POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
AUGUST 7, 2008 – 7:30 PM

The Committee of the Whole meeting of the Board of School Directors of the Pottstown School District was held on Thursday, August 7, 2008, at 7:35 PM in the second floor LGI room of the Pottstown Middle School. The following board members were present: Mr. Edwin Edwards, Mrs. Amy Francis, Mr. Richard Huss, Mrs. Michele Pargeon, Mr. Dennis Wausnock, Mrs. Julia Wilson, and Mr. Nat White. Absent were Mr. Robert Hartman and Mrs. Judith Zahora. Also present were Superintendent of Schools, David Krem; Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Reed Lindley; Director of Education and Human Resources, Dr. Jeffrey Sparagana; Business Administrator, Mrs. Linda Adams; Solictor, Mr. Stephen Kalis; Mrs. Gail Cooper, Mr. Robert Giering, Mr. Matthew Moyer, Mrs. Kathy Marchek, a member of the press and interested citizens.

MR. HARTMAN ENTERED THE MEETING AT 7:36 PM.

AWARDS
No awards.

MINUTES
Mrs. Adams indicated the minutes from the July 24, 2008 Regular Meeting were amended as requested by Mrs. Pargeon.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Personnel Committee
Mr. Wausnock stated the committee will not meet next Tuesday, August 12th and there are no issues to report at this time.

Finance Committee
No report.

Facilities Committee
Mr. Hartman reported that a facilities committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 11, 2008.

Montgomery County Legislative Committee
No report.

PSBA Representative
No report.

Montgomery County Intermediate Unit Representative
Mr. Hartman indicated a July meeting was not held. A meeting is scheduled for the third week in August and he will update the Board after the meeting takes place.

Community Relations Committee
Mrs. Wilson was asked by Mr. Armato to report that this coming year will mark three important anniversaries for our district. Rupert Elementary School will celebrate its 80th year, the Pottstown Middle School will celebrate its 75th year, and the annual Thanksgiving Football game against Owen J. Roberts School will mark the 50th year of this tradition. Mr. Krem added that this coming June, the Pottstown School District will conduct the 129th commencement ceremony which designates our district to be one of the oldest public schools in the state. He indicated the need to start preparations for the 130th celebration which will take a good year to plan.

Neighborhood Elementary Schools Project

Mrs. Pargeon reported that a meeting was held last evening, August 6, 2008, which she attended along with Mr. Edwards, Mr. Krem, Mr. Wausnock, and Mrs. Wilson. After discussing all the scenarios regarding the elementary schools, the committee is still divided and has no recommendation to make to the Board. Mrs. Pargeon stated she is willing to compromise to keep everyone happy. Mrs. Pargeon stated the subject is open for discussion.

Mr. White prepared a statement to the Board sharing his disagreement with the Superintendent's Commission on Redistricting from 2006 which favors a three-school option. He believes that new construction is almost twice as expensive as renovating. He stated the smaller size of the school is more relevant than smaller class sizes. He feels a school construction project which eliminates our treasured elementary buildings will destroy the integrity of our neighborhoods. He strongly believes the five school option is cheaper and is the best option for our taxpayers.

Mrs. Francis stated that Mr. White's statement was rhetoric and it is what she hears each time he reads a statement. She wanted Mr. White to agree that small class size is the most important thing, not small school sizes. Mr. White believes small school size is more important than small class size.

Mrs. Pargeon indicated she and others have read "Dollars and Sense". We really only have two walkable schools; Lincoln and Franklin, Barth is 50% bussed and Edgewood is 46% bussed. The initial costs for three versus five buildings may be higher but operating costs should be lower. This will leave two properties available for sale to contribute to supporting the tax burden. She thanked Mr. White for his time to write his statement and read it.

Mr. Edwards stated that after spending and hour and a half discussing which option should be voted on, his mind is set and he is ready to vote. Mr. Edwards encouraged the Board to not play the numbers game. He stated that all the studies are great but do not necessarily pertain to our community of a five square mile urban setting. He feels the studies regarding other districts are not relevant to our district and the Board should care about the uniqueness of our community.

Mr. Hartman was surprised to learn the selection of schools to be eliminated in a three school option. He would like to see Barth remain and a four school option be considered. He asked the Board to consider addressing the needs of the administration building and maybe move the administration staff to Edgewood along with keeping the warehouse there. He said when the Jefferson building was closed it affected the neighborhood.

Mrs. Francis asked if the discussion was to decide the schools or just the number of schools.

Mr. Huss stated that the Board needs to stay focused on either three or five schools which will be voted on at the next meeting then we can discuss other issues. Nothing will be decided this evening.

Mr. Edwards indicated the board needs to stay focused on the number of buildings, three or five with no mention of which buildings.

Mr. Huss agreed the board needed to stay focused on three or five buildings to be voted on at the next regular board meeting. After the vote on the number of buildings, the board would then enter into discussions on what buildings to close.

Mr. Hartman suggested the Board consider a configuration of kindergarten through sixth grade at our elementary buildings. Originally, our district housed kindergarten through sixth grades in the elementary schools, the middle school holding grades seven through nine and the high school grades ten through twelve. He feels the Board needs to think about this before moving

forward with any construction or renovations because this is the only time we can take a look at this possibility.

Mr. Edwards appreciated Mr. Hartman's comments concerning moving sixth grade back to the elementary schools and ninth grade back to the middle school, but is interested in what the Administration thinks about the issue.

Mr. Krem indicated that sixth grade in the middle school is currently configured to be a school within a school and ninth grade is set up as a ninth grade academy. He does not believe the same education can be provided to the ninth graders at the middle school as can be provided at the high school. If sixth grade is moved back to the elementary schools and the board gives serious consideration to class sizes of approximately 21, you may be over building and may need to build up not out.

Mrs. Pargeon indicated that it was not necessary to reconsider sixth grade at the elementary schools and ninth grade in the middle school as Administrators had previously been asked and their recommendation was not to support moving the grades. The remaining board members were in agreement.

Mrs. Francis shared her support of an Early Childhood Center. She believes we need to start very early to plant seeds and foundations as children pass through each grade level. She feels it would be a huge mistake by the Board to take this piece out of the process and children and parents will loose a lot of what they really need which is to know how to interact with the School District. She is only willing to reconsider pulling sixth grade back into the elementary schools if an Early Learning Center is reconsidered.

Mrs. Wilson stated the Board needs to focus on smaller class size. She is concerned if the Board chooses the three school option, it will require additional classrooms and salaries would be very costly to the taxpayers. She stated the importance of educating families regarding the education of their children.

Mrs. Francis agreed with Mrs. Wilson and indicated this leads back to the need for an Early Learning Center to teach both students and parents. An Early Learning Center addresses birth through 4K and taking that piece out of the equation is a mistake. We will lose a lot of what the parents and children need in our community.

Mr. Wausnock doesn't need to hear any more as he has already made up his mind and is prepared to vote in two weeks.

Mr. White asked how Mr. Hartman's four building proposal might impact voting at the next meeting. He asked for clarification of the process.

Mr. Kalis, the board parliamentarian, explained that a motion must be made by a board member, a second to the motion must be made by another board member, the motion is then open for discussion by board members and at the conclusion of discussion, a vote is taken. The motion passes or fails and additional motions can be entertained. If a second is not made for the motion, there is no discussion or a vote.

<u>Co-Curricular Activities Committee</u>
Mr. Hartman reported that Mr. Huss, Mrs. Pargeon, Mr. Nat White, Mr. Stephen Rodriguez, Mr. Jeffrey White and Mrs. Adams went to the Governor Mifflin School District to see their practice and stadium fields with the newly installed artificial turf. After meeting with a School Board Member and the Co Curricular Director of Governor Mifflin, they stated that the artificial turf was initially expensive. They believe in the long run, it will save the district money as the turf only needs to have the carpet changed every fifteen years. The artificial turf resembles grass-like fibers and the only up-keep is to "brush" the turf regularly. He would like the Board to consider artificial turf for our district as it will benefit the facilities side and it offers community

use all evening long. He also reported that sport and band practices start on Monday, August 11, 2008.

Dress Code Policy/School Uniforms
Mrs. Francis stated a meeting is to be held on August 18th with the cluster to discuss a plan for assisting needy students in acquiring uniforms. Mr. Krem, Mr. Armato, Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Francis will attend the meeting. There have been no questions received by any board members relative to the policy to be voted on later at this meeting.

Technology/Curriculum Committee
No report.

Liaison with Borough Council and Economic Oversight Committee
Mr. Edwards had his first meeting this morning with the Borough and he is getting his feet wet. The meeting outlined 43 main objectives of the strategic plan and 23 objectives are in motion. He shared the zoning at the airport is not an issue as it meets the FFA guidelines. He stated the Borough met with Penn Dot to discuss the Hanover Street Bridge and plans for its improvement. The Borough is looking at the redevelopment of Industrial Drive and the plans to build a new Kiem Street bridge with the old bridge to remain as a pedestrian bridge. Mr. Edwards explained the success of the homeowner's initiative. A passenger train line is being considered and the passenger trains study will be available in the beginning of October.

LIST OF BILLS
Mrs. Adams presented the list of bills to be approved at the Regular August 21, 2008 Board meeting.

CONSENT ITEMS

Personnel
Dr. Sparagana reviewed the personnel items to be placed on the Regular August 21, 2008 Board meeting agenda for approval.

Dental Coverage For Act 93/Support Staff
Dr. Sparagana indicated the board will be asked to vote at the next meeting on a change in dental carriers for non-union employees which will provide better coverage at a reduced cost.

POLICY 1700: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
Mr. Krem answered Mrs. Francis questions regarding the Web Master reporting to the Community Relations Director. He stated he will provide a monthly report to the board showing web activity.

School Attendance Officers
Mr. Krem reviewed the school attendance officers to be placed on the Regular August 21, 2008 Board meeting agenda for approval.

Policy 7300: Transportation Of Students
Dr. Lindley indicated the policy is being revised and will be provided in the board packet for the regular board meeting. We would like to have the policy approved prior to the start of school. He requested action to be taken at the Regular July 24, 2008 Board meeting.

Special Education Contracts
Mrs. Adams presented contracts for special education services for the 2008-2009 year to be approved at the Regular August 21, 2008 Board meeting.

ASG Security Change Orders
Mrs. Adams presented the change orders from ASG Security to install security in the new modular classrooms and be approved at the Regular August 21, 2008 Board meeting.

Settlement of 2006 & 2007 Per Capita And 2006 & 2007 Occupational Tax Duplicate
Mrs. Adams presented the Settlement of 2006 & 2007 Per Capita and 2006 & 2007 Occupational Tax Duplicate to be approved at the Regular August 21, 2009 Board Meeting.

Student Accident Insurance
Mrs. Adams reviewed the Student Accident Insurance for the 2008-2009 school year to be approved at the Regular August 21, 2008 Board meeting.

School Physicians And School Dentists
Mrs. Adams presented the school physicians and school dentists for the 2008-2009 school year with no increase in fees to be approved at the Regular August 21, 2008 Board meeting.

NON-CONSENT
Mr. Krem presented Policy 6182: School Attire and School Uniform Policy with action to be taken this evening.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS
No unfinished business.

REPORTS
No report.

INFORMATION

1. A+ Communications Activity Report – Mr. Armato
2. PEAK Article – Mr. Armato
3. Partnership Summit – Mr. Armato
4. Partners in Public Education Letter – Mr. Armato
5. Montgomery County District Attorney Town Meeting – Mrs. Adams

HEARINGS FROM PATRONS
Hearings from the patrons are limited to Policy 6182: School Attire and School Uniform Policy.

Tammy Moore stated she spent money at the end of the season last year on clothes for her son to wear to school this year. She questioned the Board as to when he would be able to wear these clothes with the newly passed uniform policy. She stated it is costing her more money now to purchase uniforms. She stated that if there will be consequences to students who do not wear uniforms, the parents should be penalized and not the student.

Jennifer Green said she is a special education teacher in a different school and while she agrees uniforms are good in certain settings, it is not needed at the elementary school level. She feels the policy inhibits freedom of expression and she is frustrated as a parent and an educator. She stated if public education is free, then the district should reimburse parents for uniform expense.

Theresa Daywalt stated the purchase of uniforms didn't cut costs for her. She feels her daughter needs a cardigan sweater for the cooler months and it will cost her $44.00. She could have purchased multiple items of clothing at Wal-Mart for that price. She feels there will still be issues with the haves and have nots as the Wal-Mart generic uniforms are completely different than those purchased at Schuylkill Valley which have the embroidered logo. Students will see who has what and they won't see past the uniform. She feels children should express themselves and be individuals and uniforms will suppress that freedom. She feels we need to teach children to respect each other and not worry what is on their backs.

ACTION
It was moved by Mrs. Francis and seconded by Mrs. Pargeon that Policy 6182: School Attire and School Uniform Policy be approved.

Mr. Hartman stated the uniform policy was the second biggest issue at the last election and he feels requiring parents to purchase uniforms is taking it to extremes. The costs parents will have and the time it will take for teachers to enforce the policy will take away from educational time. He stated he could not support the policy the way it is set up. He stated the Board votes on policies which the Administration must follow and he would like to see it enforced the way we had it.

Mrs. Francis stated that Mr. Hartman could have called her at any time with his questions but she never heard a word. Mr. Hartman stated he objected to parts of the policy. Mrs. Francis stated the policy has no intention of punishing children in early grades but reminded him how the response to older children changes but positive reinforcement is first applied. Mr. Krem stated that their will be different treatment for an elementary student and their parent versus an eighth grade student who has a uniform and won't wear it. Mrs. Francis reminded Mr. Hartman that the committee is working with the Cluster and administrators to find a way to assist students in need.

Mrs. Francis called the question and it was seconded by Mrs. Pargeon that Policy 6182: School Attire and School Uniform Policy be approved as presented and a copy be filed in the Secretary's office as addendum #2008-2009-08.

Upon roll call, the vote was recorded as follows: Mr. Edwards: aye; Mrs. Francis: aye; Mr. Hartman: nay; Mr. Huss: aye; Mrs. Pargeon: aye; Mr. Wausnock: aye; Mrs. Wilson: aye. Ayes: seven. Nays: one. Absent: one. Motion carried.

FEDERATION REMARKS

Mrs. Marchek believes a universal letter is needed to address the first offense of the uniform policy rather than it being addressed differently by individual teachers. There would be too many interpretations and variances in delivering consequences if left to individual teachers. The universal letter could be placed in the homework book.

ROUND TABLE

Mrs. Pargeon stated her child wore generic uniforms from Wal-Mart all last year and she has a family of five and a dog. She stated she cuts corners by shopping in thrift shops and Wal-Mart. She wants her child to express herself academically, artistically and musically. She is glad the Board passed the policy. She was glad that the public came out to express their concerns and she hope they can see the big picture. She reminded the Board that there will be a meeting at the Borough Hall on September 25, 2008.

Mr. Krem stated the number one request presented to Mr. Armato was the need for a logo patch for generic uniforms. The Board approved a patch and ordered 1,000. He feels they are stunning and almost identical to the embroidered logo by Schuylkill Valley. The patch is an iron-on patch and is very inexpensive, costing approximately one dollar. The patches will be available in all buildings and are transferable.

Mr. Huss stated that he and David Garner, of the Borough Hall set up a joint meeting scheduled for Thursday, September 25, 2008 at 7:30 PM at the Borough Hall. He asked that attendance be indicated to Mrs. Coleman. Any items you wish to have put on this agenda should be sent to his attention.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Wausnock and seconded by Mrs. Francis that the meeting adjourn. All members present voted aye. The Committee of the Whole meeting was adjourned at 9:28 PM.

Linda S. Adams
Board Secretary