POTTSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
July 7, 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, July 7, 2011 at 7:30 PM in the 2nd 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., Mrs. Michele Pargeon, Mr. Dennis Wausnock, Mrs. Polly M. Weand, Mr. Nat White and Mrs. Julia Wilson. Absent was Mr. Thomas Hylton.
Also present were Superintendent, Dr. Reed Lindley; Board Secretary, Mrs. Linda S. Adams; Solicitor, Mr. Stephen Kalis; Ms. Pamela Bateson, Mrs. Gail Cooper, Mrs. Loretta Hoch, a member of the press, and interested citizens.

AWARDS

None.

PRESENTATION

None.

REPORTS

Mrs. Adams presented the minutes of the regular meeting held on June 16, 2011 to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee

Mr. Wausnock stated that the next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 14. Dr. Lindley stated that a non-profit organization and a for profit entity have expressed interest in purchasing the Annex and/or an elementary school building, if one becomes available. He stated that these topics will be discussed at the Finance Committee meeting on July 14.

Facilities Committee

Mr. Hartman reported on several key items discussed at the June 21st Facilities Committee meeting. He stated that the Finance Committee will recommend to the Board moving the Head Start program to the high school. Other key items discussed at the June 21st Finance Committee meeting were: updates on the North Fields Project (details on the project, timeline for the project), the Guaranteed Energy Savings Project, Stadium updates (press box, fencing, card access, lighting and the concession stand), compressors on the chiller at the high school (replacements this summer) and discussion on the recent roof change orders (purchasing an infrared camera to alleviate added costs for future roof repairs).

MR. HYLTON ENTERED THE MEETING AT 7:44 PM.

PSBA & Montgomery County Legislative Representative

Mrs. Pargeon forwarded a copy of the legislative report to all the Board Members. She stated the state budget was passed.

Montgomery County Intermediate Unit Representative

Mr. Hartman reported on items approved and discussed at the June 22nd meeting: 1) approval of the director's contract, 2) rollover of salaries for all staff with no increases, 4) seek funding sources for the IU and the school districts. The next Intermediate Unit Board meeting is scheduled for August 24.

Community Relations Committee

Mrs. Pargeon reported the Open Doors Event is scheduled to take place on September 10, 2011. The next Community Relations Committee meeting will be held on August 4.

Co-Curricular Committee

Mr. Hartman reported on the topics discussed at the June 21 meeting. The committee discussed ways to recognize the Wrestling team's 500th Program Victory. He announced that a POD storage unit is being donated to the Co-Curricular football program by A.D.Moyer Lumber & Hardware. The committee reviewed the Co-Curricular budget prepared by Mr. Connors. The approved cuts enabled the continuation of the freshman program.

Technology/Curriculum Committee

Mrs. Wilson reported that the June 23 committee meeting was canceled. The next Technology/ Curriculum Committee meeting is scheduled for July 28.

Policy Committee

Mrs. Pargeon stated that the Policy Committee did not meet in June. The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for August 9.

Personnel Committee

Mrs. Weand stated that the June Personnel Committee meeting was a joint meeting with the Finance Committee. The next Personnel Committee meeting is scheduled for July 12.

LIST OF BILLS

Mrs. Zahora presented the list of bills to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval. She asked who the contact was with the Foundation, since the Director was leaving and also it the dual enrollment program still existed. Dr. Lindley indicated that a posting for a part time Director has already been made and the he and Mr. Armato would be the contact with the Foundation. He also indicated that the plan for dual enrollment to continue is still in place and shouldn't be impacted by who is the leader.

CONSENT ITEMS

Personnel

Dr. Lindley reviewed the personnel items as presented to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Professional Leaves

Dr.Lindley reviewed the professional leaves as presented to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Field Trips

Dr. Lindley reviewed the field trips as presented to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Contracts

Mrs. Adams reviewed the contracts as presented to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Hours of Operation

Dr. Lindley reviewed the Hours of Operation as presented to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Policy for Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program

Mrs. Adams reviewed the Policy for Free and Reduced Price Lunch Programs as presented to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

Student Accident Insurance

Mrs. Adams reviewed the Student Accident Insurance as presented to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

NON-CONSENT

Resolution Regarding Non-Renewal of Temporary Professional Employee

Dr. Lindley reviewed the Resolution regarding Non-Renewal of Temporary Professional Employee as presented to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board Agenda for approval.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Huss asked the Board to discuss the Board President's Task Force on Facilities Recommendation, which is to be placed on the July 21, 2011 Board agenda for approval. Mr. Huss asked each Board Member for their comments and questions regarding the Task Force Recommendation of three elementary schools (Barth, Lincoln and Edgewood) with Pre-K through Grade 5 configuration, as presented at the July 5, 2011 Board Workshop. Mrs. Wilson asked where the students would be placed during renovations. Mr. Huss stated the district would not close a building until all renovations were completed. Students would be moved out of the building as it was being renovated and placed at surrounding elementary buildings.

Mr. Hylton opposed closing Rupert. He expressed his appreciation to the Task Force members for their service. Mr. Hylton questioned the structure of the Task Force meetings and the information provided in the Task Force book. He did not agree with the staff savings as presented and believes there would not be a savings from decreased staff. He provided his account of the past several years that indicate staff increases versus enrollment decreases. He felt that a floor plan of the renovations should have been presented by the architects. Mr. Hylton stated he supports retaining 5 elementary schools and doing upgrades for approximately $13million. He felt that the Pottstown community could not afford a $30 million renovation project. Mr. Hylton quoted a newspaper article that reported a potential alternative education school in Pottstown in other words "troubled students". He asked Dr. Lindley if the district is negotiating with the Delaware Valley High School to sell them the Annex building and/or the Franklin school.

Dr. Lindley explained that some of the increased staff in the past several years was part of bringing students who were outsourced back to the district. It was less expensive to add staff than to continue to pay the Montgomery Intermediate Unit and other private sources tuition. Dr. Lindley reminded the Board that administration does not negotiate contracts in absence of Board involvement. He stated that the district and the solicitor received a letter from the Delaware Valley High School stating that "they could save the district money". He reiterated his previous statement that the administration will present to the Finance Committee information received from interested parties (non-profit and for profit) expressing interest in purchasing the Annex and a school building, if one becomes available.

Ms. Harris also saw the article in the paper that Mr. Hylton spoke about. She expressed her concern that the Task Force members may have been "hood-winked" into their decision at the expense of the students.

Mr. Hartman took exception to Ms. Harris's remark and found it insulting. He stated that the Task Force was comprised of intelligent, educated and skilled individuals. He stressed to the Board the importance of focusing on what is best for the students. The information provided to the Task Force was factual and not half-truths as published in newspaper articles. Mr. Hartman explained that the state reimbursement will not be available for the next 20 years once the district acts upon an elementary renovation project.

Ms. Harris clarified that her comment was not meant to insult the Task Force members but she is aware that data can be manipulated. She stressed it is important to utilize space properly to help maintain the tax rate and neighborhood schools.

Mr. Kalis commented on Parliamentary Procedure for the Committee of the Whole process. It is the duty of the Board President to recognize each Board Member and provide them an opportunity

to speak. All comments should be addressed to the Board President, not to individual Board Members. Once each Board Member is recognized there is an opportunity for each Board Member to speak a second time. He suggested that after the process is complete the floor be opened to Hearing from the Patrons.

Mrs. Weand was not in favor of spending $13 million to renovate the 5 elementary schools. Renovations lead to unexpected additional costs as indicated by the recent Edgewood/Franklin roof project. She spoke about the high tax rate and the difficulty to support 5 elementary schools. Mrs. Weand supports fewer schools with good environments for all the students. She supports the best education for what the community can afford.

Mrs. Wilson stated that buildings do not make a good education. The Pottstown School district already provides a good education. The community cannot afford modern buildings with all the conveniences. She suggested that families need to get involved with their children and help them.

Mr. White referred to the renovations of the Hill School and St. Aloysius. He expressed his belief that the Pottstown School District can support neighborhood schools.

Mrs. Pargeon stated her support for the Pottstown School District as a whole, not just one building. She acknowledged the excellent education the students receive in the Pottstown School District, the successes in the curriculum program and the support provided by PEAK. She stated her opposition to maintaining 5 elementary schools at the expense of the taxpayer. Taxes will continue to go up and class sizes will grow. Mrs. Pargeon reminded the Board of the driving force behind the "Renovate & Repair" publication. She stated that only one person has been responsible for keeping the community from moving forward. She is voting for 3 schools.

Mr. Wausnock – no comment.

Mr. Hartman commented that The Hill School and St. Aloysius are private schools and do not have the same mandates as public schools. He stated that an excellent education is not the problem and not pretty buildings. The important issue is to make the buildings adequate and equal for all students. He stressed the importance of learning from past mistakes, to do what is right, what is best for the students and taxpayers. Mr. Hartman asked the Board Members to look at all the information and to base their decision on what is right, not on re-election.

Mr. Hylton thanked everyone for patiently waiting for their opportunity to speak.

HEARINGS FROM THE PATRONS OF THE SCHOOLS

Julia Kummerer, 1048 South Street, asked the Board to listen to the public. Fewer elementary schools will not bring new home owners to the borough. She supports keeping 5 elementary schools.

Kim Stillwell, 1228 Center Street, expressed her disappointment with the selection of the Task Force Members. She offered her idea for selecting members for the Task Force. Mrs. Stillwell stated that administration is busing students needlessly.

Kathy Yeagle, 38 W. 5th Street, does not support closing Rupert. She urged the School Board to make some changes. Ms. Yeagle offered her suggestions on some changes that could be made including moving 4-K to the high school and selling 12 acres of Barth to a developer for town homes.

Laura Janowski, 1145 Grove Street, does not support closing Rupert. Her suggestions included moving the HUB and Annex Administration to the high school, sell the buildings to help with repairs to the elementary buildings and move registration to the middle school.

Christina Bacon, 1424 Cherry Lane, was not in favor of spending $33million for elementary renovations. She voiced her concerns about decreasing property values and the rising taxes. She suggested the administration look for other solutions that make sense.

James Wilson, 1341 South Street, supports neighborhood schools. He expressed his concern about the impact closing a school would have on families and the tax burden on the taxpayers. He spoke about parental involvement being the most important factor to a good education. He suggested that the borough renovate High Street to collect more revenue and lessen the tax burden.

Glen Williams, 891 South Street, stated that he had a petition circulating with approximately 300 signatures requesting to keep all the elementary schools opened.

Maxine Bacon, a student at Rupert, asked the Board to keep Rupert opened.

Hanna Monger, a student at Rupert, loves Rupert Elementary. She does not want it to close.

Irene Monger, 1424 Cherry Lane, presented the Board with (1 hard copy to Mr. Wausnock) CDs of a Rupert survey with 141 responses. She stated that the Rupert survey results differed from the Task Force On-Line survey. She supports the reduced scope of renovations for $13 million.

Jeannie Howard, 1497 Sunset Drive, does not support closing schools. She spoke about the physical and economical impact on the students and the community. She felt that the reduced scope was a more reasonable option.

Danielle Butterfield, 1106 Queen Street, does not support closing Rupert. She asked the Board Members to put aside their personal feelings for each other and consider each other's suggestions.

Rick Adams, 1481 Cherry Lane, questioned if the Task Force report was putting the cart before the horse. He would like to see a well thought out process.

Mike Stillwell, a student at Pottstown Middle School, stated that he felt the Task Force On-Line Survey was not communicated to the students. He stated that approximately 73 responses were from residents without students in the district.

John Johnson, 626 Grant Street, supports 5 elementary schools and fix what has to be fixed. He stressed the importance for the community and the school board to work together.

Tammie Scavello, 1015 South Street, does not support closing Rupert. She voiced her concern about the negative impact on the children and children with disabilities. She is in favor of a reduced scope of renovations.

Philip Thees, 63 S. Evans Street, thanked the Task Force for their hard work. He does not support renovations that are done hap-hazard. Anyone who thinks you can properly modify all 5 elementary schools for $13 million – then I have a bridge to sell you. Also, you can not cover any unexpected expenses (asbestos in the buildings).

FEDERATION REMARKS

Mr. Decker thanked the Board for all the time and effort they are putting into the facilities recommendation. "Speaking for myself and not as a Federation Representative but as a concerned individual", he volunteered to serve as a Task Force member for the purpose of what is best for the students. The Task Force members acted with incredible integrity and he felt good about the process. He doesn't feel good about having the same conversation he had when he started with the district 14 years ago concerning what to do with the elementary schools. Everyone is talking about Pottstown needing to do something - status-quo does not work. We need to be innovators, courageous and look at the facts.

ROUND TABLE

Mr. White appreciated the turnout and the comments. He stated that several Board Members have maintained their commitment to neighborhood schools.

Mr. Hylton – no comment.

Mrs. Wilson appreciated everyone's opinions and suggestions. She expressed her support for all Pottstown students. Mrs. Wilson stated she honestly does not know what is best. She thanked everyone for all they have done.

Ms. Harris thanked everyone who attended and participated in the meeting. She stated that she did not seek election for personal gain. Her decisions focus on what is in the best interest for the majority. She continues to support 5 schools.

Mrs. Pargeon stated that she cannot support maintain 5 schools. Her decision is based on the vast amount of research and information she has learned from her 3 ½ years of serving as a Board Member and serving on numerous committees. She supports what is best for all students.

Mr. Hartman thanked everyone for coming out tonight. He stressed the importance of the decision this Board must make. He asked the Board Members to review all the information and to vote on your conscience, not what platform you ran on.

Mrs. Weand supports what is best for the students and spending tax dollars wisely. Lesser renovations will not sustain the buildings for the next 20 years. Mrs. Weand stressed the importance to act now to keep the buildings viable. It is not the 50's any more. Future budgets may require cutting programs, we need to keep things fair for all students and spend money wisely.

Mr. Wausnock expressed his appreciation for everyone's input. He looks forward to the vote on July 21. It is his hope that this will be the last time he will need to vote on this topic.

Dr. Lindley stated that the administration has remained neutral throughout the Task Force process. The Task Force was asked to focus on three criteria: 1) Quality Education, 2) Affordability to the taxpayer and 3) Sustainability for the next 25 to 30 years. Dr. Lindley stressed the need to put to rest the notion that this issue is guided from down town. Having gone through this year's budget and the agony of people who lost their jobs or almost lost their jobs – maybe people can "hear" we need updated elementary schools and we need to reduce the operating budget. We need to rise from the ashes of

mediocrity and articulate a vision that helps leaders in positions of authority. What ever decision is made – there will still be problems going forward. We need a greater tax base with in the 5 square miles of the borough. All the problems won't be resolved at the next meeting. We need leadership from this community and I am asking for your support in that.

Mr. Huss recognized that bickering causes division. He affirmed that the administration remained neutral during the Task Force process. Many sources provided the information requested by the Task Force. Mr. Huss stated that all the buildings need upgrades. The Task Force recommendation for 3 schools is the second time this recommendation has been presented to a Board. Mr. Huss thanked the Task Force members for all the time and effort they have dedicated to the process. He expressed his appreciation for an excellent job.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Wausncock and seconded by Mr. Hartman that the Board adjourns. None opposed. The meeting adjourned at 10:39 pm.

Linda S. Adams, Board Secretary