

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

The February 20, 2006 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

Karl Meyer

Charles Porter

Ronald Savitski (*Absent*)

Thomas Slusser

Paul Starr (*Absent*)

Michael Yeager (*Absent*)

OTHERS PRESENT

Dr. Alan J. Lonoconus, Superintendent; Daniel Rodgers, 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

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lonoconus' report included the following topics:

1.) He requested a moment of silence due to the recent deaths of former Berwick Area School District Superintendent, Mr. Dave Force, and Southern Columbia bus driver, Mr. John Carl.

2.) He asked the Board to consider moving the first Board meeting in March to the 6th due to the timeline for the Guaranteed Energy Savings project and the budget presentation. It would give the whole Board the opportunity to hear the entire discussion and the companies could be invited to attend. Mrs. Bell-Perry and Mr. Jones noted that they had prior commitments on the 6th. Solicitor Roberts noted that he would need to know how to advertise following the Board's decision. Mr. Porter noted that he feels there is a lot of Board work needed prior to making a decision. He was not aware that gym air conditioning was part of the plan. After a brief discussion, President Meyer recommended that the Facilities/Finance Committee meeting still be held on March 2nd and following that meeting they would determine if there was a need for a special meeting on the 6th. Mr. Porter stated that he would like to have the base proposals presented.

3.) Dr. Lonoconus noted that the low temperatures and the efficiency of the water system caused some pipes to freeze near the lower pump house. The pumps may not have been running at all over the weekend. Mr. Campbell informed him that the problem would be repaired and the system should be up and running for Tuesday. He noted that some insulation might be required to prevent the problem in the future.

4.) He distributed an article from The Daily Item regarding parents' and educators' perception on things such as school discipline, testing and homework.

Mr. Porter referred to a copy of a letter from Mr. Pete Rickert regarding the Bus Starter position. The letter indicated that the buses would not be started and he asked if the 20-minute

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pre-trip inspection and warm-up time was not being followed. Dr. Lonoconus replied negatively and noted that what Mr. Rickert was referring to was that someone had been coming in and starting the majority of the buses. Each driver would have to come in and start his/her own bus and do the pre-trip inspection. Mr. Slusser noted that the buses do not always get a pre-trip inspection in the afternoon because some drivers work at the school during the day. Dr. Lonoconus noted that only one pre-trip inspection per day is required.

Mrs. Bell-Perry asked if the district would be renewing Terry Sharrow's contract because a decision is required by March 1st. Dr. Lonoconus noted that he was waiting to speak with the coaches at a post-season meeting. He asked if it would suffice to extend the deadline to April 1st if both parties are agreeable. Solicitor Roberts recommended that the Board approve an agreement with Mr. Sharrow. A motion would be included as an action item later in the agenda.

Mr. Porter asked if the new Connected Math program had been suspended because of problems. Mr. Clippinger replied that there were no problems. The meeting that was held in September was part of the implementation process to make parents aware of the changes and what to expect. Mr. Clippinger noted that Connected Math is not heavy in computation and the administrators and teachers felt it was important to go over concepts that would be tested on the PSSA. Mr. Porter asked if it was originally part of the curriculum. Mr. Clippinger replied that it was what they planned. Mr. Becker reported that they wanted to include concepts that they may have missed. Mr. Porter asked if this would be a practice from year to year. Mr. Clippinger explained that the administrators discussed the issue with the 5th and 6th grade teachers. They decided they needed a broader orientation for moving students into the new program. It would take two to three years for the program to become fully effective. They discussed taking time to review concepts that would be tested on the PSSA. The 6th grade math teacher knew there would be minimal information covered on fractions and felt that it would be important to cover the information. They made a conscious decision several weeks ago to make the information more current for the students. Mr. Porter asked what wasn't being accomplished during the time that they switched back to fractions. Mr. Becker noted that they are trying to bring the students up to speed. They are presenting or reviewing concepts that the students may not yet have seen or won't get to until later in the Connected Math curriculum. They want to make sure the students are prepared.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum - Elsie Bittner, Chairperson, reported that the Curriculum Coordinating Council meeting would be held on Tuesday, February 28th at 8:00 a.m. in the District Office conference room. The next committee meeting will be held at the regularly scheduled time prior to the second Board meeting in March.

Policy - Hugh Jones, Chairperson, reported that the committee would meet following the Board meeting. Mr. Porter asked if any of the substance abuse policies from the coaches were available. Dr. Lonoconus replied that only one sport has a written policy. Some of the others are still in the process of developing policies. Mr. Porter asked if different sports have different academic policies. Dr. Lonoconus responded that there is a district-wide policy and it is based on PIAA guidelines.

Vo-Tech - Amanda Bell-Perry reported that they are continuing work on their budget. Dr. Lonoconus reported that the deadline for the Director position was last Friday. They received six applications. Interviews are planned for the first week in March. The Business Manager and Director of Special Education positions are now being advertised.

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TREASURER'S REPORTS

On a motion by Porter and second by Jones, 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 Slusser, the minutes of January 9 and 16 (as amended), 2006, were presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Jones and second by Slusser, General Fund invoices in the amount of \$494,719.47 and Capital Reserve Fund invoices in the amount of \$1,723.50 were presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – FISCAL

On a motion by Bittner and second by Slusser, budgetary transfers in the 2005-06 budget to ensure proper accounting (**per Exhibit A**) were presented for approval. Prior to a vote, Mr. Porter noted that most of the transfers were for conferences. He noted that the accounts intended to pay for conferences are depleted and apparently the administration is not saying no when teachers want to register for a conference. Mr. Clippinger noted that the Board has given approval the last few years for students who qualify to attend the FBLA Leadership Conferences. He noted that because of Act 50 the account, which covers conference expenses, has been depleted to approximately 25 percent of what it had been in previous years. He reported that he had money available under his professional development account. Mr. Porter asked why money is not held out for the conference if the administration knows that the students go each year. Mr. Clippinger replied that they never know how many students will qualify and attend the conference each year. Mr. Porter asked if there is a line item for conferences when the administration puts a budget together. Mr. Clippinger replied affirmatively, but noted that it is a "guestimate." He noted that it has been a challenge to find money for meeting some of the district's goals. Mr. Porter pointed out that the district received over \$300,000 additional revenue from Act 50. Mrs. Bell-Perry asked if the FBLA students would be contributing to the cost of the conference. Mr. Caputo noted that it might be necessary now. They found out that more students have qualified. There is a contingent plan where students might have to pay \$45. Mrs. Bell-Perry asked who would be chaperoning the students. Mr. Caputo replied that Mrs. Force and Mrs. Shively would be among the chaperones. Mrs. Bell-Perry had concerns that there would be no male chaperones since there would be several male students attending. Mr. Caputo noted that the teacher's husbands would also be present. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Jones and second by Bell-Perry, to pay the following invoice from the Capital Project Fund was presented for approval:

- The Fence People - \$6,497.00 (Final)

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Bittner and second by Jones, to appoint Brewer, Gehrig & Johnson, LLC to audit the financial records for the local tax collectors for the year ended December 31, 2005, as required by the Pennsylvania Local Tax Collection Law, at a cost of \$1,975, was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

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On a motion by Slusser and second by Bittner, to ratify a 3-year contract (July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2009) with PenTeleData for Internet services at a cost of \$1,056 per month was presented for approval. Prior to a vote, Mrs. Bell-Perry asked the reason for the increase. Dr. Lonoconus explained that the increase is due to additional bandwidth and increased rates. After the discussion at the last Board meeting, he asked Mrs. Monick and Mr. Davis if it would be feasible to enter into a 3-year contract and they agreed that it would be feasible. President Meyer asked if AT&T provided a quote. Dr. Lonoconus responded affirmatively and noted that it was a little higher. Mr. Porter asked for the actual amount of the quote. Dr. Lonoconus replied that it was \$1,074 for a 3-year contract, but additional fees would apply. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – PERSONNEL

On a motion by Slusser and second by Jones, employment of Monna Tomtishen (Teacher) as and After School Tutor effective November 16, 2005, at the contracted rate, which will come from proceeds of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant, was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – POLICY AND PROGRAMS

On a motion by Bittner and second by Bell-Perry, a 7th Grade Field Trip to Inner Harbor, Maryland, on May 12, 2006, was presented for approval. District expenses to include transportation and possible substitute costs. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Bittner and second by Bell-Perry, to table an Agreement with Central Penn Physical Therapy, Inc. (per Exhibit B) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Jones and second by Porter, the first reading of Policy 137.1 Extracurricular Participation by Home Education Students (per Exhibit C) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Bell-Perry and second by Bittner, the first reading of revised Policy 123 Interscholastic Athletics (per Exhibit D) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Bittner and second by Slusser, a Senior Class Trip to Washington, D.C. to visit the Holocaust Museum, on March 22, 2006, was presented for approval. District expenses to include transportation and possible substitute costs. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Bell-Perry and second by Bittner, approving an Agreement with Terry Sharrow to extend the contract notification period to April 1, 2006, was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

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BOARD COMMENTS

Mrs. Bittner announced that County Band would be held Thursday night at Benton. Mr. Porter asked the status of the Drivers Education Program. Dr. Lonoconus responded that the program is going well since Mr. Peters was hired as an additional instructor. It was difficult to work students into the schedule. Mr. Porter asked the amount of time for behind-the-wheel training. Mr. Caputo replied that it is six hours. Mr. Porter asked if Mr. Peters is handling all of the students this year. Mr. Caputo replied that Mr. Peters is instructing most of the students. Mr. Conner is doing the paperwork and instructing some of the students when their schedules allow. Mr. Porter questioned the length of Mr. Peters' contract. Dr. Lonoconus replied that there is no contract per se. He works as needed and is paid by the students. Mr. Porter asked if Mr. Conner's schedule is tight. Mr. Caputo replied affirmatively as far as behind-the-wheel instruction is concerned.

RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC

District resident, Mr. Jerry Davis, commented that it appears that the tentative budget was prepared based on higher expenses and lower revenue than may actually occur. He noted that the only way to improve the budget would be to cut teachers or aides. He noted that there is a lot of pressure put on the teachers with No Child Left Behind. He asked what could be done to increase Federal funding. He stated that he was sure the public doesn't realize that only two or three percent of the district's revenue comes from the Federal government. President Meyer was unsure how to increase funding but suggested that residents contact their legislators. Mr. Davis suggested that they could implore the press to get the information out to the public. Mr. Rodgers noted that there might be some good news in Governor Rendell's proposal. It is very preliminary, but there is a possibility of more state funding. Mr. Davis noted that according to PSBA Facts and Figures, that the average Pennsylvania SAT score is below the national average. He asked where Southern's scores are in relation. Dr. Lonoconus replied that Southern Columbia is above both the state and national average in SAT scores.

District resident, Mr. Blaine Madara, asked why the district was changing the policy pertaining to interscholastic athletics. Dr. Lonoconus replied that it was due to recent legislation. Because of Act 67, public school districts have to allow home-schooled students to participate in interscholastic sports. Mr. Madara noted that he understands that the Board is trying to be fiscally responsible, but when programs need to be cut, it affects students' education. He pointed out that the ten percent cut in the athletic budget has a very small affect on the overall budget.

District resident, Mr. Florey Guarino, questioned the number of aides. Mr. Dunkelberger replied that there are between 25 and 30 total aides, of which 22.5 are in Special Education. He noted that most of the aides are paid through IDEA and ACCESS funds, not straight district funds.

Mr. Davis asked Mr. Porter where he expects to see improvement. Mr. Porter replied that he doesn't want to get into the Board members cutting the budget. He wants to first see what the administration has to offer. He is concerned about the long-term health of the district. The Capital Reserve Fund and General Fund balances have gone down considerably. He wants to see fiscal health for the long term. Mr. Madara asked where he feels there is room to cut. Mr. Porter replied that they needed to look at class schedules. He is in the process of doing that but is not yet finished. He noted that he was in favor of AP (Advanced Placement) courses when they were first implemented but was told they would not have both AP and Honors courses. He mentioned the possibility of offering the courses every two or three years. The same courses could possibly be offered, but maybe in a different form.

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Mr. Davis asked if they are looking at courses to prepare students for college or if they are being reasonable and preparing the students for a job locally. Dr. Lonoconus replied that it comes down to what parents expect. The enrollment at Columbia-Montour Area Vocational-Technical School is low because parents don't see it as a viable option for their children. Mr. Davis noted that they are going to have to be practical at some time. Mr. Caputo noted that the administration tries to keep the curriculum relevant to diverse student groups. Southern Columbia has one of the highest graduation rates in the nation. Dr. Lonoconus stated that unfortunately, some of the positions that parents and students are looking for are not in our state. Mr. Davis noted that under NCLB, a certain percentage of students won't or cannot succeed. While the teachers are spending extra time on that small percentage, the majority of the students suffer. Dr. Lonoconus agreed that the teachers spend more time reviewing information, but the assessments are how the district is measured. The district has been fortunate enough to receive grants to fund after school programs.

President Meyer thanked members of the public for their input.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Jones and second by Bittner, the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tresa J. Britch
Board Secretary