

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the December 12, 2006 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, December 12, 2006 in Council Chambers at the Portsmouth Municipal Complex.

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), Ms. Elisa Loeser (Student Representative), Mrs. Linda Briolat (Employee Representative), Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative)

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. Superintendent Lister called the roll. The Chair wished Mrs. Briolat a happy birthday and asked that she lead the Pledge of Allegiance after the moment of silent reflection.

The Chair wished everyone a happy holiday season of Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanza, and said he hopes they are able to enjoy this time of year with their families.

Remembrances

Chair LaPage said the hearts of Board members go out to the Fogarty Family in Greenland, for the loss of their son, Thomas. He thanked Dr. Cushing, Superintendent of SAU 50, for all that has been done over the past week to comfort the children in Greenland. The Chair asked people to keep Dr. Arthur Hilson, a former School Board member and High School social studies teacher, in their thoughts and prayers as he battles cancer. He asked people to also keep Linda Telles, a retired teacher from Little Harbour School, in their thoughts and prayers during her illness. The Chair then called for a moment of silent reflection.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

***Minutes Amended
and Approved***

The Chair called for approval of the November 28, 2006 minutes. Ms. Loeser requested two corrections on page two; the first being to

(Approved by the Portsmouth School Board on January 9, 2007.)

change the word “make” to “made” on the paragraph entitled “Fall Sports Teams;” and the second to correct the name of the Fall Drama Production to “Roar of the Grease Paint, Smell of the Crowd.” Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was unanimously approved.

Correspondence

Middle School Newsletter, Library Dedication

Mr. John Stokel, Middle School Principal, distributed a copy of the December, 2006 Middle School newsletter. Board members received a copy of an invitation to the Dedication Ceremony of the new Public Library to be held on January 7, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

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

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

“Portsmouth Plus” Homework Club

Mr. Stokel said he has the honor of introducing some people who have been involved with the “Portsmouth Plus” Homework Club since its inception; Kristen O’Connor-Gunn and Karen Schuster. He commended them for writing grants and seeking support for the program, and said they are here this evening to share with the Board the progress the program has made.

Mrs. Schuster thanked the Board for supporting the program over the last four years. She said the grant was written to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation four years ago with the help of personnel at New Heights. She said the grant funds have declined over the years; \$90,000 the first year, to \$59,000 this year. Mrs. Schuster said the program has been very exciting, and they do not want to see it die when the funds run out at the end of this school year.

Ms. Kristen O’Connor-Gunn said that 216 Middle School students are enrolled in the Homework Club. She said the after-school hours are the most at-risk times for students, and research has shown that students who attend the Homework Club regularly demonstrate significant improvement in grades when compared with their peers who do not attend the Homework Club.

Ms. O’Connor-Gunn said the program’s funding will end next year, and those involved with the program are looking for everyone in the community to step up and say if they believe the program is

**“Portsmouth Plus”
Homework Club
(cont.)**

worthwhile. She said they continue to apply for grants and to hold fund-raisers. She said they are very proud of the program, and hope the School Board feels the same way.

Ms. Tracy Tucker, Director of New Heights at the Community Campus, told the Board she is speaking as a committed member of the Portsmouth community. She said that Portsmouth is lucky; programs like this don’t happen in other places. She said the kids are going to Homework Club and then taking the bus to New Heights. Ms. Tucker said the majority of calls to “911” occur between the hours of 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. She said the kids in Portsmouth are either going to Homework Club or New Heights during those hours. Ms. Tucker said the New Heights staff works with Middle School teachers to coordinate the curriculum. She encouraged the Board to support this program.

Ms. Dot Ferrari, parent of a sophomore at Portsmouth High School and a fifth grader at the Middle School, said her son had the opportunity to attend the Homework Club for three years while he attended the Middle School, while her daughter is new to Homework Club, having played soccer in the fall. She said the Homework Club allows her children to receive one-on-one help from teachers while focusing directly on instruction. She, too, encouraged the School Board to keep this program.

Ms. Diane Schafer, parent of a seventh grader, told the Board that she has been involved with this program from the beginning, and said the program has been a tremendous help to their daughter as a fifth grader entering into a big school and having a lot more homework. Her daughter has learned good study skills, and the teachers are right there to help her. Ms. Schafer said the program is unique in that it has connections with the community. She said they all knew from the beginning that the program would only be funded for three years, and said this has been enough time for the program to prove itself, as the numbers are showing. She said she truly hopes the Board will find money in its budget to continue the program. Ms. Schafer quoted her daughter as saying about the Homework Club, “It is good that there are teachers who can help me if I had any questions. It is really good when you get all your homework done and got home and would not have any homework left.”

Dr. Shuldman asked Ms. O’Connor-Gunn how much money she is talking about for maintaining the program next year. She responded they would need a budget of \$59,000. She said the students/parents pay a fee per marking term for the students to participate in the program. She said that a fund-raiser recently held at the Muddy River Smokehouse raised approximately \$1,200 for the program, and that she was very proud of the music community for their support of

“Portsmouth Plus” the program.
Homework Club
(cont.)

Mr. Hayward asked if there is data to show the percentage of students in Homework Club who are new to the school district as opposed to those students who have been in the school district since starting school. Ms. O’Connor-Gunn said she does not have that information, but that is something she can pull together for the Board. Ms. Garrity asked what the money is used for. Ms. O’Connor-Gunn said a large portion of the money is for her salary, and the program also pays for the research data and pays teachers on staff for an hour after school each day. She said the program also contracts with New Heights for the curriculum integration. Ms. Tucker explained how the students are transported from the Homework Club to New Heights. She said parents pick up the students from the Community Campus, and New Heights provides transportation for those kids whose parents cannot pick them up. Mr. Lyons said one of the pieces missing is the business community, and he invited them to make a presentation at a Rotary meeting.

Mrs. Clayburgh thanked Ms. O’Connor-Gunn for her fine leadership in this program, and asked if there is a way to correlate the success of the program to students’ results in the State testing. Mr. Stokel said they are starting to look into that. Mrs. Clayburgh asked if there is a strategy for trying to raise the \$59,000. Ms. O’Connor-Gunn said the Portsmouth Plus Board is working with organizations, the Portsmouth community, and pursuing grants. She said that grants are becoming incredibly competitive, and they tend to like to fund new programs; they tend to not fund smooth-running programs. She said that New Heights writes grants on behalf of Portsmouth Plus, and she would like to be able to continue that collaboration. She asked the Board to help get the word out to the community about the importance of this program and the affect it is having. Mrs. Mayer asked how the decline of funds (\$93,000 the first year to \$59,000 this year) has affected the program. Ms. O-Connor-Gunn said the program’s first year was costlier as funds were used to purchase equipment. She also said that student fees have increased throughout the past three years. Students currently pay \$15 per term (every six weeks). Dr. Shuldman asked the date when funds will run out. Ms. O’Connor-Gunn said the grant will run out of money as of the last payroll in June 2007. She expects the program will be able to finish the school year.

Dr. Lister thanked Ms. O’Connor-Gunn, Mrs. Schuster, Mr. Stokel, and the teachers and parents who participated in this program. He said the program was originally comprised of Big Brothers, Girl Scouts, New Heights, and the School Department and has evolved into a great relationship between New Heights and the Middle School. He reiterated Ms. Tucker’s words that the program is unique,

**“Portsmouth Plus”
Homework Club
(cont.)**

and said that everyday 218 students stay after school and want to be with their teachers. The Superintendent said that he has had conversations with Mr. Stokel about how to be creative next year for the program. He said there is a culture in this City of kids who don't mind staying after school to learn; it begins with PEP (Portsmouth Enrichment Program) in the elementary schools. He said these programs help the kids and also helps the community to be a better place.

Chair LaPage stated that programs have been introduced to the School Board in 1995, 1998, and 2002; some of these programs have been transferred into part of the school budget. The Chair said the Board has to consider what happens when a new program is introduced and becomes successful and the funding disappears. He said all school districts are being held accountable with AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress), and this program is helping our students achieve in school. He reminded the Board that it will have to pass its budget by February 15, 2007, and the status of the funding source for this program may not be known by that time.

**Friends Project
Request for
Overnight Trip**

Ms. Heidi Chase, Executive Director of the Friends Project, presented a request to take up to 11 members of Girls Group from the Friends Project to Old Quebec during the Winter Carnival from February 9 – 12, 2007. She said the group will join with another organization called Ethel's Tree of Life (with whom they successfully collaborated on another trip in the past) to provide a fun adventure for the students and some graduates who have continued to stay involved in the program. Ms. Chase reviewed the travel plans, the skills students will use on the trip, how the trip will be funded. Mrs. Clayburgh moved the Board approve the Friends Project Girls Group overnight trip to Quebec from February 9 – 12, 2007. Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. Mrs. Clayburgh credited the Friends Project and Ms. Chase for providing social opportunities for students with disabilities. She said students without disabilities are always welcome to attend. She said the program began with a grant six years ago, and Ms. Chase and others have worked hard to raise funds each year. The Chair stated this is another fine program that does not cost the taxpayers of Portsmouth. The motion to approve the trip was unanimously approved.

PERSONNEL

Coaching Elections

Mr. Zadavec presented the nomination of Laurie Harrigan to the position of Middle School Varsity Girls' Basketball Coach. Mr. Ristaino moved the Board accept the nomination; Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Coaching Elections (cont.) Mr. Zadavec presented the nomination of Patrick Quinn to the position of Middle School Varsity Boys' Basketball Coach. Mr. Ristaino moved the nomination be approved; Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee to Review Rentals and Leases

Ad hoc Committee to Review Rentals and Leases – The Chair reported this will be a standing committee for a while. He said they have met and will meet again in January. At that time, Beth Setear, Coordinator of the Portsmouth Early Education Program (PEEP) will attend to present her program and its relationship with other organizations at the Community Campus. Mr. LaPage said the increase to the lease at the Community Campus has increased over \$27,000 over last year, and it will continue to increase. He said the Board must be fiscally responsible, look at other options, and make a careful decision for the long-range. He suggested the Board look at possibly including space for PEEP in a new middle school building.

The Chair said he met with Dr. Lister and Mr. Bartlett to discuss rental requests at the Wentworth School. He said requests to rent space at the building consume a great deal of our administrators' time, and the revenue is deposited to the City's general fund account. He said the committee will report back to the Board at the end of January.

Policy Committee

Policy Committee – Mrs. Clayburgh reported the Policy Committee met prior to tonight's meeting to discuss the possibility of adopting a student behavior contract as opposed to a contract for just student athletes. Principals John Stokel and Jeff Collins were invited to participate in the discussion before the Committee proceeds. She said the Principals will poll their students to find out how the students feel about this. They will bring this information back to the Committee in February.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business to come before the Board.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Science Curriculum Dr. Lister said the Assistant Superintendent has talked about the Curriculum Council reviewing the science curriculum. He said that last year the Board honored its sabbatical to Doreen George to support her work with teachers on the science curriculum and that has

***Science Curriculum
(cont.)***

paid off tremendously. The Superintendent said that Ms. George has done a tremendous job working with the Middle and High School teachers. He said that he appreciates the Board leaving this sabbatical in the budget. Mr. Zadavec said that Ms. George will give a presentation at the next Curriculum Council meeting. He said that Ms. George has also worked with teachers at all three elementary schools. Dr. Shuldman asked if the incorporation of technology is being considered as the curriculum is revised. Mr. Zadavec stated that the Technology Department was not included in all of the planning, but that Ms. George has had conversations with Ms. Birrell. He said they are not able to integrate the technology everywhere at the same time, and they will find ways to create meaningful experiences for students.

***Plan to Meet
Adequate Yearly
Progress (AYP)***

Dr. Lister reported that today a committee comprised of himself, Steve Zadavec, Joanne Simons, Paulette Hoeflich, Shawn Donovan, Lisa McAllister, Karen Schuster, Roxanne Monmaney, and Jennifer Unger met with others in Manchester to start developing a plan to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). He said the plan has to be completed by January 3, 2007 and in place by February 15, 2007. The Superintendent said he has met with Dr. Cushing, Superintendent of SAU 50, to discuss what the District plans to do. Dr. Lister said the administration is very proud of what the teachers do in our schools to help students.

***Jeremy Alex Fund
to Benefit
Portsmouth
Students***

The Superintendent reported that, due to Mr. Lyons, he, Mr. Zadavec and Mr. Bartlett met with representatives from Portsmouth Rotary who were interested in developing a partnership with the schools and looking at funding opportunities. He said they have indicated an interest in assisting us with students who have difficulty participating in some of the school trips. The Superintendent said this assistance will enable more students to attend some of the trips that come before the School Board. He said they also have an interest in helping at the PASS (Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School) Program.

Mr. Lyons said that Ted Alex, a member of Portsmouth Rotary, established the Jeremy Alex Fund in memory of his son. Mr. Lyons said he would like to ask Mr. Alex to attend a future School Board meeting. He said this fund from the business community to help students supplements funds from the City of Portsmouth. He also said there is a real partnership with the 250 members of Rotary, and they are committed to supporting our schools.

***Second Readings of
Policies Approved***

The second readings of policies were presented to the Board for final reading and approval.

Pupil Safety and

The second reading of the Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention

(Approved by the Portsmouth School Board on January 9, 2007.)

Violence Prevention – Bullying Policy Policy – Bullying was presented for second reading. Mr. Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the second reading be approved. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

Wellness Policy The Wellness Policy was presented for its second reading. Mr. Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the second reading be approved. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

Non-Smoking /Tobacco Policies (Students and Personnel) The Non-Smoking/Tobacco Policies for Students and Personnel were presented for second readings. Mr. Ristaino moved the second reading of the policy for the student and personnel sections be approved; Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

Parent Involvement Policy The Parent Involvement Policy was presented for its second reading. Mrs. Clayburgh moved, seconded by Mr. Ristaino, the second reading of the Parent Involvement Policy be approved. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

FINANCIAL

November 2006 Financial Report The Superintendent, speaking on behalf of the Business Administrator, presented the November 2006 financial report. He said he has talked with Mr. Bartlett, who was concerned that the Adult Education account was highly overspent. In reviewing it, he found that some expenditures were taken out of that account by mistake and, therefore, those items will need to be taken out of other line items and the situation corrected. The Chair requested the administration continue to keep an eye on energy costs.

Clubs and Groups That Have Met Registration Requirements The Board received a summary of the clubs and groups that have registered for 2006-2007, and those groups that have not yet responded. The Chair stated this process was started a few years ago and will continue with a meeting with all booster groups and clubs in January. Mr. Lyons moved the Board approve the clubs and groups that have provided complete information, per Mr. Bartlett's memo dated December 1, 2006. Mr. Ristaino seconded the motion. Mr. Lyons said this is a very important initiative that was started by Chair LaPage a few years ago. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

NEXT AGENDA

Holiday Dinner The Chair reminded the Board that its holiday dinner will be held next week. He said the Board Chairs and Superintendent from SAU 50 have also been invited.

***Future
Presentations***

The Superintendent said that Mr. Ristaino had previously requested the students who went to Washington, D.C. be invited to give a presentation at a future Board meeting. He said the administration is working on that. The Superintendent also reported that Dr. Shuldman had requested a presentation about High School re-design, and the administration is also working on a presentation to the Board.

OTHER

Remembrance

Chair LaPage apologized for forgetting to mention earlier in the meeting that Jack Walker's sister passed away last week. He asked Board members to keep Ann and Jack Walker in their thoughts and prayers.

Concerts

Mrs. Clayburgh reminded the Board that the All-City Concert will be held at the High School tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Garrity said she attended the Middle School Concert last week and thought that all of the students did a wonderful job, but that she did not like the organization of the evening where seats were reserved for the students.

Adjournment

Mr. Ristaino moved the Board adjourn its meeting; Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister
Executive Secretary