

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the November 14, 2006 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, November 14, 2006 in the Council Chambers at the Portsmouth Municipal Complex (City Hall).

Attendance

PRESENT: Mr. Kent F. LaPage (Chair), Mrs. Nancy Novelline Clayburgh (Vice-Chair), Ms. Sheri Ham Garrity, Mr. Clay Hayward, Mr. John Lyons, Jr., Mr. Brendan Ristaino, Dr. Mitchell Shuldman, Mr. Carson Smith, Mrs. Ann Walker

PARTICIPATING: Dr. Robert J. Lister (Superintendent of Schools), Mr. Stephen Zadavec (Assistant Superintendent), Mr. Stephen T. Bartlett (Business Administrator), Mrs. Linda Briolat (Employee Representative), and Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative)

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He said the Country recently celebrated Veterans' Day, and asked people to remember all veterans, living and deceased, as well as those who are presently defending our Country. The Chair asked Mr. Jack O'Reilly, science teacher at Portsmouth High School, to lead the Pledge of Allegiance following a moment of silent reflection.

Remembrance of All Veterans

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes Approved

Chair LaPage called for approval of the October 24, 2006 minutes. Mr. Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Letter of Thanks from School Librarians

The Chair read a letter from the school librarians (Joan Christy, Kathy Pearce, and Kelly Pilgrim) thanking the Board for the additional \$5,000 that was added to the library budgets, and outlining how the funds have been used. The Chair stated that \$5,000 is not a lot of money in today's world, but it has helped and the librarians have put it to good use. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mr. Ristaino, to accept the letter and place on file. The motion was unanimously approved. (Mrs. Clayburgh arrived at the meeting at this time --7:03 p.m.)

“P” Decal

Board members received a letter “P” decal. The Chair stated the tidal wave of Clipper Pride is out there in many facets, and he encouraged Board members to place the decal on their vehicles. Mrs. Clayburgh said that every student at Portsmouth High School has received a decal in the hopes that they will place it on their car or their parents’ car.

Letter from State Rep. and Former Board Member Congratulating Students

The Chair read a note from State Representative Jackie Cali-Pitts congratulating the Portsmouth High School marching band and football team on wonderful seasons, and for bringing together the school community. Mr. Smith moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the correspondence be accepted and placed on file. The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

No one had signed up to address the Board. The Chair declared the Public Commentary Session closed.

Programs Offered by Portsmouth Rotary

The Chair recognized Mr. Jerry Glynn, President of Portsmouth Rotary, and Mr. Tim Allison to speak about programs that Rotary has provided for students. Mr. Glynn thanked the Board for allowing them some time this evening and spoke on the Interact Club, which is essentially a mini Rotary inside the High School. The Portsmouth Rotary Club sponsors an Interact Club at Portsmouth High School and provides support and guidance. He stated the Club is self-governing and self-supporting and, each year, completes two community service projects. One of these projects furthers international understanding and develops a network of friendships with local and overseas clubs. Once a month the students work in the Salvation Army’s soup kitchen. Mr. Glynn stated that Mrs. Clayburgh and Ms. Nancy Modern, International Language Department Head and language teacher at Portsmouth High School, are the advisors. Mr. Glynn said the Portsmouth Rotary Club is very grateful to the School Board for their support of this program.

Mr. Allison discussed the Blue Skies Program, which is a mentor program that involves students in a variety of activities both at school and at Rotary luncheons and special events. There is a set of expectations for the students and mentors. Mr. Allison said the program has lapsed in a way, and he is here this evening to talk about the program to try to re-ignite it. He said that in the past, a guidance counselor had been involved, although he said it is important that it not be viewed as a counseling program. The students attend Rotary luncheons and participate in fundraising and volunteering.

**Portsmouth Rotary
(cont.)**

Mrs. Clayburgh thanked Mr. Glynn and Mr. Allison for attending this evening's meeting and for the opportunities offered to the youth in this area. Mrs. Clayburgh said that approximately 50 students participate in Interact Club, which meets on Thursday mornings. She offered to help in getting the Blue Skies Program going again. Ms. Garrity asked Mr. Allison what type of help he is looking for, and he stated that having the School Board aware of what they are trying to do and working with the Superintendent to establish a connection with the Guidance Department. He said that Rotary certainly has the people power on their side to make the program work.

Dr. Lister thanked Mr. Glynn and Mr. Allison for presenting this evening, and said it is not just about these two programs. He commended the Rotarians for what they do in the community and for taking a leadership role. Mr. Lyons also said it is more than these two programs; it is a connection between the business community and the community at large. He said Rotarians painted the hallways at the Middle School when the building was in dire need of painting.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

**Teacher Mentor
Program**

The Superintendent introduced Mr. Jack O'Reilly, a science teacher at Portsmouth High School, who has been very involved in the teacher mentoring program at the High School. Dr. Lister said that Mr. Zadavec has also put a lot of work into this program.

Mr. O'Reilly said that he became involved in mentoring four years ago while working on his Masters Degree. His advisor suggested his paper be about something he was passionate about. That same year, three teachers in the science department gave notice and left. He met with one of the teachers, who stated that he had a pretty rough year and felt like nobody cared. Mr. O'Reilly's advisor suggested that he look into mentoring, and that led to what he is doing today.

Mr. O'Reilly provided information on the number of teachers who leave the profession within the first three years of teaching, and the costs associated with replacing them. He said the major reason that teachers leave the profession, aside from the salary, is that they feel isolated and do not feel supported. He said the administration does not always have the time, and they would also be required to evaluate the teachers throughout the school year. Teachers mentoring their colleagues can help them get around the school, complete the required paperwork, and observe their classes in addition to meeting with them on a weekly basis. He provided information to show the

***Teacher Mentor
Program (cont.)***

difference that a mentoring program makes in teacher retention. Mr. O'Reilly said that his goal in the mentoring program is that no one feels minimized or that no one cares. He reviewed the number of teacher mentors currently in the school system (four) and the number of new teachers who are being mentored, and grants that have been received for the program. He said there remains money in a grant to purchase materials to train future mentors, and a long-range goal would be to measure students' success. Mr. Hayward thanked Mr. O'Reilly for his hard work and said the program should be expanded. Mr. O'Reilly said the program is a win-win situation, as he has also learned from the new teachers. Dr. Shuldman asked if the District has a sense of how many teachers have come in and then left. Mr. Zadravec responded they have started to look at that, but said statistics indicate that between 20% and 30% of teachers leave within the first five years. He said that not all leave the teaching profession; some go to a different school. Dr. Lister said he believes we need to continue doing a good job with mentoring. The administration and Mr. O'Reilly answered questions from the Board. The Chair thanked Mr. O'Reilly for his hard work and passion about this program.

PERSONNEL

There were no personnel issues to come before the Board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

***Middle School Joint
School Advisory
Committee***

Middle School Joint School Advisory Committee – Mrs. Clayburgh reported the Committee met last week and agreed to have Team Design do the final engineering study of the Parrott Avenue and Jones Avenue sites, and has requested this information be available for the Committee's January 18, 2007 meeting. Dr. Shuldman said the sites will be evaluated side by side using the criteria that the Board considers to be important to determine which site better fits the educational narrative of the middle school concept. Mr. Lyons asked if the comparisons will include costs. Dr. Shuldman stated it would be vague and possibly in terms of square footage, and not actual construction costs. Mr. Lyons asked if the comparisons would include which property may or may not be eligible for State building aid. Mr. Bartlett said the plan is to determine the feasibility of both sites with an "apples to apples" comparison, including cost estimates. This information may then be measured against criteria for State building aid. Mrs. Clayburgh said a second site walk of the Jones Avenue property was held on Friday, November third. She said the walk was well-attended and additional information, such as where the

***Middle School Joint
School Advisory
Committee***

athletic fields would be placed, was discussed. Ms. Garrity reported that all members of JSAC received a copy of the Board's article about the middle school concept. The Chair stated that Ms. Garrity informed Board members that the article is supposed to be printed in The Portsmouth Herald on November 19, 2006.

***Ad-Hoc Committee
to Review PEEP
Lease***

Chair LaPage again asked Board members to serve on an ad hoc committee to review the Portsmouth Early Education Program's lease at the Community Campus. He said the lease increased by 23 ½%, and he has to compare this to the School Board receiving a 5 ¼% increase in its budget. He also said that in addition the 23 ½% increase, there is an additional 50 cents per square foot charge for environmental (janitorial) fee. The Chair stated that PEEP has been at the Community Campus for five years, before that they were at the Jones School and at the Middle School. The costs were absorbed within the school buildings. Mrs. Walker asked if there are still empty classrooms at the High School that have not been designated for any other program. The Chair suggested the Board send a letter to the Foundation for Seacoast Health indicating that it would like to meet with them to discuss the lease increases. Mr. Ristaino moved the Board send a letter to the Foundation for Seacoast Health stating it would like to review the lease and, at the same time, see if there is any space available for the program at the High School. He requested this be completed no later than January 1, 2007. Mrs. Walker seconded the motion.

Dr. Lister said they have asked for an extension to allow the Board to discuss what it wants to do. The Superintendent said they are trying to be fiscally responsible. He said it is convenient for PEEP to be housed with the Community Child Care Center, Families First, and the other partnerships that are housed at the Community Campus. Dr. Lister said that some of the increase has to do with the increased cost of energy to run the building and the low yield from investments. Mr. Ristaino asked if there has been any discussion of including PEEP in the new middle school building. Mrs. Clayburgh commended the staff at PEEP for the work they do with the children.

Chair LaPage asked for up to three members of the Board to join him and the Superintendent to work as an ad hoc committee. Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Clayburgh offered to serve. Mr. Ristaino's motion was then unanimously approved.

Wentworth School

The Chair said the Superintendent has received two proposals to lease space at the Wentworth School, in addition to the Exchange City Program. Chair LaPage said that Dr. Lister and Mr. Bartlett, as well as the previous Superintendent, have spent a great deal of time talking

***Wentworth School
(cont.)***

with people who are interested in this property. The Chair said the School Department does not receive any revenue and does not want to be in the rental business. He also said they do not want to jeopardize Exchange City, which is located at the school. Mr. Ristaino asked if there has been thought of designating an area at the Middle School for Exchange City, and suggested it might be something to talk about. Mrs. Walker asked, should someone rent space, who would be responsible for making it accessible. The Chair replied the tenant would be responsible, and said that City Attorney Sullivan has done an outstanding job in developing the lease agreements. Dr. Shuldman asked who is interested in the space. Dr. Lister responded that Portsmouth Community Radio and the Portsmouth Music and Arts Center have expressed interest in space at Wentworth School. He said there has been an inquiry from a third party, but will not release the name as they have not presented a written request. He said the third party is a private school. The Chair suggested the requests be forwarded to the City Attorney for his review. Dr. Lister said there is approximately 28,000 square feet at the Wentworth School, and Exchange City leases 14,000 square feet. Mr. Bartlett said the Maintenance Department uses some classrooms for storage. Dr. Shuldman moved the two requests be forwarded to the City Attorney; Ms. Garrity seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Ad Hoc Committee
Established to Study
the Future of the
Wentworth School***

Mrs. Clayburgh moved the Board set up an ad hoc committee to study the future of the Wentworth School building. Dr. Shuldman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The Chair requested that Board members submit their name to him if they are interested in serving.

Council Chambers

The Chair reported that the Council Chambers is not always available for the Board to use for its second meeting of the month, and the availability of the room would not be known until a short period of time before the meeting occurs.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business to come before the Board.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

***NHSBA Delegate
Assembly***

The Chair reported on the New Hampshire School Boards Association's Delegate Assembly held on November 4, 2006. He said the majority of discussion was on raising the dropout age to 18

***District In Need of
Improvement
(DINI)***

and the funding of education.

Superintendent Lister read a press release stating the State Board of Education denied the District's appeal for Portsmouth not to be a District In Need of Improvement (DINI). The Superintendent reported that all schools in Portsmouth made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading, and the appeal was denied due to the performance of one sub-group in making AYP. Dr. Lister said that he and Mr. Zdravec will lead a committee of district educators to develop a plan for the Portsmouth School District, which is due January 7, 2007. He said the District will receive \$20,000 and the support of the State Department of Education to develop and implement a plan. In addition, a percentage of Title 1 monies will need to be earmarked for activities within this plan. Other districts on this list include Nashua, Dover, Rochester, Derry, and Exeter.

Superintendent Lister said that he met with the AREA Board Chairs and Dr. Cushing last night and discussed the implications of being on this list. The Superintendent said that a letter will be sent to all parents saying that we are on the list and that a plan will be developed by the first week of January. The Superintendent said the plan will be presented to the School Board, and the District will then move forward.

Mr. Ristaino asked what the sub-group was. The Superintendent said one was a socio-economic group and the other was special needs. Dr. Shuldman stated that, essentially, it is not a large number of students, and yet the District is required to develop a plan for all students in all schools. Dr. Lister said the plan is to address those students in need who did not do well on the test. He said the District also sees this as an opportunity to not only address the needs of those students, but to push forward on its efforts on literacy and a personalized education to meet the needs of all students. Mr. Zdravec said they want to develop a plan that will meet the needs of all students at all levels. Mrs. Mayer asked if these were the results of this year's test. Mr. Zdravec said these were the results of the Fall 2005 NHEIAP test and the Spring 2006 NECAP test. The results of the tests recently taken by students will not be released until December. Mr. Zdravec answered questions about the tests and how a District makes AYP. Dr. Shuldman asked if the District is losing money due to this designation. Dr. Lister said the District will receive \$20,000, but is required to use 10% of Title 1 funds, which in Portsmouth's case will be approximately \$50,000. Mrs. Simons, the Reading/Title 1 Director, will need to take money away from other programs to designate towards this plan.

FINANCIAL

October 2006 Financial Report

Mr. Bartlett reviewed the October 2006 financial report and answered questions from the Board. He stated that line item 183, property liability insurance, is higher than anticipated because the District is insured through a pool and last spring's flooding caused a rate increase that affected everyone.

FY 2008 Budget Schedule

Mr. Bartlett presented a proposed budget schedule for the 2007-2008 budget process. He reported there will be City-wide budget session to take the place of the Joint Budget Committee on November 27, 2006. He reported the schedule shows adoption of the FY 2008 budget by the City Council to be on May 29, 2007. He said this was the result of the City Councilors hearing concerns that arise due to the adoption of the budget in late June. Mr. Bartlett said this also means that he has to submit the School Department budget to the City Manager and Finance Director by February 16, 2007. The School Board is schedule to hold its second budget work session on Thursday, November 30, 2006. Some Board members expressed concern there may not be enough information at that time. The Business Administrator and Chair said more information would be known after the joint meeting on the 27th. In the meantime, Board members should still plan to have a work session on November 30th. The Chair stated the three main duties of the School Board is to set policy, hire a superintendent, and produce a budget for the school department.

Chair LaPage reminded the Board members they will have three meetings during the last week in November.

There was discussion about the format of the budget work sessions and the possibility of cutting back on the number of people who present their budgets to the Board.

NEXT AGENDA

November 28th Work Session and Meetings

The Chair said the November 28th meeting will begin with a non-public non-session with Counsel at 5:45 p.m. At 6:00 p.m. the Board will meet in a work session with Ted Comstock, Executive Director of the New Hampshire School Boards Association, and the regular meeting will begin at 8:30 p.m. He said the agenda for the regular meeting will be kept light.

PHS Sports

Mrs. Clayburgh said this was the first time that every sport team at

(Approved by the Portsmouth School Board on November 28, 2006.)

***Fall Play and
Concerts***

Portsmouth High School made it to the playoffs.

The Chair reminded people that the fall drama production will be held beginning this Thursday, November 16 through Saturday, November 18. He said the Middle School concert will be held on December 6th, and the All City concert will be held on December 13. The School Board photo for the yearbooks will be taken at 6:15 p.m. on Tuesday, November 28 at the Middle School.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment

There was no further business to come before the Board. Mr. Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister
Executive Secretary