

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

President Johnson convened the general session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:01 p.m. in the District Office General Meeting Room on October 21, 2010.

**Board Members Present:** Bernie Brady, Mel Brodsky, Gary Johnson, Kelly Jowett, Susan Moore, Kathleen Oxberry, 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; 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; Stephen Pepper and Stacey Wong, Student Board Representatives; Colleen DiFabio Papazian; Cynthia Cox; Melissa Sterling; Rachel Wolfheimer; Michele Yavorski; Mary Thiess; Liz Malarski, Hope D. Luken and Alan Fiermonte.

Mr. Johnson led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the Board had met in executive session on September 22, October 13 and October 18.

Dr. Cotter introduced Plymouth Whitmarsh High School (PWHS) Principal Heather Nuneviller, who presented the school's National Merit Scholars and Advanced Placement Scholars for recognition. See Attachment A for a list of student names.

**Minutes:** Mr. Johnson asked Board members to act on the minutes of the Work Session of September 13; the General Meeting of September 16; the Special Meeting of September 20; the Safety and Wellness Committee of September 23; the Facilities Management and Transportation Committee of September 29; the Human Resources Committee and the Finance and Audit Committee of October 6; the Community Relations and Student Life Committee of October 7 and the Curriculum Committee of October 18. See enclosures #1 through #8 and #41.

Mr. Zimmer 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 sought Board action on the financial reports on the list for approval. 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 September 30. See enclosures #9 through #21.

Mr. Brodsky moved and Mrs. Oxberry 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:** None.

**Staff Report:** TC Boegly, Principal of Colonial Elementary School and Assistant Principal Michael McKenna presented a PowerPoint on enrichment activities in the building. They discussed the Reading Olympics, Problem Solving Club, Science Fair, Odyssey of the Mind, CES Cares – a school-based community outreach program, the Chess Club, Girls on the Run, the band, chorus and orchestra programs and the physical fitness programs. Responding to a question from Dr. Cotter, Mrs. Boegly reported that approximately 70 percent of the student body takes part in one of these activities.

Responding to a question from Mr. Tabachnick, Mrs. Boegly explained that the school used staff mentors for various activities. Mrs. Moore complimented the administrators on the number of new programs available to students at the school.

**Old Business:** None.

**Correspondence:** Mr. Johnson noted that the District is in receipt of a letter from Thomas E. Gluck, Acting Secretary of Education, congratulating the District on the accomplishments demonstrated in the Audit of Operations for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2008, 2007, 2006 and 2005. See enclosure #22. Mr. Johnson stated that the report was issued by the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General. He congratulated Mr. Bickleman on a job well done.

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to consider two community revitalization grants. Both are in the amount of \$5,000 and are funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. The first is for Conshohocken Elementary School. See enclosure #23.

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

The second community revitalization grant is for Whitemarsh Elementary School. See enclosure #24.

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

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to consider a request from Mrs. Nuneviller to accept a grant authored by PWHS student Ross Levin. See enclosure #25. The grant is from the Small-Alper Family Foundation, PANIM and is to be used for the Colonial Garden.

Mrs. Oxberry moved and Mrs. Jowett seconded a motion to accept the grant. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Johnson sought Board action on a donation of \$10,000 from Mr. Mark Bill of the PWHS Class of 1976. See enclosure #42. Mr. Yemm confirmed for Mr. Johnson that the donation is to be used to upgrade the sound systems in the Colonial Elementary School gym and PWHS west gym.

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

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Cotter led Board members through his report, including the Personnel Report and Substitute List and the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List. See enclosures #26 and #27. He stated that the Personnel Report and Substitute List contains eight additional actions from the 11 he spoke to on Monday evening. The new actions include three leaves of absence, and five replacements. He stated that there are a large number of per diem substitutes listed. Dr. Cotter stated that the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List includes four appointments and three changes. He noted that there are no changes from Monday evening but that there is a yellow page associated with the list as a number of volunteers listed on Monday have been removed. Dr. Cotter stated that the administration has decided to draft a policy addressing volunteerism for Board review.

Mr. Zimmer noted that his wife is listed on the Personnel Report and Substitute List and he would be abstaining from that vote. Mr. Johnson asked the Board to consider the Personnel Report and Substitute List and the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List separately.

Mrs. Jowett moved and Mrs. Suchsland seconded a motion to approve the Personnel Report and Substitute List. On a roll call vote, all but Mr. Zimmer voted in favor. Mr. Zimmer abstained. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Mrs. Oxberry seconded a motion to approve the Extra Duty/Extra Pay List. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Board Student Representatives Report:** Mr. Pepper detailed the high school's participation in the Great Food Fight to benefit Philabundance. He thanked local business for helping the effort and singled out Plymouth Elementary School for their contribution of more than 2,000 cans of food. Ms. Wong reported on the success of the fall athletic teams, including the Golf team that won the Suburban One League Championship, student pictures, college recruiting night, parent conference and Homecoming Week activities.

Mr. Johnson congratulated the students for their efforts in the food drive.

**New Business:** Mr. Johnson stated that the Board would take action to establish the start date for the 2011-2012 school year. He asked Dr. Cotter to review the options. Dr. Cotter stated that two calendar drafts are provided for the Board's consideration. See enclosure 28. Dr. Cotter noted that the first calendar draft features a start date after Labor Day and ending in the second week of June. He reported that the second draft contains a pre-Labor Day start date with school ending the first week in June. He added that both calendars include 184 students days and 191 teacher days, the same as the current year calendar. Dr. Cotter reported that the calendars had been reviewed by the teachers' union and the membership was split 60-40 on which calendar they preferred with the slight majority favoring a post Labor Day start.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Mrs. Suchsland seconded a motion to adopt the first calendar option with a post Labor Day start to the school year. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

Mr. Johnson asked Dr. Cotter to create a draft of a calendar with the last day of school being Friday, June 15 and with an extra holiday added to the calendar.

Mr. Johnson asked the Board to act on a request to approve a special education placement agreement. He noted that the agreement was reviewed in executive session due to privacy issues.

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

Mr. Tabachnick asked the Board to consider two professional conference requests in one motion. He stated that the first request is for Mrs. Boegly and two teachers to attend the Pennsylvania Council for Exceptional Children at Penn State University, November 11-12. See enclosure #29. The second request is for two PWHS World Language teachers to attend the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, November 19-21 in Boston, Mass. See enclosure #30.

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. Zimmer asked the Board to act on five student trip requests in one motion. The first request is for the PWHS Mock Trial Team to participate in a training session at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., November 12-14. See enclosure #31. The second request is for the PWHS baseball team to play in a game at the Cal Ripken Baseball Complex in Aberdeen, Md., on Saturday, March 26. See enclosure #32. The third request is for the PWHS basketball team to participate in an Invitational Classic in Atlantic City, N.J., February 4-6. See enclosure #33. The fourth request is for all fourth grade students to attend the Adventure Aquarium in Camden, N.J. during the days of November 15-23. See enclosure #43. The final request is for the PWHS Future Business Leaders of America Club to attend a Future Educators Association State Conference/Competition at Penn State University from November 8-9. See enclosure #44.

Mr. Zimmer moved and Mr. Tabachnick seconded a motion to approve all five student trip requests. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried, 9-0.

**Solicitor's Report:** Mr. Sultanik asked the Board to act on Settlement and Release Agreement #244652 as reviewed in executive session.

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

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

CMTHS: No report.

Human Resources: Mrs. Moore stated that during its October 6 meeting, the Committee heard a report from Mrs. Berk regarding special education enrollment and services provided to students in the elementary schools. She stated that the committee found the report helpful. The committee also reviewed a District-wide enrollment report that noted a decrease of 17 students from the September report. Enrollment is expected to stabilize for the remainder of the year. Mrs. Moore also stated that the committee reviewed a request from the high school for \$10,000 in additional funding to support extended learning opportunities in math.

Mrs. Moore sought Board action on the list of District employee salary and wages. She noted that the list is available for public review in the District Office. Mr. Zimmer inquired as to whether or not any member will need to abstain from the vote. Mr. Sultanik stated that if an immediate family member is a member of a bargaining unit the Board member would need to abstain.

Mrs. Moore moved and Mrs. Suchsland seconded a motion to approve the salaries and wages. On a roll call vote, all but Mr. Brodsky and Mr. Johnson voted in favor. Both Mr. Brodsky and Mr. Johnson have daughters who are members of bargaining units. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Finance: Mrs. Oxberry reviewed the minutes of the October 6 Finance Committee meeting as found in Enclosure #7. She noted that Mr. Fiermonte expressed concerns over the District's financial condition due to declining revenue and increasing costs. She added that the District is continuing to monitor the new Federal Educational Jobs Fund Program which was established to provide funding to school districts for the hiring of personnel and other related instructional expenses. Mrs. Oxberry reported that the Montgomery County Tax Collection Committee (TCC) chose Berkheimer as the county-wide earned income tax collector at the rate of 1.39 percent. She noted that the TCC voted to implement the provisions of Act 32 a year earlier than the January 1, 2012 deadline. Colonial is expected to save an estimated \$18,000 or more in 2010-2011 and approximately \$37,000 in 2011-2012 because of the earlier timeline. Mrs. Oxberry also stated that the Act 1 index for the 2011-2012 fiscal year has officially been set by the state at 1.4 percent. She noted that the District may raise taxes that amount without voter approval. That rate would generate an additional \$908,000 of new revenue. She noted that the low index, coupled with decreasing revenue, will make for a challenging budgeting process. Mrs. Oxberry encouraged the public to attend the next Finance Committee meeting on Wednesday, December 1 at 6:30 p.m. in the Superintendent's Conference Room.

Curriculum: Mr. Tabachnick reported on the October 18 Curriculum Committee meeting. He stated that the committee heard an overview of the PWHS College Counseling program from Pat Tamborello. Dr. Gorodetzer explained that the high school is beginning a multi-year process of creating a writing center to assist students with reading and writing across content areas. She noted that teachers are visiting other writing centers to gather ideas. There are also plans to train highly qualified students as peer trainers. Mr. Tabachnick added that Donna Gaffney provided an update on the District's integrated math program.

Facilities Management and Transportation: Mr. Brady asked Mr. Yemm to provide an update on the water main break at Whitmarsh Elementary School. Mr. Yemm explained that a temporary solution to the situation was implemented to allow school to take place on October 21. He noted that issue was currently under control and that a full repair will be made over the weekend. Mrs. Suchsland commented that the school was well organized and did a great job in handling the situation. Mr. Yemm explained to Mr. Johnson that the break was located between the gymnasium and kitchen under the blacktop. Mr. Tabachnick inquired as to the status of the restroom facility being constructed on Victory Fields. Mr. Yemm explained that the block work and plumbing was completed and that the roofing structure was now being put in place. He stated that he expected the facility to be completed within 30 days.

Community Relations and Student Life: Mr. Zimmer asked community members to watch the mail for the District Annual Report in mid November. He stated that the Board felt communicating with the general public was important and that the Annual Report and Spring Newsletter were two main vehicles for achieving that goal. He also asked the public to view the new E-Friday Folders on the District's Web site. The folders contain information on events and happenings in the community and at PWHS and Colonial Middle School (CMS). Mrs. Moore asked Mr. Sherman about the cost of the publications. Mr. Sherman explained that there was little difference between the costs of glossy versus matte paper and that the District produced all publications in-house using desktop publishing. He noted that unlike many Districts, Colonial does not contract with a graphic designer or advertising agency to produce the publications. Responding to a question from Mrs. Suchsland, Mr. Sherman reported that research showed that 80 percent of the District population does not send children to District schools and among that population, 65 to 75 percent read the annual report and found it useful.

Safety and Wellness: Mrs. Oxberry reported on the September 23 committee meeting. She stated that the committee: reviewed a proposal to allow local police departments access to the exterior cameras at each school; reviewed a proposal to standardize the identification badges worn by District employees; examined a request for an additional EvacuTrak unit, designed for emergency transportation of disabled individuals down a flight of stairs, for the PWHS Science Wing; heard a presentation from Lori McCoy, Director of Food Services about the *Chefs Move to Schools* program; and was introduced to Eileen Lafferty, Drug and Alcohol Prevention Coordinator for the Montgomery County Office of Drug and Alcohol, and a new ad hoc member of the District's Safety and Wellness Committee.


Legislative: No report.

Municipal Liaisons: No report.

**Public Comment:** Mr. Fiermonte reported that approximately 300 parents attended the recent Star Party at CMS. He inquired as to which Board member was appointed as liaison to the community planetarium group spearheaded by Yale Joseph. Mr. Johnson reported that Mr. Tabachnick was the Board's liaison to the Colonial Foundation and the planetarium group. Mr. Tabachnick stated that he has had several e-mail communications with Mr. Joseph. Mr. Fiermonte asked if there were other planned uses for the planetarium. Dr. Cotter explained that the space is being used during the day by the CMS music department for lessons and instrument storage. He added that the space was used during the school's activity period. Dr. Gorodetzer noted that eighth grade classes may use the planetarium as a resource. Mr. Johnson stated that no plans have been made to disassemble the planetarium. Mr. Fiermonte inquired as to why an Upper Dublin School District teacher was asked to run an event in the planetarium? Mr. Yemm explained that an outside group requested to rent the facility for a fundraising activity and needed a trained person to run the equipment. He stated that he believed the group was associated with Mt. St. Joseph's Academy. Mrs. Oxberry asked Mr. Fiermonte what the planetarium group had done to raise funds to keep the planetarium open. Mr. Fiermonte stated that funds could not be raised without a written endorsement from the Board. The Board reiterated its position to Mr. Fiermonte that there would be no written endorsement or guarantee that the planetarium would remain open, but that the Board is amenable to the idea if funds can be raised to support the facility on a five-year plan and not a year-by-year basis. Dr. Cotter added in addition to annual costs, significant upgrades need to be made to the facility and planetarium instrument. He stated that several parents who attended the Star Party noted the poor condition of the facility and need for upgrades.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



David M. Sherman  
Board Secretary