

**Portsmouth School Board  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

**Minutes of the October 14, 2003 Meeting**

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, October 14, 2003 in the Council Chambers at the Portsmouth Municipal Complex.

---

**Attendance**                    **PRESENT:** Mr. Kent F. 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. Adam Irish (Student Representative); Diane O’Leary McGee (Employee Representative); and Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative)

---

**Non-Public Session**        Prior to the regular meeting, the School Board met in a non-public session. This non-public session was held in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II. ( c ).

---

**Call to Order**                Chair LaPage called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. He called for a moment of silent reflection and asked people to remember Derek Spruce, a former Portsmouth High School student and son of former high school teacher Earl Spruce, who recently passed away. Mrs. Roseann Clark led the Pledge of Allegiance.

---

**SECRETARY’S REPORT**

**Minutes Approved**        The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the September 23, 2003 meeting. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mr. Vaughn, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Chair referred to materials in the Board packets: the high school guidance newsletter, a flyer on the young women’s leadership conference, and a booklet listing the various clubs, activities, and co-curricular options at Portsmouth High School.

**PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION**

The Chair declared that no one had signed up to address the Board.

**Public Commentary  
Session**

He said there are many activities going on at City Hall tonight, and someone may have missed the sign-up sheet; therefore, he would allow speakers who have not signed up to address the Board. There was no one in attendance who wished to address the Board.

**“Exchange City”**

Mr. Philip Ross, Director of Exchange City, Portsmouth, thanked the Board for the opportunity to update them on Exchange City. He said they have come a long way in two years when he first approached the Board to bring this remarkable program to the City of Portsmouth and New England. Mr. Ross said they are approximately six weeks away from having an open and operational Exchange City here in Portsmouth. Staff members are preparing and painting the Wentworth School, and the contractors are coming in next week. Renovations to the gymnasium of the Wentworth School should be completed over the next few weeks. He said the first schools to participate in the Exchange City New England in December 2003 will come from the North Conway area and Nashua. Next week these schools will begin the six-week curriculum that is necessary before the students can arrive at Exchange City. Mr. Ross said they have waited a long time for this and they are finally bringing it to light.

Mr. Lyons told Mr. Ross that he remembers meeting with him in the Superintendent’s office when he first spoke about this project. He congratulated and thanked Mr. Ross for the hard work he has done and for his dedication to the program.

Mrs. Clayburgh said she had a sixth grader last year who participated in the curriculum without visiting the “City.” She said it was a fabulous experience for the sixth grade last year at Portsmouth Middle School.

Mr. Ross thanked the Board for its continued support throughout the process of establishing “Exchange City.” He said the Portsmouth Exchange City will support all of New England. Schools from Maine and Massachusetts have been scheduled to participate. The program is geared for fifth and sixth graders, and most of the schools are opting to send sixth graders.

Chair LaPage said the Portsmouth Exchange City program was being created at a time when it has been tough in terms of fund raising. He told the Board that Exchange City is a private/public school relationship. He said the City of Portsmouth is very fortunate that Exchange City chose to come here. The Chair offered his congratulations to Mr. Ross.

**RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS**

***Award Presented to Superintendent***

Chair LaPage said the City of Portsmouth has been very fortunate with its leadership of education, and that Dr. Lyonel Tracy has been President of the New England Association of School Superintendents for the past year. The Chair said that as he has traveled throughout the last few years, he has heard of what Dr. Tracy does for education and how he represents the Portsmouth community and its teachers and faculty. He introduced Mr. Bob Novelli from Riso Products of Boston, Massachusetts. Mr. Novelli said he is quite proud to be part of the education scene throughout the New England states, especially this evening as he is here to honor Portsmouth's own Superintendent, Dr. Lyonel B. Tracy. Mr. Novelli said he is sure the Board is aware of Dr. Tracy's accomplishments in Portsmouth. He said Dr. Tracy was elected by his peers to be President of the New England Association of School Superintendents, and that speaks for itself as to what he has accomplished throughout the New England states. Mr. Novelli invited Dr. Tracy to join him at the podium and presented him with a clock engraved "The New England Association of School Superintendents President's Award 2002-03 presented to Dr. Lyonel Tracy for contributions toward growth and improvement of education throughout the New England States presented by Riso Products of Boston and the New England Association of School Superintendents." Dr. Tracy was also presented with a check for \$500 to be used for the school district at his discretion.

Dr. Tracy thanked Mr. Novelli and said that Riso Products is a company that does a lot of business with the schools but is also a company that gives back to the community, and makes a contribution to school systems in the New England states. Dr. Tracy said he is honored to receive this award. Referring to the \$500 donation, Dr. Tracy said Dr. Lister has great plans to encourage students in the elementary, middle and high schools to play chess. A chess master from Rye has contacted the School Department and there are people working within the School Department who are encouraging kids to play chess. Dr. Tracy said it is his pleasure to donate the \$500 to that program to give it a jump start. He presented the check to Dr. Lister.

Chair LaPage thanked Mr. Novelli for taking time to recognize Dr. Tracy. He said Dr. Tracy's leadership both in Portsmouth and with the New England Association of School Superintendents allows him to do things that better education throughout the New England states. The Chair concluded his remarks by saying that Dr. Tracy recently represented Portsmouth and New England in New Orleans this past year.

***Middle School Mentor Program***

Dr. Lister gave a brief report about the Middle School Mentoring Program. As a result of efforts from the Business Collaborative, with

***Middle School  
Mentor Program  
(con't.)***

representatives from local business and educators, it was decided that one of the items they wanted to pursue was a mentoring program for middle school students. Young mentors from the Chamber of Commerce, under the tutelage of Jennifer Quinlan, recruited individuals from business that are Chamber members to mentor and work with middle school students. Counselor Diane Pollard referred the students for this program. He said training for the mentors will be held on October 23. Dr. Lister said that Amy Mercier, high school guidance counselor, has taken on the program that includes high school students going to some of the elementary schools and working with the young students. He acknowledged John Stokel, Middle School Principal, for taking leadership in this program.

Mr. Lyons stated that Jennifer Quinlan will be leaving the Chamber of Commerce to work in the private sector. He said she was instrumental in the development of the middle school program and has made a huge difference. Mr. Lyons said Ms. Quinlan will be greatly missed at the Chamber.

***Request for  
Approval of Student  
Trips***

Mr. Forrest Ransdell, High School Principal, addressed the Board requesting permission for three student trips. He said the trips have gone through the review process and are tied to the curriculum and the mission statement of Portsmouth High School. He stated that fund raising for these trips will be conducted utilizing the new School Board policy.

***Trip to Quebec City***

Mr. Ransdell introduced Ms. Nancy Modern, International Language Department Head, who presented a request for a student trip to Quebec City, Quebec, Canada from April 16 – 19, 2004. Ms. Modern said the trip is open to French Club members and other students who are taking French classes and wish to participate. The trip will be conducted through “Jumpstreet Tours.” Ms. Modern said although she has not used this company before, the Oyster River School District has used them and finds them to be satisfactory. Ms. Modern said an advantage to using “Jumpstreet Tours” is that they provide a bilingual tour guide and have their own nighttime security guards at the hotel. Mr. Lyons asked if there will be fund raising so that all students will be able to participate, even those who might find the cost of the trip difficult to pay. Ms. Modern said the French Club would be working on that, but wanted to receive approval before making those plans. Mrs. Craig asked about the days that will be missed at school (two). Ms. Modern said it will be the responsibility of the individual students to make arrangements with their teachers; however, if the teacher does not approve the trip because of a project or exam, the student will not be allowed to go on the trip. Mrs. Mayer asked if any of the organized activities will be in French. Ms. Modern said yes, although it might be challenging for some of the students in levels one and two. Ms. Modern, responding to questions

***Trip to Quebec City  
(con't.)***

from Mrs. Clayburgh, said that all students going on the trip will be required to sign the behavior contract. She believes there will be a cap of 40 students allowed to go on the trip. Ms. Modern said that Debra Miller, the new French teacher, has done an excellent job of putting this trip together.

Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mr. Vaughn, to approve the French Club's proposed trip to Quebec City, Quebec, Canada. The motion was unanimously approved.

***"Healthy Choices"  
Conference***

Mr. Ransdell introduced Amy Mercier (high school guidance counselor) and Meg Ronchi (high school Spanish teacher) who requested to bring ten sophomore students to a "Healthy Choices" conference presented by the American Youth Foundation to be held at the Merrowvista Education Center in Center Tuftonboro, New Hampshire on October 31<sup>st</sup> through November 2, 2003. Ms. Mercier said that Portsmouth High School has been given the opportunity to send students to the Merrowvista Education Center for a conference that will focus on students making healthy choices. She said they were originally asked to send five students, but after seeing the potential this program could offer, they called to request ten slots and the request was approved. Ms. Mercier said the conference is grant-funded, so the only expense will be for bus transportation (approximately \$250). She said Mr. Ransdell has said he will contribute \$100 through the Principal's Fund, and the remaining cost of \$150 will be divided among the ten students. She said they hope the students will come back and share the information they learned with their classmates and fellow students and that a new student group to help and encourage other students to make healthy choices will be established. Although Merrowvista has stated that no staff chaperones are necessary, they believe it is important that they participate. Ms. Mercier said that she, Ms. Ronchi and Mr. Hugener (high school science teacher) will attend as chaperones.

Mr. Tefft asked how the students will be chosen. Ms. Mercier responded they have talked with teachers and have asked for suggestions as to who has shown leadership ability. Participation will be by invitation only.

Mr. Lyons asked Ms. Mercier if she has looked into who the people at the Merrowvista Education Center are and if she is comfortable with what she has learned. Mr. Ransdell said that he spent three years working for the American Youth Foundation in California, and said they are a very strong and well-run organization. He said he always felt comfortable with their levels of experience and empathy for kids. Mr. Vaughn asked if this group is involved with any political program. Mr. Ransdell said they are not affiliated with any political venue or undertaking.

***“Healthy Choices”  
Conference  
Approved***

Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mr. Lyons, to approve the sending of ten sophomore students to the American Youth Foundation’s “Healthy Choices” conference at the Merrowvista Education Center. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Request from  
Percussion  
Ensemble to Attend  
World  
Championship***

Mr. Ransdell reported the High School Percussion Ensemble is requesting to attend the Percussion World Championship competition in San Diego, California in April 2004. Mr. Ransdell said the Percussion Ensemble would be returning to the competition to defend their world championship title. He introduced Mr. Steve Cirillo and Mrs. Karen Conway, who were in attendance at the meeting to answer questions. He said Mr. Cirillo has done the leg groundwork to get this process underway, yet there are still more details to be discussed. Mr. Cirillo told the Board that the trip to San Diego is a performance-related trip. The students would be performing at the highest level possible. Mr. Cirillo reviewed the itinerary, and said there would be very little time for the students to sightsee as much of the time would be devoted to rehearsals and preliminary performance activities.

Mr. Tefft questioned the cost of \$30,000 for the trip. Mr. Cirillo said that 28 students would be going on the trip, at a cost of approximately \$1,200 per student. At this time, it is expected that the funds will come from a variety of sources. He said a big fund raiser should raise two-thirds of the cost of the trip. Mrs. Craig asked if the teachers would know in advance which students will be out of school to attend that trip. Mr. Cirillo said the teachers will be notified and every student will be required to check in with him; if they have not done everything required in their classes, they will not be allowed to go.

Mr. Bowles asked how many students from last year’s percussion ensemble graduated last June. Mr. Cirillo said nine members graduated. Mrs. Clayburgh complimented the Music Department for the various activities that are ongoing (marching band, color guard, chorus). She also commended Mrs. Conway for her hard work in that department.

Mr. Tefft requested a clarification from the Chair. He said that \$30,000 is a lot of money, and if only half that amount is raised, does the School Board need to vote again on the \$15,000 or leaving it open for whatever the difference would be. The Chair stated a motion would only pertain to approval of the trip and the intent is for the students to raise the money.

There were no further questions from the Board. The Chair stated the Board reserves the right to bring this request back before them if there is a heightened security risk or something were to happen so that travel is unsafe. Mr. Cirillo said he totally understands that

***Percussion  
Ensemble's Trip  
Approved***

safety is the first issue. He said there will be 450 groups participating, and the organization promoting the competition considers security a priority.

Mrs. Clayburgh moved the Board approve the Percussion Ensemble's trip to San Diego, California to participate in the World Finals in April 2004. Mr. Tefft seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Ransdell said he will begin to contact former colleagues who are now principals in high schools in San Diego to secure practice locations for the ensemble.

***Middle School  
NHEIAP Test  
Results***

Mr. John Stokel, Middle School Principal, reported on the 2003 sixth grade NHEIAP (New Hampshire Educational Improvement Assessment Program) tests. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak on the outstanding results of last year's sixth grade tests. He congratulated the faculty and students on a great job.

Mr. Stokel reviewed student mobility rates and said when they look at the present tenth graders, they are able to go back to when those youngsters were in the third grade. He reported there was a 40.1% loss in students from when this group of tenth graders was in the third grade in 1996. For the tenth grade there was a loss of 29.2% in students from when this same group was in the sixth grade in 1999. For the sixth grade, there was a 28.8% loss in students from when they were in third grade in 2000.

Mr. Stokel reviewed the test results in the areas of math, English language arts, science, and social studies. He stated they are pleased to see the percentages of students in the novice and basic categories have declined while the percentages of students in the proficient and advanced categories have increased.

Mrs. Clayburgh stated the Board must remember that, although it is the Middle School test, the students are only in the middle school for less than one year when they take the test. The tests really reflect what is learned in the elementary and middle schools. She also stated that coded students have to take the test just like everybody else. Mr. Stokel agreed the scores also reflect upon not only the sixth grade, but kindergarten through grade five. He said the tests are more than an assessment of students; they also reflect upon the teaching styles and requires the district to look at those styles as well as tools for teaching. Mr. Stokel answered questions from the Board and participated in discussion as to how the test results can be used to be sure that we are reaching out to every child.

***Recess***

The Chair declared a recess at 8:26 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 8:39 p.m.

Mr. Forrest Ransdell, High School Principal, presented the results of

***High School  
NHEIAP Test  
Results***

the tenth grade NHEIAP tests. The results indicate a greater percentage of Portsmouth students scored “advanced” and “proficient” than the State average, and a lesser percentage of Portsmouth students scored “basic” and “novice” than the State average in the four curriculum areas (English language arts, math, science, and social studies). Mr. Ransdell provided a breakdown of information about 117 students who scored at the “novice” level on at least one portion of the exam. He said they are now beginning to look at the information to determine the initiatives they want to take. They have the ability to track a student’s progress from looking at test results in grades three and six. Mr. Ransdell answered questions from the Board as he reviewed information with them.

The Chair thanked Mr. Stokel and Mr. Ransdell for their reports. He stated that he would like to see individual student portfolios. He reminded Board members of the special work session scheduled for Thursday, October 16 to discuss the “No Child Left Behind” Legislation.

---

**PERSONNEL**

***Nomination***

Dr. Lister presented the professional nomination of Melissa Provost to the position of seventh grade English teacher at Portsmouth Middle School. Ms. Provost has been substituting in that position and is now being nominated as the District has received information from the State Department of Education regarding her participation in the Alternative IV certification process. Mr. Vaughn moved the nomination be approved; Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

---

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

***High School  
Athletic Sub-  
Committee***

High School Athletic Sub-Committee – Mr. Tefft reported the Athletic Committee met at the Middle School a few weeks ago and received preliminary introductions to the Middle School Athletic Sub-Committee program, which has been successful and has led to a record number of students becoming involved in extra-curricular sports. He said they are very proud of that program and the students participating in it. There was discussion of expanding that to the high school in a similar fashion.

***Curriculum Council***

Dr. Lister reported the Curriculum Council held its first meeting of the 2003-04 school year last week. This meeting was a planning session, with the assistance of a professional facilitator. Dr. Lister said the Council plans to make math, science, and social studies its priority this year. The Council will meet again on November 20 in

**Curriculum Council** the Board Room.  
(con't.)

Mr. Vaughn stated that he has given up the pursuit of trying to introduce a Junior ROTC Program at Portsmouth High School. He said there did not appear to be interest in the program last year, either on the part of the staff or the students. Chair LaPage applauded Mr. Vaughn for his work on that program.

**Athletic Committee** Mrs. Clayburgh asked if the Athletic Committee has met. Mrs. Craig said they have not yet met, as it has been difficult for the Athletic Director to find time during the busy fall season. She said there are plans for the committee to meet and set an agenda.

Mrs. Clayburgh said she has received a request from Louise Duprey asking that the Junior Varsity Lacrosse Team be sanctioned so that they can schedule games for the spring. She said there would be no financial commitment on the part of the Board. The Chair declared this request must go through the Athletic Director and the Athletic Committee. The Athletic Committee would then bring its recommendation to the full Board.

---

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Resolutions for  
NHSBA Delegate  
Assembly**

The Board received the proposed resolutions for the New Hampshire School Board Association's Delegate Assembly to be held on November 15, 2003. The Chair stated that Mr. Bowles and Mr. Tefft will be representing the Board.

Mr. Vaughn moved the Board adopt resolutions 1 – 14 as listed in the New Hampshire School Boards Association delegate assembly. Mr. Tefft seconded the motion for the purpose of discussion. Mr. Tefft said he would vote for the motion with the caveat that the Board could change its vote right up until November 15, allowing time for the members to study the resolutions. Mr. Lyons said he would have difficulty voting on these resolutions this evening as there has been no discussion of them. He would want to hear from the Superintendent and the Business Administrator as to ramifications of these resolutions before voting on them. Mr. Vaughn withdrew his motion. The Chair stated the resolutions would be placed on the next agenda.

### **CONTINUING BUSINESS**

**“No Child Left  
Behind” Work  
Session**

Chair LaPage reminded the Board that on Thursday evening there will be a work session to discuss the “No Child Left Behind” Legislation and will be based on educational outcomes and the Average Yearly Progress (AYP). Michael Sentance and Kristen

***“No Child Left Behind” Work Session (con’t.)***

Lepore from the Boston office of the Department of Education. He asked the Board to review the packet of information that was sent to them prior to the work session. Mr. Vaughn said he is somewhat interested that the Legislation calls for the years of testing to be changed to grades three, five and nine and he would like to know the feelings of the teachers. The Chair stated the teachers’ association has been invited to participate in this work session.

***Formation of Middle School Feasibility Committee***

The Chair announced the membership of the Middle School Feasibility Committee that was established by the Board on September 23, 2003. He said that Nancy Novelline Clayburgh will come off the High School Joint Building Committee, to be replaced by John Lyons. Mr. LaPage said that Mrs. Clayburgh, along with Nansi Craig and Clay Hayward, will be the Board members serving on the Committee. Raimond Bowles will be an alternate member. Ms. Helen Maldini, School Board member from Newington, will represent SAU 50. A Portsmouth City Councilor will be named to the Committee following the November election. The five Middle School community members will be: John Stokel (Principal), Thomas Bolko, Laura Barone, and Kenneth Hawkins (teachers), and Carl Diemer (parent). He said that Peter Torrey, Business Administrator, will also serve as a member of the Committee. The Chair charged the committee with holding its first meeting within two weeks. One of the first orders of business will be for the Committee to select its Chair.

---

**FINANCIAL**

***September 2003 Financial Report***

The September 2003 financial report was presented to the Board. The Chair suggested that Board members hold their questions until Mr. Torrey is present at the meeting.

---

**OTHER**

***Work Session***

The Chair again reminded the Board and listening audience of Thursday evening’s work session on “No Child Left Behind.”

***Next Meeting***

The next meeting of the Portsmouth School Board will be held on October 28, 2003 at the Mary C. Dondero Elementary School.

Mrs. McGee requested a correction on the last page of the high school extra-curricular programs booklet to reflect that Ms. Baker (not Mr. Baker) is the advisor for the Madrigal Singers and Treble Choir.

*(Approved by the Portsmouth School Board 10-28-03.)*

***Adjournment***

There was no further business to come before the Board. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mr. Lyons, the Board adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.  
Executive Secretary