

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

The March 8, 2010, Board Meeting of the Southern Columbia Area School District Board of Directors convened in the High School Library at 7:36 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

Charles Porter
Jennifer Shoup
Eric Stahley

Paul Starr
Richard Steele
David Stellfox

Timothy Vought
Michael Yeager
John Yocum

OTHERS PRESENT

Charles Reh, Superintendent; Daniel Rodgers, Business Manager; Tresa Britch, Board Secretary; Richard J. Roberts, Solicitor; Joseph Shirvinski, James Becker, Brenda Monick, Robert Mehalick, Administrators; Timothy George, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds; district residents and members of the media.

AGENDA HEARING PERIOD

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

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Reh's report included the following topics:

- 1.) He gave clarification on the student make-up days.
- 2.) He reported that he received a letter from the Communities That Care (CTC) Advisory Board notifying the district that they would no longer be able to fund the six-month portion of the Family Center rent which they had paid in the past. Jayme Toczylousky, a member of the CTC Advisory Board, was present at the meeting. The other six-month portion of rent was funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant. The district is not sure if it will be receiving continued grant funds. Mr. Reh reported that Dana Carroll-Lucas did not write the Family Center funding into the grant application. Mr. Steele expressed concern over an individual unilaterally making that decision without consulting the Board. Mr. Reh stated that he was not aware that it had not been included in the grant until the morning Ms. Carroll-Lucas resigned. The grant was due in Harrisburg later that same afternoon. He noted that she left the district in a tough position. Mrs. Monick stated that under Cohort 5 of the grant, it is only permissible to fund programs for children only six months prior to coming to kindergarten, so that is most likely why the Family Center was not included in the grant application. Mr. Rodgers stated that the district still has the option to fund the Family Center; however it would be through district funds. Mr. Steele asked if CTC would be willing to go back to the old arrangement if the other half of the rent were available through some other means. Mrs. Toczylousky replied that she didn't think it would be feasible, but she would consult the other Advisory Board members. Mrs. Monick reported that she and Mrs. Toczylousky would be attending a mandatory 21st

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Century grant meeting in Harrisburg the following day. She hoped to get some insight on whether the district would be receiving funding through Cohort 5.

Mr. Porter recommended having the grant applications completed in enough time prior to the deadline in order to give the Board an opportunity to read the grant application. Mrs. Toczylousky replied that the notice for the requirements of the grant application came out only two weeks prior to the deadline. Mrs. Monick also noted that Ms. Carroll-Lucas, who just completed her first full year, had been preparing for the Cohort 4 audit in which she was not the person involved in a lot of the expenditures or running the programs for the past three years. The heels of grant application came right on the heels of an audit. Mrs. Monick noted that she had weekly meetings with Ms. Carroll-Lucas regarding what would be going into the grant. She added that they had the ideas compiled, but they were just never put into the grant. Mr. Porter stated that the parameters were not known until two weeks before the deadline. Mrs. Monick stated that they had an idea of what was needed, but they didn't know exactly when the grant would be open and what questions needed to be answered in the grant.

4.) Mr. Reh reported that Mr. Nunkester was not present at the meeting as he was attending a ceremony at Penn State Schuylkill campus where an 8th grade team of students will be receiving awards for placing first in the Math Counts competition.

5.) He reported that Mr. Yeager's term on the CSIU Board expires in June. It was decided that the reappointment of Mr. Yeager would be included on the agenda.

6.) Mr. Reh attended a Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools (PARSS) meeting on Friday morning at Penn State. Approximately twenty-five superintendents were in attendance. Areas of concern were the pension situation and increased health costs. Some districts reported increases of thirty percent in health care costs. Southern has no increase through the consortium this year. It was reported by one superintendent that one option that is being considered by the Governor is an annual contribution rate of three percent for each year after 2009-2010 until the contribution rate would reach the 30 percent level. The budget was also discussed. No tax increase is anticipated. Southern's projected increase in subsidy is 7.3 percent. It was explained that school districts that have gradually increased taxes over the past three years benefited from the subsidy formula.

7.) Mr. Reh spoke in support of the middle school concept and noted several area schools that began their middle school concepts in the 1970's. The middle school concept is designed around the unique development of students ages ten through fourteen to improve their social, physical, emotional and cognitive areas. Berwick, Bloomsburg, Central Columbia, Danville, Lewisburg, Midd-West, Mifflinburg, Milton, Selinsgrove, Shamokin, Shikellamy and Warrior Run all have middle schools. Most are grades six through eight. Warrior Run, Midd-West, Central Columbia and Southern Columbia all have grades five through eight. Statistically, sixty-nine percent of all districts in the United States have a middle school concept. He noted that what's successful in terms of a program; whether it's K-6, a middle school concept 5-8 or 6-8; it's the curriculum, the teachers, the staff development provided, and the leadership of the building principal. He added that Southern Columbia is the only school district he is aware of that has a middle school concept but has 5th and 6th grades in one building and 7th and 8th grades in another.

Mrs. Sarah Knouse, middle school teacher, also spoke in favor of the middle school concept. She stated that it is important that as a middle school, all grades are together. At this time they are functioning under two discipline plans. It is very confusing for the middle school students to switch back and forth between what is acceptable for a middle school student and what is acceptable for an elementary student. The middle school team feels that the project as it is outlined now, with all of the middle school students being in the high school building, would be

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the way to go. The students cannot develop stable peer groups. They don't have the stability of being in one building. With 5th and 6th grade in the elementary building they are locked into the elementary schedule, the elementary unified arts and the elementary lunch times. They cannot expand their schedule to do activities as a middle school due to facilities, scheduling and timing, through to no fault of Mr. Shirvinski. Sixth grade is now sandwiched between third grade, as they have moved several times to accommodate handicapped students.

If the teachers were together as a middle school, they could team across the curriculum areas. The time on task lost is another issue. If there is a discipline issue, time is lost as the principal may need to travel from one building to another and the teacher instructional time is lower than it should be. If they were in one building, the discipline could be more effective. It could be under one plan, it could be quick and it would not take away from the student's learning. They also feel that discipline issues would decrease because there would be one plan and less confusion over what is expected. When this whole middle school project started years ago, the goal and objective was to develop a united middle school. At this time they are still functioning in two buildings with two unified arts staffs and they have not met their objective. She noted that the district now has the opportunity to meet that objective and move forward for the benefit of the students' education and academic learning. She noted that it would be a shame to put all of the taxpayer dollars into a yet a separate building where there would still be no unified middle school concept. She stated that as a parent, taxpayer and employee, she feels that the district needs to keep moving forward in a positive way and get the middle school together so there can be a principal who is functioning in one building and one team in grades five to eight so they could work as a unified group. It would also give Mr. Shirvinski the opportunity to develop his program further.

Mr. Reh stated that students who change buildings for certain classes experience a loss of academic learning time. He noted that there are numerous benefits to having the middle school all under one roof. He stated that the current building plan would meet the educational needs and he strongly recommended that the Board proceed with the option that has been presented, receive the bids for this option and move forward from there.

Mr. Shirvinski spoke in favor of the middle school concept and noted some of the difficulties of having the 5th and 6th grade students in the elementary building. Mrs. Monick reported that sharing of resources is not feasible with the middle school teachers in two different buildings. Training is also an issue due to the different schedules.

8.) Mr. Reh requested an executive session following the regular meeting to discuss personnel.

9.) Mr. Rodgers discussed a five-year projection. He prepared two projections which include the building project, operating costs and PSERS increases. One projection includes the immediate increase to thirty percent PSERS contributions and the other analysis phases in the PSERS increase three percent a year for the five years of the projection, although it would probably be phased in over eight to ten years to get to the levels required to completely fund the PSERS retirement fund.

Under the first projection, the deficit in the 2010-2011 budget would be approximately \$121,000, approximately \$270,000 in 2010-2011, \$1.2 million in 2012-2013 and \$1.2 million in the last year. The average taxpayer in Columbia County would have to pay approximately an additional \$195, and the average taxpayer in Northumberland County would pay approximately an additional \$250 in year five.

Under the second projection, the average taxpayer in Columbia County would have to pay approximately an additional \$75, and the average taxpayer in Northumberland County would pay

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approximately an additional \$96 in year five. Mr. Rodgers stated that he will continuously update the projections as he gets closer to the 2010-2011 actual budget. He emphasized that these projections are a big picture and the numbers need to be more refined. The next updated projection will be released at the special Finance Committee meeting at the end of the month. He noted that the projections include increases in salaries of roughly four percent, increases in healthcare costs, deregulation in electricity, and one percent increase in supplies. He noted that a lot of assumptions were made in developing the projections and updates will be made as more up-to-date information becomes available.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Vo-Tech – Eric Stahley reported that the Joint Operating Committee (JOC) met February 16th. They discussed negotiations, assistant coaches for softball and baseball, e-portfolios that replace senior projects, and the 2010-2011 budget. The JOC approved the 2010-2011 school year calendar. The boosters will hold a power lifting event. They also discussed replacing the clocks in the school and the possibility of adding an additional period at the end of the day. Mr. Stahley distributed a handout regarding adult education classes and the ability to register online. A football coop with Millville was discussed, but it is in the preliminary stage.

Travis George, a senior student at Columbia-Montour Vo-Tech was present, and his e-portfolio was presented to the Board.

Activities – Paul Starr, Chairperson, reported that the committee met prior to the Board meeting. They discussed the Athletic Director and Assistant Athletic Director positions and the fact that Terry Sharrow and Jim Roth would be switching positions. The administration would be working on the numbers and the assignments. The coaches' salary and point system was also discussed along with the possibility of changing it. Mr. Porter asked if the Athletic Director positions switch was definite, as he thought it was just a proposal. He noted that he would like to hear from Terry Sharrow before a decision is made. Mr. Reh stated that both individuals would both be asked to come to the next meeting.

Facilities & Services – Dave Stellfox, Chairperson, reported that the committee met on the 1st and there was a brief discussion regarding construction management and clerk of the works bids. They are making some progress on the Priority List projects. A major discussion came up that the Board needs to look at and stress the situation at the high school and replace the doors that don't have windows. Preventive maintenance requests are being addressed as they are received. They discussed the condition of the concession stands and possible renovations and relocation.

Finance – Eric Stahley, Chairperson reported that the committee also met on the 1st. The district's insurance agent attended the meeting. Premiums have decreased over the past few years as the staff has been more proactive. They also discussed builder's risk coverage. They discussed booster clubs and how they relate to the district's insurance coverage. They are covered under the district's insurance if they submit a facilities use request and it is approved by the district. The committee discussed the Act 34 Tax Collection Committee. As part of the new committee the districts and municipalities are being asked to provide some upfront seed money. The district's share would be \$3,193. BusTracks transportation software would cost approximately \$15,125 for software and training and roughly \$4,000 per year for maintenance. It could result in upwards of \$58,000 in reimbursements per year from the State. They also discussed the 2010-2011 budget, the five-year budget overview and the Vo-Tech budget. They scheduled a special Finance Committee meeting for March 25th at 6:00 p.m. in the District Office conference room for the specific purpose of dealing with the upcoming budget. Mr. Stellfox reported that the insurance agent stated that the main reason for the reduction in the district's insurance premium was because

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of the quick response time on injuries and incidents. He commended the staff for reporting in a timely manner.

Policy & Programs – Rick Steele, Chairperson, reported that the committee was not able to meet because the other meeting ran longer than expected. They will be recommending approval of the first reading of Policy 915 Relations with Booster Organizations at the next meeting. They will also be looking at a new Policy 114 relating to Gifted Education.

PSBA Liaison – Rick Steele reported that they have scheduled the Spring Legislative meeting on April 7th at Mount Carmel High School.

Transportation Services – Tim Vought, Chairperson, reported that the committee discussed the bus routing system. They had a cost reduction of \$2,000 for a new total of \$13,125 for the first year. They are going to provide the cost of one GPS unit. Mr. Vought noted that if the district sends the information to the vendor, there is no additional cost, which would be possible through the GPS unit. Mr. Rodgers noted that the new software would be compatible with the district's student information system, which will expedite reports and dissemination of information to drivers and parents. He also noted that district's using BusTracks are able to more accurately report what is going on in their transportations departments, so historically, they have seen an approximate seven percent increase in year one in state reimbursement. Mr. Vought stated that if the Board would approve the purchase of the software next week, it could be up and running within one month and could be useful in the end of year state reporting.

The committee also discussed the bridge construction at Catawissa. They came to the conclusion that they would bring all students in five minutes earlier in an attempt to get the Vo-Tech and non-public school students to school on time. Mrs. Pheasant will be providing quotes for cameras at the next meeting.

Mrs. Shoup reported that she and President Yeager attended a CSIU workshop pertaining to School Law with regard to the role of Board members and case law on the same subject.

CSIU – Mike Yeager reported the air dates of the Scholastic Challenge; however there was some discrepancy. Mr. Becker stated that he would check on the dates and provide the correct information to the Board. Mr. Yeager discussed a previously distributed handout regarding ARRA funds from CISU. Mr. Reh noted that the district's IU budget should be decreased from last year by over \$60,000 due to programs that have been implemented in-house. President Yeager reported that the Pennsylvania Joint Purchasing Council will be replaced by the Keystone Purchasing Network, which is now taking in twenty-three states.

ITEMS – TREASURER'S REPORTS

ITEMS – MINUTES/INVOICES

ITEMS – FISCAL

ITEMS – PERSONNEL

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

- A. To acknowledge that Emily J. Ruckle will be retiring as Dental Hygienist (contracted service) effective with the end of the 2009-2010 school year (currently

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June 7, 2010). Mrs. Ruckle has served as the district's Dental Hygienist for thirty-eight years.

- B. To accept the resignation of Susan C. Robinson from the position of Middle School Guidance Counselor effective with the end of the 2009-2010 school year (currently June 7, 2010). Mrs. Robinson has been in this position since November 1993.
- C. To designate Katarina Hutchison as a Volunteer Assistant Jr. High Girls Soccer Coach for the 2009-2010 school year (pending receipt of favorable clearances and a negative Tuberculin test).
- D. The addition of the following individual to the 2009-2010 Substitute List effective March 9, 2010 (pending receipt of all employment requirements):
 - Angela Smith (Elementary)
- E. Job Description of the Technology Support Technician (per Exhibit D).

Prior to voting it was agreed that exit interviews should be conducted when employees leave the district. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS - POLICY AND PROGRAMS

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Yocum reported that the Curriculum, Instruction and Technology Committee meeting scheduled for the next Monday at 6:30 p.m. would be held in Room 128. Mrs. Monick reported that a Promethean Whiteboard presentation would take place at 7:00 p.m. and all Board members are invited to attend, as well as the public.

RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC

District resident, Mr. Richard Gotshall asked President Yeager what impressed him about Dr. Witten at CSIU that he voted to give him a raise. President Yeager replied that the CSIU is a \$172 million business and he does a very good job of running it. It is all goal oriented and salaries are based on those goals.

Mr. Gotshall asked the Board to only use the CSIU for purchasing when it is in the best interest of the district. President Yeager replied that they are trying to do that already and cited as an example the Social Worker services that were previously purchased through CSIU.

District resident, Florey Guarno, asked if Mr. Roth would still be doing his other duties if he and Mr. Sharrow switch positions. Mr. Starr stated that he teaches four classes now and it is his understanding that he will still be teaching four classes. Mr. Guarno stated that it was his understanding that the concession stands were run by the Booster organizations. Mr. Stellfox explained that the Boosters run the concession stands, but they are owned by the district. Mr. Guarno stated that he thought the purpose of the superintendent's report was to report on the accomplishments and activities of students in the district, but he stated that Mr. Reh did a lot of campaigning for the middle school concept this evening. Mr. Reh stated that as superintendent, he is a non-voting member of the Board and he has a right to comment on any issues that arise. He was responding to information that came up at the Act 34 hearing and made a recommendation based on information that he gathered.

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Ralpho Township resident, Frank Berger, asked if hard copies of the five-year projection could be provided to the public. Mr. Rodgers replied affirmatively.

Mrs. Monick stated that the district does see extreme savings on many services from the CSIU, especially in training and professional development. Mr. Porter noted that there are benefits of the CSIU, but he expressed concern over the Joint Purchasing Council.

District resident, Mr. Craig Inns, asked if the administration and Board are equating facilities with educational results. He noted that the key to good education is to have a gifted teacher and motivated students. He asked the Board to step back and think about the priorities. Mrs. Shoup pointed out that mandates for non-public schools are different than those for public schools; they are much greater for public schools.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Vought and second by Stellfox, the meeting was adjourned at 10:21 p.m. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tresa J. Britch
Board Secretary