

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the September 13, 2001 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Thursday, September 13, 2001 in the Board Room at Little Harbour School.

Attendance

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

ABSENT: Mr. John Dowd

PARTICIPATING: Dr. Lyonel B. Tracy (Superintendent of Schools); Dr. Robert J. Lister (Assistant Superintendent); Mr. W. Peter Torrey (Business Administrator); Mrs. Barbara Doyle (representing Mrs. Ann Walker, Employee Representative)

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m., and stated the meeting was postponed from Tuesday evening due to the crisis that occurred in this country on Tuesday. Mr. LaPage said he appreciates everybody's understanding and flexibility to be here this evening to conduct a business meeting. He said the horrible events resulting from the terrorist attacks have affected everyone. The Chair stated that he, along with the Vice-Chair, Superintendent of Schools and Business Administrator, met with other City officials at noontime on Tuesday. It was decided at this meeting to postpone all City meetings scheduled for that evening so that the official work day would end at 5:00 p.m., allowing time for people to reflect on the day's events with their own families. Mr. LaPage said the reception for new staff will be held prior to the October 9, 2001 meeting.

*Opening Comments
from Chair*

*Disciplinary
Hearing*

The Chair told the Board that a disciplinary hearing will be held on Tuesday, September 18, 2001 at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Doyle led the Pledge of Allegiance.

State Budget Forms

Mr. Torrey reviewed the process of the annual financial reports (MS 25 and DoE 25). He stated that Board members' signatures are required on these forms.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes Approved The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the July 17, 2001 meeting. Mr. Tefft moved the minutes be approved as written; Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the August 21, 2001 meeting. Mr. Hayward moved the minutes be approved as written; Mrs. Clayburgh seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Bowles inquired if the distribution of the minutes includes a copy being forwarded to the City's webmaster. The Superintendent responded a summary of the meeting would be forwarded to the City's webmaster within 144 hours of the meeting, and the minutes would be forwarded after being approved by the School Board.

Newspaper Article on Hiring of Teachers The Board received a copy of the newspaper article, "Teachers are still needed as school draws near," (The Portsmouth Herald, August 18, 2001). Dr. Lister said this was placed in the Board packet upon request of a Board member.

RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUAL VISITORS

Comments Re: Baseball Field Mr. Peter Bresciano, 101 O'Leary Place, Portsmouth, thanked Mr. Torrey for providing him with a copy of the school district's annual financial report. He said he was here this evening to speak about the baseball fields at Portsmouth High School. Mr. Bresciano said he is not here to browbeat the School Department or Athletic Department, and he believes that Drs. Tracy and Lister know what he is talking about and where he is coming from. Mr. Bresciano said he hopes the School Department will keep in mind the safety of the high school students when they are participating in that kind of sport. He said if the fields are not properly maintained, then we are looking for an accident to happen. Mr. Bresciano said the grass on the soccer and field hockey fields are cut, and rightly so. He said it only behooves us to do the same for the baseball field even though the season is over. He reminded the Board that this field, as all others, is a community field. Mr. Bresciano said that he may come to the Board at budget time to request, if necessary, funds be placed within the athletic accounts to properly maintain these fields.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

Reception Rescheduled

The Chair announced the reception for new hires will be held prior to the October 9, 2001 School Board meeting.

PERSONNEL

Professional Nominations

Dr. Lister presented the following professional nominations:

Deborah Heath-Barlow (70% home-school coordinator); Sherri Carver (40% media/TV production); Melissa Moll (Italian at Portsmouth High School and Middle School); Suzanne Drysdale (50% reading specialist at New Franklin School); and Margaret Ronchi (Spanish teacher at Portsmouth High School).

Discussion of In- School Suspension Position

Mrs. Craig questioned a posting for an in-house, in-school suspension teacher. She asked if this is a new position. Dr. Lister responded this position was advertised by the high school in place of Mr. Simpson, who ran the P.M. Program. Dr. Lister said that Mr. Simpson had resigned, and they are looking at an in-school suspension program. Dr. Tracy said they would like to try this program rather than to send kids home, and possibly out on the street. He said it is not a position that has been created permanently. They are trying to use the vacancy of the P.M. Program to pilot this, and would report back to the Board. Mr. Muske said he is concerned if we are trying to move away from a progressive teaching program to an in-school suspension punishment program, and he would not want to see that transition. Dr. Tracy said they do not intend for in-school suspension to be a punishment program; they want this to be a learning experience, and at this point it is not replacing the P.M. Program. He said they need to come up with some kind of learning experience for students who would be suspended. The Chair stated that, during disciplinary hearings in the past, the P.M. Program was utilized by the Board for some students. The administration stated it would report back to the Board with in-depth information.

Professional Nominations Approved

Mr. Tefft moved, seconded by Mrs. Craig, to accept the professional nominations submitted by Dr. Lister. The motion was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of September 11 Tragedy

Dr. Tracy commented on the September 11, 2001 tragedy, and said it was something that none of us have ever gone through before. Dr. Tracy said he never thought he would see this type of enemy act, even though his father was a Pearl Harbor survivor. He said a lot of

***Discussion of
September 11
Tragedy (con't.)***

people have been affected by these acts of terrorism. The Superintendent commended the staff at all schools for the manner in which they handled this tragedy, and said it was a very, very difficult day. The staff was available for counseling the students. He said school was not released early because we have many children who go to homes that do not have adults during the day. It was felt the most significant and productive adults the students could have at this time, other than their parents, were their teachers, and every single one of them proved that. Dr. Tracy said the approach with middle and high school students was different than that with elementary students. At the middle and high school levels, radios and televisions were made available to the students with the teachers present to help the students through this. Extra counselors were available at the Middle School and High School. At the elementary school level, the principals and teachers handled the situation as they took the readings on it. If students needed counseling, that is what they did. In most cases, they did not specifically talk with the primary students until the students had an opportunity to go home and process the events with their parents. The next day, the elementary schools offered guidance and support to the students. The schools looked at the names of each child absent from school on September 12 to determine if any of them were particularly upset on September 11 and might need extra help. Dr. Tracy said after-school activities were cancelled on September 11 because they felt it would provide families with time to process this tragedy and not have to work around activities.

Dr. Tracy said that President Bush has declared Friday, September 14, 2001 to be a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance. The Commissioner of Education in New Hampshire is asking that schools be in session on this day. Dr. Tracy said it is a good time for kids to be in school with adults who are supporting them. He said lots of our kids and adults have been personally affected by this tragedy.

Mr. Torrey stated he believes the Superintendent covered the bases with his comments. Personally, he found it to be a very difficult day.

Dr. Lister said the building principals made arrangements with staff to meet the needs of the students, and he felt as though the kids were really safe in school on Tuesday. He said they have been sensitive to the needs of the students as well as those of the staff.

Mrs. Doyle said she felt as though they were protecting the students at Dondero School on Tuesday. The Principal sent home a letter with each child telling them what had happened, and provided support for staff and students the next day. Mrs. Doyle said it was handled beautifully. She commended the Superintendent and the Principals for the wonderful job that was done for students and staff. She said the next day the teachers went about teaching, and students having

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difficulty were seen by guidance counselors. She said the students had a lot of questions, particularly the next day; the teachers were prepared to deal with those questions. She said there was limited discussion in the morning if the children felt they needed that.

Mrs. Robin Burdick, Principal of Little Harbour School, said that Little Harbour basically followed the same process. She said the three elementary school principals called each other throughout the day to make sure they were doing things similarly.

Mr. Bowles said he was searching in his mind how to address this issue, and he thanked the Superintendent for bringing it up. Mr. Bowles said he was an 18 year old college student when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and, being a member of the ROTC, he knew where he was headed. Mr. Bowles said he knows there are people who look at the United States as being evil, but he does not understand how 18 people willingly sacrificed their lives and the lives of hundreds of others to make a point. Mr. Bowles said he is delighted the American people are coming together and uniting behind President Bush. Comparing Tuesday's terrorist attack to December 7, 1941, Mr. Bowles said everyone felt that it (the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour) was a sneak attack. He said it was a military attack against our military, and everything about it was involved in fighting a war. The tragedy of September 11 was an attack against the American people.

Dr. Tracy said September 11, 2001 was a time when we came together as a City in a big way. The Mayor and City Manager called a crisis management meeting; the Board Chair and Vice-Chair were there as well as all department heads who were in town. He said everybody came together and knew what had to be done. The Mayor called for all flags to be lowered and flown at half-mast. Dr. Tracy said he had a good feeling about the togetherness of all City departments.

Mr. Lyons said September 11 was a memorable day, and created a turning point in American society. He said it doesn't matter who you are; when you saw a fireman running into that building, it was an act of courage. He also said we do not understand how the terrorists think nor what they do. He said what they did was an act of terror and horror. But perhaps this is an opportunity for everyone to come together and say "right is right and wrong is wrong and God bless America." Mr. Lyons said he does not think we have to understand cultural differences; what happened was an act of terror and was just wrong.

Mrs. Clayburgh said, as a mother of three children in the public schools, she was concerned for the safety of her children and went to

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the schools by mid-morning. After arriving at Dondero School, she felt comfortable with what was going on and how the situation was being handled. She then went to the Middle School and saw the situation was being handled there, too. Some classrooms had the television on. Mrs. Clayburgh said she was very proud of the way the School Department handled the situation and she left her children in the schools. It was evident to her that the children were the number one concern of the staff.

Chair LaPage said he and the Superintendent contacted one another several times throughout the day and he was kept informed by the Superintendent. Mr. LaPage said he and Mr. Lyons attended the noontime meeting. At that time no one knew what else might happen, and no one still knows what might happen. He said there were united efforts among Central Office, City Hall, and other City departments. He commended the Central Office administration for keeping him and school administrators informed, and he thanked the Board for its flexibility. He ended his remarks by saying, "God help us we never go through anything near this devastating again."

***Superintendent's
Goals Approved***

The Chair stated that he would like a vote from the Board on whether or not to accept the Superintendent's goals for 2001-02, as developed at the August 13, 2001 work session. Mr. LaPage said that although Mr. Dowd is not present at tonight's meeting, he has talked with him and he is supportive of the goals. Mr. Lyons moved the Board approve the Superintendent's goals for 2001-02 with a review by the Superintendent at a time when he feels it is appropriate to do so. Mr. Bowles seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

(Mrs. Clayburgh was excused from the meeting at this time – 6:55 p.m.)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

***Joint Building
Committee***

Mr. LaPage reported the Committee was shown an artist's rendition of how the exterior of the high school would look after renovations. He said he was extremely pleased, and official drawings would be unveiled soon. The architect kept in mind the history and architecture of Portsmouth. He also reported the contract for renovations at New Franklin School was approved. Mr. Torrey reported the committee approved the use of Team Design, Inc. to be the designer and engineer for the New Franklin School project. He said representatives from Team Design will be at the October 9th School Board meeting. Mrs. Craig expressed concern the building look like it belongs in Portsmouth and will have a presence. Mr. Tefft asked when the Board will be asked to vote on the plan. Mr. Torrey

Joint Building Committee (con't.) responded the Chair is talking about having a plan to present to the Board sometime in December or January.

Mr. Bowles stated concern that two members of the Joint Building Committee, Councilor Wagner and School Board member Muske, are not running for re-election. He said they are both valuable members of the Joint Building Committee and asked the Chair if they could be allowed to remain on the committee. The Chair stated that Assistant Mayor Clews has also chosen not to run again and she also serves on the committee. He said he has already discussed this with the City Manager.

Joint Budget Committee Mr. LaPage reported the Joint Budget Committee met on September 6, 2001 and had a very good session. The Chair stated that Portsmouth residents are still supporting other parts of the State through the State property tax, which results in very tight budgets for the City departments. He said the budget process will be very tough this year. He said the City needs to respect its negotiated contracts. The next meeting of the Joint Budget Committee will be held on December 6, 2001. By that time, department and school budgets will have been put together.

Athletic Committee The Chair asked members of the Athletic Committee to meet with the Athletic Director to review the coaches' handbook. He asked this be done within the next couple of weeks. The Chair also asked the Committee to meet with Andrea Ogden to draft plans for a "Wall of Honor" at Portsmouth High School.

September 25 Agenda The Chair stated agenda items that were on the original agenda for September 11 and were not covered this evening will be placed on the agenda for the September 25, 2001 Board meeting. At that meeting, Dr. Lister will fill in for Superintendent Tracy, who will be attending a conference.

Wentworth School, Exchange City Program Mr. Lyons asked about the status of the Wentworth School and the Cody Foundation. Dr. Tracy responded the Cody Foundation is well underway with its construction of the Exchange City Program. The first payment has been made, and they are working through all of the permits. He credited City Attorney Robert Sullivan for his assistance to the Foundation as they move forward. Mr. Torrey said that Mr. Ross will meet with the Board in October to review their plans for the construction of the Exchange City at Wentworth School.

Second Reading of Policies Approved Mr. Tefft stated there is nothing controversial about the policies that are up for second reading. He moved the Board approve the second reading of the following policies in the Budget section of the policy book: Sale and Disposal of Books, Equipment and Supplies; Grants, Gifts and Bequests; Local Purchasing; Operation and Maintenance of

Plant; and Safety. Mr. Muske seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Review of Policy Book

Mrs. Craig said the Policy Committee will continue to review five policies at a time. The Superintendent will report back to the Board at the October ninth meeting to discuss an alternative process to updating the policy book.

FINANCIAL

2000/01 Annual Financial Report

Mr. Torrey reviewed the 2000/01 annual financial report and said the School Department returned about one-tenth of its 2000/2001 budget to the City of Portsmouth.

2001/02 Tuition Rates

On a motion by Mr. Tefft, seconded by Mr. Hayward, the Board unanimously approved the 2001/02 tuition rates as submitted by the Business Administrator. The motion was unanimously approved.

August 2001 Financial Report

Mr. Torrey reviewed the August 2001 financial report. He said the line item for health insurance is showing as being totally expended because all departments transfer their balance in this account over to the City on July first. The funds are placed in a special account designated for health insurance.

OTHER

Adjournment

There was no other business to come before the Board. The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Craig moved the Board adjourn its meeting; Mr. Tefft seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.
Executive Secretary