POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
FEBRUARY 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, February 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, Mr. Thomas J. Hylton, Mrs. Michele Pargeon, Mrs. Polly M. Weand, Mr. Nat White and Mrs. Julia Wilson. Absent were Ms. Valerie L. Harris and Mr. Robert H. Hartman. 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, Ms. Pamela Bateson, Dr. Robert Stevens, a member of the press, and interested citizens.

Ms. Harris entered the meeting at 7:33 P.M.

AWARDS

None.

Mr. Hartman entered the meeting at 7:45 P.M.

PRESENTATIONS

Mrs. Meck, Data Coordinator for the Pottstown School District, reported on the importance of data security and controlling the data information of the staff and students of the Pottstown School District. She presented a handout that included the various dangers in the amount of information that is exposed and practical ways to help keep data secure. The Pa. Department of Education has created an Information Management System (PIMS) for grades K to 12, identifying students through special identification numbers. This system enables the district to keep information secure on all students and staff. Mrs. Meck emphasized the importance of securing personal information.

REPORTS

Mr. Ummarino, Pottstown High School Assistant Principal, reported on the significance of the Freshman Academy. This group consists of high school teachers who collaborate to help ninth grade students transition to the high school while increasing student achievement. A tutorial group has been implemented this year to teach study skills, time management and reading comprehension and to improve test taking and summarization skills. Since establishing this group, the failure rate has dropped dramatically.

Mrs. Mcoy, Acting Director of the Career and Technology Department, spoke on the nine programs offered to the Pottstown students. These programs interact with the community. She provided a hand out depicting activities and achievements performed by the students. Mrs. McCoy reported on changes and additions to the Business Technology program.

MINUTES

Mrs. Adams presented the minutes of the regular meeting held on January 21, 2010 to be placed on the February 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee

Mr. Wausnock reported the Finance Committee will meet on Thursday, February 11th.

Facilities Committee

Mr. Hartman reported the Facilities Committee will meet on Monday, February 8th.

Montgomery County Legislative Representative

Mrs. Pargeon was unable to make the meeting last month. She is planning on attending the February meeting.

PSBA Representative

Mrs. Pargeon reported the Keystone Exams have been passed. She reminded the board that PSBA is asking for school boards to adopt the Standard Code of Conduct and School Governance. The board agreed to place the resolution on the February 18th board agenda for board approval.

Montgomery County Intermediate Unit Representative

Mr. Hartman reported that the main point of the meeting on January 28th was focused on the Transportation Study. The MCIU has been looking at the individual school districts costs for busing versus establishing a multi-county consortium. Preliminary results indicate approximately a 32% reduction in costs. He will bring back additional information to the board as more details are reviewed. Mr. Hartman is now serving on the Facilities Committee for the IU, replacing a committee member who is no longer in office.

Community Relations Committee

Mrs. Pargeon reported that Mr. Pollock of PCTV, has agreed to waive the $1,200 broadcasting fee. PCTV proposed a fee of $2,400 per year for taping two board meetings and run meetings every Thursday night. Mrs. Pargeon will present this proposal to the Finance Committee. Other topics discussed at the committee meeting were: 1) selecting school activity photos to be placed on next year's school calendar and publishing the photos on the web site and 2) conducting a photo session with the Executive Team and Act 93 Employees to be posted on the website. The photos would include a brief biography focusing on "Why you are proud to be part of the Pottstown School District". Mr. Armato reported several donations made to the school district: 1) approximately 30 Vanguard volunteers came out to help paint the basement

at the high school, 2) Diamond Credit Union donatd $2,500 to our Reading Olympics program, 3) Mr. Michael Van donated a computer, printer and appropriate educational software to an 8th grade student that was identified by the school principal and teaching staff for outstanding achievement and effort and 4) Mr. Van also donated three wooden office desks to the middle school. Mr. Armato reported that the Pottstown High School Alumni is now on-line with several hundred alumni currently enrolled. The newly designed Pottstown School District website was rolled out on January 25th. A survey is available for comments.

Ms. Lampe announced that "Dancing with The Pottstown Stars" will be the first fundraiser for the Foundation For Pottstown Education. Ms. Lampe introduced Sue Seanor who provided details of the fundraiser.

Co-Curricular Activities Committee

No report.

Technology/Curriculum Committee

Mrs. Wilson reported the committee met briefly on January 12th. At that time, Mrs. Wolfe informed the committee that the phone upgrade was 99% complete. The committee discussed the sustainability options for the Step by Step contract that will expire at the end of this school year. Mrs. Wilson stated the committee viewed a DVD on "Driving through the Eyes of Teens". The DVD was provided by Ms. Harris and State Farm Insurance. The committee would like to see if there is a way to get this material available to our students, possibly through a health course. The next meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2009.

Policy Committee

Mr. White reported that the committee had considered a new policy proposal but after discussion has decided to table it indefinitely.

Personnel Committee

Ms. Harris stated the Personnel Committee will meet on February 11th.

Neighborhood Schools Committee

Mr. Hylton reported on the recent visit to Springford School district to observe their geothermal heating system. Mr. Hylton noted that the engineer is more important that the architect when considering installing a geothermal heating system.

Mrs. Weand voiced her concerns about the maintenance costs for a geothermal heating system. Springford stated their costs are approximately $100,000 including the need to hire skilled personnel to maintain the system.

Mr. Hartman commented that the geothermal system installed at the Springford facility came about from an overall plan for renovations throughout the whole building. He noted that their buildings aged from five to twenty years old. A sprinkler system was also installed. Mr. Hartman recommended that the Pottstown School Board set a comprehensive plan of all facilities, not just pieces.

Mr. Hylton suggested the school district would need approximately an additional $120,000 to install a sprinkler system. The sprinkler system could be installed at the same time as the geothermal heating system.

Mr. Hylton stated the school district received bid proposals to replace windows at Rupert and Edgewood Elementary Schools from several architects on February 2nd. The costs to provide architectural services covered a wide range from $20,000 to $80,700. Crabtree Rohrbach submitted a request for proposal at $20,000. Mr. Hylton recommends the board accept the Crabtree Rohrbach proposal.

LIST OF BILLS

Mrs. Zahora, Treasurer, asked the board to check into the cost of remediation classes as a result of the recent change in administering the Keystone Exams. She was pleased to hear that the busing consolidation would be a significant cost savings to the school districts. Mrs. Zahora recommended the board proceed with caution when considering Mr. Pollock's proposal for broadcasting the monthly meetings. She asked the board where the money was coming from to pay the architect for the window replacement project.

Mrs. Zahora presented the list of bills to be placed on the February 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

Mr. Huss indicated that the Finance and Personnel meetings scheduled for February 11, 2010 would be executive sessions.

CONSENT ITEMS

Personnel

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

Mr. Hartman asked Dr. Sparagana if the new human resource person to be hired in 4b. would report to Mrs. Adams. Dr. Sparagana stated the position reports to him and he will work in cooperation with Mrs. Adams.

Professional Leaves

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

Field Trips

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

Policies

Mrs. Adams stated that Policy #113.2 is a second reading and is to be place on the February 18, 2010 board agenda for approval. Policy #5900 and Policy #5910 will be moved to Unfinished Business on the February 18, 2010 agenda.

Bid Awards

Mrs. Adams reviewed the bid awards to be placed on the February 18, 2010 board agenda for approval.

NON-CONSENT

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mrs. Pargeon will ask the Finance Committee for their recommendation for PCTV to Televise Board Meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

INFORMATION

1. A+Communicaations History Information Sheet
2. A+Communications Activity Report Information Sheet
3. A+Communications Activity Report
4. Pottstown Pride: Fall 2009
5. Letter from Mr. Thees to all Board Members and a copy filed in the Secretary's office as addendum #2009-2010-053.

FEDERATION REMARKS

Mr. Decker urged the board to focus on education and not unnecessary repairs.

ROUND TABLE

Mr. White – no comment.

Mr. Hylton – no comment.

Mrs. Wilson offered her comments on a recent email from a concerned citizen. She has no animosity toward any board member and hopes they can all work together. She has been in favor of keeping the five elementary schools but is no longer sure it is possible. There is no money and it would be fiscally irresponsible to spend money that doesn't have anything to do with improving the education of our students.

Ms. Harris had the pleasure of attending a session at Lincoln Elementary School which she found very informative and interactive. She was glad to hear that a Personal Finance class is being offered to the high school students.

Mrs. Pargeon attended the 2nd Parent Literacy night. The meeting was very informative and offered good strategies to implement at home. She thanked Mr. White for attending the meeting. In response to the public comment, Mrs. Pargeon stated she has no animosity toward any board member. She is all in favor of Neighborhood Schools but has observed at Lincoln Elementary the number of students that are driven to school. Mrs. Pargeon stated she will not vote for replacing the windows at Rupert or Edgewood. This renovation will not have a positive impact on the children's education.

Mr. Hartman thinks the Career and Technology programs are great. He supports Mr. Decker's comments. The board needs to listen and look at the educational needs of the students. The board should never pass something without knowing where the money is coming from. Mr. Hartman stated he needs to know how the window replacement project will be funded before he will consider doing anything.

Mrs. Weand voiced some objections to a recent tour taken by Mr. Hylton, Ms. Harris and an historical architect of the Rupert School's floorboards. Why were other board members not invited? Mr. Huss promotes open governance. Where is the open governance? Was the reason for this tour to see what else could be done? Mrs. Weand was concerned why the taxpayers should pay for historical renovations.

Mr. Hylton responded stating that the Rupert Elementary School building was declared eligible for the historical registry in 2001. The Historical register enables tax credits for the properties. Mr. Hylton asked Mary to join the tour only for her recommendations as an historical architect.

Ms. Harris noted that no additional things were discussed on the tour relative to historical renovations.

Mr. Hartman expounded on the correct procedure that all board members should follow. The Superintendent is the point of contact. The Superintendent would then make a contact to the proper committee. That is how it is suppose to work. School boards should not micro manage. Mr. Hartman understands that a mistake was made by the new school board members. He does not expect this to happen again.

Mr. Wausnock – no comment

Dr. Sparagana reported on the success of the 2nd Literacy night. He was pleased to report that three children's baskets were donated by some of the teachers as raffle items.

Dr. Lindley thanked Mrs. McCoy and Mr. Ummarino for their reports.

Mr. Krem was unable to attend the 2nd Parent Literacy night due to a prior comment with the Borough Council. We invested $1000 to participate in the ULI summit. There is stimulus money earmarked for the borough, but it must go through the borough. They provided an update on the action to bring in PAID. There will be a Memorandum of Understanding available for the March Committee of the Whole meeting. The committee is not to be staffed with any elected officials.

Mr. Huss addressed the arguing that has taken place at the past few board meetings. The bickering needs to stop. The board has a lot of work ahead. All future requests to visit any school building must be made to Mr. Krem. Mr. Krem will then coordinate the visit with the school principal. Mr. Huss confirmed there will be a Special Voting meeting for the purpose of selecting an architect for replacing the windows at Rupert and Edgewood Elementary Schools on Monday, February 8th at 7:00 P.M. in the board room of the Administrative Building.

Mr. Huss announced there will be an Executive Session following the regular board meeting for the purpose of potential litigation.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Wausnock and seconded by Mr. Hartman that the Board adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:23 P.M.

Linda S. Adams
Board Secretary