

## Joint School Advisory Committee Meeting

### Minutes of the September 20, 2006 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, September 20, 2006 at the Portsmouth Middle School, Room 106.

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- Attendance:** Present:  
**Chair:** Joanne Grasso, Counselor  
**City Council Members:** Tom Ferrini, Ned Raynolds  
**School Board Members:** Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, Sheri Ham Garrity, Mitchell Shuldman  
**Planning Board:** Anthony Coviello  
**Advisory Members:** Rose Sulley, Eric Weinrieb  
Ex-Officio: Robert Lister, John Stokel, Helen Maldini
- Presenter:** City Attorney Mr. Robert Sullivan
- Call To Order:** Chair Grasso called the meeting of the Joint School Advisory Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.
- Minutes Approved:** The Chair called for the approval of the August 30, 2006 minutes. Ms. Garrity moved and Ms. Novelline Clayburgh seconded, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.
- Chair Grasso handed out a map showing the Portsmouth Middle School property and the Peirce property. Mr. Robert Sullivan, City Attorney, was invited to explain the Peirce Trust. He was asked to answer questions if the 4.36 acres could be utilized to expand the Portsmouth Middle School and the steps it would take. He was also asked to give an estimation of what the cost might be.
- Presentation:** Mr. Sullivan explained that the Peirce property is not really a trust in the common sense but a restriction on the deed enforced by the Division of Charitable Trust with the Attorney General's Office. The restriction of the deed is that the property is to be kept as a park and no other purpose.
- With the proper steps and the right amount of money by following the eminent domain process the city could eliminate the Peirce restriction.
- The proper steps would include a decision by the City Council to pursue this, a public hearing and vote, engage in the services of an outside independent appraiser, discuss this with the Attorney's General's Office to see if they can come to some kind of an agreement including a financial offer made to the Attorney General's Office.

The potential cost of acquiring the Parrot Avenue property should include the hiring of an outside appraiser. He feels after consulting with city appraisers and the city assessor that the cost to obtain the property could be in the range of \$1.7 – \$2 Million.

**Discussion:**

Money for this property may go to the Attorney General’s Office into a Recreation trust to be used by the public for recreational purposes. The swapping of property may be pursued by applying to the court to modify the trust but only if the Attorney General’s Office agrees although Mr. Sullivan is not aware of this happening for the purpose of eminent domain.

The city does not own the Peirce Property to use as it wishes. The City holds the title and is responsible for the property but it does not have all of the rights as an owner would normally have but has the restrictions which states it is to be used for the purpose of a park and no other purpose which is enforced by the Charitable Trust Unit of the Attorney General’s Office. Eminent domain would be needed in order to use this property as the city wishes.

When asked how long the process would take, Mr. Sullivan responded that the longest part would be the appraisal which could take about 6 – 8 weeks. The entire process could be just a matter of months.

Attorney Sullivan left the meeting at this point and would return if the committee should need any further assistance.

**Charge:**

Chair Grasso handed out the charge, which had been reviewed by Mayor Marchand who added the last sentence.

**JOINT SCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JSAC)  
CHARGE**

*JSAC shall be responsible for expanding the examination and assessment of the middle school facilities. It shall make recommendations to the School Board and the City Council regarding potential new construction, improved construction, and/or renovation plans for the Portsmouth Middle School.*

*JSAC shall not be responsible for the review of grade configuration, educational programs, or curriculum for the middle school, except as such information shall be necessary to more fully understand facility needs such as square footage requirements, classroom configuration and similar construction and design considerations.*

*JSAC may also be mindful of the elementary schools when considering the infrastructure needs of the Middle School.*

Ms. Sulley made a motion to accept the charge as presented. Mr. Ferrini seconded and the committee approved it unanimously.

***Site Review:***

Chair Grasso asked Mr. Stokel to explain to the committee what the list of sites were that were considered and why some of them did not end up on the final list of recommended sites. The list of those sites is listed on the Proposed Sites, Portsmouth Middle School, Team Design, dated October 4, 2005.

Team Design was asked to come back to the original committee with sites that were available in the city that met the State Standards of 16 acres. Looking at those sites, the committee concentrated on Jones Avenue because the city already owns it and there is room to add more athletic fields in the planning.

A discussion ensued about the Parrott Avenue site and the Jones Avenue site.

An aerial view of the Jones Site was handed out by Chair Grasso.

Access to the Jones Avenue property may not originate from Jones Avenue because it is too narrow. This might be considered as an emergency exit. Another Access could be using school owned property located between the movie theatre and a small cape on Lafayette Road.

Committee members asked about the possibility of sites at Pease Tradeport but it is state owned not City owned. A location in Newington was also discussed with a collaboration with SAU 50 but it is felt that the Middle School should be located in Portsmouth.

Discussion included in depth property study to be done on these two sites, Parrott Avenue and the Jones Ave sites. Building a new Middle School on one site and having fields at another; bussing situations, custodial issues; lack of fields at this time, the ease of students getting to fields if they are adjacent to the school, where to place students during a possible 2 year construction phase on the Parrott Avenue site were also mentioned.

Mr. Ferrini made a motion to request joint RFQs followed by RFPs between the School Department and the City Manager's office for engineering studies for the Jones Ave Parcel and Current Middle School to determine their viability from an engineering perspective.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Weinrieb.

This information will be referred to Mr. Bohenko, City Manager, for further clarification.

There was a brief discussion about the present Middle School being a part of the city's history and it is hard to put a value on the present Middle School site. It must be looked at as not just a piece of land but a part of the city's history, and a part of the community. Need to place a weight on the factors, including bussing kids to the school, students walking to school, fields, traffic issues, etc. Place weights on the things that are important in order to determine the best site.

Chair Grasso handed out a Memorandum from Team Design on the Landfill Reuse Preliminary Summary of Jones Avenue Site Redevelopment.

Everyone agreed that this committee was asked to keep an open mind and continue forward with the best interest of all constituents involved.

***Action Steps:***

- Russ Wilson, Athletic Director, can be asked to come and speak on the athletic field issues in the city.
- A walk of both sites would be a good thing to do as the committee moves forward on this issue.
- A vote was taken of the motion and was approved by an 8 to 1 vote with Mr. Raynolds voting against the motion.
- Chair Grasso asked that Mr. Ferrini bring to the City Attorney the motion voted on and approved tonight.
- On the Agenda for the next meeting on October 4, 2006, there will be listed under OLD BUSINESS to discuss a motion about looking at other sites.
- Also on the agenda for October 18, 2006 Mr. Raynolds will ask Dr. Arthur Maerlander to make a 45 minutes to 1 hour presentation to the committee.

***Demographics:***

Dr. Robert Lister, Superintendent of Schools, was previously asked to comment on demographics. He stated that the population of the city in 2006 is approximately 21,000. The estimated population in the city for 2020 is 24, 470. The population is fluctuating between 2,000 and 3,000 over the next few years. The planning board is sharing the information on the building developments within the city.

Information on the projected populations is needed for the future needs of the school. The school department is looking at this information for the budget but they are just projections. Dr. Lister is researching these projections. His sources include the New

Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning, Community Development, Office of Economic Development, Planning Board and The Portsmouth Master Plan.

***Next Meeting:***

The Joint School Advisory Committee scheduled future meetings for:

Wednesday, October 4, 2006, 7:00 p.m., Portsmouth Middle School, Room 106.

A walk to the site on Jones Ave will be on Saturday, October 14, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. meeting at the Athletic Building at Portsmouth High School.

Wednesday, October 18, 2006, 7:00 p.m., Portsmouth Middle School, Room 106.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

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