

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

The December 3, 2007, Special Board Meeting of the Southern Columbia Area School District Board of Directors convened in the Travel, Lodging and Marketing Careers classroom of the Columbia-Montour Area Vocational-Technical School at 7:15 p.m. with President Michael Yeager in charge of the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all. President Yeager welcomed everyone, followed by a roll call of Board Members.

BOARD MEMBERS

Timothy Benner
Hugh Jones (*Absent*)
Charles Porter

Ronald Savitski
Thomas Slusser
David Stellfox

Michael Yeager
John Yocum

OTHERS PRESENT

Charles Reh, Superintendent; Daniel Rodgers, Business Manager; Tresa Britch, Board Secretary; Richard J. Robert, Jr., Solicitor; James Becker, Joseph Shirvinski, Robert Mehalick, Barbara Lombardo, and Roger Nunkester (arrived 8:29 p.m.), Administrators; and candidates for the board vacancy; Mr. Paul Starr and Ms. Annie Morgan (departed at 7:22 p.m.).

AGENDA HEARING PERIOD

President Yeager announced that all items on the agenda would be considered action items.

BOARD VACANCY

Two candidates for the Region II board vacancy were present. Each of the candidates had previously been interviewed at a public meeting, therefore President Yeager asked them to make a brief statement concerning their interest in serving on the board. Mr. Paul Starr stated that he has lived in the district since 1977 and served on the board for two years. His name could not appear on the ballot because he is a Federal employee, but he would like to continue to serve on the board.

Ms. Annie Morgan stated that she moved into the district about five years ago. Her 13-year old daughter attends school in the district and she would like to be considered for the position.

Mr. Porter asked if the Hatch Act would prevent the district from appointing Mr. Starr. Solicitor Roberts explained that the Hatch Act is not a restriction on the district; it is a restriction on what the employee does. His recollection of the Act is that it prohibits a Federal employee from engaging in partisan political activity such as getting his/her name on a ballot, but it does not prohibit the individual from being appointed.

On a motion by Savitski and second by Benner, to appoint Paul Starr to fill the Region II vacancy was presented for approval. Prior to voting, Mr. Porter stated that too many times in a school board election, there is no competition. He thanked both candidates for offering to serve. By roll call vote, the motion carried; 5-Yes, 1-No (Stellfox voted No).

The Board Secretary administered the oath of office to Mr. Starr and he was seated on the board at 7:22 p.m.

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SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Reh's report included the following topics:

1). He welcomed the new and returning board members and stated that he looked forward to working with all of them. He announced that the previous board approved a new three-year teachers' contract last Thursday

2). Information from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) was enclosed with the Friday Letter packet for all board members. Information pertaining to items such as funding, Act 1, Cyber Charter School and No Child Left Behind was included. He noted that Cyber Charter Schools cost the district around \$75,000 per year. Mr. Porter asked if \$75,000 was the net cost. Mr. Rodgers replied that the net was approximately \$65,000.

3). Mr. Reh attended a workshop in Harrisburg on Friday with Locust Township Police Chief Jeff Sutton. The workshop was on Law Enforcement and First Responders. The new state audit is going to require each school district to have a memorandum of understanding with the local police department. It will require interaction with the local agencies for an effective and comprehensive safe school. Solicitor Roberts will be looking into the establishment of a memorandum of understanding with Locust Township and the district's first responders.

4). The Department of Education has implemented changes in the 2008 state assessment. Most notable are the changes in attribution rules pertaining to special education and vo-tech students. The PSSA scores of special education and vocational students who do not attend Southern, will be attributed to Southern. Since they are no longer Southern students, the administration feels that it is an injustice to the district. Mr. Porter noted that Southern receives the reimbursement for the vo-tech students. President Yeager noted that the vocational-technical schools feel that it may affect their enrollment. Mr. Reh stated that the local administrators would be developing a letter to send to legislators. Mr. Porter pointed out that the vo-tech schools do not receive state funding, so the penalty would not affect them. Mr. Becker noted that vo-tech schools can still go on warning if they are not meeting AYP, and can receive all of the same retributions as other districts.

5). Mr. Reh received information pertaining to the Classrooms for the Future initiative. It has show to have a positive impact on students. It is improving the quality of instruction. Students are becoming more engaged in learning. Teachers spend less time lecturing and more time in small groups and engaging students in learning. It has shifted the focus from the teacher to the students and their learning. The funding for the first year was \$95,000 for equipment with \$45,000 for the Integrator and Coach. This year's funding is \$265,000 for equipment and \$35,000 for the Coach.

6). Business Teacher, Mrs. Christina Force, informed Mr. Reh that four students; Ralph Beishline, Ted Heitzman, Greg Hilderbrandt and Sam Springer, have been competing in the Virtual Business Challenge. There were 295 teams in the competition and they placed 29th, which ranked them in the top ten percent.

7). Board members would be receiving additional information regarding the School Boardsmanship Seminar on January 30, 2008. All board members are invited to attend the seminar, which will be held at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU). Details will be forthcoming. PSBA provides training seminars for board members throughout the state, but they are difficult to attend. All area superintendents thought it was the responsibility of the CSIU to provide this seminar for both new and returning board members.

8). He deferred to Mr. Robert Mehalick, Director of Special Education and Students Services. Mr. Mehalick reported that every school district that provides special education is

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mandated to go through a review of their program every six years. A team from the Department of Education comes in and looks at 121 different areas of the program. They review the paperwork and the special programs offered to students. They also interview parents, students and educators. The district was out of compliance in 14 areas. Some of the violations could not be prevented. When a new special education student moves into the district, the sending district might not send all of the necessary paperwork. Southern has to accept the student as exceptional, and testing will be done as soon as possible, however if the original evaluation paperwork was not sent, Southern would be cited for the violation.

Another area of concern was in Transition. Transition can mean from preschool to school age, in which the district was not cited. The other area of transition is for special education students who reach the age of 14. The district is required to develop a transition plan that will help each child explore the opportunities available for their adult lives, including employment, independent living skills, post-secondary education, military, etc. That is the responsibility of the school district and was one area in which Southern was cited. Another area was in failing to write measurable goals, and another area was in inclusionary practices, which means that the district must instruct students in the least restrictive environment whenever possible. Last January, the special education department received the list of citations and since that time, the department has been revisited and is now in compliance in all areas.

Mr. Porter asked if the compliance monitoring report is available to board members. Mr. Mehalick replied affirmatively and agreed to provide it to the board members as soon as a hard copy is available. Mr. Porter asked if special education is getting up to speed in some of the areas that were lacking. Mr. Mehalick replied that as a team, the department is definitely coming up to speed. He credits his teachers and commended Solicitor Roberts for his professional insight and support throughout the process.

ITEMS – FISCAL

On a motion by Savitski and second by Starr, to accept the Single Audit Report from Schaeffer, Jones, Eichner & Wagner, L.L.P. for the fiscal year 2006-2007 (**per Exhibit A**) was presented for approval. Prior to voting Mr. Rodgers gave a brief explanation of the audit report. The district's revenues came in \$392,000 higher than expected. When the 2006-2007 budget was adopted, the state budget was not passed, so the final appropriations were not determined. They came in approximately \$195,000 higher than expected. Investment earnings came in \$111,000 over what was anticipated. He noted that the district is taking advantage of wire transfers directly into accounts and the funds are earning interest more quickly. Earned income taxes came in \$62,000 higher and delinquent real estate taxes came in about \$63,000 over budget. The unreserved, undesignated fund balance of the district is \$1.6 million. That amount is acceptable as recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). They recommend that a district's fund balance be eight to ten percent of its total operating budget. The fund is available for unforeseen circumstances. Mr. Rodgers pointed out that the district is in fairly good shape from a debt standpoint. He noted that in the next few years, the district would aggressively pay on the remaining bond. The district would have the ability to borrow if the need arises. Mr. Porter stated that in November, \$300,000 was transferred from the General Fund to the Capital Reserve Fund, so the balance is not \$1.3 million. Mr. Rogers agreed and pointed out that the figures in the audit report were as of June 30, 2007. He explained that the district booked a receivable on the Capital Reserve Fund side and a payable on the General Fund side as of June 30, 2007, but the \$1.6 million balance is still correct. Mr. Porter asked if the balance of the Capital Reserve was actually down to \$500,000. Mr. Rodgers replied affirmatively. Mr. Porter

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pointed out that as he recalled from reading the legislation, those were not hard and fast rules on the recommended percentages for the fund balance. If a district has a \$13 million budget, it could actually have a 16-20 percent fund balance, but could not raise taxes. Mr. Rodgers agreed and noted that there is a formula to determine a range for a district's fund balance. If a district goes above that range, it cannot raise taxes. If the fund balance is at the acceptable level, a district is allowed to raise taxes.

President Yeager asked if anyone would be interested in a School Finance review. Mr. Rodgers recommended that a session be held prior to the January Facilities/Finance Committee meeting. President Yeager asked if he would include a handout. Mr. Rodgers responded affirmatively. Following Mr. Rodgers report, the motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Porter and second by Stellfox, to adopt a Resolution pursuant to Section 311 of Act 1 of Special Session of 2006 (per Exhibit B) was presented for approval. Prior to voting, Mr. Rodgers explained that all of the deadlines under Act 1 are triggered off of the Primary Election. Since the election is early this year, everything for school districts is pushed up. The preliminary budget needs to be posted or the resolution needs to be acted upon by January 3, 2008. Due to the fact that there are no meetings scheduled prior to the deadline, Solicitor Roberts recommended that the board take action at this meeting. Mr. Rodgers explained that by passing the resolution, the district is making a statement that it will not raise taxes above the recommended index generated by PDE. This year the district's index is 5.8 percent. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – PERSONNEL

On a motion by Stellfox and second by Savitski, employment of Tina Kistler as Support Teacher for Secondary Math effective November 28, 2007, through the end of the 2007-2008 school year at the contracted rate of \$738 (pro-rated) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Savitski and second by Yocum, the addition of the following individuals to the 2007-2008 Substitute List (pending completion of all employment requirements) was presented for approval:

- Tori Carrington (K-12)
- Mildred Fleetwood (K-12)
- Wilene Kanasky (K-12)
- Lori Brobst (Aide)
- Paula Deitrick (Aide)
- Karen Thomas (Cafeteria Worker/Aide)
- Kathleen Crisp (Elementary K-6)
- Jamie Faust (Special Education)
- Jeffrey D. Longenberger (K-12)

Prior to voting, President Yeager asked about the current substitute status. Mr. Becker replied that on most days, there are enough substitutes. Mr. Savitski reported that the elementary is having difficulty finding substitutes. He noted that some other districts pay \$100 per day and Southern pays \$80 per day. Mr. Stellfox asked how many substitute days occur per school year. Mr. Rodgers agreed to provide that information. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

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On a motion by Savitski and second by Stellfox, to designate Ashley Haladay as a Volunteer Cheerleading Coach for Wrestling for the 2007-2008 school year (pending receipt of favorable clearances and a negative Tuberculin test) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Savitski and second by Starr, the resignation of Hugh Jones from the Board of Directors effective December 3, 2007. Mr. Jones served on the board since January 19, 2004. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote. After a brief discussion, it was determined that the vacancy would be advertised with a deadline of December 21, 2007.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Porter asked if there was a need for student custodians. Mr. Becker replied that they advertised for student custodial workers a few months ago and they only received one application. After a brief discussion, it was determined that there was a need.

On a motion by Porter and second by Savitski, to approve four (4) student custodial worker positions for the 2007-2008 fiscal year at minimum wage (\$7.15) and a maximum of 35 hours per week was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Mr. Stellfox asked for any available documentation pertaining to past and current business, in fairness to the new board members. President Yeager stated that a lot of information is presented at Committee meetings and all members are welcome to attend whether or not they are assigned to that particular committee. The board minutes through October 2007 are available on the district website. Mr. Porter stated that the administration is very open to having board members come in to talk. Mr. Yeager noted that it would be helpful for the board to get together just to discuss procedures.

Mr. Savitski asked if a response to the FMS certified letter was received. Mr. Reh responded affirmatively and noted that the letter indicated that they would have a response by January 10th.

Mr. Porter stated that a basic tenet of boardsmanship is that members have no power except through the entire board.

Mr. Reh reported that at the last meeting, the board discussed the need to make adjustments to the criteria for determining coaches' salaries. Solicitor Roberts confirmed that determining the coaches' salaries does not need to be discussed at a public meeting because it deals with personnel.

RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC

Mr. Shirvinski reported that the heating system continues to be a problem in the elementary building. Temperatures have been in the 50 degree range in some classrooms. Mr. Stellfox stated that the wrong system was installed for the building. The system was intended for an open classroom design and it will continue to be a problem. The influx of computers has also contributed to the cooling problem during the summer months.

Mr. Becker reported that he would check with CSIU regarding behind-the-wheel driver instruction. The cost is \$180 per student for six hours. Each student would be charged \$50 and the district receives \$35 per student from the State. The district cost would be \$95 per student through CSIU.

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Mr. Porter stated that he spoke to Mr. Harry Sherman who is in charge of Driver Education at PDE. A teacher's aide could be hired. They would need a letter of eligibility and would have to take a test through PDE. They would need to get three credits of Driver Education training. Within five years they would need to get an additional nine credits. Currently East Stroudsburg and an IU offer online or correspondence courses. Another possible option would be private driving schools. Mr. Becker noted that there are not any in the immediate area. Mr. Reh noted that most of the schools in the Schuylkill County area use the Schuylkill Vo-Tech, so they are probably booked. Mr. Becker stated that he is looking for some direction from the board. Mr. Reh recommended that they contact CSIU to take care of the backlog and the district would pay \$95.00 per student.

On a motion by Savitski and second by Benner, to authorize the administration to contract with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit for behind-the-wheel Driver Education instruction at a district cost of \$95.00 per student. The student cost will be \$50. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Mr. Reh stated that he received a request from the AFSCME Representative for the board to meet with the bus drivers. Due to the fact that the administration is in the information gathering stage, Solicitor Roberts recommended against the meeting. He stated that entire board should not meet with the group. The Negotiations Committee should meet with them when the time comes.

Mr. Porter asked Mr. Mehalick if there were any changes that he would like to make concerning the Gifted Teacher position. Mr. Mehalick stated that his only concern is that PDE limits the caseload to 75 students. He did ask for an extension. The caseload is currently at 84. He noted that every Gifted IEP needs to be a sound document as the Gifted Program follows the same Procedural Safeguards as special education.

Mr. Nunkester reported that 104 senior citizens are signed up for the dinner thus far.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Stellfox and second by Porter, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tresa J. Britch
Board Secretary