

## Joint School Advisory Committee Meeting

### Minutes of the August 30, 2006 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, August 30, 2006 at the Portsmouth Middle School, Room 106.

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***Attendance:***

Present:

**Chair:** Joanne Grasso, Councilor

**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, Stephen Bartlett, John Stokel, Helen Maldini

***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 16, 2006 minutes. Ms. Garrity moved and Mr. Ferrini seconded, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chair Grasso asked Mr. Stokel make his presentation to the committee to help lay footings for what the committee is going to be doing, getting the information and hearing it the same time, get the facts and lay the foundation and come up with an answer. She asks that questions be asked tonight so there will be no back tracking. The committee needs to move forward.

***Presentation:***

Mr. Stokel handed out the reports presented to the council in June of 2004 for those committee members who did not have one.

Mr. Stokel explained adolescents is driving the middle school concept. The age used to be considered 10 – 14. However, it is now believed to be up to 15, 16 and even 17. No two adolescents are the same and every single one of them is the same.

This is a time when there is the most growth spurts other than as an infant. But drastic emotional changes are also going on and they don't understand what is going on. An isolate during adolescents is a critical thing. Children who are isolate need to be counseled.

The middle school concept allows the team teachers to meet each day at the same time during the school day to talk about these kids, their courses, and unified arts classes.

After 8<sup>th</sup> grade, most of these kids would not participate in unified arts classes. The high school students are usually scheduled on a certain track depending on what they are going to do after high school.

Copies of the Carnegie Report on Turning points 2000 were available. The Carnegie Report was done in the 80's about teaching the adolescent students and in 2000, fine tuned those areas and did an update.

All students need core curriculum and there are standards for academics for all students so when they leave MS they are ready to be successful in high school.

All teachers who want to teach this grade level must be able to work with adolescents and able to be a team teacher and want to work with this age group.

As mentioned by Bob Lister in the opening day speech, **THIS IS NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S SCHOOL**. These classes are no longer rows of desks as the teacher talks and the students listen. These kids now work together and work in groups, sit at tables rather than desks. Classes are flexible. This allows for larger groups, longer time than class time to complete a lesson. Larger room is needed for these students to meet as groups, get up and move around, work together.

To help meet the needs of a personalized education and follow the child, teachers need to know the students. The teachers used to just teach. Now the teams work to get to know the students. Advisor and Advisees are formed. Every student has the same advisor for all 3 years. Each advisor works with his/her students throughout all 3 grades, helping them in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to select high school courses.

MS allows for more time for parents to come into the school. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade schools do not allow enough time for the parents to get involved. Students need to have ownership and space to call their own, a sense of belonging. Teachers today stay and work longer hours to get involved with the kids and their activities.

The previous committee invited Dr. Robert Spare from NELMS (New England League of Middle Schools) to help the committee, to give direction. This information can be found in the report given to the School Board.

All of the faculty and staff were interviewed to see what their needs were. The committee wanted to end up with a facility for the adolescents that met all their needs. If people are not involved in the decision-making, it won't work. Everyone needs to be a part of this.

The Middle School is presently 99,000 square feet. The original thought was a need for 220,000 square feet. Team Design worked with the committee and the committee set the needs at 180,000 square feet.

Spaces are needed for the teams, team meetings, students and teachers meeting together, being on the same page, classroom meetings to talk to kids and have kids involved.

February 2004            Visits to other middle schools were set up. Dr. Spear gave them names to visit. Page 9 of the report gives this information. Faculty went during school vacation so as not to take away from the students.

April 2004              Report from Bisson Report program analysis

May 2004                Report given on the Facility analysis

June 2004               Report given to the School Board

***Discussion:***

The Report, Turning Points, came out in the 80's. In 2000 the report was fine-tuned and Turning Points 2000 was released. Changes were made like the advisor/advisee program. It looked at what was working and fine-tuned some of those ideas. It kept the core classes, the teams and the main ideas of the middle school concept.

Breaking Ranks I and Breaking Ranks II was a report about High School in the 80's and so the Middle School followed to give the students their personalized education. The Middle School concept gives the students more chance to have more opportunities, to be able to meet with the same teachers on a regular basis. This helps to lower the drop out rate. These students need more room to move around.

Currently there are 55 teachers in house at the middle school plus 3 that travel. The classes are a bit bigger than we would like. Would like 20 students in a class but some are 23 or 24. The unified arts teachers are the teachers who teach more than one grade level but teach all 6<sup>th</sup> grades separate from 7<sup>th</sup> grades and separate from the 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

In 1975 the addition was put on, the school went into double sessions and it was 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders only. The Annex was used for 200 7<sup>th</sup> graders who had to walk to the Middle School for unified arts. This was due to Pease and a large group coming from Mariners Village. When Pease closed there were 179 students from Pease who left.

In 1976 after double sessions the students came back to single session and the school decided that they wanted to come back as a team. It was still 7 and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but Junior High School teachers worked as a team. There were about 1,000 students.

In 1981 when John became principal, he looked at what was driving curriculum. The kids were bored, so more unified arts classes were needed. John also wanted to see the 6<sup>th</sup> grade come in to the school since 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade alone isn't enough time for these students and parents to get involved. In 1983 there was a drop and the numbers went to about 650 students. But there was still not enough room for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to come to the Junior High. Then there was a big drop in enrollment by 1983 which made it close to being able to have the 6<sup>th</sup> grade fit into the building. Then the base closed and this allowed enough room for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to move to the Junior High School.

The board approved this to happen in 1992. But, in 1991, Sherburne School closed due to budget cuts. So the 6<sup>th</sup> grade was moved to the Junior High the summer of 1991.

The school became involved in NELMS so staff could look at what was working to change it to a Middle School. This was a big change for the teachers to go from a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Junior High to 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Middle School.

The committee visited schools that were using the Middle School concept including York, Dover and Hampton Academy and the differences between them.

This committee discussed the idea of changing the present Middle School 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade concept to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>, etc. reconfiguring grades for the Middle School. Moving the 6<sup>th</sup> grade back to the elementary could not work because there is no room for them back in the elementary schools. Again, the students would not spend enough time in the Middle School to allow for the teachers to get to know the students. The concept of the middle school would be lost. The students would not have the ability to have the unified arts courses offered now.

The current building does not work because of the space limitations. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade currently is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for their core classes. This works for most of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade core classes but not for science which is on the second floor. There is no room to allow for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes to be together or the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes to be together. There are no common meeting places, no areas for students to move around, no storage areas, no place for team meetings or large group meetings.

The idea of the Middle School is to make sure that it is not only a team, but also a member of the school. The team cannot take on a life of its own and segregate from the rest of the school. All the teams and teachers from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> grade need to prepare the students for high school.

Chair Grasso handed out a memo from City Council Member Chris Dwyer. Members of this committee discussed issues she mentioned including future renovations to Middle School, Little Harbour and Dondero. There is money designated in 2009 and 2010 of \$10 million each and \$500,00 each for 2008, 2010 and 2012. These would be for renovations such as a new roof, sprinkler system, a new boiler, renovations needed. This is the current plan.

Steve Bartlett and Bob Lister go to the Planning Board Meetings regularly. They are keeping track of the numbers of projects being built in the city and proposed to be built in the city. Bob will bring information received from the Planning Board to the next Joint School Advisory Committee of the projected growth.

The demographics will determine the curriculum in order to meet the needs of the adolescents. However, this Joint School Advisory Committee does not make the decisions on the grade level breakdowns. That is done by the school board. This committee must work with the configuration that the Middle School is 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This committee is to decide if the school will be renovated or a new building built with these three grades housed in it. This committee does not make changes on configurations of schools. That is the job of the school board.

The original committee was to be an exploratory committee, as the first step. The original committee was informed that the current building being 99,000 square feet with renovations needed to bring it to 180,000 square feet could not be accomplished by renovating the current Middle School building because the Peirce Trust could not be broken, an addition could not be built at the present site. So the original committee, with limited funds, looked at available spaces. The Jones Avenue site appeared to be a most promising site.

This committee feels there is more research to be done, more resources to use, questions to be answered in order to determine what would be best.

The charge of the committee is being reviewed by the mayor and will be presented at the next meeting.

***Next Meeting:***

The Joint School Advisory Committee scheduled future meetings for:

September 20, 2006, 7:00 p.m., Portsmouth Middle School, Room 106

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

***Adjournment:***

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

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