

For Immediate Release

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**Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials Conducts
Review of District's Facilities and Plant Operations Divisions**

Recommends Combining Facilities and Plant Operations Under One Director

Report Includes Nine Commendations for Areas of Excellence

PITTSBURGH September 4, 2007 – At tonight's Business and Finance Meeting, the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) presented recommendations to the Board regarding the District's Facilities and Plant Operations Divisions. PASBO, at the request of Superintendent Mark Roosevelt, had three of its members conducted a study and analysis of the District's Facilities and Plant Operations Divisions' organizational structure, budget and decision making process relative to contracts and procurement strategies for construction and professional services.

The recommendations presented by PASBO will serve as one of the tools the Superintendent will use to assess the District's Facilities and Plant Operations Divisions. The Superintendent is obligated to present a plan for the reorganization of the District's Facilities and Plant Operations Divisions as one of his Year 3 Performance Priorities set by the Board in July.

Current Operational Structure

Currently, the District Operations Office is run by the Chief Operations Officer who is a direct report to the Superintendent. The Director of Facilities, Director of Plant Operations, Director of Pupil Transportation, Director of Food Service, and the School Police Chief each report directly to the District's Chief Operations Officer.

Facilities Division

The District's Facilities Division is responsible for the District's Capital Improvement Program, which includes the design, construction management and inspection of District buildings, renovations and site improvement projects. Additionally, the Facilities Division provides technical support to school administration and central office.

Plant Operations Division

The District's Plant Operations Division is responsible for the operation of all District facilities including custodial services, utilities services, athletic fields, truck transportation and mechanics. The Operations Division is charged with ensuring all buildings maintain clean, healthy and safe conditions.

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Recommendations from the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials

In May 2007, PASBO sent a Study Team of current School Business Officials, recognized as experts in the field of school district operations and maintenance. The team, assembled by William L. McGill, Director of Technical Assistance for PASBO, interviewed 18 District staff, toured six facilities and viewed 57 documents prior, during and after its two day visit.

Organizational Structure

The Study Team observed that the current distinct division of the Facilities and Operations departments “likely creates coordination issues and inefficiency.” PASBO recommends combining the two divisions into a single Facilities and Plant Operations Division under one director.

PASBO further recommends that the District either “decrease the staffing of architects and engineers in construction management or involve them more in construction management.” The PASBO team describes the current layering of staff in this department as “one level in excess of a good working structure.”

Additionally the Study Team reports that the District should be commended for reducing custodial staff due to “Right Sizing” and declining enrollment. The Study Team “believes the custodial levels are now at the minimum level needed to successfully maintain safe and clean facilities.” It is believed that the District would benefit from recruiting and maintaining a larger staff of substitute custodians and would benefit from conducting a time study of level 1 and 1A custodial staff.

Within its report PASBO recommends the District prioritize the sale or dispersion of closed buildings due to the cost associated with maintenance.

Properties and Construction Contracts

PASBO acknowledges that “change orders are inevitable during construction projects.” Currently District change orders exceed 5% on a regular basis prompting PASBO to make a recommendation regarding the current change order process. The Study Team recommends that all projects have a 5% change order contingency. Additionally, the Team recommended that the District retain its newly adopted change order policy.

In May, the Board approved changes to the District’s change order policy. The new policy requires Board approval of any increase over the not-to-exceed amount of contracts. Any change orders decreasing the not-to-exceed amount may be approved by the Chief Operations Officer or a designee. In an emergency, change orders that are necessary to protect students, staff, property and the economic best interest of the District made be authorized prior to Board approval. The board will need to reauthorize the current change order policy prior to January 2008.

The Study Team reports, “it is virtually impossible to plan, design and build within a single budget year.” It is recommended that funds for planning and architectural development be allocated in the planning of projects prior to execution.

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Additionally the team commended the Operations Office for its work under the extremely tight timelines related to *Right Sizing* and acknowledges that proper planning and execution of contracts should prevent problems from repeating.

Eligible Business Enterprises

While “applauding the recognition of the need and the commitment of the District for the Minority and Women Business Policy,” PASBO cautions that the current implementation procedures used by the District limits the participation of all bidders, including minorities and women owned businesses.

The PASBO Study Team noted significant issues with the Eligible Business Enterprise (EBE) unique goals set for subcontractors. A review of contracts for a prior four-year period revealed the dollar difference between the EBE bidder and the next lowest bidder exceeded \$1,000,000.

It is recommended that the Board adopt Minority and Women Business Policy and Procedures similar to the Harrisburg School District: begin the EBE process at \$25,000, reduce paperwork and allow contractors to complete subcontractor paperwork after they are identified as the low bidder. It is further suggested that a better working relationship between the Facilities Division and MWBE office be developed.

Areas of Excellence

Within its comprehensive review of the Facilities and Plant Operations Divisions, PASBO acknowledged Pittsburgh Public Schools Operations Office performs its duties well and identified nine commendations for areas of excellence. These areas include: Safety Committee, Integrated Pest Management, Staff Safety Management, Recycling, Staff Communication Tools (instant communication during emergencies), Green Cleaning, Parts Acquisition (adequate supplies and parts for District needs), Maintenance Commendation and Energy Conservation.

Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO)

PASBO is a professional association whose members are engaged in or provide products and services for school business management. Currently, PASBO is made up of more than 2,500 members who are primarily employed full time with public or private schools in Pennsylvania. PASBO programs and services promote the highest standards of school business management practices, member recognition, professional growth and the effective use of educational resources. For more information regarding PASBO please visit their website at www.pasbo.org.

For More Information

For a complete copy of the PASBO Facilities and Operations Department Review, please visit the Pittsburgh Public Schools website at www.pps.k12.pa.us, call the **Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920** or visit the Division of Communications, Room 204, Pittsburgh Public Schools Administration Building, 341 South Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

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