

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

The February 14, 2011, Board Meeting of the Southern Columbia Area School District Board of Directors convened in the High School Library at 7:34 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 (*Absent*)
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, Robert Mehalick, Administrators;; district residents and members of the media.

AGENDA HEARING PERIOD

President Yeager announced that Fiscal Items B and C, all Personnel Items, and Policy and Programs Item A on the agenda would be considered action items. District resident, Frank Berger, asked if the public could listen to the discussion on Fiscal Items B and C, and have the chance to comment before the vote. President Yeager responded affirmatively. Mr. Berger noted a discrepancy over the budget figure posted on the website and the preliminary budget figure on the agenda. Mr. Rodgers explained that the number posted on the website was from the special Finance Committee in January. The number on the agenda is the most current figure.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Reh's report included the following topics:

- 1.) Mr. Reh announced that the District received achievement recognition plaques in honor of the Elementary, Middle and High Schools meeting Adequate Yearly Progress for two consecutive years.
- 2.) Mr. Reh explained the second revision to the 2010-2011 school calendar due to the need for additional snow make-up days.
- 3.) Mr. Rodgers reported that the 2009-2010 financial audit report was received late Friday and appears as an addendum discussion item. He reviewed the audit report and noted that there were no material findings. He discussed the steps in the process of the Act 1 timeframe in terms of approving a preliminary budget as well as moving forward with a motion allowing the administration to apply for exceptions. He stated that it appears the District will be applying for exceptions relating to healthcare related benefits, special education and retirement contributions. The PDE system to apply for exceptions has not yet opened. If a Board does not pass a resolution in January stating that it plans to stay within the Act I index, then a preliminary budget must be adopted by February 16th. Applications for exceptions are due March 3rd. Mr. Rodgers stated that the budget presented is a preliminary budget and the administration will continue to look at ways to reduce the deficit further before a final budget is presented to the Board. He discussed

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highlights of the 2011-2012 Preliminary Budget and areas in which reductions would be made. Mr. Reh stated that the textbook line item can be reduced by \$25,000 and still be sufficient for the upcoming year. He made it clear that no student would go without a needed textbook.

Mr. Stahley asked if Mr. Rodgers had determined what the millage increases would be for Columbia and Northumberland Counties under the latest version of the budget. Mr. Rodgers stated that nothing has significantly changed. The Columbia County millage rate will go from 28.07 to 31.33, which would result in an increase of \$90 to the average homeowner with a fair market value home of \$102,000. The millage rate in Northumberland County would increase from 45.73 mills to 50.74 mills. The average homeowner, with a fair market value home of \$108,500 would pay an additional \$118. Mr. Rodgers noted that the aforementioned increases were based on the preliminary budget with no further reductions in the deficit. He reiterated that they will work diligently to reduce the deficit.

Mr. Berger asked for clarification on the operating expense figure. Mr. Rodgers explained that the number does not tie to any exceptions or current proposed administrative cuts, but the \$633,000 is the number that the administration is still wrestling with. He noted that it is the administration's challenge as well as the Board's challenge to determine how they are going to deal with the \$633,000 deficit. Will they use Fund balance, make cuts, raise taxes or a combination of the above. Mr. Rodgers stated that he would assume that that they will probably use some of the Fund balance, make some cuts and possibly if the Board decides to use one of the exceptions, they may raise taxes above the Act 1 index. Mr. Berger asked for clarification on the total instruction expenditures and the various figures that have been presented. Mr. Rodgers replied that it is a working document and the figures will change. He stated that the budget presented at the February Finance meeting included a negative \$325,000 in line item 3300. That figure was in the budget to show the Board the cuts the administration was proposing. The negative \$325,000 was eliminated and placed in the cost centers where it belongs: \$150,000 came out of line item 1100 Regular Programs, \$100,000 came out of line item 5200 Fund Transfers, \$25,000 textbook reduction came out of line item 1100 Regular Programs, and \$50,000 for big ticket items came out line item 1100 Regular Programs.

4.) Mr. Shirvinski stated that Kindergarten Registration will take place the week of March 28th. A Pre-K Night will be held March 7th for parents of children preparing for Kindergarten.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Activities - Paul Starr, Chairperson reported that the committee met with Jim Roth. Mr. George is looking into waterproof, anti-bacterial carpet tiles for the locker room floor. They would like to come up with a policy on gender cross-over in sports. Mr. Becker noted that P.I.A.A. will not address the issue. The job description of the Assistant Athletic Director is being revised to provide more clarity. Mr. Stellfox and President Yeager requested a copy be included in the Friday Letter.

Facilities & Services - Dave Stellfox, Chairperson, reported that they would be meeting on Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. in the High School Library. They would be discussing the track and members of the Football Boosters would be in attendance to discuss a new concession stand.

Finance - Eric Stahley, Chairperson reported that the majority of topics discussed at the committee meeting have already been discussed at the present meeting. Derek Stine asked them to consider paving the gravel parking area where the buses park. They discussed the audit report, health insurance broker services. They plan to review the proposals at the next Finance meeting and then move forward on the committee's recommendation. They spent a lot of time discussing the 2011-2012 preliminary budget. They discussed four ways to deal with the budget deficit; cut

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costs, take money out the Fund balance, find more revenue, and raise taxes. They discussed the procedure for the Act 1 exemptions, the exemption amounts and how those figures fit into the budget. At this time, the preliminary budget would be balanced through an increase in real estate taxes. Mr. Porter added that \$262,000 is set aside for PSERS.

Policy - Rick Steele, Chairperson, reported that the committee continues to try to coordinate a number of policies regarding volunteers, field trips and administration of medication. There seems to be some consensus to go with the clearance requirements defined at three different levels in the Volunteers Policy. They discussed the Medication policy and self-administration of some medications. Mrs. Atherton was present to discuss some other medically related requirements. The committee plans to have updated policies to recommend for adoption in the near future. They also discussed revised Policy 113.1 Behavior Management for Exceptional Students. He noted that Mr. Mehalick would be present at the next Policy Committee meeting to discuss the changes. They discussed Booster sponsored events versus school sponsored events.

CSIU - Mike Yeager reported that the IU budget is based on estimates of what each district will purchase each school year. Southern's estimate for the General Operating Budget is \$21,000, which includes Guest Teacher training, driver education and alternative education. Other CSIU Programs amounted to \$296,389, which includes special education, statewide alternative education, computer technology, Microsoft licensing and cooperative purchasing services for a total estimate of \$317,873. They found a second group to join OPED and developed an OPED Trust Agreement with the Carbon Lehigh School District. Larry Breech requested some information regarding the Trust that he could take back to his Board. President Yeager had a copy available for the Board's review. They received a program profile regarding a speech therapy program which they offer. The search committee met with Dr. Leary on the 28th of January. The top two or three candidates will be interviewed.

Vo-Tech - Eric Stahley reported that the JOC met January 18th. They hired a head baseball coach and two assistant softball coaches; all replacement positions. They hired a new adult education instructor. The Vo-Tech is holding a Career Camp, which is scheduled for two weeks in July. The JOC is in the process of updating their policy manual. The preliminary budget will be lower than last year; \$7,140,086. Southern Columbia's cost will be higher due to increased enrollment; \$17,551. They discussed using \$600,000 of the Fund balance to balance the budget. They have a Reserve account specifically set up with \$79,000 as a house building fund. A vote was taken to return the \$600,000 surplus money to the sending districts, which passed with an 8-3 vote. Mr. Bacher gave a report on e-portfolio and the senior project presentations, mock interviews and recent Act 80 days. Mr. Dunkelberger gave a report regarding the Learning Support students visiting Luzerne County Community College. Mr. Brookhart talked about voucher legislation. He announced that the superintendents discussed shared services within the sending districts at their last meeting. Mr. Stahley reported that he attended an open house at Vo-Tech on the previous weekend. The event was well attended and very informative. Mr. Stahley serves on the Long-Term Planning Committee. They are looking at options for the future of the school, types of vocations, improvements to the building, property acquisition, etc.

ITEMS – TREASURER'S REPORTS

ITEMS – MINUTES/INVOICES

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Mr. Porter expressed concern over the minutes from January 17th and the details of Mr. Reh's statement concerning Mr. Porter's recent letter to the editor. He noted that his concern was with the process of the building project. He reiterated that he did not use the word finagled. He stated that he talked to Mr. Reh about the Robert Lack drawings and never supported the E.I. Associates drawings. He stated that he will stand by what he wrote. He noted that the minutes were accurate as to what was said, but what was said was inaccurate.

ITEMS – FISCAL

On a motion by Stellfox and second by Starr, to adopt the 2011-2012 Preliminary Budget in the amount of \$17,274,991 (**per Exhibit B**) was presented for approval. By roll call vote, the motion carried; 7-Yes, 1-No (Stahley voted No).

On a motion by Steele and second by Vought, to authorize the filing of applications with the Pennsylvania Department of Education for referendum exceptions for the budget year 2011-2012 pursuant to Act 1 was presented for approval. Prior to voting, Mr. Porter asked for clarification on the healthcare figures and calculations. Mr. Rodgers replied that it is a weighted average based upon participation in GHP and the PPO. Solicitor Roberts clarified that the Board is not voting on specific exceptions; they are voting to authorize the filing of applications for any appropriate exceptions. Mr. Porter stated that the district has already set aside \$262,000 for future pension contributions. He would not be in favor of going to the state to raise taxes on the taxpayers when they have already raised the taxes and set that money aside. Mr. Stellfox stated that the purpose of the \$262,000 was to prepare for the spike and they actually wanted to set more aside. Mr. Stellfox stated that they have a preliminary budget in front of them and he stated that it doesn't hurt a thing to file for the exceptions. Mr. Stahley asked why they should file for them if they aren't going to use them. Mr. Yocum stated that they would have had to file for them regardless of the building project because they knew they were over budget. Mr. Porter referred to the special education exception and stated that all of the changes made through the Special Education Department were to save money, but now the district is filing for an exception. He asked for clarification. Mr. Mehalick stated that there were start-up costs for four new programs. Mr. Rodgers explained that it appears that it is all savings, but what they are not taking into account is the regular salary increases and health insurance increases for the entire department, as well as contracted services for students that are not discussed on a regular basis. He added that even though they are limiting the increases in the Special Education Department; the net is still an increase in that department. He also noted that there is still additional savings to be experienced once the building project is complete. Mr. Porter stated that he would like to see information regarding the Special Education numbers from the beginning of the year and the current numbers included in the Friday Letter. By roll call vote, the motion carried; 6-Yes, 2-No (Porter and Stahley voted No).

ITEMS – PERSONNEL

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

- A. To acknowledge tenure for Lauren Day effective January 23, 2011.
- B. The addition of the following individual(s) to the 2010-2011 Substitute List effective February 15, 2011 (pending completion of all employment requirements):

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- Mark Finn (Elementary)
 - Ashley Haladay (Elementary)
 - Rebecca Haley (Elementary)
 - Richard Miller (Elementary/Social Studies)
 - Nichole Shiko (Elementary)
- C. To accept the resignation for retirement of Jean Atherton from the position of Certified School Nurse effective July 29, 2011). Mrs. Atherton has been with the district since February 1990.
- D. To accept the resignation for retirement of Cindy Stabley from the position of Bus Driver effective February 28, 2011. Ms. Stabley has been with the district since November 2007.
- E. To accept the resignation of Brenna Lawrence from the positions of Junior High Football Cheerleading Coach and JV Football Cheerleading Coach effective February 8, 2011. Ms. Lawrence has been with the district since the 2007-2008 school year.
- F. Employment of James Kessler for the position of Elementary Boys Basketball Coach 2010-2011 school year (pending completion of all employment requirements), at a rate of \$7.70 per hour/70 hours maximum.
- G. Employment of Kristen Vitkauskas as a Tutor for the After School Acceleration and Preview (ASAP) program, effective February 15, 2011, at a rate of \$23.00 per hour (per the Collective Bargaining Agreement).
- H. To change the employment status of Michael McElroy from Substitute Bus/Van Driver to Regular Run Bus Driver effective February 15, 2011 (salary and benefits per the Collective Bargaining Agreement)
- I. To accept the resignation of Brenda Webb from the positions of Paraprofessional and Bus Driver effective February 25, 2011. Mrs. Webb has been with the district since March 1995.

The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

ITEMS - POLICY AND PROGRAMS

On a motion by Vought and second by Stellfox, a second revision to the 2010-2011 School Year Calendar (per Exhibit C) was presented for approval. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

There was a discussion regarding the 2011-2012 Instructional Planning Guide and the Keystone Exams.

BOARD COMMENTS

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RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC

District resident, Florey Guarno, asked how the students make up classes missed due to a two-hour delay. Mr. Becker replied that they don't miss classes. They run a reduced schedule and every class is held. Mr. Guarno noted that the Board is planning cuts for the upcoming year, but asked what they planned for the following years. Mr. Rodgers stated that some of the cost saving measures would roll into the next year, but some of the items such as textbooks would need to be addressed year to year. Mr. Guarno stated that the projections for the next five years are 3.8, 4.0, 4.0, 4.0 and 4.0. He stated that if the state sets the index below 4.0, the district will have to file for exceptions again and raise taxes. Mr. Rodgers responded affirmatively, assuming on the five-year projection that the assumptions are at 4.0 percent. The projections that were put together originally last year were based on those assumptions; however it has been requested of him to update the projection and take it out five more years. He noted that the assumptions would probably be closer to 2.0 percent.

Mr. Guarno stated that it appears that if the district does not need to replace two retiring teachers that it is overstaffed. Mr. Reh explained that one of the positions they are looking at was dealing with the Classrooms for the Future. That individual will be moved into the regular classroom. That individual was working in the Technology Department. Mr. Reh stated that he wouldn't say they are overstaffed. They will be putting more responsibility and taxing the existing Technology Department to pick up the slack for that person being taken out of the Technology Department. The other area may be overstaffed at this time due to the decrease in ESL (English as Second Language) students. Due to the decrease in the ESL population, a full-time ESL teacher is no longer needed; therefore that teacher will be moved into a regular classroom. Mr. Guarno expressed concern over the size of the new gymnasium. Mr. Stellfox stated that he needs to keep in mind that it is three classrooms. Mr. Guarno stated that he feels the Board is working the system. He noted that it began with the administration wanting to bring the special education students back, and now they are building a middle school and new gymnasium. President Yeager stated that the building project came about as a result of a tour of the elementary school on a Saturday. They saw how many students were in closets and how many classes were in the hall. They needed to make a decision as to the best way to accommodate the students. Mr. Reh stated his job is to evaluate the educational needs of the district. In 1999, the Board members did what they thought was right by going to a middle school concept. He noted that it was the right idea, but not having a true middle school concept has caused too many educational conflicts. He added that by building at the high school, the overcrowding in the elementary is addressed, a true middle school concept is accomplished and they will also have space to meet the needs of the special education students. By solving those problems, there is the need for more cafeteria space and there is also the need for a gymnasium. He noted that the gym was originally planned to have approximately 966 seats. In looking at the structure of the building, there was a two or three feet offset, and it was recommended to bring that wall out and make the structure symmetrical with a straight wall. By doing that, there were probably two rows of bleachers added, which raised the seating capacity from 966 to 1,100. The square footage of the gym is larger than the current gym to make it safer for competitive sports, i.e., more space behind the baskets and in front of the bleachers.

Mr. Reh stated that if the district would have received similar funding as in the previous year, along with the reduction in spending, they would not need to raise taxes. Mr. Becker stated that he was the Middle School Principal for four years, and what they were doing was the best with what they had to work with, but they weren't doing the right thing. They were doing a middle school program in two different buildings with two different sets of rules. He said that it

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was a complete mess. The students didn't know how to respond as the rules were changing back and forth. Mr. Becker stated that it was one of the driving forces of why he left. Mr. Shirvinski stated that as a 5th grade teacher the year the middle school concept was implemented, they had no idea how to put it together, and it is still not the way it should be.

Mr. Berger asked for confirmation that the 1.8 index equates to approximately .59 mills and 1 mill equates to approximately \$180,000 in tax dollars. Mr. Rodgers replied affirmatively. Mr. Berger asked if that basic information could be included with the projections. Mr. Rodgers stated that they need to keep in mind that when they talk district wide about .5 mill or 1.0 mill, it encompasses two different counties. When he puts the 1.8 percent into the budgetary format that is driven down to him by PDE, it translates into something a little higher. It is all driven by a sophisticated formula and computation by the state. The 1.8 index translates into approximately \$114,000. Mr. Rodgers stated that the point he was trying to make was that if he makes a comment such as, "the 1.8 index translates into approximately .5 mill;" that is an approximation, but if he states, "the 1.8 index translates to \$114,000;" that is an exact dollar amount. Mr. Berger asked Mr. Rodgers to put that in black and white when he has time. Mr. Rodgers stated that he would put the actual computation that the state provides out on the website.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Porter and second by Stellfox, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 p.m. The motion carried by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tresa J. Britch
Board Secretary