

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

The August 15, 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

Richard Swank

Michael Yeager

OTHERS PRESENT

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

AGENDA HEARING PERIOD

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lonoconus' report included the following topics:

1.) He thanked the Board for allowing the administrators to go on retreat. They got a great deal accomplished without the daily interruptions.

2.) Mr. Springer explained that the administration was under the impression that the draw down deadline for the loan was August 31, 2005, however the draw period is based on the settlement date of January 19, 2005, making the draw deadline actually October 19, 2005, therefore the motion to draw the remaining balance has been eliminated from the present agenda. The Board can discuss uses for the remainder of approximately \$54,000. A motion will be included on the agenda for the second meeting in October.

3.) Dr. Lonoconus reported that the individual involved in the 911 call during the last Board meeting is doing well. He will not be playing football this season, but will be involved with the team at some level. He noted that there were some concerns from Board members regarding the response time following the 911 call. After contacting several authorities, he found that the Department of Health sets up how the 911 call system works. The 911 Center has to call Catawissa Ambulance first because the school is located in Columbia County. Ralpho Township is the second contact if there is no response from the first contact. He commended both organizations, because their service has always been excellent in the past. He also commended the coaches and students for their actions prior to the arrival of the emergency personnel.

4.) Landscaping around the sign in front of the high school and in a portion of the District Office parking lot has been completed. Mr. Jones asked if fencing would be installed at the stadium for safety purposes. Dr. Lonoconus replied that they would be looking into that matter.

5.) PSBA is holding a seminar regarding the next step for Act 72 and asked if any Board members would be interested in attending. Mr. Swank, Mr. Jones, Mrs. Kreischer, Mr. Savitski, Mrs. Bittner, Dr. Meyer and Mr. Yeager expressed their interest.

Board Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2005

Page 2

6.) The buses have all passed inspection and the buildings will be ready for the opening day of school thanks to a great deal of hard work on the part of our Buildings and Grounds staff.

7.) An executive session was held prior to the meeting to discuss personnel items.

President Meyer asked for clarification on the fence, which was mentioned earlier in the report. Dr. Lonoconus explained that it would be fencing to close in the area underneath the bleachers. Mr. Jones noted that he was referring specifically to the space in front of the bleachers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Activities - Linda Kreischer, Chairperson, reported that no meeting was held this month and that future meetings would be held at 7:00 p.m. instead of 6:30 p.m.

Curriculum - The Professional Development Plan meetings have been held in place of the Curriculum Committee meetings.

Policy - Hugh Jones, Chairperson, reported that there was no meeting due to the executive session. Dr. Lonoconus contacted the superintendents of Bloomsburg, Central and Berwick school districts regarding an endowment fund and academic hall of fame. Bloomsburg runs their programs by procedure. They do not have a written policy. Central has something in writing for their endowment fund but nothing for their academic hall of fame. He has not yet received a reply from the Berwick Area School District. It seems that each district does it differently.

CSIU - Linda Kreischer had nothing to report other than the Board Briefs.

Vo-Tech - Dr. Lonoconus reported that when the superintendents last met, they discussed the possibility of all local School Boards holding their reorganization meetings at Columbia-Montour Area Vocational-Technical School. They felt it would give Board members a chance to resource with Board members from other districts.

TREASURER'S REPORTS

On a motion by Yeager and second by Swank, the Treasurer's Reports were presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

MINUTES AND INVOICES

On a motion by Bittner and second by Savitski, the minutes of July 11, 2005, were presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Jones and second by Savitski, General Fund invoices in the amount of \$263,147.07 and Capital Reserve Fund invoices in the amount of \$17,898.76 were approved. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – FISCAL

On a motion by Yeager and second by Savitski, authorizing the payment of the following invoices from the Capital Project Fund and a draw on the General Obligation Note of 2005 to fund the payment was presented for approval:

- E&D Specialty Stands #3 - \$124,444.00
- Guyette Communications #1 - \$44,160.00

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Board Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2005

Page 3

On a motion by Kreischer and second by Bittner, accepting additional state and federal funds into the 2005-06 budget as follows was presented for approval:

- 21st Century Learning Grant - \$189,579.78 (carryover funds) - Funds to be used in accordance with the grant application for the summer program and community learning center activities.
- Communities That Care - \$45,733 - Funds to be used for the Family Center, enhancing the IST and after-school tutoring programs, providing parenting and anti-bullying programs and for substance abuse prevention.
- ACCESS - \$8,275.00 - Funds to be used for technology upgrades and professional development for the Special Education Department

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Jones and second by Yeager, awarding the bid for the 12-Passenger + 1-Wheelchair School Bus to M. A. Brightbill Bodyworks for \$37,225.00 [new 2004 model] (**bid tabulation per Exhibit A**) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Kreischer and second by Swank, establishing a student activity account for Junior High Cheerleaders, Tracy Clossen, advisor, was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – PERSONNEL

On a motion by Yeager and second by Jones, employment of Instructional and Non-instructional Substitutes (pending completion of all employment requirements) for the 2005-2006 school year (**per Exhibit B**) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Bittner and second by Kreischer, the acceptance of the resignation of Joseph C. Shirvinski, Jr. from the position of 2nd Grade Teacher effective August 15, 2005, was presented for approval. Mr. Shirvinski has been with the district since August 1996. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Jones and second by Swank, employment of Jessie M. Pollock for the position of Elementary Teacher effective August 21, 2005 (pending completion of all employment requirements) at Step 3 of the Bachelor's Salary Schedule (\$35,258) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Kreischer and second by Swank, acceptance of the resignation of Stacy A. Krum from the position of Registered Nurse effective August 19, 2005, was presented for approval. Ms. Krum has been with the district since September 2000. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Yeager and second by Savitski, a Childbearing/Childrearing Leave for Polly Sharrow (Kindergarten Teacher) beginning on or around October 31, 2005, and ending on or around February 7, 2006 for a total of 58 days, was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Board Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2005

Page 4

ITEMS – POLICY AND PROGRAMS

On a motion by Savitski and second by Swank, the list of Frequently Used Assessments (Per Exhibit C) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Yeager questioned the progress of the revision to the nutrition program. Dr. Lonoconus explained that they were waiting for students to come back. He also noted that the Food Services Director does not work on a full-time basis during the summer months.

President Meyer asked for an update on class sizes. Mrs. Shultz and Dr. Lonoconus provided the following figures, which were based on moving a 6th grade teacher to 2nd grade:

Grade	Enrollment	Class Size(s)
1 st	97	19/20
2 nd	117	19/20
3 rd	104	20/21
4 th	110	22
5 th	99	19/20
6 th	105	26/27

Dr. Lonoconus did not have the exact figures for the 7th and 8th grades, but noted that they were similar to last year. Mr. Caputo reported that 9th and 10th grades each had enrollments of 110, 11th grade had 123 and 12th grade has 120. Mr. Savitski asked what the 2nd grade class sizes would be without moving a 6th grade teacher. She replied that they would be 24 and 25. The 2nd grade group had seven teachers in Kindergarten. In first grade, there was a decrease of one teacher due to retention, but the size increased again this year. The current 6th grade went all the way through with large class sizes except for 5th grade. Dr. Lonoconus noted that it has always been the philosophy of the administration to maintain smaller class sizes in grades K-4. It is proven that the students are more successful as they get older. The Accountability Grant funds actually target smaller class sizes. Historically, more staff has been put into the K-6 area to accommodate the “bubble.” Dr. Meyer asked for confirmation that all classrooms are filled in the elementary building. Mrs. Shultz provided confirmation and added that some teachers are even doubling up in classrooms. Dr. Lonoconus noted that some are in spaces, which were not meant for classrooms. He added that the bottom line is how would you pay for another teacher? Mr. Swank noted that there are a lot of teachers ready for retirement. They will be leaving at a higher step on the salary scale and new teachers would be coming in at a lower step. He didn't feel it was right to ask a teacher to completely change what they are doing. He added that he was contacted by parents and students concerning the loss of a 6th grade teacher. He asked, “How is that helping No Child Left Behind?” Dr. Lonoconus replied, “That's why it was done.”

Mrs. Kreisler noted that classrooms have to be conducive to teaching. Classrooms cannot be placed in storage rooms. Dr. Lonoconus noted that the average class size for 6th grade would be 26 to 27 students, but those numbers could change due to pullouts. Some could be lower and some could be higher. The numbers could also change throughout the year due to newly identified students. The class sizes are always fluctuating. President Meyer stated, “It appears that an administrative decision has been made in the best interest of the students, with what we

Board Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2005

Page 5

have.” Mrs. Shultz noted that she doesn’t want to see high class sizes at any grade level, but when backed into a corner with no money for an extra person and no room, they will do the best they can do.

Dr. Lonoconus noted that on one hand the Board is telling the administration to stay fiscally responsible, but now is asking for an additional teacher. He noted that they would be looking at \$50,000 plus that the Board and administration would have to come up with. Mrs. Kreischer said that she would like to see it happen, but the Board has to be responsible concerning finances and classroom space. Mrs. Bell-Perry asked what it would take to change a storage room into a classroom. Mrs. Shultz noted that a coat rack would be needed, as well as teacher storage. They could probably find enough desks. She noted that they have already faced unforeseen expenses due to moving a 6th grade teacher into 2nd grade. Mrs. Bell-Perry recommending using the remaining money on the General Obligation Note to renovate a room. Solicitor Roberts explained that the Resolution would have to be changed, the district would have to advertise, and it would have to be submitted to the Department of Community and Economic Development, which could be done, but would take considerable time.

Mrs. Kreischer asked for Mr. Springer’s input. He noted that the budget goal for this year was met. The Board went beyond the budget with the help of the state to hire a secondary English teacher, so they are already ahead of the head count that was budgeted. He noted that there would be some savings due to retiring teachers, but a new teacher would be hired long-term, not just for the current year. There are costs other than salary that would increase each year, such as health care and retirement. Adding another staff member would make budgeting difficult, as the district is still limited under Act 72.

RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC

District resident, Ms. Lori Wilson, noted that she attended the meeting because she was a concerned parent of a child going into 6th grade. Mr. Swank asked her after hearing what she heard, if she still felt the same way. She said that she still had concerns, but after hearing Mr. Springer’s report she could understand the financial difficulties an additional teacher would create.

Mrs. Mary Ann Marrara, 6th Grade Language Arts Teacher, noted that this is her 28th year in 6th grade and she feels that 6th grade students are a second priority. She also noted that the 6th grade is departmentalized. If one teacher leaves, they will have to regroup. She doesn’t want to see the team dismantled because she feels that they do a great job. She would like to see a 2nd grade teacher hired. President Meyer asked if there is a plan. Dr. Lonoconus replied that Mr. Becker is addressing the issue. He spoke with the 5th and 6th grade teachers. Mr. Visnosky is being asked to move to 2nd grade. Ms. Connie Lupold, 6th Grade Science Teacher, teaches all of the 6th grade students regardless of exceptionalities. The numbers become significant for her. She feels she will be less effective if her class sizes are higher.

Mr. Visnosky, current 6th Grade Reading Teacher, reported that his main concern was that he was hired because there were only 4 teachers in 6th grade and they were each teaching reading. The district has spent a lot of money for his training, textbooks, novels and reference materials in an effort to build up the reading program. If he leaves 6th grade, he feels that money will be lost.

District resident, Ms. Deirdre Girardi, noted that her main concern was how the change would affect learning. She cares about the quality, not the class sizes and feels that the quality will suffer greatly.

Board Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2005

Page 6

District resident, Deanna Ciocco, asked why they would allow the 6th grade students to suffer? President Meyer noted the best use of resources available would be at 2nd grade. The Board is not saying that 6th grade is less important.

District resident, Mr. Jim Cecco, stated that he was concerned about a subject such as math being taught by a Language Arts teacher, but now he sees that it would not be the case.

District resident, Ms. Judy Mowery, noted that she has heard that the 6th grade program is great. She wants the Board to find the money to keep it intact.

District resident, Mr. Chris Gedman, suggested that a teacher be added now and the teacher structure be reevaluated when someone retires. Dr. Lonoconus explained that the administration does that every time someone retires.

Mr. Savitski asked for Mr. Clippinger's input. He noted that the administration has made a difficult decision because of limited resources. He couldn't come up with a place to put a classroom. Dr. Lonoconus noted that the administration would do their best to make it happen if the Board decides to hire an additional teacher, however, they have to remember that they are still operating under Act 72 and have to ask, "What will be the opportunity cost?" The budget process will be much earlier this year.

Mrs. Marrara noted that Title 1 Reading is available for grades K-4. The reading support is gone in grades 5 and 6. Students are accustomed to remedial reading in K-4 and the regular classroom teachers have to meet their needs in grades 5 and 6. Mrs. Bittner asked if there was enough time before the start of school to hire a new teacher. Mrs. Shultz noted that she had extremely strong candidates that she had to turn down for the two previous elementary positions. She asked the Board to consider allowing her to select a finalist from the original pool of candidates. Mr. Swank commented that he had hoped she would say that. Solicitor Roberts noted that the position would still need to be advertised. President Meyer said that she should do whatever it would take to get the position filled with a qualified individual if the Board decides to move in that direction.

Mr. Yeager referred to the comments of Mr. Visnosky and noted that the district has not lost the money they invested in Mr. Visnosky's training. He still has the knowledge and he can teach others. The more he teaches, the more he learns. Mr. Yeager noted that both of his children had great experiences in 6th grade. He doesn't know if the district can afford to hire another teacher. He is confident that the 6th grade teachers would rise to the occasion. He realizes that it is a very difficult situation. He asked what would be lost if a new teacher were hired. Dr. Lonoconus noted that they would have to work through the budget process. Mr. Yeager noted that if the district doesn't fix some of its liabilities, they are open to the possibility of lawsuits. Mr. Swank noted that he feels the smaller class sizes are important in grade K-12. Mr. Savitski commented that they should just get it over with and hire a new teacher and worry about it later.

Mrs. Shultz asked the Board to make some strong decisions on class sizes and set some guidelines, so problems like this would not have to be dealt with on a last minute basis. She had reported the enrollment figures several weeks ago and the figures were high at that time. President Meyer assured her that the Board promotes smaller class sizes.

On a motion by Kreisler and second by Bell-Perry, a motion to adjourn the meeting and return after a brief intermission was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m. The Board reconvened at 9:44 p.m. with all members present.

Board Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2005

Page 7

On a motion by Kreischer and second by Bittner a motion to authorize the administration to advertise for an Elementary Teacher was presented for approval. By unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried. (Mr. Savitski voted first.)

Mrs. Mowery thanked the Board for making the decision to hire a new teacher.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Jones and second by Swank, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tresa J. Britch
Board Secretary