

**Portsmouth School Board  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

**Minutes of the September 9, 2003 Meeting**

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, September 9, 2003 in the Council Chambers at the Portsmouth Municipal Complex.

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***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. Carvel Tefft, Mr. Charles Vaughn

**PARTICIPATING:** Dr. Lyonel B. Tracy (Superintendent of Schools), Dr. Robert J. Lister (Assistant Superintendent), Mr. W. Peter Torrey (Business Administrator), Mr. Adam Irish (Student Representative), Diane O'Leary McGee (Employee Representative)

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***Non-Public Session***

Prior to the regular meeting, the Board met in a non-public session in Conference Room A to meet with Counsel and to discuss the hiring of new personnel.

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***Call to Order***

Chair LaPage called the regular meeting of the Portsmouth School Board to order at 7:02 p.m. He called for a moment of silent reflection and asked people to keep in mind those defending our Country and others around the world: Dave Keitt, who is home recuperating from surgery; and Laura Barone, Middle School teacher whose mother recently passed away. Mr. Arthur Ashley, evening custodial supervisor at Portsmouth High School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Torrey explained to the Board that the DoE 25 and MS 25 forms would be circulated around the table this evening for the members' signatures. Both forms are required by the Department of Education and report the School Department's budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2003

***Fall 2003 Athletic Schedule***

The Board received a copy of the Fall 2003 Portsmouth High School fall athletic schedule. The Chair stated if any Board member has not yet received his/her season pass to athletic events, to please see him, Dr. Tracy, or Dr. Lister.

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

The Chair stated there was no correspondence to come before the Board at this time.

***Minutes Approved*** The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the August 12, 2003 meeting. Mr. Tefft moved, seconded by Mr. Vaughn, the minutes be approved as written. The motion was unanimously approved.

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### **PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION**

***Comments Re:  
Individual  
Education Plan*** Mr. Chris Jarvis, 20 Nathaniel Drive, Portsmouth, told the Board he and his wife are homeowners and taxpayers in the City of Portsmouth, and they have two children, one of whom is diagnosed with autism. Mr. Jarvis said he wanted to express his concern and disappointment over the process and differences establishing the IEP (Individual Education Plan) between the School Department and his wife and him. He said one of the major concerns has been the lack of administrative involvement in trying to resolve the differences over the last year. Mr. Jarvis stated the staff member they have been dealing with has no degree in special education, so he does not believe that person has the ability to understand where they are coming from. He stated the school department has shown no indication that it desires to resolve the differences, and said that he hopes the Board shares his concerns.

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### **RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS**

***Recognition of  
Employee*** Mr. Peter Bresciano, representing the Seacoast Adult Baseball League, invited Mr. Arthur Ashley to join him at the podium. Mr. Bresciano read a letter of appreciation to Mr. Ashley, signed by the five team managers, for his support and dedication to providing a playing field that was playable, even after the worst of weather conditions. They stated Mr. Ashley's efforts were no less than "Herculean," and he was always present to take care of any problems and to condition the field between games. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, the letter be accepted. The motion was unanimously approved. Mrs. Craig requested a copy of the letter be placed in Mr. Ashley's personnel file. Chair LaPage thanked Mr. Ashley for his hard work and dedication.

***Request to Take  
Students to Belize*** Mrs. Kathleen Metterville, Assistant Principal at Portsmouth High School, was present to request permission to take a group of students on a trip to Belize June 26 – July 3, 2004. Ms. Metterville handed out information about the trip, as well as a group picture from the 2003 trip to Costa Rica. Ms. Metterville said a group of students

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***Request to Take  
Students to Belize  
(con't.)***

traveled to Belize in 1999, and she recommends using the same travel company. She said they are proposing a trip that will last eight nights and nine days. She said the trip will involve science studies; it will not be just a vacation, and the students will be joined by a group of students from Winchester, Kentucky, and their teacher, David Christiansen. She expects the trip will cost \$1,600 - \$1,700 per person, but does not yet have the specifics. She said parents and teachers will be encouraged to join them on the trip. Mr. Vaughn moved the Board approve the trip to Belize proposed for June 26 through July 3, 2004. Mr. Bowles seconded the motion. The Chair requested it be understood that in case of civil unrest or issues worldwide that would make air travel unsafe, the trip would be cancelled. Mrs. Clayburgh said last evening the City Council recognized the students in the Environmental Club for their efforts in keeping the downtown area clean. Ms. Metterville said the "clean-a-thon" has been wonderful. Students have gone downtown twice a month since April of this year, and they will resume this activity this coming Saturday. She said downtown merchants made donations to the Environmental Club, and a careful report was kept on the students who participated and how often; the donations were proportionately divided up among the students who participated and earmarked towards the cost of the trip to Costa Rica. In addition, Ms. Metterville said they held several bake sales, and this year they plan to hold a Halloween dance on October 31<sup>st</sup>. The motion to approve the trip was unanimously approved in a roll call vote.

***Trip Approved***

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**PERSONNEL**

***Professional  
Nominations***

Dr. Lister presented the professional nomination of Michael McKenney, Assistant Principal at Portsmouth High School, to a revised position of Assistant Principal/Athletic Director at Portsmouth High School. The Chair stated this is redefining Mr. McKenney's position due to the budget cuts made last March. Mr. Tefft thanked the Superintendent for being creative. He said we all know that we face tremendous budget constraints this year and that it was necessary to do something to meet those constraints, yet, at the same time, continuing our policy of leaving no child behind. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, to approve the nomination. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Lister presented the professional nomination of Anne Swainbank to the position of Middle School Dean of Students. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, to approve the nomination. The nomination was unanimously approved. Mrs. Clayburgh commended Ms. Swainbank for being an outstanding math teacher. Mrs. Clayburgh said she would miss Ms. Swainbank as a math teacher, but that she will make an excellent administrator.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### ***Joint Building Committee***

Joint Building Committee – Chair LaPage reported on the August 20, 2003 meeting of the Joint Building Committee. The report included a status report, auditorium renovations, furniture bids, and energy efficiency. Mr. LaPage said the City Council will tour the building on September 24<sup>th</sup>, as well as members of the SAU 50 school boards, who will tour the building in the evening. He also said that accommodations are being made for faculty to tour the building. The next meeting of the Joint Building Committee will be held on September 17, 2003. Mr. Torrey commended the new high school principal, Forrest Ransdell, for his enthusiasm and involvement with the building project. Mr. Lyons asked the Chair if the project is on schedule; the answer was yes. He also asked the Chair if the project will come in on budget; the answer was yes. Mrs. McGee asked about a timeframe for teachers to tour the building. The Chair stated that will be determined. He encourage the teachers to tour the building and to give input.

### ***Policy Committee***

Policy Committee – Mrs. Craig reported the Policy Committee met on August 19, 2003. She said Mr. Tefft will be a new member on the committee, replacing Colleen Montminy. She explained the process that will be used in reviewing and revising the policy book. She said some policies will be combined to simplify the readings and, in some cases, to be more specific. Mr. Tefft said he wanted to commend the Policy Committee for its hard work on this time-consuming process. He moved the Board approve the second reading of the Fund Raising policy as presented. Mr. Vaughn seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

### ***Meeting with Fund Raising Groups***

The Chair stated, now that the policy has passed second and final reading, he will call for a meeting of all booster clubs and other groups that fundraise to meet on October 7, 2003 for a review of how fundraising will be done in the Portsmouth schools. Mr. Lyons asked if the policy will be given to the building administrators. Dr. Tracy responded that today the Administrative Council received a copy of the policy, and there was significant discussion about how the policy will be adhered to at the building level. Mr. LaPage said this policy in no way implies there were issues with any of the groups that were fundraising.

### ***Motion to Eliminate Policies***

Mrs. Craig said now that the fund raising policy has been approved and there is now a comprehensive policy, there is no need to keep pages 6, 20, and 25 of the Community Relations section of the policy book. She moved these policies be eliminated. Mr. Lyons seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

***Field Use Referred  
to Athletic  
Committee***

Chair LaPage reported a meeting was held two weeks ago to discuss field use. Representatives of the School Department and the City met to discuss use of the fields. He said there is high demand to use the fields, and because of construction at the high school, the practice field is covered with dirt and will not be usable for two years. He said discussions centered on field use for schools, the Recreation Department, and City residents, while still allowing for the fields to be properly maintained. The Chair and Mr. Torrey commended Rus Wilson, Recreation Department Director, for his cooperation and assistance over the years. Mr. LaPage asked that the Athletic Committee meet as soon as possible to continue discussions about the fields.

***Member Needed for  
Curriculum Council***

The Chair deferred to Dr. Lister, who stated there is need of a Board member to serve on the Curriculum Council, to replace Colleen Montminy. The Chair stated that this appointment cannot wait until after the elections, so he asked that interested Board members see him or Dr. Lister.

***School Board  
Retreat***

The Chair stated the School Board Retreat has been scheduled for Saturday, December 6, 2003. He requested Board members offer assistance to Dr. Lister in planning the retreat.

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**NEW BUSINESS**

***SAU 50 to Hold  
Board Meeting at  
PHS***

The Chair stated the SAU 50 Board will hold its September 24 meeting at Portsmouth High School. The SAU Board will receive a tour of the building.

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**CONTINUING BUSINESS**

***“No Child Left  
Behind”***

The Board received information pertaining to the “No Child Left Behind” Act. Mr. LaPage said he serves on the Education of the States Committee along with Nicholas Donohue, Commissioner of Education in New Hampshire, and Charles Ott, Superintendent of SAU 56. After attending a meeting last June, it was agreed that they would come back to the State and involve school boards and educators on the “No Child Left Behind” Act. Mr. LaPage said the Portsmouth School Board will host a meeting for all area school boards on Thursday, October 16. Dr. Tracy stated that Michael Sentance, Regional Director to Secretary of Education Rod Paige, will be in attendance at this meeting.

The Superintendent stated that over the last few months he has attempted to provide the Board with information about the “No Child Left Behind” legislation. He encouraged the Board to set aside the

***“No Child Left Behind” (con’t.***

date of October 16 and to attend the meeting. Dr. Tracy said that Mr. Sentance came to Portsmouth this summer to speak with him, and agreed to come back and meet with the area school boards to talk about the legislation and how it impacts the schools. He commended Chair LaPage, President-Elect of the New Hampshire School Boards Association, for providing the superintendent and the Portsmouth School Board with timely updates on the “No Child Left Behind” Act.

Dr. Tracy said that three years ago, the New Franklin School was listed as a school that needed improvement. The District received \$57,000 to focus just on grade three improvement. He said the money was put to good use. This year, New Franklin School does not appear on the list. He said the District is doing a good job for its 2,700 students by following its philosophy of offering a personalized education for each student.

The Chair stated that he and the Superintendent met yesterday with Congressman Bradley and the Educational Advisory Committee. The Superintendent was requested to provide input to the Committee.

The Superintendent offered a special invitation to Portsmouth teachers to attend the October 16 work session and for the teachers to ask specific questions about the “highly qualified teachers” requirement of the “No Child Left Behind” Act. He said it is important that the District fulfill the requirements of the Act, yet at the same time respect the veteran teaching staff that has been serving our students over the years. Diane O’Leary McGee, President of the Association of Portsmouth Teachers, said she would notify teachers of the importance of attending the October 16 meeting.

Mr. Bowles said he is encouraged by the Superintendent’s positive reaction to the “No Child Left Behind” Act, which many people were criticizing. He said the Act was introduced by a bi-partisan group, and although many people have been critical of the Act, the Superintendent has been looking for ways to meet the requirements of the Act while determining how the students and City of Portsmouth can benefit from it. Mr. Bowles also stated that perhaps the recent redistricting of students to New Franklin School may have helped the school in its rating.

Mr. Vaughn reminded the Board that the Federal Government still has not properly funded 94-142, the Special Education Act. He said that he hopes the same does not happen with requirements imposed by “No Child Left Behind.”

The Chair commended Connie Carmody, Principal of New Franklin School, and her staff for working to have the students’ acceptable

***“No Child Left Behind” (con’t.)***

yearly progress increase to the point where the school is no longer listed as needing improvement.

Dr. Tracy commended Dr. Diane Law, Title 1 Director, for her efforts in obtaining materials for the Everyday Math Program and in working with the New Franklin staff.

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**FINANCIAL**

***2002-03 Financial Report Approved***

Mr. Torrey reviewed the 2002-2003 annual financial report and answered questions from the Board. Mr. Tefft moved the Board approve the 2002-03 financial report; Mrs. Clayburgh seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

***August 2003 Financial Report***

Mr. Torrey presented the August 2003 financial report. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, the report be accepted and placed on file. The motion was unanimously approved.

***AREA Tuition Rates Approved for 2003-04***

The Board received the proposed AREA tuition rates for the 2003-04 school year. Mr. Torrey said these rates are obtained by using a formula outlined in the AREA (Authorized Regional Enrollment Agreement). The proposed rates for the 2003-04 school year are: Kindergarten: \$5,302; Elementary (1 – 5 ): \$10,605; Middle School (6 – 8 ): \$8,855; and Secondary: \$9,004. Mr. Torrey explained the elementary rate is higher due to a declining elementary population. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, the Board accept the AREA Tuition Rates as proposed. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

***Students Tuitioned into Portsmouth***

The Board requested a report on the number of students who are tuitioned into Portsmouth schools. Mr. Torrey will provide this report to the Board in October.

***Middle School Feasibility Study***

The Chair asked Mr. Torrey where things stand as far as a feasibility study for the Middle School. Mr. Torrey responded this would be the time for the Board to make a decision and to direct him how it wishes to proceed. The Chair expressed concern that there will be language changes to the Building Aid, which would reduce the amount of financial assistance available to Portsmouth. He said a feasibility study would be of no cost to the taxpayers as the money has been set aside. It was agreed the administration would come back to the Board with information at the next meeting.

### **NEXT AGENDA**

The Chair stated the Building Principals will give reports on the opening of school at the next meeting, and the Board will be introduced to the new staff members. This meeting will be held on September 23<sup>rd</sup> at the New Franklin Elementary School.

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### **OTHER**

***APT Retirement Tea*** Mrs. McGee stated the date of the teachers' retirement tea has been set for Tuesday, May 18, 2004. The event will begin at 3:30 p.m. at Yoken's Restaurant.

***"Read Across America" Day*** Mrs. McGee also stated that, although plans are still tentative, it looks as though "Read Across America" Day will be on March 2, 2004.

***Discussion of Scholarships*** Mr. Lyons requested the Board discuss scholarships and how the word gets out as to the availability of scholarships to seniors and post-graduates. Mr. Lyons said he sits on the boards of different organizations, some of which no students have applied for their scholarships. He stated that if students have a financial need, he would prefer to see the funds go towards helping those students attain a college education.

***Portsmouth Community Education Program*** Mr. Bowles commended the Portsmouth Community Education program and its offerings to the community. Dr. Tracy stated that Jayne Walker, Coordinator for the program, has done an excellent job in expanding the program.

***Negotiations*** Chair LaPage told the Board that last evening the City Council approved the administrators' negotiated agreement. He commended the administration and Board members for their diligence in attending negotiations sessions. He stated the School Board has members participating in all negotiations. He commended the Board members for the hours of work they contribute to the negotiating sessions.

***Adjournment*** There was no further business to come before the Board. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, the Board adjourn its meeting. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.  
Executive Secretary