

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the December 11, 2001 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, December 11, 2001 in the Council Chambers at the Portsmouth Municipal Complex (City Hall).

Attendance

PRESENT: Mr. Kent LaPage (Chair); Mr. Raimond Bowles; Mrs. Nancy Novelline Clayburgh; Mrs. Nansi Craig; Mr. John Dowd; Mr. Clay Hayward; Mr. Kenneth Muske; Mr. Carvel Tefft

ABSENT: Mr. John Lyons, Jr. (Vice-Chair), Mrs. Ann Walker (Employee Representative)

PARTICIPATING: Dr. Lyonel B. Tracy (Superintendent of Schools); Dr. Robert J. Lister (Assistant Superintendent); Mr. W. Peter Torrey (Business Administrator); and Mr. Alan Robinson (Student Representative)

Non-Public Session

Prior to the regular meeting, a non-public session was held in the Legal Conference Room at City Hall. This non-public session was held in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II. (c).

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the regular meeting of the School Board to order at 7:35 p.m. The Chair apologized to the audience for the late start, and said the Board met in a non-public session prior to this meeting. Superintendent Tracy called the roll, and the Chair asked for a moment of silent reflection. Outgoing Board members John Dowd and Kenneth Muske led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition of Board Members

The Chair asked Superintendent Tracy to join him at the podium. Mr. LaPage said he wants to honor Board members Jack Dowd and Ken Muske for four years of hard work. Tonight will be their last official meeting. He said that over the years they have attended many meetings; regularly scheduled meetings, budget work sessions, non-public sessions, and special meetings. He credited them with attending the non-public session that was held prior to this meeting.

Mr. LaPage commended Mr. Muske for his legal and technical expertise. Mr. LaPage credited Mr. Dowd for always “doing his

**Recognition of
Board Members
(continued)**

homework” and being prepared to discuss issues at Board meetings. He said he was pleased to honor them both in the Council Chambers this evening, and presented them each with a plaque recognizing their service as a member of the Portsmouth School Board.

Dr. Tracy presented Messieurs Dowd and Muske each with a gift on behalf of the students and staff of the Portsmouth School Department. He thanked them for their contributions at the Board meetings and for their efforts to better education for the children in the Portsmouth community.

Mr. Dowd said it was a privilege to serve on the Board for the City of Portsmouth and for his own children. He said this Board was deserving of earning the EDies Excellence Award as they have done some good things. Mr. Dowd said he had some humble expectations when he first came on the Board. He believes he is leaving the School Department in good hands, beginning with Dr. Tracy and throughout the ranks, and he feels good about his children attending the Portsmouth schools.

Mr. Muske said he has had an interesting four years on the School Board, and he has especially enjoyed the last two years. He said synergy is where the end result is greater than all the parts; and that all the parts on this Board are excellent. Mr. Muske said the Board has been able to do a lot of things, and he expects that will continue.

Mrs. Craig said that she came on the Board the same time as Mr. Dowd and Mr. Muske, and that she will miss them.

SECRETARY’S REPORT

Minutes Approved

Mrs. Craig moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, to approve the notes from the November 27, 2001 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Newspaper Article
Re: Education
Funding***

Board members received in their packets a copy of an article from the November 28, 2001 Portsmouth Herald regarding the funding of education.

RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUAL VISITORS

***Public Participation
at Meetings***

Mr. Ed Lawrence commended the Board for allowing the citizens to participate in their meetings. He said he is a student of history, philosophy, and theology, and he has studied all the different governments. Mr. Lawrence said there is not enough public participation at meetings, and the work of the Board could be made

easier with citizen participation. He said he came before the School Board requesting a moment of silent prayer. He commended Mayor Sirrell for starting the City Council meetings with a moment of silent prayer, and he was hopeful the School Board would do the same. Mr. Lawrence thanked the School Board for respecting the form of government that allows citizens to speak and for listening to all viewpoints before taking a vote. Mr. Lawrence concluded his remarks by stating it would be appropriate for the School Board to begin its meetings with a moment of silent prayer.

There were no other speakers to address the Board. The Chair declared the public commentary session closed.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

Young Women's Leadership Program

Dr. Lister said it is always exciting when students and faculty members come before the Board to talk about some of the outstanding and creative programs in the school system that relate to quality in the City of Portsmouth. One of these programs is the Young Women's Leadership Program. Dr. Lister said there had been difficulty funding this program, which began with the Clipper Health Center. The Board was recently informed the program will be funded through Girls, Inc. of New Hampshire. Dr. Lister said there is a possibility to bring the Young Women's Leadership Program to the Middle School. He thanked Mr. John Lyons who, even before being elected to the School Board, was supportive of the program and assisted in raising funds; and Michele McCarthy, a member of the Clipper Health Center Board of Directors, for her support

Dr. Lister introduced Ms. Gwen Putnam Bailey, Coordinator for the Young Women's Leadership Program. Ms. Bailey told the Board she is very pleased to tell them about Young Women's Leadership, Girls, Inc., and what they are doing. She thanked the Portsmouth School Department for providing in-kind services to the program, and thanked the Foundation for Seacoast Health for its past financial support of the Young Women's Leadership Program. She also thanked the corporate sponsors for this year's conference: Liberty Mutual Group, Sheraton Harbourside Hotel, and Piscataqua Savings Bank.

Ms. Bailey said the program is now affiliated with Girls, Inc. Approximately 25 students participate in this program. Kelsea Anderson, Ginni Ryan, Beth Arsenault, Deirdre Herlihy, Tana Hoffman, and Lydia Brackett individually addressed the Board and spoke about their participation at the conference, activities they have participated in, and field trips they have gone on. Chair LaPage thanked the students and Ms. Bailey for attending the meeting this

***Young Women's
Leadership Program
(continued)***

evening. Mrs. Clayburgh congratulated the students for the activities they are participating in and for being outstanding role models for other young women. Mr. Hayward thanked the young women for setting a fine example for Portsmouth High School. Mr. Dowd asked if women in the community were interested in some of the monthly round table discussions, how would they contact the students. Ms. Bailey said they could call her at Portsmouth High School. The Chair thanked them again for coming and said he is most appreciative of their leadership roles at school and in the community. He asked if there are plans to integrate the program into the other schools. Ms. Bailey said they would have to get back to the Board, as they have just merged with Girls, Inc. She said they would like to work with the Middle School.

***Greater Portsmouth
Educational
Partnership Council***

Chair LaPage stated that last May, the Board met in a work session with members of GPEPC (Greater Portsmouth Educational Partnership Council) and asked them to come back and discuss information regarding the Council's membership. Messieurs Jim Noucas, Dave Anderson, and Dave Cohen were present to address the Board. Mr. Noucas reviewed the mission statement and their proposal that membership shall include: the Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents from SAUs 50 and 52, and the School Board Chairs of SAU 50 and 52, or their designees; six teacher representatives from SAUs 50 and 52; two student representatives from SAUs 50 and 52; four business members from groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber's Business Education Collaborative, and individual businesses; and four community members from groups such as parent groups, civic organizations, neighborhood associations, or interested individuals. They also proposed the School Board will appoint the Chair of GPEPC, who will also serve on the Leadership Team, which shall consist of administrators from SAUs 50 and 52 and three representatives from the full Council, selected by the Chair. The Leadership Team will meet monthly or as needed to facilitate the development and implementation of goals and partnerships necessary to accomplish goals. They also stated partnerships shall be encouraged from interested people who wish to engage in goals and projects and/or participate in related GPEPC sub-committees.

Proposal Approved

Mr. Tefft moved the Board approve the proposal from the Greater Portsmouth Educational Partnership Council (GPEPC) as read by Mr. Noucas. Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. Mr. Noucas answered questions from Board members regarding GPEPC's membership. The motion to approve the proposal was unanimously approved.

Dr. Tracy stated the Board asked the administration to create a renewed awareness and support of GPEPC by updating and defining its organizational structure. Through meetings with Mr. Noucas and

GPEPC (continued) Dr. George Cushing, Superintendent of SAU 50, the proposal was developed. Dr. Tracy commended Mr. Noucas for spending a great deal of time and energy in his service to GPEPC. He said this has raised concerns that there needs to be a transition to some other leadership so that Mr. Noucas is not always the one assuming responsibility. Dr. Tracy said that Mr. Noucas has agreed with the reorganization and to help throughout a transition. Mr. Bowles moved, seconded by Mr. Tefft, that Jim Noucas be appointed Chair of GPEPC. Mr. Bowles stated it would not seem the same without Mr. Noucas being at the helm of GPEPC. He commended and thanked Mr. Noucas for GPEPC's support of the Middle School's "Days of Dialogue," and particularly with the formation of the dialogue study circles during the elementary redistricting process. Mr. Tefft stated that Mr. Noucas has been involved in GPEPC for many years, and he has served the schools, GPEPC and the Seacoast community well for many years. Mr. Tefft said he appreciates all that Mr. Noucas has done. Mr. Noucas said the help of people like Dave Anderson and Dave Cohen made these accomplishments possible. Mr. Noucas said he is more than happy to serve as Chair for one more year. He said he has been looking towards a transition, but this does not mean he wants to leave GPEPC; it is just the matter of leadership. The motion that Jim Noucas be the Chair of GPEPC for one year was unanimously approved in a roll call vote.

Chair LaPage stated Dave Anderson should be recognized for this assistance to the schools over the years and for his participation in GPEPC. He said the School Department has been extremely lucky to have Mr. Anderson's devotion. Mr. Anderson said he has been involved in school systems in Massachusetts and New Hampshire for the last 15 years. He said Portsmouth's participation with GPEPC is not only a fine one, but it pays off in the long run and really makes a difference in the community. He encouraged the Board to keep up the good work.

Mrs. Clayburgh thanked Dave Cohen for not only his efforts with GPEPC, but with New Heights and Community Service Learning. Mr. Cohen thanked Mr. Noucas for getting him involved with community service learning, which has the power to create links between kids and adults in the community. Dr. Tracy thanked Dave Anderson and Dave Cohen for their dedication to the Portsmouth School Department. The Superintendent suggested the Board allow Mr. Noucas to meet together with the Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents from the two SAUs and produce a slate of names for the School Board's review and approval at the second meeting in January. Once approved by the Board, the reorganization may begin. The Chair was agreeable to this suggestion.

PERSONNEL

Hiring Process to Begin

Dr. Lister stated they are looking at beginning the hiring process in Portsmouth for all teacher vacancies. An advertisement will be placed on December 20, 2001 for positions that will be created due to professional retirements as well as other positions they know are open. The advertisements will be placed in The Portsmouth Herald and Foster's Daily Democrat, as well as being sent to all Superintendents of Schools in New Hampshire and being posted on the State Department's website. He said there will be an intensive search and interview process to bring the most qualified educators before the School Board for nominations, hopefully before the end of February. Dr. Lister said he, the Superintendent, and the Building Principals believe in an early start to fill these positions.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Joint Building Committee

Mr. LaPage said the minutes before the Board are from last month's meeting. The minutes from last week's meeting must be approved by the Joint Building Committee before they are released. The Chair said the Committee is reorganizing due to change of membership. Mr. LaPage said he will work with the Mayor and City Manager to be sure the City and School Board are well represented. The Committee will lose two City Councilors (Noele Clews and Bill Wagner) and one School Board member (Ken Muske). Mr. LaPage reported a work session was held to discuss alternative energy as well as a public forum. He said the committee has decided to meet more often, and to begin its meetings at 7:30 a.m. Mr. Torrey said there is a good exchange among Team Design staff, school staff, and Joint Building Committee members. He said a meeting will be held at New Franklin School this Thursday evening to discuss with the neighbors the Myrtle Avenue gate. Mr. Torrey commended members of the City's Planning Department for their assistance throughout the permit process.

Joint Budget Committee

Mr. LaPage reported the Joint Budget Committee met last week. The City Manager asked the department heads to come up with summaries of how their departments would be affected by (1) a level-funded, zero increase, budget, and (2) a budget increase of three percent. The Chair said there is no doubt this will be a very tough and tight budget year; however, there is good conversation and interaction among the departments. Mr. LaPage said there was discussion of the revenue that leaves the City for the State education funding and the County tax, and how this affects the local taxpayers. Mr. Torrey said that 20% of revenue collected through the tax process leaves the City of Portsmouth for these two obligations.

***Technology
Committee Report***

Mr. Muske reported the Technology Committee met on December 4, 2001. The major portion of the meeting was a presentation by Dr. Gayle Razzaboni from Dell Computer, Inc. Dr. Razzaboni's presentation included: new innovations the system can look for in computers that will impact the K-12 education market; the benefits of leasing equipment; how Dell can assist in the disposition or recycling of old computers and technologies; and if they should consider outsourcing some services. Mr. Muske said the committee reviewed the technology plan budget, and agreed the proposal was aligned with the parameters set at the previous meeting. The committee also received an update on changes to the District's acceptable use policy, an update on inter-connectivity between school buildings, updating the technology plan, and the news that the City's webmaster has resigned. Mr. Torrey said he recently received a memo from Bob Sombric at City Hall stating that an interim webmaster has been secured. The webmaster's position will be posted and the process to fill the position will soon begin.

Athletic Committee

Mr. Dowd reported the Athletic Committee met on December third at the request of the Athletic Director, Andrea Ogden. He stated Ms. Ogden is concerned about the impact the construction at the high school will have upon her department, especially when the athletic building is demolished to clear the ground for the new wing. In addition to office space, Ms. Ogden is concerned about the practice fields that will be lost and the amount of storage space that will be lost. She stated the scheduling of the remaining fields would become an issue. Ms. Ogden also informed the committee that recently there was talk of the realignment of schools in different sporting categories based on enrollment. It is not expected that Portsmouth's category will change. Mr. Dowd reported that approximately 75% of the student athletes continue to be on the honor roll, and our teams continue to win the good sportsmanship award. Mr. Robinson asked if the student sports contract was discussed. Mr. Dowd responded the committee had previously discussed the contract when talking about the coaches' handbook.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to come before the Board.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

***School Board
Retreat***

Dr. Tracy stated that, for the second year in a row, the Board held a very meaningful retreat and it was a good day on behalf of the students in the Portsmouth School Department. A copy of the agreed-upon goals was included in the meeting packet. Dr. Tracy

Goals from Retreat asked Board members to review this information, and stated it would be placed on the Board's next agenda for adoption. The Superintendent commended the Board for taking a weekend day to spend together discussing educational issues. Dr. Lister said the retreat was a very worthwhile activity. Mr. LaPage thanked Mr. Dowd and Mr. Muske for attending the retreat, even though they will be leaving the Board at the end of this month. He said this is another indication of their loyalty to serving as Board members.

Student Trip to Russia – Grant Extended Dr. Lister provided an update on the Russian student exchange program trip. Dr. Lister told the Board the grant supporting the trip to Russia for students and staff from Oyster River and Portsmouth High Schools has been extended to July 31, 2003. Mr. Tefft said this allows time to see what the world situation is. Dr. Tracy responded that he spoke with Kathleen Dwyer this afternoon and, at this time, she does not feel there is a need for the Board to make a decision. However, the issue of insurance and other inquiries about insurance are still on the table, and he plans to have a report to the Board at the January 22, 2002 meeting.

“SchoolMatch” Audit Review Committee Dr. Tracy stated a draft of the charge to the “SchoolMatch” Committee is in the packets. He said the topic was discussed at the retreat as having not yet been addressed. Two Board members, Clay Hayward and Jack Dowd, volunteered to serve on this committee. Dr. Tracy suggested a chair be designated for this committee, and then move forward to name the other members of the committee. A final report would be presented to the Board. Mrs. Clayburgh moved, seconded by Mr. Tefft, that Clay Hayward be named Chair of the “SchoolMatch” Committee. Mrs. Craig stated the School Board does not usually nominate and vote on committee chairs. Chair LaPage stated they may make recommendations, but there is no need to take a vote on this. Mr. Muske said he would not want to set a precedent that might not work well for other committees in the future. Mrs. Clayburgh withdrew her motion; Mr. Tefft withdrew his second of the motion. Chair LaPage declared that Clay Hayward is appointed as Chair of the “SchoolMatch” Committee.

Bell Ringing for Salvation Army The Chair reminded Board members they will be ringing bells for the Salvation Army on Saturday, December 22, 2001, and there are still some open time slots.

Gymnasium Dedication Chair LaPage said he met briefly today with Tom O’Leary, who is heading up the dedication of the Stone Gymnasium. Plans are moving ahead for the dedication ceremony. The Chair asked that a representative from the group meet with the Board to discuss the plans.

Class Rank Mrs. Craig asked if there has been any final determination on the subject of class rank at the high school. Dr. Tracy said they have met a number of times to discuss class rank, weighted grades, etc. He said the committee has now written up an initial draft of possibilities for the administration to rethink and take a look at class rank and our weighted grade system. Dr. Tracy said he is now in the process of examining the information and will meet with them in the near future. He said he has met with individual parents to discuss their concerns. He hopes to have a final decision within the next month.

Holiday Parade Mrs. Clayburgh thanked everyone on the Board who participated in the holiday parade on December first. She also said she attended the Portsmouth Middle School concert last night, and it was fabulous; a great performance by all the students.

PEP 2000 Holiday Fundraiser Mrs. Clayburgh said PEP 2000's fourth annual Holiday Home Tour was held on Sunday. Approximately 600 people toured nine Portsmouth homes that were decorated for the holiday. She said this was the biggest event they have ever had. This event raised \$12,500 net for PEP 2000 after school activities at the three elementary schools.

Education Funding Mr. Bowles reported he introduced a Constitutional amendment in the Legislature, which, if it were to pass, would eliminate the donor town concept. This amendment was approved by the House Rules Committee and is on its way to being drafted. He thanked Mr. Ted Jankowski and members of the Coalition Communities for their assistance. Mr. Bowles said it is extremely urgent for Board members and school administrators and faculty to speak to their professional organizations about the unfairness of the donor town process. He said the City of Portsmouth is not asking for a favor; it is asking for relief. Mr. Torrey reiterated Mr. Bowles' statements and said he is right on target. He said taxpayers in the City of Portsmouth are sending money to the State to be spent outside of the City.

FINANCIAL

November 2001 Financial Report Mr. Torrey reviewed the November 2001 financial report with the Board and answered questions.

“Exchange City” Mr. Torrey reported that “Exchange City” has begun the process of renovating the Wentworth School. There are on the agenda for the December 20, 2001 Planning Board meeting for a “wetlands use” permit. He expects that representatives for “Exchange City” will come before the School Board with a presentation of their plans for the building.

NEXT AGENDA

Reorganization Meeting

The Chair declared there is a need for a reorganization meeting prior to the January 8, 2002 meeting. This meeting was scheduled for Thursday, January 3, 2002 at 5:30 p.m. in the Board Room at Little Harbour School.

OTHER

There was no other business to come before the School Board.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment

The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Clayburgh moved, seconded by Mr. Muske, the Board adjourn its meeting. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.
Executive Secretary