

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the October 9, 2001 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, October 9, 2001 in the Council Chambers at Portsmouth City Hall.

Attendance

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

ABSENT: Mr. Raimond Bowles

PARTICIPATING: Dr. Lyonel B. Tracy (Superintendent of Schools); Dr. Robert J. Lister (Assistant Superintendent); Mr. W. Peter Torrey (Business Administrator); Mr. Alan Robinson (Student Representative); Mrs. Ann Walker (Employee Representative); and Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative)

Reception

A reception for new staff was held in the Portsmouth Room at City Hall prior to the meeting.

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order in the Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m. The Chair asked that, during the moment of silence, the Board remember two people of the school community that recently died: Maria Pirie, a Dondero parent, and Valerie Livingstone, Principal of Rye Elementary School. The new staff members led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Remembrance

***During Moment of
Silent Reflection***

Chair LaPage stated the Board has started a new tradition this evening by honoring and recognizing new staff members. He said the Principals will be asked to introduce their new staff.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes Approved

The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the September 25, 2001 meeting. Mrs. Clayburgh moved, seconded by Mr. Hayward, the minutes be approved as written. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Chair stated Board members will find in their folders two articles

regarding student trips. One article was from Education Week, and the other was from the World News. Mr. LaPage said this information would provide the Board with some background of what is happening with student trips.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

New Staff

Dr. Tracy said staff members who have been hired within the last two years and had not yet met the Board were invited to attend this evening's reception. He thanked Ms. Nancy Brown (Food Service Director), Mrs. Carlene Pafford (Little Harbour Cafeteria Manager), and Mr. Dale Durgin (Food Service Driver) for providing the refreshments for the reception.

Introduction of New Staff

Dr. Tracy and the Principals introduced the new staff members in their respective buildings. Chair LaPage welcomed them to the school district and invited them to come forward to meet the Board.

RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUAL VISITORS

There was no one who wished to address the Board.

Chair LaPage passed the gavel to Vice-Chair Lyons and joined people in the audience to give a report.

Portsmouth Regional Ice Arena Committee (PRIAC)

The Vice-Chair recognized Mr. Fred Rancourt and Mr. Norman LaFleur, Co-Chair for the Portsmouth Regional Ice Arena Committee (PRIAC). They told the Board that PRIAC is a coalition of seacoast citizens dedicated to building an ice arena in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and its fiscal agents are Portsmouth Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce. Their vision is to construct a state of the art ice arena on the grounds of Portsmouth High School. Their goal is to raise two to three million dollars in 18 months. The rink is modeled after the Ham Ice Arena in Conway, New Hampshire. When the ice arena is built, they suggest it be operated and maintained by the Portsmouth Recreation Department or the Seacoast YMCA. With the pending donated land and fundraising, they propose the ice rink can operate debt free and can become self-sufficient in its operations and maintenance through nominal fee structures, contract services and advertising.

Mr. LaPage said the committee is trying to find land in Portsmouth. He said the athletic complex was built in 1994, and at that time there had been a site review for an ice skating rink. That location is now being used as a parking lot at the rear of the building. Mr. LaPage said there had been a private ice rink in the seacoast area, which

***Ice Arena
(continued)***

closed in 1995. In addition to community use, Mr. LaPage said the ice rink would be used by the high school hockey team. Those students and their parents are driving in the early morning hours to get to ice skating practice.

Mr. LaPage said committee members spoke with the City Manager and Mayor Sirrell. It was stated that if a rink was to be built on City property, it would revert back to the City of Portsmouth's Recreation Department, even if it was on school property. Mr. LaPage said they are not asking for a vote from the Board, but that the Board give consideration to the project as it moves forward to the City Council next week.

Mrs. Nancy Clayburgh, 405 F. W. Hartford Drive, Portsmouth, (member of the Portsmouth School Board, parent, and member of the Portsmouth Regional Ice Arena Committee) said the Portsmouth hockey team would not have to rent space or pay for transportation to and from other ice skating rinks if this rink is built. This would greatly benefit our hockey team. In addition, she said they are not only thinking of the Portsmouth hockey team, but of the community. Other skating programs as well as community members will be able to utilize this ice rink; this would be a place where families could go, and she envisions this rink as serving the entire community. They believe the income from fees and rentals would allow the rink to pay for itself. Mrs. Clayburgh said PRIAC members are committed to raising the funds to build the rink, so there would not be a mortgage. She believes this team of volunteers will accomplish this goal.

Mrs. Clayburgh said this project is supported by the Portsmouth Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce. These organizations already have non-profit status and a non-profit account. She said all donations will be funneled through those accounts so that people can take advantage of the tax rebate. She said they also plan to approach individuals in the community and ask for donations, as well as holding special events.

Mr. Dowd stated it seems as though this project has wide community support. He said the Athletic Committee discussed the possibility of an ice rink on school property, and Ms. Ogden (the Athletic Director) had some thoughts about traffic flow, the hours of operation, etc. He recommended that Ms. Ogden be included in discussions and planning.

Mr. LaPage said preliminary discussions include the location to be near the indoor pool. As soon as the School Board and City Council give some type of head nod, this committee may move forward. He said the City's Recreation Department and the Schools' Athletic Director would be included in the planning process.

***Ice Arena
(continued)***

Mr. Lyons said the taxpayers in the City of Portsmouth should be very pleased with this proposal as there could be an ice skating rink that is part of the high school campus. He said this facility will be something of which Portsmouth can be proud. Mr. Lyons congratulated and encouraged the people representing PRIAC.

The gavel was returned to Chair LaPage.

Mr. LaPage said this committee will now move forward to the City Council next week unless there are any objections from Board members. There were no objections.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

***Opening of School
Reports***

Dr. Tracy stated the building principals will report on the opening of school and give some highlights. He introduced Constance Carmody, Principal of the New Franklin Elementary School.

***New Franklin
School***

Mrs. Carmody said she is happy to report that New Franklin School got off to a good start. There is a late bus for students who want to stay for after school activities, and there have already been a number of field trips. Mrs. Carmody credited the school's PTO for their hard work in providing funds and opportunities for the children of New Franklin School. She said that many of the experiences the children are exposed to can develop into lifelong interests. Mrs. Carmody reported the fifth grade will go to Environmental School at Odiome Point later this month. Mrs. Carmody said New Franklin School is involved with an indoor air quality study. She has met with the architects from Team Design, Inc. and she has been assured the addition to New Franklin School will be ready at the beginning of the next school year.

Mrs. Carmody introduced John Stokel, Principal of Portsmouth Middle School.

Middle School

Mr. Stokel reported the Middle School had an awesome opening this year, and has three great groups of students in grades six, seven, and eight. Mr. Stokel said, because Portsmouth is a desirable school system to work in, they have been able to hire some top-notch, quality people. Mr. Stokel said whenever you have a number of retirements of veteran teachers, you always worry about filling positions; but because this Board and the City are so supportive of education, they have been able to hire good, quality people. Reporting on the number of disciplinary incidents, Mr. Stokel said the number of incidents are drastically down compared to last year. To date, there have been no students assigned to in-school

suspension, and there have been a total of three out-of-school suspensions this year. He said these numbers are down drastically from years past. Mr. Stokel said the Middle School is a friendly place to be. He said character education has been moved to the front burner; they take 20 – 25 minutes during homeroom time each month to hold an assembly and to talk about the value of the month. This month the value is responsibility, and athletes from the University of New Hampshire came to the school and talked to the students about what it means to be a responsible adult. Mr. Stokel said they are also working on the issue of study skills, and will come up with a set of study skills they want each eighth grader to have when they leave Portsmouth Middle School. He said the Teaching and Learning Team is looking at the subject of organization skills, and will come up with outcomes they want each eighth grader to have. From there, the plan is to back up and come up with outcomes for the end of grades six and seven. They want to keep study skills on the front burner for all students. Mr. Stokel said they are looking into ways to continue the “Everyday Math Program” beyond the sixth grade. Mr. Stokel said the Middle School has a very strong parent advisory council that comes up with great programs for the school. The sixth graders participate in a program at the Music Hall; they go to three or four productions a year. The Middle School held its open house last week, and Mr. Stokel said there was a great turn-out. The parents followed their child’s schedule and received overviews from the teachers about the curriculum and classroom expectations. Mr. LaPage asked about the summer school program for students in the eighth grade that did not make the academics to go into the high school. Mr. Stokel said the classes were held again this summer, and were designed so that there would be no more than ten students per class. Two sections of math and two sections of language arts were offered. He said there has been strong parent support for this program. Mr. Stokel said this is not a voluntary program. Students attend these classes if they have not done well or they will be retained in the eighth grade.

Dondero School

Mrs. Jill LeMay, Principal of the Mary C. Dondero Elementary School, said it is wonderful getting to meet people and that every day at Dondero has been wonderful for her. She said staff members, parents, and Central Office administrators have welcomed her and have been supportive. Mrs. LeMay said everything went smoothly the first day of school; the teachers were well-prepared as they had spent many hours in their classrooms during the summer preparing for the students. During the last few weeks of summer, students and parents came in to meet the teachers. As a result, there were about 465 happy, smiling faces on the first day of school. Mrs. LeMay said the custodians worked very diligently throughout the summer and the school was in good condition for opening day. She said they continue to keep the school shiny and she is very pleased with their

***Dondero School
(continued)***

extra efforts. She said there is new landscaping in the front of the school. Mrs. LeMay said the school buses were very late in arriving to school in the afternoon. She said this situation has improved tremendously, and she has been working with Peter Torrey and the people at Laidlaw Transportation to continue to improve this situation. There was perfect weather for the back to school picnic, and all open houses have been held with the exception of two first grade classes. Those open houses will be held this month. Mrs. LeMay said class sizes range from 14 to 21 students; however, the kindergarten classes are rather large. Mrs. LeMay said there is a new sign-in procedure this year at Dondero School for visitors and itinerant staff. They are asked to sign in at the front office and wear a name tag. She said there are quite a few activities ongoing at Dondero School, including reading lessons and butterflies being let free. She said the PTO has provided opportunities for programs in the school, and the Teaching and Learning Team has met once and will focus on student assessment reporting systems. Mrs. LeMay said she hopes to see Board members in Dondero. In closing, she thanked the Board for giving her the opportunity to be at Dondero School. Chair LaPage commented on the smooth transition for the students and staff at Dondero School.

***Portsmouth
Alternative
Secondary School
(PASS)***

Mrs. Paulette Hoeflich, Principal of the Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School, said this is the tenth year for PASS. She said a program was held during the summer, but it was not summer school. It was an additional session at the high school level where students could earn two credits. She said the students worked all day for five weeks. The project, building a boat, required a lot of interdisciplinary skills as well as other interesting things, and the students were very successful with their project. Mrs. Hoeflich said they took the students to an adventure-based camp the first couple of days of the new school year so that everyone gets to know one another. Everyone starts off at the same level, and the students work in teams helping and encouraging each other. Mrs. Hoeflich said there are ten new students at PASS this year. She said the veteran students were asked to help support and encourage the new students, and that worked very well and they have been able to move forward. Mrs. Hoeflich said there was a guest speaker, a 17 year old girl from Afghanistan, who visited PASS the day after September 11. She spoke to the students about what it was like to live in Afghanistan and she enlightened the students and staff about the importance of education. Mrs. Hoeflich said the students were very interested in what she had to say and were very respectful towards her. Mrs. Hoeflich said the enrollment at PASS is 38 students as of today, but by the end of the marking quarter there will be 40, possibly 41; which is a little bit over what they are comfortable with. For the first time in many years, half of the students are females. She also said for the first time, students in grades nine through 12 will be required to work

PASS (continued) on portfolios. The open house at PASS will be held on October 17. Mrs. Hoeflich answered questions from Board members regarding the selection process and about the program's activities.

Little Harbour School

Mrs. Robin Burdick, Principal of Little Harbour Elementary School, said Little Harbour had a very smooth opening with 365 children. Mrs. Burdick said that on the first day of school, every child, teacher and staff member wants to do the best job they can. She said class sizes are in the range between 14 and 19; unfortunately the 19 are in grade one. Mrs. Burdick said the school held a flag dedication on September 18. Senator Gregg had a flag flown over the United States Capitol in honor of the young people. The school also received a letter from Senator Bob Smith sent to the principal on behalf of the Indoor Air Quality Team. Mrs. Burdick credited school nurse Priscilla Santiago and business administrator Peter Torrey for their diligence and assistance in dealing with the air quality issues at Little Harbour School. Mrs. Burdick said there are 16 children who are of limited English families, 12 of whom are new to the school system this year. These families come from different countries all over the world. All of the children speak English; some are bi-lingual. Mrs. Burdick also reported that Little Harbour School has a full-time computer teacher this year, and she credited Susan Deese-Laurent, math/science coordinator, for the work she is doing with Everyday Math. Mrs. Burdick said she has asked Mrs. Deese-Laurent to head up a science committee at Little Harbour School. She said the school has the beautiful pier and needs to use it on a regular basis. Mrs. Burdick commended the Little Harbour parents. She appreciates the relationship she has with the parents and said they challenge her thinking. Mrs. Burdick said the events of September 11 have changed every one of us, and she is pleased to work in a school where she can see the children every day. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to work at Little Harbour School.

Portsmouth High School

Mr. Richard Gremlitz, Principal of Portsmouth High School, reported the high school had a very smooth opening. He was happy to report there were very few adjustments needed for students' schedules. He reported the freshman orientation was held and was successful in integrating those students into Portsmouth High School. Mr. Gremlitz reported that 36 of the 165 classes offered during block one are offered in the 45 minute format, with approximately 300 students having classes in this modified format. He said this was a very easy transition to the school calendar, and the educational implications will be evaluated over a period of time. He said the faculty is working diligently through a self-study in preparation for the accreditation process that will occur one year from this month. The faculty has also been working to formulate and read reports. He said the reports have to be submitted to the faculty and ratified by a majority vote in order to be included in the report. Mr. Gremlitz said the first open

Portsmouth High School (continued)

house was held last Wednesday evening. Mr. Gremlitz said Portsmouth High School responded sensitively to the recent National tragedy. A school-wide assembly was held on September 14; the Student Council President, the Senior Class President, and Dr. Hilson spoke. Mr. Gremlitz said he felt a great deal of pride and emotion during this assembly. He said the high school looks forward to continuing the positive energy for the rest of the year.

There was discussion of the proposed renovations to the high school. Mr. Gremlitz said there was an opportunity last week for each department representative to meet with the architect. The plan is to go back to another draft that will be made available for the staff's review.

There was discussion about the enrollment of students from SAU 50. At the present time, approximately 33% of the high school population come from the towns that make up SAU 50. Mr. Gremlitz said the high school staff is working very hard to make Portsmouth High School the school of choice for SAU 50. Chair LaPage said he has received some phone calls from parents trying to make a decision of whether to send their children to Portsmouth High School in the next year or two. He asked Mr. Gremlitz if he has received any calls like this. Mr. Gremlitz responded that he has not received any of these calls in the last month or so, but these calls are usually received in the spring. Mr. Tefft asked if the proposed high school will be able to accommodate an influx of students from private schools. Mr. Gremlitz said the new school is designed so that every teacher would have his or her own classroom. He said if we got to the point of a substantial increased enrollment, some teachers will have to go from one room to another. Therefore, there is room for growth in the new school.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Joint Building Committee

Representatives from Team Design, Inc., Wes Bonney and Dan Bisson, were at the meeting to present the architect's drawing of the proposed Portsmouth High School, the site plan for the New Franklin Elementary School, and the project schedules for the High School and New Franklin School projects.

New Franklin School Project

Mr. Bonney spoke on the New Franklin project first. The proposal adds approximately 10,000 square feet at a proposed budget of 1.4 million dollars. He said representatives from Team Design have met with the City's code officials. He said there are areas of New Franklin School that do not have sprinklers, but given the history of the building, it was requested that sprinklers be added to the entire building. Mr. Bonney said, at this point, the proposal adds sprinklers

***New Franklin
School Project
(continued)***

only to the addition. He said they may look to the capital improvement project to address adding sprinklers to the rest of the building. Mr. Bonney said the issue of parking came up during the preliminary technical review. They have addressed the issue, with the plan calling for 52 parking spaces, an increase of 26 spaces over the present parking lot, and allowing for the construction of 28 additional spaces on the property in the future.

Mr. Bonney reviewed plans for the high school project, and highlighted the proposed concept drawing. Mr. Bonney and Mr. Bisson reviewed the latest revisions for the floor plans and answered questions from the Board. They told the Board that this plan basically falls within the budget, and this drawing will continue to be updated as they work through the process and decisions are made. They also said they are still on schedule and expect to be on target with breaking ground in April.

Mrs. Craig asked questions about the placement of athletic fields. Mr. Tefft asked if the high school building would have firewalls like those in New Franklin. The response was the building is too big to take that approach; however, sprinklers will be installed throughout the facility. He also questioned the design of a flat roof, and stated he does not understand why this would be proposed for a building in New England. Mr. Bisson stated that all roofs that are designed to be flat have internal draining systems so that they do not get iced up and collect snow. He said only two or three roof contractors are allowed to work on this roof as he has confidence they will do the job right the first time. Mr. Dowd expressed concerns that plans for New Franklin School, after renovations, have the same as Little Harbour and Dondero elementary schools. Mrs. Clayburgh commended Team Design for the manner in which they conducted themselves at last week's meeting of the Joint Building Committee as some sensitive issues were discussed. Chair LaPage thanked them for coming to the meeting.

Recess

The Chair declared a recess at 9:55 p.m. (Mrs. Mayer and Mrs. Walker left during the recess.) The meeting was reconvened at 10:07 p.m.

Athletic Committee

Mr. Dowd reported on a recent meeting of the Athletic Committee. He circulated a copy of the athletic handbook, and said a copy is signed out to every coach. Mr. Dowd reported that all members of the committee were in attendance. Ms. Andrea Ogden, Athletic Director, had guidelines for a "Wall of Fame," including criteria for a plaque committee; nomination review, etc. Mr. Dowd said the committee discussed what will happen when the athletic building is taken down during construction; specifically, the need for office and storage space. Regarding the proposed ice hockey arena, Mr. Dowd

***Athletic Committee
(continued)***

said that Ms. Ogden has stated she would like to be involved in discussions concerning construction and placement of the rink. He also reviewed coaching vacancies. Mr. Dowd said the committee discussed the lack of school spirit and attendance at games. Mr. Dowd said the Athletic Director asked if the Board has received an answer about whether or not the gate receipts may be retained and used within the schools' athletic department. Chair LaPage said he has not yet heard back from the City Manager. The Chair also stated that Ms. Ogden will come before the Board at its November 27 meeting to discuss the "Wall of Fame." Mr. Muske asked if the "Wall of Fame" will be for all teachers in the school system or just for athletes. He said the "Wall of Fame" needs to be for all teachers, not just those who are coaches. He suggested the athletes share the "Wall of Fame" with other school staff. Mr. Lyons, commenting on school spirit, said the Board is looking to construct a high school that will be the center of the community. He hopes other Board members will talk up the sporting events so that Portsmouth High School will be the place to be on Friday nights. He said the homecoming game will be held on October 19, and he encouraged people to attend. There was further discussion about the "Wall of Fame" and storage space for the Athletic Department. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, the report of the Athletic Committee be accepted. The motion was unanimously approved.

Policy Committee

Dr. Tracy said that Mrs. Craig asked the administration to keep moving forward with reviewing policies and bringing them before the Board. The Board received copies of pages 11 through 15 of the Budget section. Mr. Tefft moved the Board accept the first reading of these policies; Mr. Muske seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Tefft asked to briefly report on the last meeting of the Curriculum Council. He said the District filed a Staff Development Master Plan, using guidelines suggested by the State. Mr. Tefft said the Board should be proud that this school district has been recognized by the State of New Hampshire for having a great staff development master plan. He said the committee, in discussing a goal for this year, will look into the hours of the school day.

NEW BUSINESS

***NHSBA Delegate
Assembly***

Chair LaPage stated that he still does not have a volunteer to represent the School Board at the annual New Hampshire School Board Association (NHSBA) Delegate Assembly. He stated that, since he is a member of the Executive Board, he is unable to vote on the resolutions. Board members had previously received a copy of the proposed resolutions submitted by local school boards. There

***NHSBA Delegate
Assembly
(continued)***

was discussion of these resolutions. Board members expressed concern with number six, and stated it is not their prerogative to determine how the State will fund education. Mr. Lyons moved the Board instruct its delegate to vote in favor of the resolutions with the exception of number six; Mr. Tefft seconded the motion. The motion passed in a six to one vote with one abstention (Mrs. Clayburgh, Mr. Dowd, Mr. Hayward, Mr. Lyons, Mr. Muske, and Mr. Tefft voted for the motion; Mrs. Craig voted against the motion; and Chair LaPage abstained from voting).

Mrs. Clayburgh moved the Board request the word “income” be deleted from resolution item number six; Mr. Hayward the motion. The motion was defeated in a five to two vote (Mrs. Clayburgh and Mr. Hayward voted for the motion; Mrs. Craig, Mr. Dowd, Mr. Lyons, Mr. Muske, and Mr. Tefft voted against the motion; and Chair LaPage abstained from voting).

***School Board
Retreat***

The Chair reminded Board members that the annual School Board Retreat will be held on December first.

2001-02 Enrollment

The Superintendent reviewed the October 1, 2001 enrollment, and answered questions from Board members. Dr. Tracy said the kindergarten numbers at New Franklin School are up to 20 students per session. He asked the Board’s permission to hire a paraprofessional, on a short-term basis, to work in these two classes. Mr. Dowd made this in the form of a motion; seconded by Mrs. Craig. The motion was unanimously approved in a roll call vote.

***Sub-Committee to
Review Student
Trips***

The Chair appointed Clay Hayward, Nancy Novelline Clayburgh and Raimond Bowles to the sub-committee to review student trips and charged them with reporting back to the Board at the December 11, 2001 meeting. The Chair stated that Assistant City Attorney Kathleen Dwyer will serve in an advisory manner on this committee.

There was some discussion of the articles that were in the Board folders regarding student trips; “Worried Schools Cancel Student Trips,” (Associated Press, October 1, 2001) and “Students, Educators Stay Close to Home in Wake of Attacks” and “Safety Concerns Prompt Schools to Curb Travel” (Education Week, October 5, 2001).

FINANCIAL

There was no financial business to come before the Board this evening.

Approved by the Portsmouth School Board on November 13, 2001.

NEXT AGENDA

Yearbook Photo

The Chair stated the School Board's photo will be taken at the November 13, 2001 meeting.

Adjournment

There was no other business to come before the School Board. On a motion by Mr. Tefft, seconded by Mrs. Craig, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn its meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.
Executive Secretary