

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the November 10, 2003 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Monday, November 10, 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. Roseann Vozella Clark, Mrs. Nancy Novelline-Clayburgh, Mrs. Nansi Craig, Mr. Clay Hayward, Mr. Charles Vaughn

ABSENT: Mr. Carvel Tefft

PARTICIPATING: Dr. Lyonel B. Tracy (Superintendent of Schools), Dr. Robert J. Lister (Assistant Superintendent), Mr. W. Peter Torrey (Business Administrator), Diane O’Leary McGee (Employee Representative), Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative)

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He stated the Board is now back to having nine members as Roseann Vozella Clark, a Portsmouth High School graduate and former instructor at Portsmouth High School, was elected to the fifth seat and, therefore, will fulfill the remainder of Colleen Montminy’s term on the Board. He said it is a unique opportunity for the Board to have a two-year term available, which allows a new board member to ease into the position. Mr. LaPage said Mrs. Clark is able to bring a great deal to the Portsmouth School System, and he welcomed her to the Board and said he is looking forward to working with her over the next couple of years.

Welcome to New Board Member

Congratulations to Vice-Chair, Nominated to State Board of Education

Chair LaPage stated he will ask Vice-Chair John Lyons to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. He said Mr. Lyons was recently nominated by Governor Benson to serve on the New Hampshire State Board of Education, and the vote on his nomination will come up within the next two weeks. The Chair said it has been his pleasure to work with Mr. Lyons over the last four years on the Board. He knows that he will not only represent the children of Portsmouth, but all children in the State of New Hampshire, as he is a hard worker who understands the issues of the City of Portsmouth and State of New Hampshire.

The Chair called for a moment of silent reflection. He asked the Board to keep in mind those who are less fortunate and those who are protecting our Country, both at home and throughout the world.

The Chair stated that Mrs. Clark was sworn in by the City Clerk last Thursday and will participate, along with Mrs. Walker, in a formal swearing-in to be conducted in January. Mr. Lyons led the Pledge of Allegiance.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes Approved The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the October 28, 2003 meeting. Mr. Hayward moved, seconded by Mr. Vaughn, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Letter Commending Chair on Manner of Conducting Meeting The Chair read a letter from Joseph A. Keefe, Ed.D., Executive Director of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives, complimenting him on the manner in which he conducted the October 14th meeting of the School Board. (Dr. Keefe and his wife caught the telecast of the meeting on Saturday, October 25th, while staying at the Sheraton Hotel.) Dr. Keefe, a former superintendent of schools for 26 years, said it was evident that Chair LaPage has a knowledge of the subject matter and an understanding and appreciation for the points of view expressed by members of the Board. He said that he and his wife believe the school board has the good of the children and youth of the city at heart. Mr. Vaughn moved the letter be accepted and placed on file; Mrs. Clayburgh seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

No one had signed up to address the Board, so the Chair declared the public commentary session closed.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

Request for Student Trip Mr. Forrest Ransdell, Principal of Portsmouth High School, presented a request from Gwen Putnam-Bailey, Young Women's Leadership Program Coordinator, for 24 Portsmouth High School students to attend the Young Women's Leadership Annual Fall Conference to be held at the Merrowvista Educational Center in Center Tuftonboro, New Hampshire on November 13 – 15, 2003. Mr. Ransdell said this conference is fully funded. He explained there was a delay in bringing this request to the Board as Ms. Putnam needed to find more chaperones, and that has been achieved. He also stated that a trip to

the Merrowvista Educational Center two weeks ago by another high school group was very successful. He asked the Board to approve this request. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mr. Lyons, the trip for the Young Women's Leadership Annual Fall Conference be approved by the Board.

***Trip to Annual
Conference
Approved***

Mr. Lyons stated that a few years ago there had been a reorganization that occurred within the Clipper Health Center, and he is glad to see that Ms. Putnam-Bailey has continued to move forward the Young Women's Leadership Program. The motion to approve the trip was unanimously approved.

***Commendations to
High School
Principal***

Chair LaPage commended Mr. Ransdell on his handling of recent bomb threats. The Chair stated he has not had a chance to put his compliments in writing, but he wants Mr. Ransdell to know that his actions have been outstanding. Mr. LaPage said it is unfortunate the actions of a few students affect the entire student body. He said the message from the high school administration is that they are not going to fool around with this type of behavior.

***Presentation on
Reading Program***

Dr. Lister left his seat to join Dr. Diane Law, Title 1 Director, at the podium to present a report on the reading program (kindergarten through grade 12) in the Portsmouth schools. They distributed two articles from Principal Leadership, "Don't Forget the Adolescents," and "Is Reading a Lost Art?"

Dr. Lister said the Board has received reports from the school principals about the NHEIAP (New Hampshire Educational Improvement Assessment Program) tests. He reminded the Board that the outstanding results do not happen by accident; they are the results of a lot of hard work by many people. He said they believe in reading across the content areas, not just about teaching reading to students. Dr. Lister said they believe in providing a child-specific education for all students, while being in compliance with the "No Child Left Behind" act. He said there is a goal that all children will be reading by grade three, and the District promotes hiring highly qualified teachers.

Dr. Law said the reading program is funded by the local district, entitlement funds, and competitive grants. The City of Portsmouth funds six reading specialist positions at four schools and one fifty-percent reading recovery position. Dr. Law reviewed the duties of the reading specialists and support staff. Other funds come from Federal entitlement funds (determined by the number of free and reduced lunch students) and the Comprehensive School Reform grants for each of the elementary schools. Dr. Law said that Little Harbour and New Franklin are Title 1 schools; Dondero does not qualify because the number of students qualifying for free and

**Reading Program
(con't.)**

reduced lunches is low.

Dr. Law reviewed the Title 1 regulations, such as all Title 1 tutors must be supervised; therefore, all reading specialists supervise the tutors. She also said that New Franklin is classified as a system-wide school because over 50% of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. Title 1 funds may be used for all classes and students at that school. Little Harbour is classified for targeted assistance, which means the students eligible for Title 1 assistance must be referred by teachers and then go through a testing process to determine eligibility. Title 1 funds may then only be used to provide services for those students.

Dr. Law elaborated on the homework clubs that have been established at Gosling Meadows, Osprey Landing, and Winchester Place. She said this program has the support of parents and they are grateful for it. She also reviewed the activities that have taken place during the summer program. Dr. Law said the Title 1 Program also provides services to 18 students at the Chase Home and to the homeless children at Cross Roads.

Dr. Law reviewed staff development that is provided by Title 1 and answered questions from the Board.

The Chair stated the school district provides in-kind contributions to the Title 1 program such as the classroom spaces, heating, lights, etc. He thanked Dr. Law for her presentation. Dr. Tracy said this program is a perfect example of how we can deliver a child-specific education for every student in our district. He reiterated that a child's performance in school does not happen by accident; there is a team of educators working with that child. He said the biggest impact on a child's education is the person delivering the instruction; the teacher in the classroom. The Superintendent said keeping classes small at the elementary level has led to this success. He said that no matter how committed the teachers are, they cannot deliver those results with 22 –28 kids in a classroom.

PERSONNEL

There was no personnel matter to come before the Board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Joint Building
Committee**

Mr. Torrey provided the Board with a list of items making up the furniture, fixtures and equipment budget for Portsmouth High School. He said the new high school will be approximately 300, 000 square

***Joint Building
Committee (con't.)***

feet when finished. He said that although some furnishings from the current building will be moved to the new building, there is a desire to purchase new furnishings and equipment that will last for the next 30 to 40 years and look nice. He said the Joint Building Committee originally set aside \$2,180,000 for this purpose. He reviewed the expenditures and encumbrances to date, and reported the list of furnishings and equipment, after the bidding process, comes in under budget. He reviewed the list with the Board and answered questions. Mr. Torrey said the Joint Building Committee is looking for the Board's approval of this process. Mrs. Clayburgh moved the School Board approve the process and procedures of the furniture, fixtures and equipment budget dated October 22, 2003. Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Lyons said a great deal of work has gone into this process, and he also credited Mr. Torrey for overseeing the various components of this project. He also credited Mr. Ransdell for staying on top of this project.

The Chair stated that he would like for the Portsmouth schools to have first refusal on the existing furnishings that will not be moved into the new building, with SAU 50 given an opportunity to acquire some of the furniture they might need. The Chair also stated he would like to see the administration develop a plan for moving classrooms into the new building. He said it is still planned to move into the new building during the February 2004 vacation.

***Middle School
Needs Assessment
Study Committee***

Mrs. Clayburgh reported the Portsmouth Middle School Needs Assessment Study Committee held its first meeting on October 29, 2003. The Board Chair and Superintendent of Schools attended the meeting and presented the committee with its charge. The committee will meet again on November 19 at Portsmouth Middle School. Mr. Torrey said the group will provide regular updates to the Board and is confident that it will make its final report, with all findings, to the Board no later than May 31, 2004.

Athletic Committee

Mrs. Craig reported the Athletic Committee met on Monday, November third. There was a lengthy discussion about use of the fields. She said requests for field use will go through the Athletic Director's office. His intentions are to schedule field use to accommodate the best use of the fields while, at the same time, protect the fields.

Mrs. Craig said the committee is reviewing a request from the junior varsity lacrosse to become an official, sanctioned team. The committee also discussed the role of an athletic advisory committee similar to the one at the Middle School. Further discussions will take place on this topic, such as the composition of the committee, and

***Athletic Committee
(con't.)***

how it would interact with the mission of Portsmouth High School. Mrs. Clayburgh offered to meet with the Athletic Committee to review how the advisory committee functions at the Middle School.

Mrs. Craig reviewed the statistics from the fall season, and said Cory Thorne set a new cross-country record.

***NHIAA
Classification***

Chair LaPage said he met with the Superintendent, High School Principal and Athletic Director last Friday to discuss the high school's NHIAA classification. He said a public information session will be held on Tuesday, November 18 at 7:00 p.m. at Portsmouth High School.

The Chair stated the NHIAA released the information late, and a request for classification change has to be submitted to the NHIAA by November 21st. He said the Board does not meet again before that date. After further discussion Mr. Bowles moved that in view of the time constraints, the Superintendent and the Board Chair be authorized to report to the NHIAA regarding the classification in the best interests of Portsmouth High School. Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. Mrs. Craig questioned the Board's involvement in this process. The Chair responded the student enrollment determines the classification, and that has not changed since 1991. He said ramifications of the change would not only be monetary (sending busloads of athletes to further distances), but also the travel time involved for the students, who would have to be released from school early. The motion to empower the Superintendent and the Board Chair was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

***Representation on
Committees***

The Chair stated that John Lyons will replace Nancy Novelline Clayburgh on the High School Joint Building Committee. Mrs. Clayburgh is now serving on the Middle School Needs Assessment Committee. The Chair stated that two other members of the Joint Building Committee, City Councilor William St. Laurent and Board Member Carvel Tefft, will need to be replaced. He credited Mr. St. Laurent and Mr. Tefft for having done an outstanding job on this committee making sure the committee does the right thing for the taxpayers, students and teachers. The Chair commended Mr. Tefft for saving the taxpayers money by working with Mrs. Clayburgh to secure the auditorium seats. The Chair stated the efforts of Mr. St. Laurent and Mr. Tefft have saved the taxpayers millions of dollars on the high school project. Mr. LaPage said he is working with the Superintendent of Schools and the Mayor to secure replacements for this committee.

2004-05 Budget

The Chair stated the Joint Budget Committee will meet in early December. He thanked the Mayor and City Manager for responding to a request for this committee to meet early in the budget process.

Mr. Bowles requested the Superintendent comment on an article that appeared in the newspaper that stated he asked his budgetmakers to work within a two-percent guideline. Dr. Tracy said the administration is following the same protocol for budget building as it has for the last four years. The Superintendent said he met with the Business Administrator and they agreed on a format for percentage of budget items. What came out of the business office was a very comprehensive narrative and numbers format for the budgetmakers to build their budgets. He said they asked the budgetmakers to stay within two percent increases for their initial requests for operating costs. They will be given the opportunity to submit a separate request for whatever they feel strongly for in excess of the two percent. Dr. Tracy said they have not set any type of cap on this budget, yet they have to realize that the major range of expense this year is going towards the instruction of students. He said, through the negotiations process, competitive salaries were ratified. He reminded the Board that 87% of its budget is for salaries. He said the budgetmakers will talk about what they need in the schools to provide a quality education for our students at an affordable cost to the taxpayers.

Mr. Bowles said the most important thing a school board does is to pass the school department budget. He said that new legislation reduces the rate of the Statewide Property Tax. If this passes the next session of the Legislation, the City will have considerable flexibility in its budget that was not available last year. Mr. Bowles said he would like the School Board to participate in a meaningful way in the budget process at an earlier stage than what has otherwise been the process. He reminded the Board that their budget along with the City Manager's municipal budget were the only ones that adhered to the Joint Budget Committee's request last year.

Mr. Lyons said he agrees one of the Board's duties is to provide the best education the City can afford. However, he said that one of the things this Board has tried to avoid is micro-managing. Mr. Lyons said the Superintendent and administrators have a budget process that has worked for the last four years. He said the Board is looking for a disaster if it interferes with its CEO's ability to work with his principals and department heads to present a budget to the Board. He said there are a number of Board members who will start talking about what they are interested in. Mr. Lyons said the Board needs to first have an overview of the total budget, and he is nervous when he hears the statement that the Board should become involved in the budget process at the earliest moment. He suggested that the Board

**2004-05 Budget
(continued)**

not change a process that is already working well.

Mr. Vaughn cautioned there is still a problem in the Legislature about what is going to happen with the bill and that Mr. Lyons is absolutely correct in stating the Board has a CEO who has done an excellent job in formulating a budget. Mr. Vaughn stated the Superintendent would not be adverse to listening to suggestions and comments. He said he is in agreement that the Superintendent should formulate a budget, and said he would listen in a very objective way.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

***School Board
Policies***

Mrs. Craig requested to address the revisions to policies before making motions to eliminate other policies.

Policy Approved

Mrs. Craig moved the Board review and approve the second reading of the policy entitled “Admission and Attendance of Non-Resident Students.” Mr. Lyons seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved in a roll call vote.

***Policies Revised and
Approved***

The Chair stated he will ask for an amendment to the “Attendance” policy. Mrs. Craig moved the Board approve the second reading to revise and approve the following policies: Graduation Requirements (Section III); Admission (Section VI); and School Assignments (Section VI). Mr. Vaughn seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved in a roll call vote.

Mrs. Craig moved the Board approve the second reading to revise and approve the Attendance policy (Section VI). Mr. Vaughn seconded the motion. The Chair addressed his concern with verbiage in the policy, and stated that he would not want a building principal or school nurse to assume responsibility for a student returning to school after three days’ absence. Mr. Lyons suggested the words “or a readmission slip from the school nurse or building principal” be deleted from paragraph four of the policy. Mr. Vaughn made this in the form of a motion; seconded by Mr. Hayward. The Superintendent agreed that he would not want to give authority to any school personnel where there would be a liability issue. The motion to amend the policy was unanimously approved in a roll call vote. The amended motion was brought before the Board and was unanimously approved in a roll call vote.

Policies Eliminated

Mrs. Craig moved the Board approve the second reading to eliminate the following policies from Section VI as they are now incorporated into other policies: General Policy Statement; Attendance; Attendance Records; Non-Residents; Class Assignment; and Graduation for Handicapped Students. Mr. Bowles seconded the

motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

Board Retreat

Chair LaPage stated that due to a number of conflicts, the School Board's retreat will be rescheduled to early January.

***Drama
Performance,
"The Music Man"***

Mrs. Clayburgh encouraged Board members to attend the production of "The Music Man," which will be performed November 20 – 23 at Portsmouth High School. She said the audience will be sitting in the new seats. Mr. Torrey reported the auditorium carpeting is being installed now, and it is expected the "new" auditorium will be ready for opening night of the play.

***Fund Raiser for
Auditorium Chairs***

Mrs. Clayburgh reported there will be a free fund raiser for the auditorium on Sunday, November 30th at 1:00 p.m. She said there will be complimentary baked goods, courtesy of high school parents, and the Principal will offer a tour of one section of the new building. Mrs. Clayburgh said that local talent will be showcased, and Tom Bergeron, host of "Hollywood Squares" has agreed to be the Master of Ceremonies for this event. Mr. Lyons asked if the plaques will be on the chairs in time for this event. Mr. Torrey said there is a delay in the plaques being shipped and, therefore, there would not be enough time to have them engraved and installed before November 30.

Marching Band

Mrs. Clayburgh commended the members of the Marching Band who recently performed at the football game.

***PEP Holiday House
Tour***

Mrs. Clayburgh stated the largest fundraiser for PEP, the holiday house tour, will take place on December 7. She said the group expects to raise between \$10,000 and \$15,000. Tickets are \$15 each and will be available at locations throughout Portsmouth by the end of the week.

FINANCIAL

***State School
Building Aid***

Mr. Torrey provided the Board with changes to the State's school building aid. He reviewed the information with the Board and how it would affect Portsmouth, especially should there be a proposal concerning the Middle School. The Chair stated that a vote and bonding by June 30, 2004 would not affect the District's reimbursement.

***October 2003
Financial Report***

Mr. Torrey presented the October 2003 financial report. He said it is relatively early in the year and there are no items to indicate concern; things are proceeding on target.

NEXT AGENDA

Next Meeting

The Chair stated the next meeting will be held at the Community Campus. A report on staff development will be presented at that time. Mr. Lyons said the Community Campus is excited to host the Board meeting and Liz Kennedy has offered to give a tour of the building at 6:30 p.m. The Chair cautioned there is a possibility of the need for a non-public session at 5:30 p.m.; therefore, he would not want to commit to a tour at 6:30 p.m.

The Chair stated the meeting at Sherburne School will be rescheduled.

OTHER

Holiday Dinner

The Superintendent stated the Board's annual holiday dinner will be held on December 16. Detailed information will be sent to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment

There was no further business to come before the Board. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mr. Lyons, the Board adjourn its meeting. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.
Executive Secretary