behalf of the students and faculty of PWHS and invited them to attend concerts, programs and sporting events at the school. She reported that the second semester begins on January 25 and that the winter sports season was well underway. Other events held recently included a class ring breakfast, a course planning night for parents and a course selection day for students for next year's classes, a financial aid night for parents and the National Art Honor Society induction. She concluded by noting that the student council will hold its annual Valentine's Day dance to support the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

**New Business:** Mr. Johnson sought Board action on the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit (MCIU) 2010-2011 Budget on Thursday evening. See enclosure #33. Dr. Cotter explained that the budget actually is a composite of four separate budgets, the General Administrative Budget; the Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development Budget; the Legislative Services and Grants Budget and the Technology and Information Services Budget. He noted that Colonial's contribution to the MCIU budget is \$73,861 or 4.4 percent higher than last year. Mr. Sultanik stated that it would be appropriate for the Board to vote collectively on the budget as a whole and then fill out their individual ballots for each of the four separate IU budgets.

Mr. Sigafos noted the 4.4 percent increase in the District's contribution and inquired if the IU was exempt from the 2.9 percent state index. Dr. Cotter stated that if contributions from all schools were added together the increase would equal 2.9 percent. Mr. Sultanik explained that each district's contribution is weighted differently dependent upon the size of its student population.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Brady seconded a motion to approve the IU budget. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0. **Note:** Individual ballots reflected a unanimous approval vote on all four IU budgets.

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to consider the Central Montco Technical High School 2010-2011 Operating Budget. See enclosure #34. Dr. Cotter stated that Colonial's more than \$1.9 million contribution to the budget is 13.36 percent lower this year because of changes in enrollment. He noted that the contribution is based upon a three-year average of enrollment.

Mr. Sigafos moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the CMTHS Budget. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Johnson directed the Board to act on at Special Education Cost Plan for the 2010-2011 school year. See enclosure #35. The plan from the MCIU includes the pricing structure and costs for the purchase of services estimated at \$1,064,480.49. Mrs. Berk explained for Mr. Johnson that the plan covers services provided by the MCIU that the District cannot provide for itself.

Mr. Brady moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the Special Education Cost Plan. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Tabachnick sought Board approval for the adoption of textbooks in the area of Business Education for dual enrollment programs. See enclosure #36.

Mr. Tabachnick moved and Mrs. Suchsland seconded a motion to adopt the textbooks. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to consider an Easement Agreement with Whitmarsh Township to allow the township to access McCarthy Park through school district property for construction purposes. See enclosure #52. Mr. Yemm reported that the district offered to allow the township to access the property through the drive on Franklin Way in order to maximize the safety of the residents in the area. He noted that the township is required to restore the District's property to its original condition. He also stated that the agreement has been reviewed by the solicitor.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Brady seconded a motion to approve the agreement. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Johnson sought Board action on a request to accept an E-Grant in the amount of \$30,000 to extend fiber optic line from the high school to the Angus Tract farmhouse for future technical services. See enclosure #37.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Tabachnick seconded a request to accept the grant. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Tabachnick asked the Board to act on two professional conference requests in one motion. The first was a request for two PWHs music teachers to attend the state conference in Pittsburgh from April 21-24. See enclosure #38. The second was for Lori McCoy, Director of Food Services, to attend a training program sponsored by Tyson Foods in Fayetteville, Arkansas from February 2-5. See enclosure #53. He noted that there is no cost to the District.

Mr. Tabachnick moved and Mrs. Suchsland seconded a motion to approve the conference requests. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Sigafoos asked the Board to consider three student field trips. The first was for Ridge Park Elementary School second graders to attend the Adventure Aquarium in Camden, N.J. on February 2. See enclosure #39. The second request was for the PWHs Drumline and Indoor Guard to participate in several out of state competitions. See enclosure #40. The third request was for 20 PWHs DECA students to attend the state conference in Hershey from February 17-19. See enclosure #41.

Mr. Sigafoos moved and Mrs. Oxberry seconded a motion to approve the field trips. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Brady sought Board action on a bid for the installation of lighting on Victory Fields. See enclosure #42. He noted that all bid procedures are in accordance with Pennsylvania code and that the public may review the bid in the District office. He stated that the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee recommended that the bid be awarded to Phillips Brothers at a cost of \$269,258.

Mr. Brady moved and Mrs. Moore seconded a motion to approve the lighting bid. Mrs. Suchsland questioned how often the lights would be used. Mr. Yemm stated that a lighting ordinance had been adopted by Whitmarsh Township that limited the District's use of the lights to 180 days on a rolling calendar. He added that lights are not to be on past 9:30 p.m. and usage is not permitted during certain parts of the year. He also noted that in the event that only one field is in use, the field that is furthest away from the neighboring homes would be the one to use the lights. Mr. Yemm also explained that the lights can be operated remotely via computer. Mrs. Suchsland questioned about security when the lights are in use. Mr. Yemm explained that security personnel

are on duty from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. during weekdays and that a site watch program is in effect on weekends. He noted that District personnel monitor the use of the fields and make sure that any outside organizations have the appropriate authorization.

Mr. Sultanik noted that the motion should be amended to state that the lighting installation is subject to all required jurisdiction approvals. Mr. Brady and Mrs. Moore reaffirmed their support of the motion. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Solicitor's Report:** Mr. Sultanik sought Board action on the Real Estate Settlement Stipulations as presented in executive session. He noted that parcel 65-00-10556-00-8 has an assessment reduction from \$1,373,380 to \$1,232,790 and that parcels 65-00-05581-00-6, 65-00-08344-00-6 and 65-00-07207-00-9 have a combined assessment increase from \$23,395,980 to \$28,212,500.

Mrs. Luken moved and Mr. Sigafos seconded a motion to approve the stipulations as presented. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Committee Reports:** Intermediate Unit: Mr. Zimmer mentioned the IU budget that was passed by the Board earlier in the meeting. He also spoke about IU's Act 183 E-Fund Grant totaling \$418,679, of which Colonial is receiving funds to extend internet capabilities to the Angus Tract Farmhouse.

CMTHS: Mr. Johnson stated that the CMTHS Joint Operating Committee did not meet in January.

Human Resources: Mrs. Moore presented the Human Resources (HR) budget report. She noted that in preparing the report the committee examined enrollment projects for the coming school year. She reported that a District-wide increase of 52 students across all grade levels is expected. She stated that the HR budget includes the addition of 1 autistic support teacher and .4 speech and language instructors. The budget also includes the reduction of one elementary teaching position and five instructional aides for a net savings of \$201,457. At Mrs. Moore's request, Mr. Sultanik explained that School Boards must reelect Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents for a period of either three or five years if they intend to renew the positions. Mrs. Moore read a resolution to reelect Dr. Cotter for a period of three years contingent upon the mutual agreement of a contract to be presented to the Board in February or March.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to reelect Dr. Cotter for three years. On a roll call vote, all but Mrs. Oxberry voted in favor. The motion was carried, 8-1.

Mrs. Moore then read a resolution to reelect Dr. Gorodetzer to a three-year term as Assistant Superintendent, also contingent upon the mutual agreement of a contract to be presented to the Board in February or March.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mrs. Luken seconded a motion to reelect Dr. Gorodetzer for three years. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mrs. Moore also noted that the HR committee reviewed revised FMLA Administrative Regulations, the possibility of conducting an employee survey and heard information on a possible early retirement incentive program.

Finance: Mrs. Luken presented a report on the preliminary budget and noted that the Board will act on the budget in February. She stated that the preliminary budget includes total expenditures of \$96,612,000, an increase of \$4,032,000, or 4.36 percent, over the current budget. Absent a real estate tax increase, revenues are estimated at \$86,992,000 resulting in a budget deficit of \$9,620,000. In order to balance the 2010-2011 preliminary budget a 7 percent real estate tax increase to District taxpayers is needed. This is an annual increase of \$178 on the district's median

assessed value of \$147,010, or a \$121 increase for each \$100,000 of assessed value. The benefits portion of the budget has increased 14 percent or \$2,153,084. The major portion of the benefit increase is associated with the 72 percent state mandated increase in the employer retirement contribution rate accounting for a \$1,790,996 increase in the PSERS costs. The state reimburses the district for 50% of this cost. Mrs. Luken stated that the board is planning to file for budget exceptions to allow for the tax increase above the 2.9 percent Act 1 limit. A balanced 2010-2011 budget also calls for the use of \$5,085,000 of the district's projected fund balance of \$8,900,000 for June 30, 2010. Mrs. Luken reported that the budget, in the state required format, will be displayed on the district's website by the required January 27 state mandated deadline. It will also be available in the district office at that time. Mrs. Luken stressed that this is a preliminary budget and that expenditures and revenues will continue to be monitored and adjusted during the next five months. The proposed final budget is scheduled for board adoption on May 17, with the adoption of the final 2010-2011 budget scheduled for June 17, 2010.

**Curriculum and Program:** Mr. Tabachnick stated that the committee received a report on the review of the science and social studies programs and an overview of the Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVASS). Dr. Gorodetzer reported that the District has opted not to participate in the state's Race to the Top grant program at this time. She noted that the administration spent a great deal of time reviewing the program and realized that many of the recommended programs are already in place in the Colonial. She also noted that to comply with program requirements, the District would need to compromise its highly successful professional development program. Mr. Tabachnick added that the committee heard proposed changes to the PWHS student progress reporting system from Dr. Monica Sullivan, the school principal.

**Facilities Management and Transportation:** Mr. Yemm stated that the committee reviewed information regarding the replacement of the exhaust systems for two back-up electric generators, one at Colonial Elementary School and one at PWHS. He also reported on the installation of lightning protection for the football stadium at PWHS. He noted that there was a lightning strike that occurred during 2009. The equipment to be installed will reduce the risk of future lightning strikes. Mr. Yemm also stated that the Facilities Management Department is continuing to remove old televisions from the K-3 schools. All removed equipment will be donated to Team Children.

**Community Relations and Student Life:** Mr. Zimmer noted that the District hosted approximately 300 senior citizens at the annual senior citizen winter concert and luncheon in December. He added that seniors may now sign up for the spring matinee and luncheon on March 20. Mr. Zimmer informed residents that it was time to register children for kindergarten.

**Safety and Wellness:** Mrs. Oxberry noted that the committee will meet on January 29.

**Legislative:** No Report.

**Public Comment:** Ms. Thiess commented on the history of the PSERS program and noted that the employee contribution has remained steady at between 6.5 and 7.5 percent over the years even though the state and District payments were decreased by state mandate early in the decade. At Mrs. Luken's request, Mr. Bickleman confirmed that the state and District contribution to PSERS was about 1.15 percent in the year 2000. He noted that the rate is 4.78 for the current budget year and will increase to 8.22 percent for the 2010-2011 budget. Mr. Bickleman added that projections for the 2012-2013 year are for state and District contributions to be 29 percent. Responding to a question from Mrs. Suchsland, Mr. Bickleman stated that the contribution rate for 2010-2011 was set by the state in December 2009. Responding to another question from Mrs. Suchsland, Mr. Bickleman reported that the District has applied to the state for Act 1 exceptions in the past. Mr. Bickleman confirmed for Mr. Sigafos that future projected contribution rates could decrease

if the economy continues to improve. Mr. Sultanik cautioned that the projections are based on a return on investments of 8.5 percent.

Mr. Sigafoos informed the Board that he attended a meeting of the Plymouth Parks and Recreation Department and noted that there may be opportunities for the District to collaborate with the new education center in Wetherill Park. He stated that the center is to be dedicated on April 24. Mr. Sigafoos confirmed for Mr. Johnson that the public may help support the project through the purchase of a brick, bench or tree.

Mr. Tabachnick reiterated that the Board is working collaboratively with the administration to reduce spending and minimize the tax burden without jeopardizing the quality of education in the District.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David M. Sherman". The signature is stylized and cursive.

David M. Sherman  
Board Secretary