POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
March 31, 2011 - 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 31, 2011 at 7:30 PM in the second floor LGI room of the Pottstown Middle School with President Richard C. Huss presiding. Upon roll call, the following members were present: Ms. Valerie Harris, Mr. Robert H. Hartman, Jr., Mr. Thomas J. Hylton, Mrs. Michele Pargeon, Mr. Dennis Wausnock, Mrs. Polly M. Weand, and Mrs. Julia Wilson. Absent was Mr. Nat White... Also present were Superintendent, Dr. Reed Lindley; Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Jeffrey Sparagana; Board Secretary, Mrs. Linda S. Adams; Solicitor, Mr. Stephen Kalis; Mr. John Armato, Ms. Terri Lampe, Dr. Angela Tuck, Mr. Robert Giering, Mr. Stephen Rodriguez, Mrs. Gail Cooper, Mr. Scott Ware, Mrs. Norma Jean Weatherly, a member of the press, and interested citizens.

AWARDS

Mr. Moyer introduced the Rupert Elementary Writing Award winners:

K-5 - Michael Gardner
1st Grade - Kira Nihart
2nd Grade - Andrew Lue
3rd Grade - Jacob Eagle
4th Grade - Kyle Taylor
5th Grade - Morgan Kelly

COMMUNICATION

Dr. Lindley read a letter he received from CSMI expressing their interest in possibly pursuing elementary charter schools in four of the five elementary buildings in Pottstown. Dr. Lindley explained the pending state legislation which would allow a school district to start their own charter school. The CSMI letter and Dr. Lindley's remarks are attached to the minutes.

REPORTS

Mrs. Adams presented the minutes of the regular meeting held on March 17, 2011 to be placed on the April 14, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

HEARINGS FROM PATRONS OF THE SCHOOLS

Mr. Leflar was pleased that the School Board has a process to pursue payment of delinquent taxes through the Sheriff Sale process. He indicated he represented the "Code Blue" organization and read a statement asking the Board to remove a School Board Director for manipulating and interfering with the decision making process of the Board President's Task Force on Facilities. Mr. Leflar cited "improper conduct" as outlined in School Code Section 406.

Mrs. Zahora agreed with Mr. Leflar and called for the dismissal of the School Director. She agreed that the conduct of the School Director demonstrates an undermining of the purpose of the Board President's Task Force on Facilities. She voiced her concerns that the content of the paid public advertisements are

one sided and just barely factual. Mrs. Zahora is interested in knowing what the costs are for the charter school and noted that CSMI was not interested in all five elementary school.

Mrs. Francis agreed with the recommendation for the dismissal of the School Director. She believes the paid advertisements and supplement were intentional attempts to sway the community. Mrs. Francis supports open discussion with the opportunity for all sides to be heard. She asked the Board to discuss ways to stop these attempts that are hurting the community.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee

Mr. Wausnock stated that the Finance Committee will meet on April 7th as an Executive Session at 7:15 pm due to the impact to personnel. He requested that all Board Members attend. The time was changed from 7:00 pm to 7:15 at the request of Ms. Valerie Harris.

Facilities Committee

Mr. Hartman reported on key items discussed at the March 14th Facilities Committee meeting.

- Policy 707: Use of Facilities and Rental Rates was turned over to the Policy Committee.
- Additional cameras at the High School were installed outside the restrooms.
- Stadium projects (card access, track recoating and cost estimates for lightning) are In process.
- Bid to recoat foam roofs at Edgewood and Franklin is being sent out.
- Middle School gutter replacement and roof painting is anticipated to be completed in 2010-2011 as a capital project.
- Tennis Court – proposal to place a bubble over 4 of the courts; allows year round usage at no cost to the district.
- Guaranteed Energy Savings Project – 3 companies are being interviewed and a recommendation will be brought to the Board for approval at the April 14th meeting.

PSBA & MC Legislative Committee Representative

Mrs. Pargeon reported on budget cuts and tuition vouchers discussed at the March 17th Montgomery County Legislative Committee meeting. The Governor's proposed cuts in education will affect the Pottstown School District by $297/per child in comparison to Lower Merion at $30/per child. She talked about several House Bills that are currently being introduced and worked on:

- HB 1201 – setting up Chapter 12 regulations for required physical education per week
- Representative Warren Kampf is introducing legislation to release school districts from the Prevailing Wage mandate
- SB 904 - provisions for Cyber and Charter Schools
- SB798 – provisions for a prototypical school facility design
- SB 537 requiring 2/3 vote for school boards to raise property taxes
- Multi-bill package for mandate relief

Mrs. Pargeon reported the PSBA is introducing a mandate relief package (FREE + INITIATIVE) that would give more flexibility to the school boards. She reminded the Board of the deadline to submit proposals for the 2012 platform. Mrs. Pargeon volunteered to work on a proposal with Ms. Bateson and Dr. Lindley to cap or limit attorney fees for special education due process cases. Mrs. Pargeon reviewed the PSBA Code of Conduct for Members of PA School Boards emphasizing "service to public education".

She expressed her belief that a Pottstown School Board Director has failed in his duties as a school board member. Mrs. Weand stated her support for Mrs. Pargeon's statement.

Policy Committee

Mrs. Pargeon reported that the Policy Committee is reviewing policies regarding school volunteers and signage advertising. The Use of Facilities and Co-Curricular policies will be ready to bring to the Board after the April 12th Policy Committee meeting. Mrs. Pargeon indicated, as stated in Policy 004 Section 6, a School Board Member can be removed from office by a petition signed by 10 voters.

Montgomery County Intermediate Unit Representative

No report.

Community Relations Committee

Mrs. Pargeon reported on several information items occurring in the district during the past several weeks.

- a recent newspaper article opposing school vouchers and supporting education in the Pottstown School District
- Career & Technology Automotive Veteran's Car Restoration featured on Channel 10
- Facebook link corrections.

She reminded the Board Members of upcoming events taking place in the district. Mrs. Weand added the First Suburbs will be making a presentation on April 14th in King of Prussia at the Mascaro Building. Mrs. Adams read a report submitted by Mr. Armato regarding recent events taking place in the district.

Co-Curricular Activities Committee

Mr. Hartman reported that the Co-Curricular policies were finished up and turned over to the Policy Committee. The School Volunteers policy is being reviewed by the Principals and will be submitted to the committee for their review. He reported on the successes of the various Co-Curricular sports.

Technology/Curriculum Committee

Mrs. Wilson reported on the topics discussed at the March 25th meeting. Mrs. Wolfe updated the committee on the keyboarding pilot program taking place in the elementary schools. Mrs. Wolife is looking into costs for scanning files stored in the Administration basement. Mrs. Wilson reported on an upcoming Assembly, "Crash 1-O-1" scheduled to take place prior to the prom. The committee was given updates on the Treasures Reading Program. Mrs. Wilson talked about some creative ideas to obtain classroom supplies for the elementary social studies.

Personnel Committee

Mrs. Weand reported that some of the Lincoln University student teachers have expressed interest in student teaching in the Pottstown School District next school year. The Personnel Committee is seeking volunteers to provide housing for the student teachers during the 2011-2012 school year. Ms. Harris stated she is aware of a community member interested in offering housing for a Lincoln University student teacher.

LIST OF BILLS

Mrs. Zahora presented the list of bills to be placed on the April 14, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

CONSENT ITEMS

Personnel

Dr. Sparagana reviewed the personnel items as presented to be placed on the April 14, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Professional Leaves

Dr.Sparagana reviewed the professional leaves as presented to be placed on the April 14, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Contracts

Mrs. Adams reviewed the contracts for the Advanced Power Control HVAC Service Agreement, the Devereux Foundation Agreement and the Child Resource Centers Agreement to be placed on the April 14, 2011 Board Agenda for approval. Dr. Lindley reviewed the Crabtree, Rohrbach and Associates Fee Proposal not to exceed $15,000 to be placed on the April 14, 2022 Board Agenda for approval. He explained the proposal is for services to provide data to the Board President's Task Force on Facilities. Mrs. Adams recommended that the expenditures be funded from the maintenance budget.

Bid Awards

Mrs. Adams explained that the Bid Awards for First Aid General Supplies is being prepared in accordance with awarding to the lowest bidders meeting the required specifications and will be placed on the April 14, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Revised 2010-2011 School Calendar

Mrs. Adams reviewed the Revised 2010-2011 School Calendar. Dr. Lindley noted that through a collaborative effort of the Administration and Federation, all parties agreed to maintain the early dismissal for the end of the third marking period as currently scheduled.

NON-CONSENT

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Hartman asked the Board President to have the Pottstown School District's solicitor research School Code for dismissing a School Director. He stated that this information is needed in order to respond to the requests made by the public. Mr. Huss asked the solicitor to provide an overview of the School Code

guidelines for dismissing a School Director and research if the list of concerns as presented by the public is applicable to the School Code guidelines.

INFORMATION

Head Start move to High School

Dr. Sparagana spoke about a recommendation to move the Head Start Program to the High School Life Skill area. The program is currently being housed at the Administration Building in a partitioned area of the Ann Jones Room. The benefits to the move would be a more conducive learning space for the Head Start students, allowing a separate entrance for the parents and students. It would also provide an opportunity for an on-site clinic for the Career Tech Child Care Class at the High School allowing the high school students to obtain the necessary certifications.

High School Parent Conference Summary

Update of Charter School Expenditures

Dr. Lindley provided the update as an information item for Board. The 2009-2010 Charter School Expenditure Report is a breakdown of expenditures paid to the individual charter schools.

Dr. Lindley addressed the concerns of the Board regarding the Charter School Communication. He stated that it is his duty as Superintendent to let the Board know about pending issues. Dr. Lindley explained that the Charter School Communication was for the purpose of letting the Board know about a possible proposal that would be presented to the Board for a decision and the pending legislation that would allow the charter school to go beyond the Board. He did not make a recommendation to the Board. Mr. Hylton requested the Dr. Lindley provide a copy of the letter and memo to the Board outlining the events and discussions that have taken place. The Board Members discussed the importance of allowing sufficient time to further discuss charter schools at a committee meeting open to the public. The Board agreed to set up a meeting in May for all Board Members and the public to attend at a scheduled committee meeting.

FEDERATION REMARKS

Mrs. Vollmuth stated that the Federation would have serious concerns about a charter school in the Pottstown School District. She stated a charter school in the Pottstown School District would be detrimental to the Pottstown community as a whole.

ROUND TABLE

Mrs. Pargeon agreed with Mrs. Vollmuth's remarks.

Mr. Hartman enjoyed the Rupert writing awards. He complimented the JROTC for an excellent job in organizing the Military Ball. It was a fun night. He asked Mr. Huss to clarify the upcoming Task Force meeting scheduled for April 11th and April 26th. Mr. Huss explained that the April 11th meeting may need to be changed to a discussion meeting for the Task Force Members. The April 26th meeting would be a public meeting for community input. Mr. Hartman supports the legal right to publish things in the paper. He expressed his disappointment in the manner in which information was presented in recent newspaper articles. He hopes that the Task Force continues to move forward knowing that the Board Members support them in efforts to make their recommendations in the best interest of the community.

Mrs. Weand extended her appreciation to the Task Force Members for all their time devoted to the goals of the Task Force. She felt that the paid advertisements were an insult to the Task Force Members. She indicated the Board must move forward to provide the best education for the students.

Ms. Harris commended the Rupert students for their readings. She stressed the importance of keeping an open mind on the content of the information and not the source.

Mr. Hylton stated that the Board Members were directed not to speak at the Task Force Meetings. He explained that he published a supplement to provide information and ideas on facilities to the Task Force and to the public. Mr. Hylton explained that the essence of our system of government is the free flow of ideas. He asked for the addresses of the Task Force Members to insure they received a copy of the supplement. He felt it was the most cost effective way to share his ideas with the community and the Task Force Members.

Mrs. Wilson congratulated the Rupert students for their writing awards. She enjoyed the OAC Annual Dinner and complimented the Culinary Art Students for a great job. Mrs. Wilson was pleased to learn about one of the DECA Team's fund raising projects and is interested in knowing what the other teams came up with for their fund raising projects.

Dr. Sparagana spoke about the final Parent Literacy Night scheduled for April 5th. He stated that the committee will meet on April 14th to review the progress and plan for next year. Dr. Sparagana complimented the staff for a great job and is pleased to see how the parents are benefiting.

Dr. Lindley thanked the Board for sending Mr. Peronne and the Debate Team to the state competition. He thanked Mrs. Halpine and Ms. Whitehurst for their assistance with the PSSA's.

Mr. Wausnock – no comment.

Mr. Huss thanked the Board Members for not contacting the Task Force Members as he had directed. He asked Mr. Hylton why he chose not to follow the Board President's direction. Is the information the Task Force is getting from Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates, the administration, Mr. Bush, not enough information for you? Mr. Huss expressed his disappointment with Mr. Hylton's actions. He hopes that the Task Force is not too upset and makes a good decision for the students and taxpayers.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Wausncock and agreed by all Board Members that the Board adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Linda S. Adams
Board Secretary

April 1, 2011

Mr. Richard Huss, Board President
Members of the Board of Directors
Dr. Jeffrey Sparagana, Asst. Supt.
Mrs. Linda Adams, Business Administrator
Mr. Stephen Kalis, Solicitor

Dear Board Members and Colleagues:

Per your request I am reviewing my comments made at the Committee of the Whole on March 31, 2011 during my presentation of the communication that I received regarding a potential proposal for a charter school in Pottstown. Prior to reading the letter that I had received, I provided the following contextual commentary:

Since my appointment as Superintendent I have been contacted by persons wishing to discuss charter schools. I have had 3 appointments with individuals that made it clear to me that there were providers interested in moving a charter school to Pottstown.

I explained to all three that I would personally oppose a charter school (regardless of quality issues), because of the school's ability to "cherry pick" students, to attract students from various schools and grade levels, but not enough for the Board to reduce programs or staff. Solely from a fiscal viewpoint, this approach is detrimental to the School District and to the taxpayers of Pottstown. The District would need to maintain current programming, would not be in a position to close a school, etc. and the funding to the charter would further drain the District budget.

Knowing that the District is facing significant financial challenges, Mrs. Adams and I had two separate visits to Harrisburg to meet with legislators where we advocated for mandate relief. We were assured that various legislators were sponsoring such bills.

I communicated my view that Boards should have all tools in their decision-making box to adequately deal with the challenges that we face. I articulated the following themes: quality education, affordable to the taxpayers, and sustainable over time.

Subsequently, knowing that the Chester Charter School was one of the providers considering Pottstown (and knowing that this Board would need to vote on the charter should such a proposal be made; and knowing that should the Board deny the charter, the proponent has the right to have the charter approved at the state level, which would be very likely in the current environment); I felt that it was important for District leadership to become familiar with the program and

process that could potentially take root in the Borough. Therefore, I along with other central staff members visited the charter school in Chester.

On March 30, I received the letter from the CEO of the Chester Charter School as presented here and in the Board minutes.

In summary, it is my duty as Superintendent of Schools to be in a position to offer sound recommendations to the Board that enhance the quality of education, provide programming that is affordable to the taxpayers; and is sustainable over time. As we face continuing budget deficits, and deliberate on the best solution to improve the elementary schools, I will continue to seek ideas and potential solutions to bring to this Board for consideration.

The communication of the interest of the Chester Charter School has potential implications to the District and the Borough; which should be understood and debated. I clearly understand the “shock” that this letter and my comments created. However, given the potential impact of the information in the letter, I felt it necessary to communicate its contents at this time to the Committee of the Whole.

Currently, there is no decision for the Board to generate regarding a potential charter school—such decisions are required upon receipt of an actual proposal. I appreciate your thoughtful and concerned engagement with this matter.

Sincerely,

Reed Lindley

Reed D. Lindley
Superintendent of Schools

CSMI

RECEIVED
MAR 31 2011
POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

March 30, 2011

Mr. Reed Lindley
Superintendent of Schools
Pottstown School District
Administration Building
230 Beech Street
Pottstown, PA 19464-0779

Dear Superintendent Lindley:

I am writing to let you that Charter School Management (CSMI), Incorporated, is considering submitting an application for a charter school in the Pottstown School District. After considerable research and evaluation, my company has concluded that we can offer a positive benefit to the students and citizens of Pottstown based on the successful model of the Chester Community Charter School (CCCS) in Chester, Pennsylvania. Our application would be submitted in time to open a school for the 2012 – 2013 school year.

However, there is a legislation currently pending in the Pennsylvania Senate (PA Senate Bill 904) which would allow for your school board to convert existing public schools into public charter schools. If this legislation is passed, CSMI will likely offer a proposal to the Pottstown School District to manage the education of your kindergarten through fifth grade students at a considerable savings to the district.

CSMI would be able educate the kindergarten through fifth grade students (approximately 50 percent of the district's enrollment) utilizing four of the five current elementary school facilities. CSMI would make necessary upgrades and updates to the facilities at its own expense.

CSMI would set rigorous academic achievement goals for all students, and for overall school performance, to be evaluated at the end of the initial five year period as a condition of renewal of a management contract, and would follow the successful model of its schools at CCCS, building on an excellent track record of academic and behavioral accomplishment.

In addition to school improvements, CSMI would provide all kindergarten through 5th grade services, including facilities and academic management, for a fee that is less than what the Pottstown School District is currently paying to educate these students. The district could use the savings toward the education of the 6th grade to 12th grade population.

If the aforementioned legislation is passed, we would very much like to submit a formal proposal for your review, as well as that of the Pottstown School Board. In the meantime, I would welcome any discussion you might be interested in having.

I look forward to speaking with you soon. Please feel free to call me at (610) 447-0200.

Sincerely,

Vahan H. Gureghian, Esq.

Chief Executive Officer

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