

# CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

## School Department Budget

May 3, 2007 – 6:30 p.m.

Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

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City Council Present: Mayor Marchand (6:40 p.m.), Assistant Mayor Ferrini, Councilors, Grasso, Dwyer, Reynolds (7:05 p.m.), Pantelakos, Whitehouse, Smith, and Hynes

Officials Present: City Manager John P. Bohenko; Judie Belanger, Director of Finance; Dr. Robert Lister, Superintendent of Schools; Stephen Zdravec, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Stephen Bartlett, Business Administrator of Schools; Kent LaPage, Ann Walker, Nancy Clayburgh, John Lyons, Sheri Ham Garrity, Brendan Ristaino, School Board Members, Rus Wilson, Recreation Director, George Shea, Principal New Franklin Elementary School; Robin Burdick, Principal Little Harbour Elementary School; John Stokel, Principal Portsmouth Middle School; Jeffrey Collins, Principal, Portsmouth High School; Sue Birel, Technical Director, Dianna Fogerty, Human Resource Director; and Dianne Kirby, Deputy City Clerk.

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### **I. Call to Order**

At 6:30 p.m., Assistant Mayor Ferrini called the work session to order and advised the City Council and members of the public that he would get the meeting started and that Mayor Marchand would be here shortly.

Councilor Grasso stated that on June 11, 2007 the City Council was to have a presentation from Portsmouth Listens. She stated that the City Council is scheduled to have a meeting on June 18, 2007. She said that Portsmouth Listens needs more time to prepare their presentation and she was requesting if there would be any problems between the School Board and the City Council to have the City Council meeting on June 25, 2007 instead of June 18, 2007, then Portsmouth Listens would present their presentation to the Joint School Board and City Council on June 18, 2007. Kent LaPage, School Board stated that he saw no problem with that.

### **II. Introduction**

City Manager Bohenko passed out a handout on the health insurance update. He stated that in the School Department we should be able to reduce the budget by \$57,856 which will bring the School Department budget to 5.7% or \$34,326,773. He stated that the next meetings would be May 9, 2007 on the Municipal budget with a reopening of the public hearing on May 14, 2007, the budget final review on May 15, 2007 and the Council will vote on the budget in a special meeting on May 22, 2007. City Manager Bohenko turned the meeting over to the School Department for their presentation.

### **III. Presentation – Superintendent of Schools/School Board**

Dr. Lister thanked everyone for the opportunity to review their budget. He explained that the presentation would be broken up into different areas within the school system and given by speakers from the different areas of the School Department. He then reviewed some of the

highlights, accomplishments and challenges within the School Department. Kent LaPage introduced the members of the School Board and the speakers.

George Shea, Principal, New Franklin Elementary School presented the 2007-2008 Elementary Budget and stated that there would be a 0% operating budget increase.

John Stokel, Principal, Portsmouth Middle School reviewed the budgetary savings at the Portsmouth Middle School and discussed some areas of budgetary concerns.

Jeffrey Collins, Principal, Portsmouth High School reviewed the highlights of the Portsmouth High School and discussed some of their unmet needs.

Rus Wilson, Director of Recreation discussed the athletic success of Portsmouth High School. He reviewed the intangible benefits, discussed the increase in participation, benefits to the school and the City as well as financial considerations.

Sue Birel, Technology Director discussed the technology needs of the school and reviewed the new student information system. She stated that the Infinite Campus program will track student progress for teachers, parents and students.

Dr. Lister thanked everyone for all their work. He stated that he is proud of the school administration and teachers.

Steve Bartlett School Administrator passed out a replacement page for Portsmouth School Department Budget Impact Summary FY 2007-2008.

Kent LaPage, School Board Chair thanked the school staff for all the work they did in preparing this year's budget. He stated that the students have to work harder to fail in our Portsmouth School System than to succeed because of the leadership team you have before you.

#### **IV. Questions and Discussion**

Mayor Marchand stated that he appreciated all the work that has gone into this year's budget. He then opened the meeting up to questions.

Councilor Dwyer stated that the new format of the budget presentation was very helpful. She asked how retirements for this year and next year will impact the budget. She also asked if there were any savings from retirement and will it carry over to next year. Dr. Lister stated that last year there were twelve retirements with 11 this year and 12 projected for next year. He stated that they have not replaced all vacancies and they also cannot always replace them with lower paying individuals. Steve Bartlett stated that three teachers were not replaced and therefore, they were able to staff where needed.

Councilor Pantelakos thanked the School Board and staff for the format of the presentation and the creative work that has been done. She stated that the Council is proud of our schools.

Councilor Whitehouse stated that the Pass Program was in jeopardy last year and requested to know how it was doing this year. Dr. Lister stated that the Pass Program is doing well. He stated that it is like watching the stock market.

Councilor Whitehouse asked how many students are in the program. Dr. Lister stated that there are 25 students currently in the program. Councilor Smith asked of the 25 students currently in the program, how many are from Portsmouth and how many for from surrounding communities. Nancy Roy, Pass Program Coordinator, stated that there are 13 Portsmouth students and 12 out of district students.

Assistant Mayor Ferrini asked if there are any unmet needs and are any programs being cut. Dr. Lister stated that they need more language teachers and they would like to have a Business Program. He stated that there are no specific programs being cut, but we need to provide what the students need.

Councilor Dwyer stated that she would like to get a handle on staffing. She stated that some of the clerical positions are not listed. Dr. Lister stated that there is nothing left to eliminate except teachers and he refuses to eliminate teachers. Councilor Dwyer said that she has not seen the line item for technology. Business Administrator Bartlett stated that it is part of the equipment line item. Sue Birel stated that they will be replacing the 5<sup>th</sup> grade computers only. She stated that they are looking into leasing the computers and if they do, they may be able to also get computers for the third and fourth grades. Councilor Dwyer asked if these computers are separate from the lab computers. Sue Birel stated that these are one per classroom and the lab computers are on a different level.

Councilor Dwyer asked why the line item for building repair/maintenance is higher at the New High School then the Middle and Elementary Schools. Kent LaPage stated that the labs have to have special filtering and drainage. Business Administrator Bartlett stated that we have added a lot of area that is run on a more sophisticated system. City Manager Bohenko stated that the Facilities Engineer position would be shared and would work with the school approximately 30-40% of the time. Councilor Dwyer asked if all entries labeled CIP different from the CIP items. Business Administrator Bartlett stated that these items listed Capitol Improvement Plan (CIP) in the School Budget are for items that are too small to be added to the Cities CIP.

Councilor Whitehouse stated that building trades are important. He said that not all students go to college and that trades should be emphasized. He stated that the final expense is down. Dr. Lister said that career technology is very important. He stated that the teachers are teachers with degrees. He informed the City Council that the difference is that all students would be able to take these classes. Councilor Whitehouse asked if the school emphasizes the hourly rate for some of these trade fields. Dr. Lister stated that he is sure the teacher's do.

Councilor Raynolds addressed the two parts of the budget where there are computer teachers and five techs and network administrators. Dr. Lister stated that the computer teachers were hired to teach typing. He stated that they are very sophisticated and are teaching not only students, but teachers as well. He advised the City Council that they do provide a valuable service. Assistant Mayor Ferrini stated that there is only one budget session left. He said that in prior years the City Manager has supplied them with proforma plans for cuts. He requested

the City Manager provide them again this year. Councilor Pantelakos stated that she finds the budgets this year to be in line with the state. Mayor Marchand stated that one of the goals here is to have the City Manager make planned cuts to assist the Council. City Manager Bohenko stated that that would be helpful. He said that we changed the format of the meetings where we have two public hearings and stated that he would bring some plans to the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. He stated that the school has worked with the City staff and are pretty tight with their operating budget.

Mayor Marchand stated that he would not feel a great deal of stress about the next couple of weeks if he were on the other side of this table. He appreciates the work that went into this year's budget.

Councilor Pantelakos express her concerns, and said that she sees the only way to get to 3 to 4 percent is with personnel cuts and she does not want to get to that. Councilor Dwyer stated that there is some room to cut in the non-operating area. She stated that if we continue to have increases in retirement, we need to take a closer look to future years. City Manager Bohenko said that is true, and we need to look to 2009, 2010 and 2011. He stated that we should not lose sight of future year step increases. City Manager Bohenko stated that after this budget is approved, we should take a look two to three years out to see what we are looking at. Mayor Marchand agrees that this is a good idea.

Councilor Whitehouse asked is we can get a handle on new assessed property. City Manager Bohenko stated that it is in the budget at \$25,000,000 less than last year due to new growth not being as significant as previous years.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

At 8:10 p.m., Mayor Marchand closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:

Dianne M. Kirby, Deputy City Clerk