

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

The November 17, 2008, Board Meeting of the Southern Columbia Area School District Board of Directors convened in the High School Library at 7:42 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

Paul Starr (*Absent*)

Timothy Vought

Charles Porter

Richard Steele

Michael Yeager

Thomas Slusser (*Absent*)

David Stellfox

John Yocum

OTHERS PRESENT

Charles Reh, Superintendent; Daniel Rodgers, Business Manager; Tresa Britch, Board Secretary; Richard J. Roberts, Solicitor; Roy Clippinger, Joseph Shirvinski, Roger Nunkester, James Becker, Robert Mehalick and Barbara Lombardo, Administrators; district residents and members of the media.

AGENDA HEARING PERIOD

President Yeager announced that an executive session was held prior to the meeting to consult with counsel regarding pending litigation and to discuss personnel issues. He also announced that all items on the agenda would be action items.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Reh's report included the following topics:

1.) He thanked Beth Fegley and Kim Spotts, who were the coordinators for this year's Southern Columbia United Way Drive. They did an outstanding job and Southern Columbia raised \$5,182 for United Way. They exceeded their goal by \$432. He also thanked the local businesses that contributed prizes for the campaign incentive drawing.

2.) He congratulated Coach Roth, all of the football coaches and the football team members for winning the District IV Championship. This is the 17th out of 18 years that Southern has won the District IV Football Championship. The team will be playing Riverside Friday night at Valley View, above Scranton.

3.) He informed the Board that the district would be advertising for the Facilities/Finance Committee meeting on December 11th and for a special Board meeting on December 15th. The Reorganization meeting is scheduled for December 3rd at Columbia-Montour Area Vocational-Technical School.

4.) He introduced Mr. Brent Kelchner, TV Production Advisor, who shared a recent Tiger News Election Day special broadcast with those in attendance. He thanked the Board for their continued support of the program. He reported that by January, he plans to have the capability to put the Tiger News broadcasts on the internet for public access. Mr. Reh stated that the improvements that have been done to the TV studio have been well worth it.

5.) Mr. Becker commended Mr. Kelchner for his work with Tiger News. He said it's a great way to start the day. He introduced and congratulated Rachael Keefer who achieved over 700 on the Critical Reading portion of the SAT. Her name will be included on the plaque.

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6.) Mr. Nunkester also commended the Tiger News crew. He reported that Mr. Kelchner spent much of his summer working on the TV Studio and certainly deserves the credit. He announced that Southern Columbia would be holding its 2nd Annual Senior Citizens Dinner at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16th followed by a Gospel Choir concert at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium. Admission to both events is free to senior citizens age 55 or older who are residents of the district.

7.) Mrs. Lombardo thanked the Board for allowing the theatre arts students to attend the field trip to New York City to attend the Broadway play, In the Heights.

8.) Mr. Becker gave a brief update on the Driver Education program. He reported that he sent the IU instructor an initial list of eleven seniors who should finish behind-the-wheel training before Thanksgiving. He sent the instructor a second list of seven seniors, which should take care of all of the seniors that had requested to participate. He also sent a list of twenty juniors to the instructor. Mr. Conner also does some behind-the-wheel instruction training in the summer. He worked with twenty-one students this past summer. He also works with some students after school. Mr. Becker stated that all of the juniors who requested to participate should complete training this year.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum - John Yocum, Chairperson, reported that the committee met prior to the Board meeting and discussed three topics; academic standards, an update on No Child Left Behind rules and teacher induction. Mr. Clippinger reported that they were trying to get an idea of the volume of standards that a student has to work toward from kindergarten through 12th grade. There are 4,298 individual standards that are spread across reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics, social sciences, three different sciences, Family and Consumer Science, Health, Safety and Physical Education. This does not include national standards which electives are based upon. The standards are not written to each and every grade level, but they are benchmarked throughout the system. They looked at what the standards indicate as far as what students need to know and what they are able to do. They also discussed what assessment anchors bring to the process and the ability to prepare students for the high-stakes testing. Mr. Clippinger stated that there will be further reports based on the standards. Mr. Yocum reported that Pennsylvania has the third highest volume of standards in the nation. There are no drastic changes under No Child Left Behind compared to what the district is currently doing.

From 1998 until the fall of 2008, 46 percent of Southern Columbia's new teachers left the district. It was suggested that an exit survey be utilized to determine why new teachers are leaving the district. The induction program has gone to a three-year model instead of a single year model. Mr. Clippinger reported that the school district expends a great deal of energy to hire good teachers to replace those that leave; from the stringent hiring process to training of new teachers. A lot of energy is consumed when there is staff turnover. One of the main purposes of the induction plan is not only to hire good staff, but to keep good staff and maintain a good professional team.

Mr. Yocum reported that some 7th grade Language Arts materials are needed because some of the materials are missing. Also some of the Biology CDs are missing from the 2005 Science materials that were purchased.

Policy - Rick Steele, Chairperson, reported that the committee met prior to the Board meeting. A new policy pertaining to Foreign Exchange Students will appear on the December agendas for both first and second readings. Another new policy the committee has been working on is Bullying/Cyberbullying, which is required under Act 61 of 2008. The act requires that the

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district have a policy in place with certain specifications no later than January 2009. That policy will also appear for first and second readings in December.

Negotiations and Personnel – President Yeager reported that the committee is waiting to hear from Attorney Beard to begin negotiations.

Activities – Tim Vought reported that the previous Monday, the committee met with three coaches; Cross-Country Boys and Girls, Boys Soccer and Field Hockey. All of them had good seasons. The only complaint was about the Field Hockey field which has been a problem. The Boys Soccer Team received compliments on their field from other teams. Cross-Country plans to improve their running course for next year. The next meeting with the coaches is December 15th at 5:30 p.m. prior to the Board meeting. There will be no Policy or Curriculum Committee meetings on December 15th.

TREASURER’S REPORTS

On a motion by Steele and second by Stellfox, the Treasurer’s Reports were presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

MINUTES AND INVOICES

On a motion by Yocum and second by Benner, the following items were presented for approval:

- A. Minutes of October 13 and 20, 2008.
- B. General Fund Invoices in the amount of \$368,863.06, Capital Reserve Fund Invoices in the amount of \$16,240.00 and Athletic Fund Invoices in the amount of \$18,603.30.

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – FISCAL

On a motion by Steele and second by Stellfox, budgetary transfers in the 2008-2009 budget to ensure proper accounting (**per Exhibit A**) were presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Yocum and second Benner, paying December 2008 bills with terms equal to or less than net 45 days was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Stellfox and second by Yocum, to authorize the payment of one-third of the cost of an appraisal of the property indentified as Northumberland County tax parcel #04000050176 was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Steele and second by Stellfox, to refund the sum of \$315.88 representing an overpayment of real estate tax paid to the district to Thomas J. and Lois A. Moffitt was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

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ITEMS – PERSONNEL

On a motion by Yocum and second by Vought, to accept the resignation of Diana Wagner from the position of Half-time ACCESS Secretary effective November 10, 2008, was presented for approval. Ms. Wagner had been in the position since August 21, 2008. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Stellfox and second by Steele, employment of Dana Carroll-Lucas for the position of Half-time Paraprofessional for the Enrichment Program (working 3 days of the 6-day cycle) effective December 2, 2008, was presented for approval. Her salary and benefits will be as per the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Stellfox and second by Yocum, employment of Ashley Haladay as a Co-Head Cheerleading Coach for Wrestling and to change Shelley Pfirman from Head Cheerleading Coach for Wrestling to Co-Head Cheerleading Coach for Wrestling for the 2008-2009 school year at a salary of \$1,382 (shared) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

On a motion by Steele and second by Vought, to increase Denise Kreisher's hourly rate from \$13.15 to \$14.60 to compensate her for the performance of additional duties was presented for approval. By roll call vote, the motion carried; 6 -Yes, 0-No, 1-Abstention (**Yocum abstained**).

On a motion by Porter and second by Steele, to increase Kim Spotts' hourly rate from \$11.78 to \$12.48 to compensate her for the performance of additional duties was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS – POLICY AND PROGRAMS

On a motion by Benner and second by Vought, a 7th Grade Field trip to Corning, New York to visit the Corning Museum of Glass on April 3, 2009, was presented for approval. District expense to include transportation. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

BOARD COMMENTS

RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC

District resident, Ms. Sandy Herr stated that she has 450 names on a petition of people who oppose privatizing the busing services within the district, and there are still some petitions out in circulation.

Ms. Sandra Hunt questioned the Board's plans concerning the busing services. President Yeager explained that it is just the beginning of the process. Solicitor Roberts added that there are no plans at this point; it's just the beginning of the discussion. Proposals have been received, but they have not yet been evaluated. He noted that it would be a long time before any decisions could be made. A district resident asked why this became an issue. President Yeager replied that it is an evaluation process and that the district is just looking at another option.

Ms. Tammy Meyer asked why the district was selling buses if a decision wasn't already made. Mr. Rodgers replied that there were five buses that did not meet state inspection so they were taken off the road.

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Mr. Tom Levan stated that many of the drivers drive the rural routes and contracted drivers would not know the rural routes. President Yeager pointed out that one of the requirements of the proposals is that the contractors must interview all district drivers. There were some concerns that the stops would be centralized.

District driver, Brenda Webb, stated that a lot of the drivers appreciate and need the benefits and there is no guarantee that the drivers will get benefits with a contractor.

Mrs. Kathy Malkoskie read a letter written by her son in support of keeping the drivers.

Mr. Lon Morris reported that two years ago his daughter was lost when there was a substitute driver on the bus.

Ms. Jamie Linn stated that the parents feel secure with the current bus drivers. They trust them with their children's lives and they don't want that to change.

Mr. Porter asked Solicitor Robert to explain the process. Solicitor Roberts stated that what has happened so far is the district has issued a Request for Proposals and has received proposals. The proposals are being evaluated now. Once that process is concluded, the district's labor counsel will begin negotiations with the union and that process will move forward. There will be additional time for public input during the process.

It was made clear that the Board members have not yet seen the proposals so this issue is far from being a done deal.

Ms. Lori Turofski asked how the district could say that it will have the same drivers when the contractor will not be offering them the same benefits. Mr. Reh stated that the Request for Proposals stated that all district drivers would be interviewed and offered a job, but he could not say how many would actually be hired. He noted that Southern is the only district in the area that owns its own school buses. He spoke to the other districts that were in a similar situation years ago and a large percentage of their drivers were hired by the contractor. Mr. Reh reiterated that this is anything but a done deal. The ultimate decision will be up to the School Board. Ms. Turofski stated that there are other ways to make the transportation department run efficiently. President Yeager stated that they have looked at combining runs. Ms. Turofski stated that a driver should be allowed to take a bus to their home when the start of their run is closer to their home than the school. Mr. Porter stated that it would cost the district approximately \$7,000 more if the district allowed the buses to be garaged off premises overnight. Mr. Rodgers noted that there were just as many dead miles when a driver takes a bus back to their house after a run, without students, as if they would start the run from the school campus.

Bus driver, Marilyn Robel, stated that locally most school districts' transportation services are under a contractor, but nationwide 73 percent of school districts own their own buses. Mr. Stellfox pointed out that he read that report, and it was actually 73 percent of the 100 districts that reported.

Mr. Porter stated that the board tried to give the drivers a fair shake as much as they could. He stated that two people mentioned ways to cut costs. He noted that the Board is open to any suggestions they might have.

Mr. Levan stated that he had some concern over the age of the buses. He noted that the mechanics are doing a great job keeping them on the road.

Bus driver, Ms. Barbara Daulis, expressed concern for special needs students and the effect a new driver would have on them.

Mr. Porter stated that the RFP requires a contractor to use newer buses than the district currently has. He stated that there are different formulas for reimbursement depending on whether the district owns or contracts buses. He asked Mr. Rodgers to recalculate the state reimbursement based on the scenario of the district owning newer buses. In the short run, the

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district would obviously have to put out more money. He asked Mr. Rodgers to do an analysis in the long run to see how the reimbursement would differ. Mr. Rodgers stated that the calculations have not been finalized. A question arose as to why the district is buying older buses. Mr. Rodgers explained that historically the district allows \$135,000 for new buses, with the intent that two new 72-passenger buses would be purchased each year. Unfortunately, there were years when that \$135,000 was not budgeted. Each year, he sits down with the mechanics and the supervisor and discusses the needs and tries to stretch that \$135,000 to meet the current needs. Last year, a new 24-passenger bus and new van were needed, so new 72-passenger buses could not be purchased. The total transportation budget is over \$1 million.

Bus driver, Susan Welkom, stated that the current system has worked for 28 years and she didn't understand why it should have to change. Solicitor Roberts stated that operations are periodically reviewed and this is part of the process.

Bus driver, Terri Hertzog, stated that she doesn't drive bus because of the paycheck; she does it because of the students.

Ms. Chris Letterman asked if the public would be notified before anything would be done. Solicitor Roberts stated that there would be advanced notice. All public meetings are advertised and agendas are posted online.

Several other unidentified individuals spoke in support of retaining the current drivers and transportation program.

Solicitor Roberts stated that this type of discussion is premature. He noted that there will be a time for public input during the process.

Mr. Steele thanked the public for coming to the meeting and providing input. President Yeager stated that the Board is limited as to what they can disclose because of the negotiations process.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Yocum and second by Stellfox, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 p.m. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tresa J. Britch
Board Secretary