

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the October 23, 2001 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, October 23, 2001 in the cafeteria of the Mary C. Dondero Elementary School.

Attendance

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

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); and Mrs. Ann Walker (Employee Representative)

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the regular meeting of the Portsmouth School Board to order at 7:10 p.m. The Board observed a moment of silent reflection, and Mrs. Jill LeMay, Principal of Dondero School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

There was no report at this meeting.

RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUAL VISITORS

There was no one in attendance that wished to address the Board.

PERSONNEL

Leave of Absence

Dr. Tracy reported that Liz Diemer, Transition Coordinator for special education students, has requested a 100% leave of absence following her maternity leave.

Professional Resignation

Dr. Tracy reported that Jan Keravich, a teacher at the Portsmouth Early Education Program (PEEP) has resigned her position.

***Coaching
Nominations***

Dr. Tracy presented the coaching nominations of Jennifer Machado to the position of assistant swim/diving coach at Portsmouth High School and Paul Griffin to the position of swim/diving coach at Portsmouth High School. Mr. Tefft moved, seconded by Mr. Dowd, to accept the coaching nominations. The motion was unanimously approved.

Student from Russia

Mr. Robinson introduced Zhanna Zvyagina, a student from Russia visiting Portsmouth through the Svederinsk exchange program. Mr. Robinson said that Zhanna has expressed an interest in American politics, so he invited her to attend the meeting this evening. Mrs. Craig asked Zhanna what school is like in Russia. Zhanna responded that her classes are 40 minutes long. School starts at 8:30 a.m., and the students attend six or seven classes. She was surprised to learn that American students only have four classes every day; they have different classes every day. The Board welcomed Zhanna to Portsmouth.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to come before the Board.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Budget Policies

Dr. Tracy reported the Policy Committee met to review pages 11 through 15 of the budget section. He said a little bit of editing was done to the policies, not to change the intent but for better verbiage. The Superintendent said the first readings of these policies was approved at the last meeting, yet the committee has decided to review the information tonight and place the policy adoptions on the next meeting's agenda. The Business Administrator and the Food Service Director provided input, and were at the Committee's meeting to answer questions. The Superintendent reviewed the changes. The Chair stated he would accept the proposed changes on behalf of the Board and they will be placed on the next agenda for adoption.

Mr. Bowles stated he understands why the change from school lunch to school meals, but the title is nationally known as the school lunch program. He asked if the committee had considered that before recommending the change. Dr. Tracy responded the committee did consider that, but they wanted to be as absolute and specific as they could. The title change indicates the program is more than just school lunch; the program also provides breakfast and snacks.

Mr. Tefft questioned the use of the word "eliminate" in number two of the "Security of Buildings and Grounds" policy. He suggested the

***Budget Policies
(continued)***

word may make the Board more liable in the event of a fire. Mr. Muske responded the Board's policy is to eliminate fires, not to minimize them. He said the Board always attempts to achieve its policies; sometimes it does not work. He does not believe the Board is opening itself up to any additional liability. Mrs. Craig said she understands Mr. Tefft's concern, and asked if the use of the word "eliminate" would preclude the science rooms from using bunsen burners. Mr. Torrey suggested the policy begin with the words, "The goal of the School Board policy..." The Board was in agreement with this suggestion.

The Chair requested the word "nutritional" be added to number one of the aims and objectives of the program within the "Food Service: Purpose(s) and Facilities" policy. The Board agreed with this request.

The policies will be brought before the Board at its next meeting for adoption.

***Young Women's
Leadership Program***

Dr. Lister reported that he received word today that "Girls Inc." (Girls Incorporated of New Hampshire) will take now take on funding for the Young Women's Leadership Program at Portsmouth High School. Dr. Lister reported that seven weeks ago he and Gwen Putnam, program coordinator, started talking about funding for the program, and started looking at several different foundations. "Girls Inc.," in addition to providing funding for the program, provides scholarships for girls and young women; sponsors poetry and reading contests; and promotes community service learning. The program also sponsors courses in: literacy, self-defense, preventing pregnancies, and auto mechanics, and does television commercials for the Nickelodeon channel. They also sponsor conferences at the State and National levels to discuss young women's issues. All of this is done with the goal of empowering young women to acquire some leadership skills. "Girls Inc." also provides camp for girls five through 12 years old.

Dr. Lister said "Girls Inc." has been in existence for 50 years; 27 years in New Hampshire. It is a national program and is a United Way non-profit agency. He met with the chief executive officer of "Girls Inc.," and some of the students in the Young Women's Leadership Program also met with her. At the present time, there are 27 girls in the program. He said the students in the program have, individually and collectively, made many contributions to Portsmouth High School and the community.

Dr. Lister said he is very pleased that "Girls Inc." will take over the funding of this program. He reminded the Board that they were looking for a total of \$32,500 to pay the coordinator's salary and for

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

materials to keep the Young Women's Leadership Program. The students, with the assistance of their coordinator, were developing a fundraising program to support ongoing activities. Dr. Lister requested the Board allow some of the young women who are in the Young Women's Leadership Program to come before them to let the Board know how important this program is to them.

Dr. Lister thanked the following people for their support throughout the process of trying to obtain funds for the Young Women's Leadership Program: Vice-Chair John Lyons (who serves on the Board of the Clipper Health Center); Superintendent Lyonel B. Tracy; and Michele McCarthy Looser (Chair of the Clipper Health Center Board and who has been involved in this program from the beginning).

Mr. Lyons said he was on the Board of Directors for the Clipper Health Center long before he sat on the School Board. He said that when the Clipper Health Center came under the auspices of the Seacoast Mental Health Center and it was announced the Young Women's Leadership Program would not be carried under that program, there was a lot of uncertainty about the future of the program. He credited Drs. Tracy and Lister for their leadership in seeing Clipper Health through the changes. Mr. Lyons said he continues to remain confident that when all is said and done, the program will be better than it was before and the School Department will be in partnerships that allow for greater flexibility. Mr. Lyons said he was very concerned about the Young Women's Leadership Program because it was not part of the new Clipper Health model. He said Dr. Lister was correct in saying the young women in this program have made a difference in this community; they are all leaders. Mr. Lyons credited Dr. Lister for his hard work in securing funding to allow this program to continue.

Mr. Tefft stated this is another form of privatization, which can be a wonderful thing. He said the school system, over the years, has taken on things that have become part of the school budget.

Mrs. Walker congratulated Dr. Lister on finding the funding. She said the Young Women's Leadership Program is wonderful.

Dr. Lister reported that Judi Frechette, a Portsmouth resident with children in the Portsmouth schools, wrote a check for \$6,000 to help fund the program.

***"A Walk for
Freedom and
Unity"***

Mrs. Clayburgh provided information to the Board on "A Walk for Freedom and Unity" that will take place on Sunday, October 28, 2001. The walk will be from the Pic-N-Pay parking lot to Prescott Park. A rally will be held at the park. This rally is student-driven;

***“A Walk for
Freedom and
Unity” (continued)***

the only adult speakers will be Mayor Sirrell and Board Chair LaPage. High School students Colby Gamester and Jamie Tober are the masters of ceremony and will run the program. Student Board Representative Alan Robinson will speak on patriotism, and other students will represent their schools.

***PEP 2000 After
School Activities***

Mrs. Clayburgh distributed a packet outlining the various programs taking place during session one of PEP 2000's After School Enrichment Program. She commented on the fundraising activities that support this program, and said the annual Holiday Home Tour will be held on December ninth this year.

Volleyball Team

The Chair reviewed items in the Board's folder. One item was the volleyball team's yearbook. He thanked Jim Noucas and the Booster Club for providing this document. Mr. Lyons said he was pleased to see the officials of both SAUs 50 and 52 listed in this program. Dr. Tracy said the volleyball team made it to the play-offs, and will play Timberlane on Thursday at 7:00 p.m. The Chair congratulated the team on having done a good job this year.

***Environmental
Camp Funding***

Mr. Dowd commented on the "Harbour Light" newsletter. He said it bothers him that the school principals, year after year, have to ask parents for assistance in fundraising events for Environmental School. Mr. Dowd said he is in support of the science curriculum, and Environmental Camp represents roughly 25% of the science curriculum for fifth grade students. He said the School Board has a policy to fund the curriculum, and he believes the Board is not following its policy in that it does not fund Environmental Camp. He does not believe it is right to place the funding of this very excellent program on the PTO's plate.

NHSBA

Mr. LaPage reported he just came from a Board of Director's meeting for the New Hampshire School Boards Association. There was discussion about a school district that had concerns over the Delegate Assembly. The Governor Wentworth School District has stated it will withdraw from the NHSBA. The Chair stated a copy of their letter would be on file in the Superintendent's office. Mr. LaPage said that Michael Eader, Executive Director of the New Hampshire School Boards Association, will meet with the Superintendent from that district to explain the process used for the delegate assembly and to review the benefits that a school district is entitled to through membership with the NHSBA.

Solar Panels at PHS

The Chair referred to a publication he recently received in the mail in which the solar panels at Portsmouth High School were mentioned as part of a study. Dr. Lister said there is some interest in continuing the use of solar panels at the High School, but nothing is being done until it is brought up at a meeting with respect to the new building.

Curriculum Council Mr. Tefft made reference to a paper in the folders concerning the Curriculum Council. This paper provides information about the topics the Council plans to address, its meeting dates, and its membership. Mr. Tefft said the Curriculum Council will report to the Board on its monthly meetings.

Dr. Tracy said that committee reports were not left off of this agenda. In keeping with a previous decision, committee reports will be placed on the agendas for the first meetings of the month.

Sub-Committee to Review Student Trips

Mr. Bowles reported that he and Nancy Clayburgh and Clay Hayward were appointed by the Chair to the sub-committee to discuss student trips. They met with Kathleen Dwyer last week and have requested information in writing. He said they have another activity planned, but that is on hold until after they receive the reports from Mrs. Dwyer.

Mr. Bowles referred to the bomb scares at Portsmouth High School in 1970 and how the Board at that time, of which he was a member, heeded the advice of the then City Attorney and evacuated the building and sent the students home. This occurred for 13 days until the Board passed a motion directing the Principal to evacuate the building but to leave the students on school grounds until such time as the proper authorities determined it was safe to re-enter the building. He said the bomb threats immediately stopped. During one of the evacuations, a student was killed in a car accident while riding home. Mr. Bowles said he wishes the School Board of 1970 had realized its prerogative and had not taken the advice of the then City Attorney.

Mr. Bowles said it is not micromanaging if the Portsmouth School Board does decide, after discussion, to change the policy that is currently in effect, and it should not be construed as a criticism of the current administration.

FINANCIAL

2002/03 Budget Completion Dates

Mr. Torrey presented the proposed budget completion dates for the 2002/03 budget. The process will begin with a meeting of all budgetmakers on October 31, 2001. Mr. Torrey said that members of the Board who serve on the Joint Budget Committee will recall the comments from the Mayor and City Manager regarding the City being a donor town and the increase in taxes to cover the State education funding tax and an increase in the county tax. Mr. Torrey said it is too early to know about health insurance premiums, cost of living increases, etc. Dr. Tracy stated that during the budget building process, they will take a close look at all of the programs in the

**2002/03 Budget
Completion Dates
(continued)**

school district to make sure there is a clear narrative explanation for them and to be sure the programs are responsible to the taxpayers.

Mr. Tefft said there is a misunderstanding in the community about the budget proposal. He said many people tend to look at the school department and the schools as being the problem for the current tax and budget issues. Mr. Tefft said the real issue is the State tax structure and not an educational budgeting issue. He said it will be important to educate people about this. Mr. Lyons said he is a member of the Joint Budget Committee and has listened to the City Councilors on that committee. He believes they see the situation as not being a school problem, yet it will be very important to make sure the community-at-large understands that.

Mr. LaPage said it may be necessary to change the date of either February fifth or seventh because of the dedication of the gymnasium to former Coach Woody Stone.

**September 2001
Financial Report**

Mr. Torrey reviewed the September 2001 financial report. He answered questions from the Board concerning individual line items.

NEXT AGENDA

Yearbook Photo

The Superintendent reminded the Board that the yearbook photo will be taken at the November 13 meeting.

***City Legislative
Delegation***

Chair LaPage said that State Representative Terri Norelli, Chair of the Portsmouth Legislative Delegation, has been keeping the Board abreast of Legislation and sending updates on the status of House bills. He suggested the Board invite Ms. Norelli and the other Legislators to meet in a work session to discuss concerns.

OTHER

***Discussion of Policy
Wording***

Mrs. Craig said she is having reservations about the changes made to the "School Facilities and Grounds" policy and requested to revisit it. She does not believe a Board policy should start with the words, "The goal of..." She requested the policy revert back to the wording as proposed except to change the first word of number two from "eliminate" to "minimize." Mr. Muske said he objects to the word "minimize," because bunson burners are not safety hazards unless misused. The Chair asked for a motion. Mr. Tefft moved the first word of number two be changed from "Eliminate" to "Minimize." Mrs. Craig seconded the motion. The motion passed in a five to four roll call vote (Mr. Bowles, Mrs. Clayburgh, Mrs. Craig, Mr. Lyons and Mr. Tefft voted for the motion; Mr. Dowd, Mr. Hayward, Mr.

Muske and Mr. LaPage voted against the motion).

***Reporter from
Foster's***

The Chair recognized a new reporter from Foster's Daily Democrat, Joel Harris, who was covering this evening's meeting.

***Jill LeMay,
Dondero School
Principal***

Chair LaPage stated it is amazing how well Jill LeMay has fit into the school community in her role as Principal of the Dondero School. He said Mrs. LeMay has started a series of coffee chats and has opened communications. He thanked Mrs. LeMay for hosting the meeting and providing the refreshments.

Adjournment

There was no further business to come before the School Board. On a motion by Mr. Tefft, seconded by Mr. Hayward, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn its meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.
Executive Secretary