

**SOUTHERN COLUMBIA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**800 SOUTHERN DRIVE**  
**CATAWISSA, PA 17820**

The February 14, 2005 Board Meeting of the Southern Columbia Area School District Board of Directors convened in the High School Library at 7:30 p.m. with President Karl Meyer in charge of the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all.

President Meyer welcomed everyone, followed by a roll call of Board Members.

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Amanda Bell-Perry  
Elsie Bittner  
Hugh Jones

Linda Kreischer  
Karl Meyer  
Ronald Savitski (*Absent*)

Richard Swank  
Michael Yeager (*Arrived 7:38 p.m.*)

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Dr. Alan J. Lonoconus, Superintendent; Joseph Springer, Business Manager; Tresa Britch, Board Secretary; Richard J. Roberts, Solicitor; Roy Clippinger, Pat Shultz, James Becker, Paul Caputo, James Dunkelberger and Barbara Lombardo, Administrators; district residents and members of the media.

**AGENDA HEARING PERIOD**

President Meyer announced that all Personnel items on the agenda, as well as two Fiscal items would be considered action items. Mrs. Thelma Helwig, Roaring Creek Township Tax Collector, addressed the Board regarding the compensation for tax collectors. She spoke on behalf of the district tax collectors and noted that they were asking for an increase of \$1.00 per bill mailed.

Dr. Lonoconus reported that he was given a letter by Mrs. Bell-Perry on behalf of Mr. Charles Porter concerning the bleacher project. He read the letter aloud (**See Appendix 1**).

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Lonoconus' report included the following topics:

- 1.) Dr. Lonoconus requested an executive session following the meeting to consult with counsel regarding potential litigation regarding a student.
- 2.) He reported that he and Mr. Yeager attended a PSBA seminar, Tools for a Successful Team of 10. He noted that it was an excellent seminar and he would like to utilize some of the information at the next Board retreat in the spring. Mr. Yeager noted that he was impressed with how Board members evaluate themselves. It was recommended that a Board should set two or three goals each year and use those goals as an evaluation tool. A code of conduct was also emphasized. President Meyer asked Dr. Lonoconus to begin organizing the next retreat.
- 3.) The administrators will be discussing the school calendar and a draft will be included with the next Friday Letter.
- 4.) The administration wants to take a proactive approach to the new federal nutritional guidelines pertaining to the district's food services. Additional funding is available through federal grants. The additional funds would help provide training to food services personnel regarding the new guidelines and promoting healthier eating habits. School and community

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support would be encouraged. The Home Economics, Health and Physical Education teachers would be involved as well. Over the past few years, the amount of soda in the vending machines has been lowered and more fruit juices and water have been added. There is currently a 60/40 ratio of fruit juices and water to soda. With the Board's approval, Dr. Lonoconus would pursue the funding. President Meyer noted that it was a great idea and that he should proceed.

5.) Dr. Lonoconus referred to a poster that was on display and noted that a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student, Kiley Blass won the grand prize in the PPL Safety Awareness poster contest. The contest was a statewide competition. The student received PPL stock as the grand prize.

6.) Both the girls and boys basketball teams have qualified for district playoffs. Both teams will play on Wednesday evening at the Danville High School. The girls will face Line Mountain at 6:00 p.m. and the boys will play Hughesville at 7:30 p.m. The wrestling team is preparing for Sectionals, which will be held on Saturday at Shamokin High School.

7.) A few more FBLA members were finalists in Web Page Design and Multi-media. Mr. Yeager asked if the Board could see some of the students' work. Mr. Caputo replied that there is an active link on the district web page.

8.) Mrs. Shultz distributed a handout (**see Appendix 2**) and gave a report on the projected staffing needs in kindergarten through 4th grade. She noted that it is too early to determine exact needs due to the upcoming kindergarten registration. It is also too early in the school year to make decisions about retention and a lot of students are registered over the summer. She would like to increase one teacher in 4th grade. The last two years there have been 25 and 26 students in a classroom. If a 5<sup>th</sup> teacher would not be moved to 4<sup>th</sup> grade, this year would begin with 27 and 28 students per classroom. Mrs. Shultz is hoping that the kindergarten numbers are low enough to allow for an extra teacher in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Kindergarten retention has increased since Pre-1<sup>st</sup> was eliminated. If an additional teacher would be needed, there is no empty classroom available.

9.) Mr. Becker distributed a handout (**see Appendix 3**) containing some historical data regarding student enrollment in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. His professional opinion is to keep five teachers each in grades 5 and 6. He would like to keep the 5<sup>th</sup> grade numbers low because it is a transition year for students. They begin preparation for the PSSA and their classes are no longer self-contained. He noted that he and Mrs. Shultz have to work together and since there are no extra classrooms, he may have to give up a teacher.

10.) Mr. Dunkelberger reported that the special education numbers should remain about the same as the current year. He does not predict that any additional teachers will be needed. He said that he doesn't know if any aides would be needed because he doesn't know who might move into the district.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Curriculum - Elsie Bittner, Chairperson, reported that the 11<sup>th</sup> grade PSSA writing test is scheduled for February 15, 16 and 17. Students in 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade will take a 1-day field test in writing. The test will take 100 minutes, 80 of which will be spent on writing. The senior retesting results have been received. One-third improved to proficient in reading and math and one-half improved to proficient in writing. The committee discussed an integrated math program for grades 6 through 11. Students in K-5 will still receive instruction in Saxon Math. Three days of professional development for teachers and several information sessions for parents will be needed regarding integrated math. A fourth year of high school math could be included in the curriculum to provide an option for students who need an additional math course. Special education students who are not meeting proficiency level will be monitored more closely. A fourth year of high school science was discussed. There are enough courses, but an additional teacher may be needed.

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Out of the 143 responses to the letters regarding students not being proficient, one-half of the parents declined any type of remediation. The letters were sent to parents of students in grades 4, 6 and 9. All of the new teachers are doing well with the many aspects of their professional practice.

Mr. Yeager noted that the proposed required credits would rise from 23.5 to 25.5 and would be part of the graduation requirements. Dr. Lonoconus noted that the majority of students already take an additional math course.

President Meyer asked what the district's responsibility would be in regards to the students whose parents reject remediation. Mr. Clippinger responded that the extra help is offered, but no one can be forced to take advantage of it. Fortunately, the grant allows the district to offer the extra help. The new grant, however, is not programmed to allow extra help at the high school level. He noted that money is available through Classroom Plus, a program where parents can apply to the state for assistance for tutoring. The program allows for a \$500 certificate per child per year for students in grades K through 9.

President Meyer asked if raising the passing grade has made an impact on students. Mr. Caputo noted that there were 240 failing grades in the 2<sup>nd</sup> marking period. Of those failing grades, approximately 100 were in the 50-60 percent range. Mr. Caputo noted that he would develop a report for the next meeting. President Meyer asked if any seniors were in danger of failing. Mr. Caputo responded affirmatively and added that they still have a semester to remediate. The passing grade was raised to give students extra motivation.

President Meyer asked how long it would take to get integrated math up and running. Mr. Clippinger replied that it would be introduced to the middle school next year. There are several factors involved in the timeline, the budget being one of them. Mrs. Bittner asked if special education students were integrated for all subjects. Mr. Dunkelberger replied that students are not included for all subjects, but more so than in the past, and the recent legislation will require even more inclusion.

Facilities & Services - Michael Yeager, Chairperson, reported that the committee met during the previous week and six Board members were present, as well as a large group from the public. They discussed the bid from E & D Specialty Stands, Inc., which is on the agenda as an action item. The recommendation from the committee is to accept the base bid and Alternate 3. The "Regardless Projects" have been pretty well completed for this year. Projects for next year include the high school gym roof, heating ventilation and air conditioning and auditorium sound. The committee toured the auditorium to get more insight on the upcoming projects. The new law regarding food services was discussed and whether or not it encompasses all food services and not just the cafeteria.

Finance - Karl Meyer, Chairperson, reported that the committee met in conjunction with the Facilities Committee. They discussed the budget. The ten percent cut in athletics will remain. They will maintain the same cuts as last year pertaining to staff. They will be looking at health insurance costs and state subsidies. An Act 72 community presentation would be scheduled. The presenter they were hoping to use is on sabbatical and is not available, but it was decided that the administrators could offer the presentation. The information session was tentatively scheduled for March 29, 2005. Dr. Lonoconus noted that district residents are invited to attend an Act 72 presentation by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which will be held in Danville. More information will follow.

The committee also discussed the possible increased remuneration for tax collectors and the Berkheimer delinquent tax collection costs.

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**ITEMS – TREASURER’S REPORTS**

**ITEMS – MINUTES/INVOICES**

President Meyer asked for clarification on the following checks and Mr. Springer provided explanations unless otherwise noted:

#10735 for Tuition Reimbursement - According to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, teachers are reimbursed for graduate course work. In this case the district paid 80 percent and the individual was responsible for the remaining 20 percent.

#10342 for Channing Bete - Mrs. Lombardo explained that this vendor offers a lot of pamphlets, brochures and information on topics such as bullying. This check covered supplies for the district’s anti-bullying program.

#10351 for Student Claim - This check was for reimbursement to a student for vandalism, which was done by someone outside the district. The individual responsible paid restitution to the district. This transaction was basically a pass-through of restitution funds.

#10363 to Alan Lonoconus for Travel Expense - Dr. Lonoconus explained that this check covered a series of travel expenses, such as trips to CSIU, PSBA trainings, etc.

#10379 to Stock Market Game of PA - Business and Gifted students participate in the Stock Market Game annually. This check covers the cost of participation.

#10389 to Bloomsburg YMCA - Mrs. Lombardo explained that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant partnered with the Bloomsburg YMCA to provide the after school Enrichment Program currently being offered.

#10650 - to Bureau of Education and Research - Mr. Clippinger explained that the check covered teachers’ conferences.

#10676 - to Elizabeth Dowd - Mr. Dunkelberger explained that Betsy Dowd provides creative dramatics for the Gifted Program.

#10708 - to Norristown Area School District - Dr. Lonoconus explained that he and Mr. Caputo were unable to attend the entire Walk-Through training at Southern, but were able to complete the training at Norristown. This check covers the cost of that training.

District resident, Mr. Dave Latorre questioned check #1035 to Columbia-Montour Area Vocational-Technical School (CMAVTS). He wanted to know the total paid to CMAVTS and how many students are sent there. Mr. Springer replied that the total payment is approximately \$450,000 annually and 38-40 Southern students attend the Vo-Tech school.

Mr. Latorre also asked for clarification on check #10370 to PA Virtual Charter School. Dr. Lonoconus explained that the district must pay the tuition if a parent chooses to send their child to an online charter school. Mr. Springer noted that there are six such students in the district. Five of them attend the aforementioned school and one attends an online charter school in Chester County.

**ITEMS – FISCAL**

On a motion by Yeager and second by Swank, the base bid for Stadium Bleachers at the Southern Columbia School was awarded to E & D Specialty Stands, Inc., at a cost of \$494,900.00 and Alternate 3 at a cost increase of \$41,250.00 was accepted, pending receipt of approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (**Bid Tabulation per Exhibit A**). Prior to the vote, Mrs. Perry asked the reason why Alternate 3 was so much higher than the other bids. Several people responded that it was due to the low base bid. Dr. Lonoconus was unable to attend the Finance/Facilities Committee meeting and missed the discussion. He asked why the Board

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decided not to pursue funding from the Booster organization for the press box. President Meyer responded that the Board decided it was time to move on and get the project done without further delay. Dr. Lonoconus noted that the Booster organization had offered in the past to help pay for the addition to the press box. Mr. Latorre noted that this area just does not supply the kind of funds needed for a project like this. He is concerned that a fundraising campaign would not work. He noted that the project has already been scaled down from the original plan. Dr. Lonoconus referred to Mr. Porter's letter regarding the elimination of staff and its relationship to the bleacher project and noted that there is a difference between the Capital Reserve Fund and the General Fund. Mr. Springer explained that whether the bleacher bid is accepted or rejected, positions would have to be cut regardless. The Capital Reserve Fund can only be utilized for projects and capital improvements. The General Fund is used for operating costs. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative roll call vote.

On a motion by Swank and second by Bell-Perry, an increase to the compensation for tax collectors from \$2.00 per bill mailed to \$2.50 per bill mailed, effective with the 2006-2007 fiscal year was presented for approval. Prior to the vote Dr. Lonoconus noted that the tax collectors handle about \$4 million in revenue. He didn't know if the Board should take the chance of losing quality people for this amount of money. It was determined that the increase would cost the district about \$3,000. Mr. Jones asked if there have been similar requests to the county. Mr. Springer replied that the Columbia County reimbursement decreased. It went from a percentage of collections to \$2.00 per bill mailed. Mrs. Bittner noted that a few months ago, the Board said no to the soccer team and now they may give the tax collectors \$3,000. She noted that the Board is supposed to be for the students. Mr. Swank noted that the tax collectors are also working for the students. By roll call vote: 2-Yes, 5-No (Bell-Perry and Swank voted Yes) the motion did not carry.

**ITEMS – PERSONNEL**

On a motion by Kreisler and second by Bittner, changing Kenneth Goodman, Jr. from Substitute Transportation Aide to Part-time Transportation Aide (working approximately 3.5 hours per day) effective February 15, 2005 (pending completion of all employment requirements), was approved. His salary and benefits are as per the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Bittner and second by Swank, the resignation of Barbara Derr was accepted from the position of Regular Run Bus Driver effective January 31, 2005. Ms. Derr has been with the district since December 17, 1998. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Jones and second by Swank, the resignation for retirement of Carol Reich was accepted from the position of High School Secretary effective July 1, 2005. Mrs. Reich has been with the district since July 19, 1976. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Kreisler and second by Jones, adding the following individuals to the 2004-2005 Substitute List effective February 15, 2005 (pending completion of all employment requirements) was approved:

- Linda Hidlay (Aide/Cafeteria/Clerical)
- (List of names continued on page 6)*

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- Amelia Schetroma (Cafeteria)
- Mary Kroh (Cafeteria)
- Laura Potter (Cafeteria)
- Alanna Burkhart (Elementary)

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Swank and second by Bittner, adding the following individuals to the 2004-2005 Substitute List effective February 15, 2005 (pending completion of all employment requirements) was approved:

- Erin Haley
- Kathryn Meluskey
- Amanda Merrill
- Amber Reese

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

## **ITEMS - POLICY AND PROGRAMS**

### **BOARD COMMENTS**

Mr. Yeager asked how the Sociology course was going. Mr. Caputo replied that the class is preparing for the first test. There are six students enrolled. Mrs. Bell-Perry observed the class. Mr. Caputo noted that it felt great to get back into the classroom.

### **RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC**

Mr. Latorre noted that the district should realize some savings due to the retirement of some long time employees. President Meyer noted that savings from individuals that are retiring is taken into consideration during the budget process.

District resident Blaine Madara commended the Board on researching the bleacher project. He noted that he felt the Board made a mistake on comparing the tax collector issue to the junior high soccer issue. The tax collectors provide a service for the district and they will be getting the same rate for eight years. He also noted that the comments regarding Southern Columbia sending students to Vo-Tech to retain their "single A" rating is way off mark. Southern has one of the lowest number of students attending the Vo-Tech school.

District resident, John Conaghan, asked if there are any early retirement incentives for long-term teachers. Mr. Springer responded that in the latest contract there is a retirement incentive, but it is only in effect for the term of the contract.

District resident, Richard Gotshall asked if everyone that applied for the Homestead Exemption would get money back regardless of Act 50. President Meyer replied that no Homestead Exemption money would be sent to tax payers if the district remains in Act 50. Solicitor Roberts noted that PSBA is contemplating initiating litigation against the Commonwealth because of the uncertainty of Act 71 and the fact that the gambling money may not be available until 2007 or later. It is inequitable to compel districts to make a decision at this time. They would like to have the date set back.

Mr. Latorre asked how many school districts there are in Pennsylvania. Dr. Lonoconus replied that there are 501 public districts. Mr. Latorre noted that it is interesting that there are only a few Act 50 districts out of that number.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Bell-Perry and second by Swank, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.  
The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tresa J. Britch  
Board Secretary