

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

The September 12, 2005 Board Meeting of the Southern Columbia Area School District Board of Directors convened in the High School Library at 7:51 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 (*Absent*)
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; Pat Shultz, James Becker, Paul Caputo and James Dunkelberger, Administrators; a large number of district residents and members of the media.

AGENDA HEARING PERIOD

President Meyer announced that all Personnel Items and Fiscal Item J on the agenda would be considered action items.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lonoconus' report included the following topics:

1.) Solicitor Roberts announced that an executive session was held prior to the meeting for personnel reasons to discuss the school nurse position and an administrator.

2.) He reported that there would be a motion on the next agenda regarding the district paying for a home school evaluator to conduct an independent evaluation of a family's home school program. Mr. Yeager asked why it would be the district's responsibility to provide the evaluation. Dr. Lonoconus responded that the family has failed to meet the requirements of an appropriate home school program and they have failed to have their program reviewed by an evaluator. The district has sent letters to the family requesting that the students be enrolled in school. In lieu of going to a hearing at a cost of approximately \$3,000, the district would obtain an independent evaluator. The cost would be much less than a hearing, and the family agreed to abide by the findings of the evaluation. Mr. Yeager questioned the State's role in the process. Dr. Lonoconus replied that the State sets the requirements, but does not provide an evaluator.

3.) September 17th has been designated as "Constitution Day" by the Federal Government. Schools are required to teach students about the constitution on either Friday, September 16 or Monday, September 19th. The district will comply with the requirement.

4.) There have been some changes in bus scheduling due to students being enrolled and withdrawn at the last minute. All bus runs will be reviewed to ensure efficiency.

5.) Mr. Chris Brown, Industrial Technology Teacher, received information from the Pennsylvania College of Technology regarding equipment they are offering to donate. They are offering two industrial grade lathes, which would be great additions to Southern's Industrial Technology program.

Board Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2005

Page 2

6.) Baseball Coach, Mr. Randy Young, addressed the Board regarding the possibility of using the remaining funds from the stadium project to make improvements to the Baseball field. Mr. Yeager agreed that the baseball field has been in disrepair for many years. He received many complaints from fans regarding its condition. The fence is a liability and could collapse easily under pressure. The infield has a bad slope due to erosion and wind damage. District resident, Mrs. Brenda Webb, noted that the field looks dilapidated. District resident, Mrs. Sharon Gregorowicz, noted that it would be nice to have some bleachers for the fans. District resident, Mr. Mike Mychak, noted that the Board was concerned with having enough fans to fill the stadium bleachers, and added that any amount of bleachers would be appreciated at the baseball field. President Meyer reported that the Finance and Facilities Committees discussed the condition of the field and plans for repairs at their last meeting. Mr. Young noted that their biggest enemy might be time. If the Board delays a decision, it will be too late to lay sod. District resident, Henry Hynoski, noted that the infield is a liability. A hard hit ground ball can easily become airborne if it hits the slope. When he was on the Board, they discussed the possibility of moving the baseball field down to the lower field area. President Meyer explained that it was discussed and was part of the referendum, but it is not financially possible at this time.

Mr. Mychak questioned the Board's plan for repair of the field. Mr. Yeager replied that the plan included the following: improve drainage, remove subsoil, replace infield with sod, replace fence with 6' chain-link fence and make a warning track. District resident, Ms. Chris Gregorowicz, asked how much time would be needed. Mr. Springer replied that it would take four weeks for the bidding process, and additional time to have the project completed. Mr. Yeager asked what could be done to speed up the process. Mr. Springer replied that an amendment to the resolution could be approved to specify how the remaining funds would be spent. Solicitor Roberts noted that a public notice regarding the resolution would have to be advertised three days in advance of Board action and a notice of adoption of the resolution three days following Board approval. If the Board decides to move in that direction, a public notice will be advertised and action can be taken at the next Board meeting.

Mr. Young noted that the team and the Booster organization would raise the money for the safety padding for the fence. Mrs. Kreischer commented that she is in favor of the improvements, but would not want to see parking on the field once the improvements are completed. Mr. Swank asked how early the team would be on the field in the spring. Mr. Young replied that it depends on the weather, but they usually are on the field during the first or second week in March.

District resident, Jack Payne, expressed concerns about the road to the lower fields, especially around the sharp turn. The road needs improvement to avoid a serious accident. Minor accidents have already occurred. More visibility is needed around the turn. District resident, Richard Rhodes reported that his son and another student were traveling around the turn when they met a district employee in a golf cart traveling in the opposite direction. His son rear-ended the vehicle he was following when it swerved to avoid the golf cart. Several residents suggested that the brush be cleared to allow more visibility around the turn. Dr. Lonoconus noted that it would be addressed.

Mr. Rhodes asked if the road presents a safety problem on the playground during recess. Mr. Springer noted that traffic is not permitted on the road during school hours other than maintenance personnel.

Mrs. Bell-Perry requested an immediate executive session to further discuss a district administrator. The Board entered into executive session at 8:27 p.m. and returned at 8:56 p.m. All Board members were present with the exception of Mrs. Bittner.

Board Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2005

Page 3

Boy Scouts representative, Mr. Russell Devore, reported that every year they try to recruit as many area youth into Boy Scouts as possible. They have request approval for representatives to go into the classroom for a few minutes at the end of the day and give a brief presentation and hand out flyers. Mrs. Shultz noted that for years, they have not allowed any group to come into the classrooms to present information and take away academic time. Groups are allowed to set up tables and distribute information during Sneak Peak night and the Fall Festival. She will allow flyers and announcements to be available for children in the Elementary Office, but she is not in favor of cutting into academic time. Solicitor Roberts noted that if the Board grants permission to this group, it would be open to similar concerns from other groups. Mr. Devore noted that Southern Columbia is one of two school districts that do not allow them into the classrooms and they have had no problems with the districts that do give them permission. Mr. Swank asked if they had ever come to any of the school events to present information. Mr. Devore replied that he was not aware of the events. Mr. Swank noted that when he was a Cub Scout leader, he was not allowed to go into the classroom, but they did get a favorable response from attending the school events. Mr. Jim Kleary, another representative of the Boy Scouts, noted that they would work something out with Mrs. Shultz and would attend the events. Mr. Swank also noted that a joint flyer between Northumberland and Columbia Counties was very helpful.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities & Services - Michael Yeager, Chairperson, reported that most of the items discussed were already reported during the Superintendent's Report. The replacement of the high school roof was completed earlier than expected and was finished before the start of school. Repair of the Auxiliary Gym roof was completed at a no additional cost to the district due to a credit available from the high school gym roof job. The high school boiler leaks. It will cost \$9,266 to replace the tubes. Mr. Swank asked the age of the boiler. Mr. Springer replied that it is 15 year old. Mr. Yeager noted that the lifetime of the tubes is normally 10 years and these lasted 15 years. Mr. Springer reported that the Auditorium lighting bids are not due until September 19th.

Finance - Mr. Springer reported that the committee met concurrently with the Facilities Committee on September 1st at 7:00 p.m. They discussed the General Obligation Note and a Resolution that would expand the use of funds for improvement of the road and the baseball field. Also discussed were stipends for the Maintenance personnel who hold positions, which require a state license. Several years ago, the district paid an outside Sewage Plant Operator \$450 per month. The current in-house Maintenance person has been paid \$300 per month since he got his Sewage Plant Operator license. The outside person remained as a backup operator at \$150 per month. The recommendation is to increase the stipend from \$300 to \$400 for the primary operator. Mr. Randall Campbell has now obtained his license and has offered to serve as a backup operator at no charge to the district. Pesticide and herbicide spraying must be performed by a licensed person. Mr. Joseph Danilowicz is licensed and the recommendation is to pay him a \$50 per month stipend. The district is now required to have a Licensed Drinking Water Operator and the recommendation is to pay Mr. Greg Derr, who is licensed, a stipend of \$100 per month. Mrs. Bell-Perry asked who pays for the licenses. Mr. Springer reported that the district pays the re-certification fee. Mr. Danilowicz uses his own equipment. Mr. Springer noted that if the district did not have people willing to do these jobs, an outside person would need to be contracted. Mr. Jones questioned the cost of an outside person. Mr. Springer replied that they were paying \$600 three years ago for primary and backup Sewage Plant Operators. That did not include the Drinking Water Operator. Mrs. Kreisler asked if an outside operator would compensate for problems that may arise. Mr. Springer replied that it is still the district's responsibility to handle any problems. President Meyer asked Mr. Springer for his opinion on the stipends. He replied

Board Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2005

Page 4

that he felt it was money well spent and reiterated that they would be replacing a paid backup operator with an unpaid person. Mr. Savitski questioned the frequency of testing. Dr. Lonoconus replied that it is done daily and also sent to an outside laboratory on a regular basis.

Negotiations & Personnel - No report.

ITEMS – TREASURER’S REPORTS

ITEMS – MINUTES/INVOICES

ITEMS – FISCAL

Dr. Lonoconus explained that according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the district cannot increase the fee to more than \$50 or it would lose the subsidy from the State. The subsidy along with the money Mr. Conner brings in would help defray the cost of an additional instructor and would cost the district \$5.00 per student. Mr. Caputo noted that Mr. Conner is available only one period per day to work with student drivers. Mr. Young asked if Dr. Lonoconus had spoken to any retired Driver’s Education Instructors. He responded affirmatively. He added that CSIU charges \$95.00 for the classroom portion of their Driver’s Education Course and \$180 for the behind-the-wheel portion.

Dr. Lonoconus explained that offering the chance of a day off with pay was something the district did several years ago to encourage staff members to donate to the United Way campaign. This year’s committee asked if it could be done again because it was successful in the past.

On a motion by Kreischer and second by Swank, a Rescission Agreement with NorthEastern Automated Technologies, Inc. (per Exhibit A) was presented for approval. Solicitor Roberts reported that the district determined that it would purchase security cameras. The administration obtained quotes from 10 to 12 different vendors and Northeastern Automated Technologies (NEAT) offered the lowest price of \$6,250. Following the purchase, the district became aware of an inquiry into the transaction, because the Superintendent’s wife is an employee of NEAT. There was no pecuniary benefit, and the profit to the owner of NEAT, if any, was *de minimis*. The Board has decided, in view of the fact that the equipment had not yet been installed, to return the equipment and rescind the agreement to avoid the appearance of any impropriety. Dr. Lonoconus noted that he did provide internal disclosure to the Business Manager. Mr. Springer reported that Dr. Lonoconus did make him aware that his wife worked for NEAT. Mr. Springer immediately asked Dr. Lonoconus if his wife would receive any commission or any other benefit from the sale of the equipment and Dr. Lonoconus replied, “No.” The equipment was being purchased at a good price and the owner was going to be helping with the setup of the system at no cost to the district. He noted that it seemed pretty clear that there were no pecuniary benefits involved. In his opinion, there was not a conflict of interest at that time. Solicitor Roberts did research and recommended that it would be in the best interest of the district to return the equipment and rescind the agreement. President Meyer opened the issue to public comment. Mr. Steve Savage, owner of NEAT, reported that Dr. Lonoconus approached him to “pick his brain.” Mr. Savage was willing to support the district any way that he could. He offered the cameras at a reduced price and agreed to assist with the installation at no cost to the district. He assured the Board that the items were purchased in the best interest of the district. He is still willing to assist with installation, regardless of where the cameras would be purchased. He noted that some accusations were made unfairly, and it is unfortunate for the district that things arose the way they

Board Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2005

Page 5

did. President Meyer noted that to paint a picture of Dr. Lonoconus as anything other than an honest man is egregious. By roll call vote; 6-Yes, 1-Abstension (Bell-Perry abstained), the motion carried.

On a motion by Jones and second by Kreischer, authorizing the administration to solicit bids for improvements to the baseball field to include a sod infield and outfield fence, and improvements to the road to the lower fields including widening to two lanes and improvements to drainage, was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – PERSONNEL

On a motion by Swank and second by Yeager, employment of Michael Johnston as a Summer Weightlifting Supervisor for the 2005-2006 school year at a rate of \$7.70 per hour/70 hours maximum was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Yeager and second by Swank, employment of the following individuals as Fall Weightlifting Supervisors at a rate of \$7.70 per hour/70 hours maximum (shared) was presented for approval:

- Christopher Brown
- Marc Longenhagen
- James McGinley

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Yeager and second by Swank, the addition of the following individuals to the 2005-2006 Substitute List effective September 13, 2005 (pending completion of all employment requirements) was presented for approval:

- Shona Fahringer (Communications)
- Darlene Johnson (Registered Nurse)

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Yeager and second by Swank, employment of staff for the After School Tutoring Program (pending completion of all employment requirements) effective October 11, 2005 (**per Exhibit C**) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Jones and second by Swank, employment of Beth A. McGinley, R.N. for the position of Elementary Registered Nurse effective October 3, 2005, at a salary of \$23,000 (pending completion of all employment requirements) was presented for approval. Her benefits are as per the Non-union Support Staff Handbook. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS - POLICY AND PROGRAMS

Board Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2005

Page 6

BOARD COMMENTS

Board members welcomed Ms. McGinley to the district and the Elementary Registered Nurse position. President Meyer thanked Mr. Savage for his generous offer of support and apologized for the way things happened.

Mr. Yeager asked if an activity bus for after school practices would be possible if parents were willing to finance it. Dr. Lonoconus noted that another district has started a similar program. Mr. Swank noted that he was able to participate in sports because of the availability of an activity bus. President Meyer noted that the issue should be presented to the Activity Committee for further discussion.

Mr. Yeager questioned the status of the committee on nutrition and fitness. Mr. Caputo noted that the first meeting was held on Thursday during activity period. Mrs. Holleran explained the restraints and new regulations. She wants the committee members to talk to their peers and bring some ideas to the meeting next Thursday. Students are beginning to understand the restrictions she faces.

RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Jones and second by Kreischer, the meeting was adjourned at 9:56 p.m. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tresa J. Britch
Board Secretary