

COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
WORK SESSION MINUTES, MAY 17, 2010

President Johnson convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:32 p.m. in the District Office General Meeting Room on May 17, 2010.

Board Members Present: Bernie Brady, Gary Johnson, Susan Moore, Kathleen Oxberry, Tom Sigafos, Beth Suchsland, Alan Tabachnick 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; 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; Jay Murray; Tom Davis; Robert Franz and Alan Fiermonte.

Mr. Johnson led the Pledge of Allegiance and asked Dr. Cotter to introduce individuals receiving awards. Dr. Cotter called Colonial Elementary School Principal Terese Boegly to the podium to recognize her music staff with an award from the National Association of Music Merchants. Dr. Cotter then called the District's Coordinator of Fine Arts, Tonia Kaufman to the podium. Mrs. Kaufman recognized Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) student Julia Campbell for being named to the All-State Band and the All-Region Orchestra. She also noted that Elana Gallo was named to the All-State Chorus. Mrs. Kaufman then introduced Jeff Phipps who presented the award-winning PWHS Drumline to the Board.

Mr. Johnson announced that the Board had met in executive session on April 21, May 3, May 4, May 12 and May 17.

Minutes: Mr. Johnson asked Board members to review the minutes of the Work Session of April 12; the General Meeting of April 15; the Human Resources Committee and the Finance and Audit Committee of May 4 and the Community Relations and Student Life (CRSL) Committee and the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of May 5. See enclosures #1 through #6. Mr. Johnson noted that the minutes of the Safety and Wellness Committee of May 12 and the Curriculum Committee of May 17 will be included in the yellow pages on Thursday evening.

Financial Reports: Mr. Johnson requested that the Board examine the financial reports on the list for approval on Thursday evening. They 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 Trust Fund Report, the Reconciliation of Cash Accounts, the Budgetary/Deficit Status Report and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending April 30. See enclosures #7 through #19.

Public Comments on the Agenda: Mr. Franz referenced a school budget article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that reported the Radnor School District was increasing property taxes less than 3.0 percent and was laying off 24 teachers. He stated that Colonial was closing its planetarium and yet still installing lights on Victory Fields. He commented that decreasing the proposed tax increase from 7.0 percent in the Preliminary Budget to 4.9 in the Proposed Final Budget showed that the District was not really working to cut costs. He inquired how much money was spent on varsity sports, including coaches' salaries and field maintenance. He stated that the District does not charge students an activity fee. He said it was time for the District to tighten its belt.

Mr. Johnson noted that the final budget will not be acted upon until June 17.

Mr. Fiermonte presented his analysis of the proposed final budget and past budgets. He commented on a significant increase in administrator positions and salaries over the past few years while other staffing areas and student enrollment have remained fairly stagnant. He reiterated that administrator salaries have increased \$1.3 million or 29 percent over the past three years, significantly higher than the Philadelphia Consumer Price Index. Mr. Fiermonte also implied that the impending crisis with the Pennsylvania State Employees Retirement System (PSERS) was caused in part by the District not paying its fair share for a number of years.

Mr. Bickleman explained that the District pays the amount established by the PSERS Board each December.

Staff Report: Dr. Cotter stated that on Thursday evening Ridge Park Elementary School Principal Jason Bacani and several Master Teachers will report on initiatives in the school.

Old Business: Mr. Johnson stated that the Board will take action Thursday on the renewal of the Solicitor's Services Contract for the 2010-2011 school year. He noted that the recommendation is to reappoint Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Esquire, of Fox Rothschild, LLP as solicitor. See enclosure #20.

Correspondence: Mr. Johnson called Board members' attention to a letter and invoice from Thomas J. Gentzel, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. The invoice is for dues for the 2010-2011 school year. See enclosure #21.

Dr. Cotter confirmed for Mr. Johnson that on Thursday evening, Dr. Elizabeth McKeane, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, will be joined by two teachers to report on projects funded through grants from the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation. See enclosure #22.

Mr. Johnson stated that the parents of Denise Cotteta are requesting that the District accept grant funding on an annual basis to offset the cost of the senior class trip. See enclosure #23.

Mr. Johnson noted that PWSHS Principal Dr. Monica Sullivan is requesting Board acceptance of a \$2,000 donation from the Lockheed Martin Corporation to the school's Robotics Club. See enclosure #24.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Board will act Thursday evening to accept funding in the amount of \$5,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development to Conshohocken Elementary School (CE). See enclosure #25.

Mr. Johnson reported that CE Principal Denise Marks is requesting Board acceptance of a gift of \$500 from Giant Pharmacy as a result of a student entry in a poster contest. See enclosure #26.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cotter stated that his report includes the Personnel Report and Substitute List and the Extra Duty/Extra Pay list. See enclosures #27 and 28. He stated that the Personnel Report and Substitute List contains 39 actions including 10 retirements, 15 leaves of absence, three returns from leave, four replacements, two extended assignments, two completed assignments and three summer program appointments. Dr. Cotter also noted that three Extra Duty/Extra Pay positions were listed.

New Business: Mrs. Moore stated that after review by the solicitor, Mr. Hartz is recommending that the Board remove the existing Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP) Policy #449. See enclosure #29. Dr. Cotter stated that the policy is antiquated and does not reflect current practice.

Mr. Johnson stated that revisions to several policies are recommended, including Conflict of Interest #318/#418/#518, Tutorial #116 and Behavior Support #219. See enclosures #30 through #32. Dr. Cotter explained that the intent is to align the Conflict of Interest and Tutorial policies to

allow teachers to tutor students as long as a waiver is signed. He added that the change to the Behavior Support Policy was recommended following a special education audit. Mrs. Berk explained that the change in wording clarifies that a parent will be notified in advance in the event that the use of restraints is needed on their child.

Dr. Cotter added that the Unlawful Harassment Policy #448 should also be considered with the policies needing revisions. See enclosure #33. He noted that the change will be reflected in the yellow pages on Thursday.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Board will consider a new policy, Blood Borne Pathogens #515, on a first-read basis on Thursday evening. See enclosure #34.

Mr. Johnson stated that Section 404 of the Public School Code requires the Board to annually, during the month of May, elect a treasurer to serve a one-year term beginning the first of July.

He also noted that the same section of the Public School Code requires the Board to name a secretary. He added that Section 432 of the code directs that the Board approve a salary for the position.

Mr. Zimmer reported that in accordance with Board Policy #004 and Administrative Regulation #004.1, two students are nominated for the position of student representative to the Board. He added that the Board has interviewed the candidates and will act on the nominations on Thursday.

Mrs. Oxberry stated that Mr. Bickleman requests that the Preliminary Budget and subsequent revisions be utilized as the Proposed Final Budget for the 2010-2011 school year. See enclosure #35. She noted that the Proposed Final Budget totals \$94,960,000 and includes a real estate tax of 18.099 mils for an increase of 4.9 percent. She added that the real estate tax increase equates to an additional \$85 per year for each \$100,000 of assessment or an increase of \$125 on the District's median assessed value of \$146,990. Mrs. Oxberry stated that the Proposed Final Budget is available for review in the District Office and on the Web site.

Mr. Bickleman stated that Board action is necessary in order to make the Proposed Final Budget available for public review for 30 days before the Final Budget is approved. He added that \$5,000,085 of the District's estimated \$7,200,000 fund balance will be used.

Mrs. Oxberry moved and Mr. Zimmer seconded a motion to approve the Proposed Final Budget.

Mr. Bickleman explained for Mr. Tabachnick that the fund balance is the difference between revenue and expenditures and that the District can only keep a maximum of 8.0 percent of budget revenue in reserve. Mr. Bickleman confirmed that as revenues fall, the amount of allowable fund balance also decreases. Mr. Tabachnick expressed concern that the District was using too much of its fund balance and wondered if further cuts could be made to preserve more of the fund balance for the next year. Mr. Bickleman confirmed for Mrs. Moore that the latest ERIP additions and the savings from the proposed bond refinancing were not yet included in the budget. Mr. Sigafos asked what will happen if the motion does not pass. Mr. Bickleman stated that he would have to confer with the solicitor and perhaps a special meeting would need to be called. Mrs. Suchsland added that she, too, was concerned that the District was expending too much of its fund balance.

On a roll call vote, all but Mr. Sigafos, Mrs. Suchsland and Mr. Tabachnick voted in favor. The motion was carried, 5-3.

Mr. Johnson stated that Section 621 of the Public School Code requires the Board to designate one or more banks or trust companies as depositories for school funds. He added that Wachovia is recommended to continue to serve as the District depository. Mrs. Suchsland inquired if the District receives interest on the funds. Mr. Bickleman explained that the arrangement with Wachovia stipulates that the District must maintain a compensatory balance and is paid interest on

the funds which pays for the bank's services. He noted that Wachovia has served as the District's depository for a number of years. Responding to a question from Mrs. Suchsland, Mr. Bickleman stated that he is presently talking to other banks and will present other options to the finance committee. He recommended not changing banks during the fiscal year. Mr. Bickleman reported that the amount of interest received is minimal, approximately 0.3 percent to pay for the banking services.

Mr. Johnson directed Board members' attention to enclosure #36, a list of investment banks, savings and loans and trust companies recommended for solicitation of interest rates on school investments during the 2010-2011 school year. He added that investments are subject to confirmation of bank maintenance and legally required collateral. Mr. Bickleman explained for Mr. Johnson that banks must maintain collateral funds in a third party bank specific to Act 72. He stated that the District always make sure that collateral funds are in excess of the money invested.

Mr. Johnson noted that Board approval is requested on a summary of preliminary Federal Program allocations for the 2010-2011 school year. See enclosure #37.

Mr. Zimmer noted that PWHS Principal Dr. Monica Sullivan is seeking Board approval to a revision in the PWHS handbook involving the use of electronic devices. See enclosure #38. He stated that the revision pertains to the use of cell phones and listening devices in school.

Mr. Tabachnick noted that Board permission is required to purchase and adopt a textbook for honors calculus. See enclosure #39.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Board will take action Thursday on two special education renewal contracts with the Lincoln Center at a cost of \$860,428 for the 2010-2011 school year. See enclosure #40.

Mr. Johnson noted that the Board will also act Thursday on a special education settlement agreement that was reviewed in executive session.

Mrs. Moore stated that the Board is asked to approve the renewal of the AESOP contract for the 2010-2011 school year. See enclosure #31. She noted that the service is an automated sub-caller and attendance management system. Mr. Hartz confirmed for Mr. Johnson that this will be the second year for the service and there will be no cost increase. Mr. Zimmer noted that the system is an automated system that places phone calls to substitute teachers.

Mr. Johnson stated that Board authorization is requested to renew the license with My Learning Plan for instruction users at a cost of \$7,485. See attachment #42. Mr. Hartz explained for Mrs. Suchsland that the service is an automated Web-based service that enables teachers and aides to log professional development hours to the Pennsylvania Department of Education as required to maintain their certification. He noted that teachers have their own accounts, but both teachers and District administrators monitor the hours.

Mr. Johnson reported that the Board is asked to accept an annual agreement with Carbon Lehigh IU Data Processing Services at a cost of \$41,652. See enclosure #43. Mr. Bickleman explained for Mr. Tabachnick that the service includes the District's purchasing, vendor bidding, personnel and tax collecting data bases. Dr. Cotter stated that in addition to the business applications there are also student applications such as Power School.

Mr. Zimmer noted that the Board is asked to approve several student trips. The first is for a PWHS student to attend the Best Buddies Conference in Bloomington, Indiana. See enclosure #44. He said that the parents of the student will sign a waiver. The next trips are for the PWHS cheerleaders to attend competitions in Johnstown, Pa. from November 19-21 and at William & Mary College from April 1-3, 2011. See enclosure #45.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Board will act on Thursday on a number of bids for instructional supplies. See enclosures #46 through #52. Mr. Sigafoos noted that the District is obligated to accept the lowest bid but wondered what checks and balances were in place. Mr. Bickleman stated that the District was required to accept the lowest responsible bid and noted that the bids specifications are tightly written and samples are requested from new vendors.

Solicitor's Report: None.

Committee Reports: None.

Public Comment: None.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Sherman
Board Secretary