

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462**  
**GENERAL SESSION MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 16, 2010**

President Johnson convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:02 p.m. in the District Office General Meeting Room on September 16, 2010.

**Board Members Present:** Bernie Brady, Mel Brodsky, Gary Johnson, Susan Moore, Kathleen Oxberry, Beth Suchsland and Alan Tabachnick.

**Board Members Absent:** Mitch Zimmer.

**Note:** One Board seat is currently vacant.

**Also Attending:** Dr. Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; Dr. MaryEllen Gorodetzer, Assistant Superintendent; Jeffrey T. Sultanik, Solicitor; 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; Michael Cielieska, Jessica Knudsen, Stephen Pepper and Stacey Wong, Board Student Representatives; Kelly Jowett; Mike DeCaro; Tom Davis; Carolyn Corchin; Frank Whitehead; Mary Thiess; Chad Murray; Donelle Brotz; Susan Gondek; Michelle Pfeil; Joe Cotteta; Sandy Cotteta and Robert Franz.

Mr. Johnson led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on August 25, September 8 and September 13.

Dr. Cotter presented six Master Teachers, who were recently appointed to two-year terms, for Board recognition. They included Colonial Middle School teachers Erin Powers, Tanya Prickitt and Sam Swetkowski, Plymouth Elementary School (PE) teacher Robin Ubaldini, Whitmarsh Elementary School teacher Lisa Swartwood and Susan Dryburgh, who splits time between PE and Conshohocken Elementary Schools.

**Minutes:** Mr. Johnson asked Board members to act on minutes of the Work Session of August 16; the General Meeting of August 19; the Special Meeting of August 25; the Human Resources Committee and the Finance and Audit Committee of September 1; the Community Relations and Student Life Committee of September 2; the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of September 3 and the Curriculum Committee of September 13. See enclosures #1 through #7 and #33.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mrs. Suchsland 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 Trust Fund Report, the Reconciliation of Cash Accounts, the Budgetary/Deficit Status Report and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending August 31. See enclosures #8 through #19.

Mr. Tabachnick moved and Mr. Brady 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. Franz stated that he was ashamed that the high school's failure to make AYP received no mention in the minutes of the August 19 meeting. He added that the District was losing track of its mission of providing the best education possible. He expressed an opinion that too much emphasis was placed on Victory Fields lighting and not enough on academics.

Dr. Cotter replied that the District's mission has always placed a strong emphasis on academics. He stated that the District has put an enormous amount of resources into academics and student

achievement. He noted that 10 years ago the District was among the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of schools in terms of AYP and now almost all schools are in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. Dr. Cotter said that it was true that the high school did not make AYP but that the general population of the school is achieving at a high level. He noted that one disaggregate group within the school did not meet its requirement. He added that the administration is taking that seriously and addressing it in a variety of committees. He said that not all work is done publicly at a Board meeting and it is a huge mistake to say our focus is not on education.

Mrs. Suchsland invited Mr. Franz to come to a Curriculum Committee meeting to see how much discussion actually takes place on academic issues. She stated it would be clear to him that academics is our number one goal.

**Staff Report:** Dr. Elizabeth McKeaney and Mrs. Berk reported on the District's summer programs. Dr. McKeaney stated that 105 students took part in the District's summer literacy programs and that all improved or maintained their skill level. She also discussed the new middle school summer program that featured research-based projects that incorporated math, science and social studies, the online high school credit recovery program and the high school Bridge Program. Mrs. Berk detailed the Special Education Extended School Year and Summer Learning Academy programs. She noted that a total of 76 students took part at the elementary and secondary levels.

**Old Business:** Mr. Johnson asked the Board to consider Board Policy #703 Memorials on a second-read basis. See enclosure #20.

Mrs. Oxberry moved and Mr. Brady seconded a motion to approve the policy on a second-read basis. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

**Correspondence:** None.

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Cotter stated that his report includes the Personnel Report and Substitute List, the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List and the Enrollment Report. See enclosures #21 through #23. He stated that the Personnel Report and Substitute List contains 10 actions reported on Monday, plus a change of date for a replacement, a return from leave and one temporary addition to the staff as a result of an IEP. Dr. Cotter stated that the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List included eight appointments and three changes. He added that the enrollment report shows class sizes of 17-24 in grades K-3, approximately 23 in grades 4-5, 18-22 at the middle school and class sizes vary by course at the high school. Dr. Cotter noted that all class sizes fell within contractual limits.

Mrs. Suchsland asked if there was a difference between desirable limits and acceptable limits. Mr. Hartz reported that acceptable limits for K-3 were 13-28 students per class.

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to vote on the Personnel Report and Substitute List separately. He stated that he will abstain since his daughter is on the Personnel Report.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mr. Brady seconded a motion to approve the Personnel Report and Substitute List. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 6-0. Mr. Johnson abstained.

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

**Board Student Representatives Report:** Mr. Cielieska reported on ninth grade orientation and the start of the fall sports season. Ms. Knudsen reported on auditions for the fall production, The Crucible, which will be held on November 11, 12 and 13. She added that the first semester Open House was well attended by parents. Mr. Pepper stated that the Spanish exchange students arrived on September 4 and he is hosting one of them. He also reported on the Welcome Back Dance. Ms. Wong stated that the seniors had their first class trip meeting and noted that the Academic Awards Dinner is scheduled for September 20.

**New Business:** Mr. Johnson requested Board action on an agreement with the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit (MCIU) involving Internet and Internet 2 Services. See enclosure #24. At Mrs. Suchsland's request, Mr. Boegly reported that this is a renewal agreement to provide a 20 megabyte

pipe connecting the Internet to all schools and a two megabyte pipe to connect Internet 2 to all schools. Mr. Johnson inquired as to what the service was five years ago. Mr. Boegly stated that it was one megabyte. He added that the District upgraded from 10 megabytes to 20 megabytes last year and will maintain the same level this year.

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

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to consider three conferences in accordance with the Board's agreement with the Colonial Administrators and Supervisors Education Association. They include the MCIU Psychologist Series in Norristown, The Temple University School Psychologist Conference in Philadelphia and the Lehigh University Special Education Law Conference in Bethlehem.

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

Mr. Tabachnick sought Board action on the attendance of two Plymouth Whitemarsh High School World Language teachers at the Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association Conference in Erie on October 15 and 16. See enclosure #25.

Mr. Tabachnick moved and Mrs. Suchsland seconded a motion to approve the conference request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion carried, 7-0.

Mr. Brodsky asked the Board to act on two student field trip requests. The first is for the Marching Colonials to attend a competition in the Washington, D.C. area from November 5-7. See enclosure #26. Mr. Brodsky noted that there is no cost to the District. He stated that the second request is for fifth graders to travel to the Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware from September 28 through October 1. See enclosure #27.

Mr. Brodsky moved and Mrs. Oxberry seconded a request to approve the field trips. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 7-0.

**Solicitor's Report:** No Report.

**Committee Reports:** Intermediate Unit: No report.

CMTHS: No report.

Human Resources: Mrs. Moore stated that the Committee discussed the enrollment report and projections extensively in its September 2 meeting. She added that the remainder of the agenda items dealt with personnel issues and were discussed in executive session.

Finance: Mrs. Oxberry summarized the Finance Committee meeting minutes found in enclosure #5. She highlighted the fact that the District will receive \$11,370 less of its federal portion of the state subsidy and that over \$180,000 in real estate taxes are being held in escrow until the settlement of assessment appeals as a result of three taxpayers who have paid their taxes under protest. She added that the District may save \$18,000 this fiscal year and \$37,000 next fiscal year if the Montgomery County Tax Collection Committee elects to have an early implementation of the county-wide earned income tax collection mandated by Act 32. Mrs. Oxberry reported that the committee is studying the possibility of implementing an activities fee for participation in high school athletics and activities. She added that the committee reviewed the District's advertising policy and directed the administration to revise the policy to allow for commercial advertising.

Curriculum and Program: Mr. Tabachnick summarized the minutes of the September 13 Curriculum Committee meeting found in enclosure #33. He stated that Dr. McKeaney presented an overview of the Science and Social Studies curriculum review performed during the 2009-2010 school year. He noted that the results help determine the alignment of the K-12 Science and Social Studies Curriculum. He noted that the committee heard reports from Social Studies Curriculum Supervisor Sergio Anaya and Science Curriculum Supervisor Maria Bellino on their specific areas. He also

reported that Mathematics Curriculum Supervisor Donna Gaffney reported on changes that have occurred as a result of last year's math curriculum review. Dr. Gorodetzer confirmed for Mr. Tabachnick that the math curriculum review covered a period of two years. Dr. Gorodetzer further explained that the curriculum review process is an ongoing process. Mr. Tabachnick invited interested members of the community to attend a curriculum committee meeting to take advantage of a great opportunity to learn the extent of the District's commitment to student achievement.

Dr. Cotter confirmed for Mr. Johnson that one small group of students can make a whole school fail to achieve AYP. Dr. Cotter stated that there are 25 targets that the high school had to meet and overall the school exceeded AYP in terms of achievement, however one group of special education students did not make their target. He confirmed for Mrs. Moore that a disaggregate group needs to include 40 students and that one student within that small of a group can greatly skew the results for the entire group. He also added that the District is responsible for the scores of all students no matter if they just came into the District the day before the exam. He added that the administration recently conducted a review of special education programs and will address the issue.

Mr. Brodsky stated that while he has been on the Board for just two months, he has heard the AYP issue addressed at least five times in committee meetings. He stated that the District takes it very seriously and it is being addressed.

Facilities Management and Transportation: No report.

Community Relations and Student Life: No report.

Safety and Wellness: No report.

Legislative: No report.

Municipal Liaisons: No report.

Mr. Tabachnick reported on the September meeting of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation. He noted that the foundation approved a major grant in support of the high school robotics program.

**Public Comment:** None.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Sherman  
Board Secretary