

NO: VIII
Minutes of the
Board of School Directors
DERRY TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
Hershey, PA 17033

November 6, 2006

OPENING ITEMS

1.01 Call To Order

A Special Meeting of the Board of School Directors, Derry Township School District, was held on Monday, November 6, 2006, in the District Office Board Room. Dr. William Parrish, board president, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1.02 Roll Call

Directors Present: Mr. Christopher Barrett
Mrs. Beulah Chabal
Dr. Donna Cronin
Mr. Brad Dorrance
Mr. John Gräb
Dr. William Parrish
Mr. Charles Stover

Director Late Mrs. Sharon Cin (excused)

Director Absent Mr. Jonathan Keeler

Superintendent: Dr. Linda Brewer

Secretary: Mr. Stephen Rineer

Solicitor: Mr. Andrew Levy

Press: Mr. Denise DiNunzio WPMT Fox 43
Mr. William Jackson HUMMELSTOWN SUN
Ms. Anne Reeves HERSHEY CHRONICLE
Ms. Chris Sholly LEBANON DAILY NEWS
Ms. Kristen Wight WHTM ABC 27

Representatives of the Administrative Staff: Mr. Edward Consalo, Mr. Greg Ebert, Mr. Troy Portser, and Dr. Timothy Quinn.

Representatives of the Staff and Community: Ms. Deb Allison-Logan, Ms. Penny Arnold, Ms. Amy Claxton, Ms. Barb Clouser, Ms. Margaret DeAngelis, Mr. Robert Demmel, Mr. Hank Donahue, Ms. Jeanine Dreher, Ms. Heidi Eby, Ms. Donna Eckert, Ms. Pat English, Mr. Ray Fardley, Mr. Ed Foley, Ms. Susan Foxx, Ms. Bunny Hottenstein, Mr. Chuck Kray, Ms. Karen Johnson, Ms. Linda Lehrian, Mr. James Leiper, Ms. Deb Malaro, Mr. Rick McCann, Ms. Monique Portser, Ms. Elaine Shuey, Mr. David Szczesny, Ms. Michele Taylor, Mr. Richard Weaver, Mr. Dave Yingst, and Ms. Jennifer Zakutney.

1.03 Flag Salute

Mr. Stover led the meeting in the Salute to the American Flag.

ANNOUNCEMENT

2.01 Reading of Special Meeting

Dr. Parrish read the following announcement of Special Meeting:

The Sunshine Act and the School Code set forth procedures by which the District may call a Special Meeting. Under the Sunshine Act, "special meetings" are defined as those meetings that are scheduled AFTER a public agency's regular schedule of meetings has been established.

As you may know, we had a scheduled regular meeting of the full Board on October 23, and we will have a regular meeting next Monday on November 13.

Under our policy and under the School Code, the President of the Board may call a Special Meeting at any time. The President must call a Special Meeting when requested to do so by three Board Members.

In this instance, I did receive three requests to call a Special Meeting from Board Members. Additionally, upon considering the nature of the requests, I similarly agreed that a Special Meeting should be called. As such, under either policy provision, the calling of this Special Meeting is proper.

2.02 Reading of Notice of Public Meeting

Dr. Parrish read the following Notice of Public Meeting:

In accordance with The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, 65 Pa. CS 701 et

seq., Sections 423 and 426 of the Pennsylvania School Code and District Policy 006, and upon request by the requisite number of Directors, the Derry Township School District Board of Education, hereby provides public notice of a Special Meeting to be held at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, November 8, 2006, at the District's Administrative Office Board Room, located at 30 East Granada Avenue, Hershey, PA.

This meeting was requested to discuss recent conduct and communication by Board Member Jonathan Keeler, and for the Board to determine what action, if any, it may take with regard to the Board Member's conduct.

This special meeting is a public meeting and is open to the public.

BUSINESS OF MEETING

3.01 Presentation of Recent Conduct and Communication by Board Member Jonathan Keeler

Dr. Parrish read the following Presentation of Recent Conduct and Communication by Board Member Jonathan Keller:

On November 1, the District was apprised on certain postings that appeared on PennLive.com website, specifically in its 'Derry' forum. As you may know, the District does NOT sponsor or operate this discussion forum in any way.

Several of these PennLive.com postings related to Mr. Keeler and his apparent construction of a home page at another website, Myspace.com. This home page contained pictures and video of Mr. Keeler and statements attributable to Mr. Keeler. A PennLive poster with the 'forum name' of 'jkeeler', and presumed to be Mr. Keeler, responded to the string of emails and appeared to acknowledge the creation of the home page.

On November 2, at approximately 9 AM, an email was sent to the Board's common email account from someone identifying herself as "Susan Shonen."

The District has not been able to identify a parent or resident named Susan Shonen, and the emailer did not provide any additional contact information, such as a phone number or mailing address. Nevertheless, the emailer's email address, the emailer's use of the Board's publicized 'common' email address and the nature of the emailer's comments led the Board's Executive Committee to conclude that the emailer might be a District resident.

Suffice to say, the emailer objected to several aspects of the MySpace.com homepage that contained pictures of Mr. Keeler ...as well as statements attributed to him.

All Board members receive an electronic copy of any email sent to the Board's common email account. This includes Mr. Keeler. Beginning at about 2 p.m., Mr. Keeler responded to the Susan Shonen with a number of emails.

After reviewing the MySpace.com information, the email exchange that I just mentioned and an even earlier string of emails on the PennLive.com website - -some of which came from the 'jkeeler' forum name - - I received requests from Board members to call this Special Meeting to discuss the totality of this conduct in the context of Boardsmanship.

Mr. Keeler's responses to the Shonen email reference the United States Constitution and freedom of speech - - a right which is at the foundation of our democratic system. But the exercise of rights also involves personal responsibility and accountability.

And freedom of speech is a mutual right. As fellow Board members, we have a similar right to publicly state our sentiments regarding Mr. Keeler's presumed conduct and representations and how we believe they are affecting this Board, this District and our Mission

Earlier this morning, Mr. Keeler sent a letter to the Board and the local press submitting his resignation from his school director position, effective immediately. The Board will considered Mr. Keeler's resignation later in this meeting.

3.02 Recognition Of Citizens (Agenda Items)

Jim Leiper commented on Mr. Keeler's conduct and communication applauding the Board for calling the special meeting.

Chuck Kray commented on Mr. Keeler's conduct and communication applauding the Board for calling the special meeting.

3.03 Approval of Jonathan Keeler's Resignation

Earlier today, Mr. Keeler submitted his resignation, effective immediately, from his position on the Board of School Directors of the Derry Township School District.

Dr. Parrish requested a motion to accept Mr. Keeler's resignation.

multiple Executive Sessions before regular Board meetings. Mr. Keeler, however, did not attend these sessions, electing to attend only the regular Board meetings on the nights in question.

Most recently, Mr. Keeler's MySpace.com website received public attention. This website, which identified himself and included a photograph of the entire Board, contained numerous references to sexual acts and listed as Mr. Keeler's general interests: "Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll!!!" After a link to Mr. Keeler's MySpace.com webpage was posted on a Pennlive.com Derry forum, someone who identified herself as a parent and presumably a constituent sent an e-mail to the entire Board expressing her concerns with his website. Using the Board's e-mail system, Mr. Keeler responded by sending a series of e-mails to this individual, including multiple e-mails which we believe were harassing and threatening. Around this time, Mr. Keeler also made a series of posts on the Pennlive.com forum, which many of us considered to be similarly inappropriate and continued to bring negative publicity to the District.

Simply put, Mr. Keeler's conduct reached the point where we felt the need to address it publicly as a Board. Our attempts to address issues in private with Mr. Keeler were unsuccessful, and the increasingly public nature of his conduct necessitated action. We as a Board may not have the ability to remove an elected school director for such conduct, but we certainly have the right to express publicly our concerns regarding the conduct of a fellow school director and the effect it has on our mission and our District. Rather than address these issues, Mr. Keeler has elected to resign his position.

Contrary to Mr. Keeler's claim, "politics" played no role whatsoever in any of these incidents. Simply put, we believe that Mr. Keeler's conduct, both leading up to and including the most recent incidents in question, was inappropriate and unproductive for a Board member. The Board and District Administration were forced to spend time and resources addressing these incidents, time and resources that could have been better spent on the ever-growing needs of our District.

Nor is this Board on a "witch hunt." We have a duty to the community, staff, parents, and, most of all, our children to act when we feel that something is not right. We only took the action of calling a Special Meeting to address these issues when Mr. Keeler's own public conduct reached the point where we felt we must act.

Mr. Keeler's recent conduct, and not his character, is what troubled enough of us to demand a Special Meeting to address these issues. We agree with Mr. Keeler that the First Amendment protects his right to speak his mind. The First Amendment, however, does not make Mr. Keeler

All Board members present signified by a Yes vote.

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen E. Rineer
Secretary to the Board
Approved at the November 13, 2006 meeting

William Parrish
President of the Board

SR:trp

Monday, November 06, 2006

I am deeply troubled that my character has recently been called into question. I consider myself to be a person of high moral values. My father was a minister; and my mother is a school teacher. I was raised to contribute to society, be respectful of others and fight for my beliefs.

I admit that I do like to joke with my close friends and family. My personal web page on MySpace.com was clearly a joke intended to be humorous. I never imagined that the page would be sought out and used against me in a political fashion.

I also have the habit of speaking my mind. It appears that this characteristic has landed me in hot water with the Derry Township School Board, even though free speech is protected by the First Amendment. I strongly believe that I have the right to discuss political and community issues, despite being an elected official. In fact, I feel that elected officials should not hide where they stand on the issues. Had I divulged any confidential information discussed in an Executive Session that would be another matter. This is simply not the case!

I was elected to the school board with the promise that I would not vote to raise taxes (an issue that concerns many people in this district). And I voted as such. This stance has not won me many friends on this board or in the school's administration. But it has won me much praise from those in Derry Township that live on limited incomes, namely the elderly. That alone has given me tremendous satisfaction. Still there is much to do, such as reinstating class rank and the academic achievement of Valedictorian.

I chose to run against John Payne for the Pennsylvania State House of Representatives because I felt that no person should run unopposed for elected office. Elections should not be decided in back rooms. This choice won me even less friends in Derry Township.

I believe that this and previous personal attacks against me are politically motivated. To me, it is no coincidence that the night I was admonished for an alleged alcohol and weapons violation was the same evening as the budget vote; that the story about this incident was leaked to a local newspaper as an "October Surprise"; or that a public meeting was called for the night before the general election. I dared to challenge the status quo of the Derry Township political machine and this is my punishment. I stand by my public statements, my voting record as a school director and my adamant support of our First Amendment. I have always had the best interests of our students and taxpayers in mind.

However, my family is my top priority. To continue as a school director at this point would only prolong the unjustified public scrutiny from a vocal minority of me and my loved ones. For this reason, I resign my position as school director, effective immediately. My family, personal happiness and the educational success of the students that attend the Derry Township School District mean more to me than any elective office I could hold.

I trust that the Derry Township School Board will now be able to focus on the important educational issues facing the district. I have enjoyed working with Dr. Donna M. Cronin, Mr. John H. Gräb, Mr. Bradford Dorrance, Esq., Dr. William Parrish, Timothy J. Quinn, Ed.D, Mr. Stephen Rineer and Mr. Brian Jackson, Esq.

I wish to thank everyone who expressed their support for me and I want you to know that, as a private citizen, I will continue to work for fiscal accountability in Derry Township and support candidates that share these values. It has been an honor to serve you.

Sincerely,



Jonathan D. Keeler
Derry Township School Board Director