

The Classical Academy  
975 Stout Road  
Colorado Springs, CO 80921

Board of Directors Special Session  
January 30, 2007

I. Chairman Chris Leland called the open session to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call.

A. Chris Leland led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Roll Call. The following Directors were present: Chris Leland, Matt Carpenter, Lisa Sutton, Steve Tomberlin, Lisa Ruth, and Clark Miller (via teleconference). Chris Bender arrived at 7:04. Also present: Mark Hyatt, President.

III. Executive Session – For the purpose of discussing personnel and employment issues.

*Moved by Matt Carpenter, seconded by Lisa Sutton, to adjourn to executive session per C.R.S. 24-6-402(4) (f), Personnel and Discipline Matters, at 7:04 p.m. Roll Call. Approved by unanimous vote (Chris Bender abstaining).*

*Moved by Steve Tomberlin, seconded by Lisa Ruth, to adjourn to public session at 7:50 p.m. Roll Call. Approved by unanimous vote.*

IV. Public Session

Chairman Chris Leland explained the two reasons for this meeting are to present the facts about what took place, and to look at the process and how it was executed. He advised the audience that the rules of order were as follows:

- All comments must be germane to the purposes of the meeting
- Personnel issues are confidential, so there will be some things to which we will not respond
- Unsubstantiated assertions of wrong doing must be avoided – there is a proper process for any assertions
- The Board and Administration will be listening intently, but this will not be an interactive event
- Action, if needed, will be initiated
- Each speaker will limited their comments to 4 minutes

He then thanked all present for participating, citing this type of interaction as extremely important to the TCA culture.

A. Comments

1. From the Audience

a. Mike Darlington thanked all of the students, athletes, parents and staff for their support and prayers. He indicated that for him the investigation has raised a lot of questions. He expressed the hope that everyone could learn lessons of humility, character, and integrity.

b. Melanie Shaha commented that despite previous disagreements with Coach Darlington, that she is speaking on his behalf. She emphasized the tremendous affect that the wrestling program has made on the character of each team member. After stating that she sensed concern among staff that we're all on thin ice, as if

anyone could lose their job, she expressed a desire that we can do a better job of outlining the consequences before we discipline.

c. Parent Gary Cronk read from two prepared statements. The first statement, from Coach Darlington, described the events of that evening, and that his intent was never to single out or hurt anyone. The second was a statement of support from the team and their parents showing support for the coach, and describing his mentoring of students and his passion for coaching.

d. Tim Birch began with the hope that his comments will provide a foundation for what others have to say. He cited the wrestling program as a standard for other programs to follow, claiming that TCA needs more coaches like Mike Darlington, whose personal involvement will last a lifetime. He then explained that many are here tonight because we don't understand why this happened. We're asking the Board to look into how something that seems fairly minor from our perspectives could grow into something that caused us to lose our coach. Many here tonight believe the definition of hazing that is being used is wrong, in that it is both too specific and too general, too impractical, and not measurable. Mr. Birch then presented a formal recommendation: that TCA adopt the NFHSA's (National Federation of High School Association) nationwide resolution as the official school definition of hazing. He offered several examples in order to put this incident into context. Mr. Birch provided a Statement of Support and Appreciation (Attachment 1), signed by numerous parents. He closed by asserting that the actions by the Administration violated the "assisting parents" portion of TCA's mission, and urged the Board to investigate. At Steve Tomberlin's request, he provided written recommendations and definitions to the Board (Attachments 2 and 3).

e. Dan Porreco publicly thanked Mark Darlington, praising him as a great role model who will be greatly missed by both current and future TCA wrestling students.

f. Don Zellmer introduced himself as an ex-wrestler who works for a faith-based sports ministry called Athletes in Action, which cares about building deep character qualities in young athletes. He came to TCA because of his love for the sport of wrestling, and his admiration for Coach Darlington. He averred that there was no question in his mind that Mike Darlington always put the kids first.

g. Dar Ringling expressed appreciation for Tim Birch's comments, and the work he's done to gather facts and definitions. Using the freshmen-pie incident at the assembly for comparison, he concluded that neither incident was hazing. He thanked the Board for investigating this.

h. Student Jared Goad described Coach Darlington as a truly uplifting coach, and compared wrestling to football activities. He felt that the results of the process and decision were more detrimental than the situation itself.

i. Ross Haycock, the volunteer assistant wrestling coach, thanked Mike Darlington for building a successful program, and instilling in the students characteristics that TCA espouses. He then addressed the wrestling team members, asking them to support Coach Jay Eide, and challenging them to step up and become stronger. He closed by addressing the Board, claiming they are here to serve parents, and will be held accountable.

j. Tom Scudder thanked Principal Hiltz and Coach Sassaman for their openness, and the way they addressed parents at the meetings. However, he was very uncomfortable with the conclusion that this was hazing. He described Mike Darlington as a diamond in the rough.

k. Gary Cronk, one of the student Wrestling Captains, spoke highly of Coach Darlington, and thanked him for what he had done for the wrestling program and the Cronk family.

l. Kevin Moss conveyed the utmost respect for Coach Darlington, and thanked him for teaching our boys to become men. He offered three recommendations that came out of a Dream Team meeting: 1) Ensure some type of recurring refresher training for teachers, so they understand their rights and recourses in an investigation situation, 2) Review the policy on how investigations are handled, and how the investigators are selected; typically they are accomplished by those outside the supervisory chain, and 3) Consider sort of parent representative or teacher advocate who can present the consensus of the parents or staff before a dismissal is considered.

m. Lee Mazzarella complimented our teachers and coaches. He expressed his opinion that parents should be listened to.

n. Parents Greg and Debbie Ino conceded their speaking time to others.

o. Student Jared Birch spoke on Coach Darlington's behalf, attesting to his mentoring. He stated that he had never seen the coach intentionally humiliate anyone on the team.

p. After thanking Coach Darlington, parent Steven Goad alleged that the proper process wasn't followed. He inquired whether intent was taken into account. He communicated his frustration when his son was told not to discuss interview details with anyone else, and how that was misinterpreted into not sharing information with his parents. He thanked Steve Tomberlin for the information at the Dream Team meeting, and asked that no one be condemned for only one mistake.

q. Val Cronk described the affect that the results of this incident and investigation have had on her family. She expressed concern about the process and the way things were handled, and suggested that reinstatement would be appropriate.

r. Isabelle Chavez, grandmother of a wrestling team member, concurred with several previous speakers.

s. Parent Lisa Beck offered a non-sports perspective, stating that edgy, intense people are valuable in helping to teach our children to think critically.

t. Jamie Nordby thanked everyone for being here, and offered a different perspective by requesting that the Board not micromanage this issue; instead, allow the administrators we have hired to do their jobs. He commented on how impressed he has been by all of the parents and students, but urged everyone to move forward.

u. Melinda Mazzarella asked the Board to consider what our students are learning about this process. She requested a serious look at procedures, to preclude losing employees.

v. Karen Birch described the positive impact Mike Darlington has made on her entire family, and her concern at his discouragement and frustration. She questioned why a certain adult witness was not interviewed.

w. Parent Sue Obenauf began by identifying herself as the adult witness. Although she didn't see the specific incident, she described that it nonetheless bothered her that no one interviewed her.

Chris Leland sincerely thanked everyone for sharing their hearts, minds and opinions. The Board is part of the parent community, and elected by the parents, and they want to do the right thing to navigate us through these waters. He alluded to the need for Solomon's wisdom, indicated that the Board will make a formal statement to the community.

V. Executive Session – For the purpose of discussing personnel and employment issues.

*Moved by Steve Tomberlin, seconded by Lisa Ruth, to adjourn to executive session per C.R.S. 24-6-402(4) (f), Personnel and Discipline Matters, at 9:33 p.m. Roll Call. Approved by unanimous vote*

VI. Adjournment

*Moved by Steve Tomberlin, seconded by Matt Carpenter, to adjourn at 11:42 p.m. Roll Call. Approved by unanimous vote.*

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Chris Leland  
Chairman

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Matt Carpenter  
Secretary