

**Portsmouth School Board  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

**Minutes of the March 9, 2004 Meeting**

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, March 9, 2004 in the Council Chambers at Portsmouth City Hall.

***Attendance***

**PRESENT:** Mr. Kent F. LaPage (Chair), Mrs. Nancy Novelline Clayburgh (Vice-Chair), Mr. Raimond Bowles, Mrs. Roseann Vozella Clark, Mrs. Nansi Craig, Mr. Clay Hayward, Mr. John Lyons, Jr. Mr. Charles Vaughn, Mrs. Ann Walker

**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), Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative)

***Non-Public Sessions***

Prior to the regular meeting, the Board met in non-public sessions in Conference Room A. These non-public sessions were held in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II. ( c ).

***Call to Order***

Chair LaPage called the meeting to order at 7:28 p.m. He apologized for the delay in beginning the meeting and explained it was due to two student hearings. The Chair said the school district is very proud of one of its graduates from the Class of 1993, Private First Class Robert Keith, U. S. Army, who has been awarded the Bronze Star for braveness four times in Iraq. The Chair called for a moment of silence and asked people to remember members of the Armed Forces who are protecting us around the world. Mr. Matt Solie, the student representative for Chair LaPage, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

***Recognition of PHS Graduate***

***Student Government Day***

The students who will participate in Student Government Day on Wednesday, March 24, were introduced. The Chair encouraged Board members to participate in the students' meeting on March 24.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT**

***Minutes Approved***

The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the February 10, 2004 meeting. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the minutes

**Minutes Approved (con't.)** be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the March 2, 2004 meeting. Mr. Bowles moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Informational Items** The Chair reviewed items that were included in the Board packet: the elementary school lunch menu, a flyer from the Wellness Committee announcing a workshop on the benefits of eating soy products, and a copy of "The Achiever," a newsletter pertaining to the No Child Left Behind Act.

**Correspondence** Mrs. Clayburgh read a letter from Joan Coffey commending the Portsmouth School Board, administration and parents for their hard work in bringing positive changes to Portsmouth High School. She said the community has seen high school students excel in all areas and the athletic program has taken a positive turn in a short time under the leadership of Mike McKenney and Forrest Ransdell. She said the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) and parent booster clubs work hard to support our children and school on a daily basis, and she encouraged the Board to continue to let the community work together and not let individual agendas take us off course. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the letter be accepted and placed on file. Mr. Vaughn thanked Mrs. Coffey for sending this letter.

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### **PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION**

**Request to Place Elementary Foreign Language Back Into Budget** Beth Santos, 79 Lois Street, said she was speaking on behalf of Dondero School and other elementary school parents to plead that the Board place back in its budget the elementary foreign language program. She distributed a hand-out, "What Are the Benefits of Knowing a Second Language." Ms. Santos said most experts agree that children learn a foreign language easier when it is introduced at an earlier age, and these children are more likely to master the language.

Ms. Paula Glynn and her son, Patrick, were present. Ms. Glynn told the Board that she really wants the Spanish program back in the elementary schools. Ms. Glynn said she has been a teacher for 11 years and is now home with her two boys. She has always believed that a second language should be taught to children at the youngest age possible, and that research shows that children who start to learn a foreign language in elementary school are more likely to master it.

**Public Forum** Mr. Bob Montville stated he came before the Board two months ago

to address the mission of the high school athletic program. He said that other issues have been uncovered and he has been frustrated that there is no system to discuss these issues as a group. Mr. Montville invited the School Board, the Superintendent and High School administration to attend a public forum that he is arranging on Tuesday, March 30, 2004 at the Comfort Inn from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. He said he will be looking for answers to his questions, and that he also plans to invite the Police Chief and members of the Police Department.

***Comments re:  
Athletics***

Mr. Scott Pafford , 969 Middle Road, Portsmouth, said he is speaking as a concerned parent and resident about the issue being played out in the press, specifically pertaining to high school athletics. Mr. Pafford asked if the rules are being applied fairly to all, and said he would like to believe the school system supports their concerns. He said there are numerous issues that continue to be played out in the press. He said changes are needed in the athletic program, and parents need to have complete confidence in the school system that the right things are being done and the right decisions are being made.

***Commendations and  
Thanks to Board  
and Administration***

Cindy Brown, 45 Pleasant Point Drive, Portsmouth, thanked and commended the School Board members and administration for their actions and behavior during the recent plight of negative publicity that has been waged on by very few individuals. She said she has seen great staff members and administrators make positive changes in an attempt to decrease drug use in the high school, and there has been open dialogue at each and every meeting of the Parent Teacher Student Association.

***Support of  
Reinstating Foreign  
Language Program***

Mr. Santos, 79 Lois Street, Portsmouth, spoke in support of the Board reinstating the foreign language program in the elementary schools. He said the program will help them to accept and celebrate different cultures. Mr. Santos said, as a Portsmouth resident, he feels powerless that his tax money goes to help other communities while his city has to face budget cuts.

***Drug Dogs in  
School***

State Representative Laura Pantelakos, 528 Dennett Street, Portsmouth, spoke in support of allowing drug dogs to be used in Portsmouth High School. She said it is no secret that drugs and alcohol are ongoing issues in our school system, and she cannot understand why drug dogs would be offensive or frightening to our students. She said that if they have nothing to hide, they have nothing to fear. Representative Pantelakos said she serves on a committee that oversees a State prison population, and 85% of the inmates' crimes are drug and alcohol related. She said it is the responsibility of the adults to provide safe and drug-free schools. She stated that when we are willing to announce publicly that we are not willing to take drastic measures to protect our students, we enable

the dealers to come forward and act.

***Support of  
Superintendent***

Ms. Tammie Carney, Dondero School parent and member of the Dondero School PTA, said she attended the State PTA Conference last November and had the privilege of sitting at the table with Superintendent Tracy. She said she is happy to see her child attend a school in a district that is under Dr. Tracy's leadership, as he is passionate about the well-being and success of children in this school district. Commenting on current issues at the high school that are being reported in the media, Ms. Carney said we need to teach our children that we are not all the stars in the show, lead in the play, or majorette in the brass band. She said sometimes it isn't about you, it is about your team; sometimes it has to be about the individual, and maybe then it is her child. She would hope to have an administration that knows the difference; the needs of the many and the needs of the one. Ms. Carney concluded her remarks by stating she has complete confidence in the administration, in the Superintendent, and in the Board's judgment.

***Request for  
Elementary Foreign  
Language Program***

Ms. Amy Brnger, 139 Clinton Street, Portsmouth, stated she is the parent of a kindergarten student at New Franklin School, and she has obtained 78 signatures in support of getting the foreign language program back into the elementary schools. She said it is easier for a youngster to learn a foreign language than it is for an adult; the study of a foreign language helps students to appreciate cultures other than their own; and studying an foreign language will help our future leaders in a global economy.

Ms. Chris Serling, 89 Sparhawk Street, Portsmouth, spoke in support of placing foreign language back into the elementary schools. She said that, unfortunately, the study of a foreign language is still considered to be a bit of a luxury in this country. She challenged this by saying the study of a foreign language is a necessity and our children are losing out.

Mr. Mitch Gladstein, 380 Grant Avenue, Portsmouth, spoke in support of placing the Spanish program back into the elementary schools. He said he relocated to Portsmouth from Los Angeles, California, where speaking another language is a necessity. He said learning another language will help his children throughout the rest of their lives.

There were no other speakers to address the Board during the public commentary session.

***Public Hearing  
(con't.)***

Chair LaPage opened the public hearing on the 2004/05 budget. He called three times for speakers. There was no one in attendance who wished to speak on the budget. The Chair declared the public hearing closed.

***Public Forum***

Mrs. Craig asked for clarification of Mr. Montville's invitation for Board members to attend an open forum on March 30. Mrs. Craig said the invitation needs to be addressed since, if there is a quorum that evening, it would need to be addressed. The Chair stated the Board meets on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, and it can be discussed at that time. He suggested the Board could seek advice from the City Attorney.

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**RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS**

***Request for Student  
to Attend Northeast  
Regional Academic  
Bowl for the Deaf  
and Hard of  
Hearing Approved***

Dr. Lister presented a request from Claire Sheridan, Teacher of the Deaf at Portsmouth High School and Middle School, and Donna Schefer, Teacher of the Deaf at Oyster River High School, for Ephraim Porter to attend the ninth annual Northeast Regional Academic Bowl for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing sponsored by Gallaudet University. The competition will be held at the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut beginning on March 11. Mrs. Craig moved, seconded by Mrs. Clark, to approve this request. The motion was unanimously approved.

***FRIENDS Project  
Request Approved***

Mrs. Clayburgh presented a request from the FRIENDS Project for an overnight "sleepover" in Kennebunkport, Maine at the home of Heidi Chase's mother. She said the purpose of the sleepover is to provide an opportunity for girls in the Girls Group, which is run through the FRIENDS Project, to enjoy a "Girls sleepover" that they would not otherwise experience due to their social disabilities. Eight students and two chaperones plan to participate. They will leave Portsmouth High School on Saturday, March 20 at 4:00 p.m. and return on Sunday, March 21, at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, to approve the request. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Request from Team  
Portsmouth Special  
Olympics Basketball  
Team Approved***

Dr. Lister presented a request for members of the Team Portsmouth Special Olympics basketball team to spend one evening overnight at a Portsmouth hotel on Saturday, March 27, 2004. Dr. Lister stated the Special Olympics State Basketball Tournament will be held in Portsmouth on March 27 and 28. Many athletes, families and coaches will spend Saturday night in Portsmouth hotels, and he Portsmouth athletes would like to join them. He said there would be sufficient adults to supervise. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the request be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

***PHS Girls’  
Basketball Team***

The Chair stated he was just handed a note informing him the Portsmouth High School girls’ basketball team defeated the Alvirne team 68 – 45. He acknowledged that Principal Ransdell, who has attended every game, has been in the audience this evening.

***Presentation Tabled***

The Chair stated that agenda item V. B., High School Guidance Department Presentation, will take place at the next meeting.

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**PERSONNEL**

Mr. Vaughn requested the students be allowed to leave the meeting after all personnel issues have been voted on so that they may get home to bed.

***Professional  
Retirements***

Dr. Lister presented the following professional retirements effective the end of the 2003-04 school year:

	<u>Years</u>	<u>Current position</u>
Martin Burns	33	Grade 5, New Franklin
Loretta Downs	35	Grade 4, Little Harbour
Diane Pollard	23	Guidance, Middle School
Sandra Proira	29	Librarian, Middle School
Anthony Rahn	28	Phys. Ed., Dondero School
Ed Stokel	33	Computer/Technology Director
Linda Telles	29	Grade 2, Little Harbour
Diane Tiezzi	20	Music, Little Harbour

Dr. Lister said he is very proud of all of these individuals and they have made great contributions to the school district.

Mr. Vaughn said it was with great difficulty that he makes the motion to accept these retirements as they have all worked hard. Mr. Bowles seconded the motion. Mr. Lyons said it is commendable that teachers in Portsmouth stay for 29 and 35 years. Mrs. Clayburgh stated the retiring teachers represent a total of 230 years in Portsmouth. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Leave of Absence  
Request Approved***

Dr. Lister presented a request from Caroline Arakelian, special education teacher at PASS, for a leave of absence for the 2004-05 school year. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mr. Vaughn, the request be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Requests to Extend  
Leaves of Absence***

Dr. Lister presented a request from Donna Schefer to extend her leave of absence through the 2004-05 school year. Mr. Vaughn moved the request be approved. Mrs. Clayburgh seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Lister presented a request from Heidi White to extend her leave of absence through the 2004-05 school year. Mrs. Walker moved, seconded by Mr. Hayward, the request be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Lister presented a request from Karen Stasko to extend her leave of absence through April 7, 2005. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mr. Lyons, the request be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Resignations  
Accepted***

Dr. Lister presented the resignation of Megan Parker, grade one teacher at Dondero School, effective the end of the 2003-04 school year. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the resignation be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Lister presented the resignation of Carol James, PASS Principal, effective the end of the 2003-04 school year. Mr. Hayward moved the resignation be accepted; Mrs. Clayburgh seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Lister presented the resignation of Michael Deragon, English teacher at PASS, effective the end of the 2003-04 school year. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the resignation be accepted. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Professional  
Nominations***

Dr. Tracy said it was his pleasure and honor to nominate 273 professional teachers for the 2004-05 school year. He asked the Board to approve these nominations. He said the classroom teacher has the biggest impact on a child's school life, and Portsmouth has some of the best teachers. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the Board approve the nomination of 273 teachers presented by the Superintendent. Mr. Bowles wanted to clarify that the list does not include administrative positions. The Superintendent stated the list contains only teachers. Mr. Lyons said that when he looks at the list, he recognizes names of people who attended school in Portsmouth and then returned to teach here. Mr. Vaughn stated the School Board, through its negotiated contract with the teachers, is required to issue contracts by March 15. In a roll call vote, the motion to approve the teacher nominations was unanimously approved.

***Recess***

The Chair declared a recess at 8:42 p.m. so the students could leave. The meeting was reconvened at 8:55 p.m.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

Joint Building Committee – Mr. LaPage reported that students and faculty will cut the ribbon to the new building on Monday, March 15, at 9:15 a.m. Later that day, from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., the Parent Teacher Student Association will host an open house.

The Chair thanked the people at Team Design, Inc., Hutter Construction, and all the contractors for not only being on time with the project, but in working with the faculty. He said the open house will be one of the more amazing events this City has had to open up to the community.

Mr. Torrey reported the Joint Building Committee officially met for the first time in the conference room of the new building, pretty much signaling that we are about to enter the educational career of the 200,000 square foot addition. He said the project has been on time and on budget. He said work will now start on the old building. He said renovation and demolition to parts of the old building will occur over the next five to seven months. At this time, the Planning Board is scheduled to review some phases of this next step at its meeting next Thursday, March 18.

### ***PHS Open House***

The Chair stated that he hopes the public will come to the High School on March 15 to see the new building. He said it has taken a total of three different school board and two superintendents along with a number of personnel to get to this point. Mr. LaPage said a formal dedication will take place in January 2005, when the entire project is complete.

The Chair mentioned the traffic pattern will change at least twice between now and when the renovation project is over. He asked that people pay attention to the changing pattern.

Chair LaPage apologized to the abutters for when demolition begins, and said they will make sure they do not interfere with the churches and neighbors in that area. He asked that if the neighbors have issues throughout the demolition process, to please contact him, the Superintendent of Schools, or Forrest Ransdell, High School Principal.

Mr. Torrey reviewed the schedule for classes at Portsmouth High School in order to accommodate the move into the new building.



***Policy Committee***      Policy Committee – Mrs. Craig reported the Board, at its February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, approved first reading of some policies. She moved the rules be suspended so that the second readings will occur at the next Board meeting. Mr. Lyons seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion to suspend the rules and take up the second readings at the March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting was unanimously approved.

Mrs. Craig stated the Policy Committee will meet next Tuesday, March 16, at 4:00 p.m.

***Workplace Safety Committee***      Workplace Safety Committee – Mr. Torrey said a report will be available at the next Board meeting.

***State Board of Education***      Mr. Lyons, a member of the State Board of Education, updated the Board on issues that are coming before the State Board of Education, and said they are actively involved in the process of reviewing and supporting the minimum standards. He said the State Board also approved a charter school application from the Exeter (SAU 16) School District, the mission of which is to address the needs of the middle range of students in the Exeter region whose needs are not adequately met in traditional programs. Mr. Lyons said the State Board will also have a work session on the New Hampshire Comprehensive Education Reform.

***National School Boards Association***      Chair LaPage said he will attend the National School Boards Association Conference in Florida from March 25 through the 30<sup>th</sup>.

***Dialogue About Drug Dogs***      Mr. Vaughn requested the Board, at its next meeting, discuss the issue brought up by Representative Pantelakos: drug dogs in the high school. Dr. Tracy stated that conversations have been held within the Portsmouth Safe Schools Team for over two years regarding using dogs in the schools. He said that last year, the school administration asked that we wait until we were in the new building with a new principal. The Superintendent said a definite plan would have to be in place. He also said they have not refused to have the dogs in the schools; they did not want to turn them loose without a plan and purpose and without the building principal leading that charge.

Mrs. Clayburgh said the High School PTSA (Parent Teacher Student Association) met and discussed drug-sniffing dogs, and came to the conclusion that that decision is up to the administration of the high school.

Mr. Lyons said, speaking to the issue of the drug dogs, that it appears people are dancing like marionettes to what appears in the newspaper. He said the School Department has been working on this issue, as well as others. He suggested that people, instead of reacting to what they read in The Portsmouth Herald, pick up the telephone and call

***Dialogue About  
Drug Dogs (con't.)***

the Superintendent of Schools or Assistant Superintendent. He suggested that would be more productive than someone reacting to what they read in the newspaper. He said people read things in the newspaper and assume there is something happening in which nothing is being done; he said that is not accurate.

Mr. Irish said the dogs have not been in the High School for two years. He said there certainly is a drug problem at Portsmouth High School. He said the Board should encourage debate and to address the issues brought forward.

Mr. Vaughn moved the Board, for the next meeting, have an agenda item for dialogue and updating on the issue of police dogs in the schools. Mrs. Clayburgh said she will vote against the motion as she believes the situation has been in the process for a while and it should belong with the administration of the school. Mr. Vaughn said all he is asking for is that the issue be raised and discussed. He said the public wants to know what the Board is doing about this issue. In a roll call vote, the motion passed in an eight to one vote (Mr. Bowles, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Craig, Mr. Hayward, Mr. Lyons, Mr. Vaughn, Mrs. Walker, and Mr. LaPage voting for the motion; Mrs. Clayburgh voting against the motion).

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**NEW BUSINESS**

***2004 School Board  
Goals***

The goals established by the School Board at its retreat in January were presented for approval. Dr. Tracy said the administration will continue to work on the Board's goals, as they have done over the last four years. He said they are a good working narrative to help the administration with the operation of the schools. Mr. Vaughn moved the Board approve the 2004 goals. Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion to approve the goals was unanimously approved.

***VFW Scholarship  
Competition***

Mr. Lyons reported that he and Mary Carey Foley were asked by the Veterans of Foreign Wars to be part of the State Scholarship Committee. Along with two other people, they judged entries by high school students from throughout the State of New Hampshire. A junior from Nute High School was selected. This student went to Washington, D.C. and competed against students from the other 49 States. He said that he noticed in today's newspaper that this student took first place in the National competition and has been awarded a \$25,000 scholarship.

Mr. Lyons said it would be wonderful to see a student from Portsmouth High School enter into this competition. He said that, for

years, no students from Portsmouth High School have entered this competition.

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### **CONTINUING BUSINESS**

#### ***School Affiliated Clubs and Groups***

Mr. Torrey reviewed a revised list summarizing the progress of registering clubs and groups that fund-raise under the auspices of the School Department. He requested the Board approve a motion to approve the clubs and groups listed under Section A as their information is complete and no further information is necessary at this time.

Mr. Vaughn moved the Board approve the clubs and groups listed under section "A" of the March 9, 2004 revised memo with respect to the School Board's "Fund Raising" policy. Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

#### ***Scholarship Committee***

Mrs. Walker asked about the status of the Leary Scholarship Committee. The Superintendent responded his office is trying to schedule a date to meet when all members can be present.

#### ***2004-05 Budget***

The Chair stated that Mrs. Walker will not be present for Thursday evening's work session. She has handed to the Chair her votes for the 2004-05 budget. Mr. Vaughn stated that he also has a copy and that Mrs. Walker has asked him, in her absence, to be her spokesperson. The Chair stated the Board will go into a meeting following the work session on Thursday night in order to vote on the budget. He said the Board should be able to complete its work on the budget that evening.

The Chair asked the Superintendent to comment on the status of the 2004-05 budget. Dr. Tracy said he asked Mr. Torrey to update the working framework to include the suggestions from last Thursday's budget work session. At this time, the proposed budget represents an 8.9% increase. He said the budget goal is to get back to providing a quality education at an affordable cost to the taxpayer. The Superintendent emphasized the following: in order to get back to the educational standards we had two years ago, an 11.42% increase would be necessary; however, he does not believe that is affordable to the taxpayers; nothing is set in stone and none of the reductions have come about easily; and there will continue to be challenges on all of these positions.

**FINANCIAL**

***February 2004  
Financial Report***

Mr. Torrey reviewed the February 2004 financial report. He said he is concerned with and watching line item 121 (substitute account) as it is only \$9,000 away from a negative balance. He said most of this is due to extended leaves. He is also watching the out-of-district tuition account. He said that, in general, we are heading towards a very tight budget year with no expectations of a surplus. Mrs. McGee asked if it is possible to get a breakdown of expenditures from the substitute account to see if the majority is illness related or due to teachers being out to attend conferences.

***Request to Use  
Scoreboard at  
Sherburne School***

Mr. Torrey said he received a communication from the group working with the football team that uses the Sherburne School field requesting to use the scoreboard. Mr. Torrey said he has no problem with this, and there would be little or no cost to the School Department; they would need to access the electricity at Sherburne School. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, to refer this issue to the Business Administrator with power (*no pun intended!*). The motion was unanimously approved.

***Authorization to  
Accept Check***

Mr. Torrey said a check in the amount of \$1,186 was received from the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation. He said this is an unsolicited gift to the school district and it is not directed to any specific program. He asked for authorization from the Board to accept the check and give it to Dr. Lister. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mr. Hayward, the Board authorize the Business Administrator to accept the check in the amount of \$1,186 and forward the funds to Dr. Lister to be used at his discretion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

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**NEXT AGENDA**

***Special Olympics  
Breakfast***

Mrs. Clayburgh reported a breakfast to benefit Seacoast Special Olympics will be held on March 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 a.m. at Yoken's restaurant. Tickets are available from Dr. Tracy, Dr. Lister, or herself.

***Adjournment***

There was no further business to come before the Board. Mr. Vaughn moved the Board adjourn; Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.  
Executive Secretary