POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
MARCH 4, 2010 - 7:30 P.M.

The Committee of the Whole meeting of the Board of School Directors of the Pottstown School District was held on Thursday, March 4, 2010 at 7:30 PM in the second floor LGI room of the Pottstown Middle School. The following board members were present: Mr. Richard C. Huss, President, Mr. Dennis Wausnock, Vice-President, Ms. Valerie Harris, Mr. Robert H. Hartman, Jr., Mr. Thomas J. Hylton, Mrs. Michele Pargeon, Mrs. Polly M. Weand and Mrs. Julia Wilson. Absent was Mr. Nate White. Also present were Superintendent, Mr. David Krem; Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Reed Lindley; Director of Education and Human Resources, Dr. Jeffrey Sparagana; Business Administrator, Mrs. Linda S. Adams; Solicitor, Mr. Stephen Kalis; Mr. John Armato, Ms. Terri Lampe, Mrs. Gail Cooper, Mr. Robert Giering, Ms. Pamela Bateson, Mrs. Lisa Snyder, Mrs. Danielle McCoy, Dr. Angela Tuck, a member of the press, and interested citizens.

Mr. White entered the meeting at 7:36 P.M.

AWARDS

Mrs. Wampole introduced a DVD of the accomplishments at Lincoln Elementary School.

Ms. Jenkins introduced the Lincoln Elementary Writing Award winners. Ms. Jenkins had each student come to the microphone and read their award winning writings.

K-5 - Abigal Rochlin
1st Grade - Klyie Boughter
2nd Grade - Hayley Yosko
3rd Grade - Anthony Hendricks
4th Grade - Emily Jerdon
5th Grade - Dylan Brandt

PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Bateson reported on the Creative Health Program developments and behavioral issues. This program is a school based partial program run through co-teaching with our staff and the Creative Health staff.

Mr. Giering reported on the Progressions Program that will be implemented at Barth and Lincoln Elementary Schools next year. He stated that outpatient counseling and mental health services would be made available to the children and their families. The outpatient counseling is a free program to assist parents in making their children successful. A private space will be made available as needed for this service.

REPORTS

None.

MINUTES

Mrs. Adams presented the minutes of the committee of the whole meeting held on February 4, 2010 to be placed on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

Mrs. Adams presented the minutes of the special voting meeting held on February 8, 2010 to be place on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

Mrs. Adams presented the minutes of the regular meeting held on February 18, 2010 to be placed on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee

Mr. Wausnock reported the Finance Committee will meet on Thursday, March 11, 2010.

Facilities Committee

Mr. Hartman reported the topics that were discussed at the February 8th meeting. The committee had a representative from Reynolds Construction Management speak on different ways to save energy. This company does not share in the savings. They charge a fee for the specific service to identify physical sand behavioral changes. Mr. Hartman reviewed other topics that were discussed at the committee meeting which included 1) the North Fields Project, 2) spending the remaining bond funds to finish up some key items at the stadium and 3) evaluating the need to set up outside services for future snow removal. He thanked all the district employees who came in to ensure the schools were ready to open after the snow storms.

Montgomery County Legislative Representative

Mrs. Pargeon stated that the March meeting was cancelled. She asked the Board if they would agree to sign the PSERS Resolution. The board agreed.

PSBA Representative

None.

Montgomery County Intermediate Unit Representative

Mr. Hartman reported that at the last meeting the IU audit reported no findings. The Transportation contracts were passed with the same companies. Other topics that were discussed at the last IU meeting included: 1) the governor's budget, the affects on the IU budget and its ability to provide services, 2) The PSERS current system and it's future outcome, 3) possible state options attached to the Keystone Exams that would be made available to the school districts to select from, 4) non-public issues resulting from private schools closing or consolidating and the impact on the school districts responsibilities to provide education to the students in their communities.

Mr. Krem provided information regarding the Intermediate Units privilege to choose what services they provide. He stated that if the IU does not provide the service it then becomes the responsibility of the school district to provide the service. Mr. Krem also provided a history on PSERS and its current situation.

Community Relations Committee

Mrs. Pargeon reported that the committee now includes two Federation Representatives as committee members. The committee will present the PCTV proposal to the Finance Committee for discussion. Mrs. Pargeon reviewed the other topics that were discussed as follows:

- Various ways to share information on the monthly meetings to the public
- Displaying student artwork in the windows of local businesses
- Spotlighting administrators with their biographies on the website
- Adding a Community Bulletin Board to the website.

Mr. Hartman suggested the committee consult the solicitor regarding setting a policy for safeguards concerning the use of the website for a community bulletin board.

Co-Curricular Activities Committee

Mr. Hartman reported the committee did not meet last month. The new Co-Curricular Activities director will start in April.

Technology/Curriculum Committee

Mrs. Wilson reported the committee will meet on March 25th and will discuss how to implement the Safe Drive/Safe Passenger DVD into the health program. Dr. Lindley stated that a similar program is being presented at the High School. Ms. Harris was pleased to hear that steps are being taken to introduce this program into the lower levels.

Policy Committee

Mr. White reported that the Policy Committee did not meet last month. Mrs. Weand asked the board to consider a policy to expand the patron's comments to include the Committee of the Whole meetings. Mr. Huss directed Mrs. Weand to take her motion to the Policy Committee for their recommendations and bring it back to the board at their next meeting.

Personnel Committee

Ms. Harris stated the next Personnel Committee meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2010.

Neighborhood Schools Committee

Mr. Hylton reported that at their meeting on March 1st, the committee presented a discussion paper on possible building reorganizations in preparation for any stimulus funds. Highlights of this plan include moving 5th grade to the Middle School, 4-K given over to Peak Partners, moving the administrative offices to the High School and redistricting of the elementary schools. Binders were distributed to all board members, the executive team and administrators. Mr. Hylton believes that the next step is for the administrators to review this plan and report back to the board on its feasibility. Mr. Hylton stated that Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates has volunteered to present to the administration their suggestions and ideas at no cost or obligation to the district. A committee meeting has been scheduled to meet on March

10th for the purpose of allowing Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates and the administrators to discuss the feasibility of the building reorganizations plan.

Mrs. Weand had done an extensive review of Mr. Hylton's plan. She asked for some clarification on many items and sited some errors. One particular item stated that the school district spends approximately $16,000 per student. Mrs. Weand stated the tuition rate is approximately $10,900. She would like to see the board spend more time studying the plan and its impact on Special Education, hiring more teachers for the 5th graders moving to the middle school and the many needs of the Pre-K students who would move to various church facilities. Mrs. Weand was concerned about the burden this would put on the taxpayers. She asked if Mrs. Adams has had an opportunity to review the plan.

Mr. Hatman voiced his concerns on whether the school district can afford this. Next year's loss is already over $1,000,000 deficit without adding additional debt. He questioned the authority of the President to direct the administration to review things.

Mr. Kalis stated that the President has the prerogative, duty and obligation to direct the Superintendent and those who report to the Superintendent to have something reviewed. The findings of a review are then brought back to the board for a final decision.

Mr. Huss asked Mr. Hylton what his expectations were for the March 10th meeting in regards to the administrations response to the feasibility of the initial plan. Mr. Huss was concerned about the amount of time needed to review the plan and have the administration present its findings.

Mr. Hylton agreed it would take months of reviewing and discussion. His immediate concern is to apply for the stimulus funds now as the deadline to apply is April 1st . The school district is not obliged to accept the funds if they are made available.

Mr. Krem agreed that the administration could provide their professional opinion at the March 10th meeting. He stressed to the board the importance of the community input and support.

Mr. Huss agreed with Mr. Krem that the board, administration and community must work together.

Mrs. Pargeon voiced her concerns about a having school within a school, the transportation of secondary students and adding an additional $1,000,000 debt to the current debt. She questioned that the manner in which this plan was discussed and prepared is a possible violation of the Sunshine Law. The local newspaper published a quote from a State Open Records/Right to Know official confirming this was a violation of the Sunshine Law as it relates to committees. Mrs. Pargeon asked Mr. Kalis for his opinion.

Mr. Kalis provided an explanation that a committee does not constitute a quorum for the agency. Committees have no right to vote or make final decisions. Mr. Kalis offered to provide a formal opinion. He confirmed if a citizen wished they could file a complaint with the Open Records Office.

Mr. Hartman's voiced his concern that the plan presented at the March 1st meeting was prepared and discussed without a public meeting. His impression was that the whole presentation and comments were prepared prior to the committee meeting. He stated that if the committee members and a quorum of the committee met outside a public meeting it was a violation of the Sunshine Law. He proposed that the board hold an open board workshop to properly facilitate the options and opinions of the entire board and the public. Mr. Hartman stressed the importance of the board to listen to the administrators. He is embarrassed to be a part of this board. He would like to see the board work together.

Mrs. Wilson read the Discussion of Possible Building Reorganization plan as presented by Mr. Hylton at the Neighborhood Schools Committee meeting on March 10th. She read a lot of interesting things and a lot of disturbing things. Her concerns include putting a 10 year child in the Middle School building that is not designed to handle four grades, the impact on the 5th graders physical and mental health by placing them in an environment above their maturity level and the educational impact of taking 4-K out of our district. Mrs. Wilson disagreed with having Crabtree, Rohrbaugh and Associates making a presentation before hearing the Administrations assessment.

Mr. Huss stated that board members asked for a plan from Mr. Hylton. He asked Mr. Hylton to present a plan to make peace with the board. Mr. Hylton provided a discussion plan that he formulated through years of his ideas of how to do things and improve things. Mr. Huss stressed the importance of starting somewhere and working together.

Mrs. Weand agreed with the importance of having a plan. She believes the whole board should have been involved in developing a plan. The plan presented by Mr. Hylton misrepresents what the board was suggesting. It is not giving the true vision of what the whole board was thinking about. She believes that Mr. Hylton's plan was being pushed on the board and that the Neighborhood Schools Committee should be combined with the Facilities Committee. Mrs. Weand was disappointed in the lack of being welcomed at the very first Neighborhood Schools Committee meeting and the comments made by Mr. Hylton.

Mrs. Pargeon is not in favor of anything that would not improve the quality of education for our students and reduce the burden of our taxpayers. She believes this plan is an extension of Mr. Hylton's Save Our Land / Save Our Town's book tour promoting his ideology of neighborhood schools. Mrs. Pargeon stated she believes he looks to financially benefit from this in the future.

Ms. Harris stated she feels that personal grudges should be put aside and the board should start working together. The whole board needs to work together for the best interest of our students and community.

LIST OF BILLS

Mrs. Adams, Substitute Treasurer, presented the list of bills to be placed on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

CONSENT ITEMS

Personnel

Dr. Sparagana reviewed the personnel items as presented to be placed on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

Professional Leaves

Dr. Lindley reviewed the professional leave as presented to be placed on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

Field Trips

Dr. Lindley reviewed the field trips as presented to be placed on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

Real Estate Tax Exoneration

Mrs. Adams reviewed the Real Estate Tax Exoneration Resolution as presented to be place on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

NON-CONSENT

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. PCTV Televising Board Meetings
2. Policy 5900: Interscholastic Athletics and Co-Curricular Activities for Pottstown High School and Pottstown Middle School
3. Policy 5910: Co-Curricular Awards and Recognition for Co-Curricular Participation

NEW BUSINESS

Contract for Fairmont Ventures

Dr. Sparagana reviewed the Fairmont Ventures contract to be placed on the March 18, 2010 for board agenda for approval.

2010 Candidates for Alumni Honor Roll

Mr. Krem reviewed the Candidates for Alumni Honor Roll to be placed on the March 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

Motion to direct the Facilities Committee

Mrs. Weand made a motion to have the President of the Pottstown School board, Mr. Huss, direct the facilities committee and its chairman Robert Hartman to perform their due diligence on all activities and issues concerning building construction, reconfigurations, maintenance, repairs and renovations for the Pottstown School District as of this date March 4, 2010 until further notice. This motion is intended to enforce established policy for the Pottstown School District. All activities regarding building construction, reconfigurations, maintenance, repairs, and renovations for the Pottstown School District will have to be discussed and passed through the facilities committee before any vote can be made by the entire board to perform the building activities described above. This motion will be considered at the next regular board meeting.

INFORMATION

1. Technology Update: January 2010
2. Summary of Parent Conferences
3. Conference Report –
4. PSBA New Board Orientation Workshop April 2010

FEDERATION REMARKS

Mr. Decker thanked the board for directing the administration to look at the impact of the proposed plan and ensure that all the educational mandates are in place. He stated that the teachers are very interested in participating in any discussion or workshops to lend their knowledge about our students, their socialization skills and how they adapt. They look forward to working together with the board and administration.

ROUND TABLE

Mr. White - no comment.

Mr. Hylton - no comment.

Mrs. Wilson - no comment.

Ms. Harris - no comment.

Mr. Wausnock - no comment.

Mrs. Weand had the opportunity to tour Rupert Elementary School yesterday. She feels that after all the discussion about renovations; it is still all about the kids and the staff. She had a great day.

Mr. Hartman enjoyed the student writings tonight. He thanked the public for attending tonight's meeting and listening to the discussion. Mr. Hartman invited the public to attend the next meeting to hear their comments. He congratulated Mr. Krem on becoming the Superintendent of the Wyomissing School District beginning in July.

Mrs. Pargeon has been fortunate to be able to volunteer at her child's school. She attended the third Parent Literacy Night and again had a very rewarding experience. Mrs. Pargeon enjoyed listening to the writings this evening and is proud of the teachers and their hard work.

Dr. Lindley announced that the Cheerleaders won the competition in New Jersey and qualified for the Nationals.

Dr. Spargana was pleased with the success of the third Parent Literacy meeting. In addition to the 83 participants, they had 2 visitors from Pittsburgh who observed the meeting.

Mr. Kalis request that the board hold an executive session for litigation purposes.

Mr. Armato - no comment.

Mr. Krem attended Dr. Seuss week at all of the buildings and was glad to see various board members visiting the schools. It was an enjoyable experience.

Mr. Huss congratulated Mr. Krem on his new position as Superintendent of the Wyomissing School District and was glad he is staying until the end of June.

Mr. Huss announced an Executive Session for the Purpose of Litigation.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Ms. Harris and seconded by Mrs. Weand that the Board adjourns. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:22 P.M.

Linda S. Adams
Board Secretary