

**Portsmouth School Board  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

**Minutes of the March 27, 2007 Meeting**

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, March 27, 2007 in the cafeteria at the Mary C. Dondero Elementary School.

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***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)

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***Non-Public Session***

Prior to the regular meeting, the School Board met in a non-public session in the library. This non-public session was held in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II. (b) and (c).

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***Call to Order***

The Chair called the regular meeting of the Portsmouth School Board to order at 7:14 p.m.

The Chair called for a moment of silent reflection. He asked people to remember the Service men and women who are protecting us around the world and to keep them in their thoughts and prayers. Mrs. Jill LeMay, Principal of Dondero School, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

***“Music In Our Schools” Month***

Chair LaPage said March is “Music In Our Schools” Month and is a great chance to think of our student musicians.

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**SECRETARY’S REPORT**

***Minutes Approved***

The Chair called for approval of the February 15, 2007 minutes. Ms. Garrity moved, seconded by Mr. Smith, to approve the minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Chair called for approval of the March 13, 2007 minutes. Ms.

***Minutes Amended and Approved*** Garrity moved, seconded by Mr. Ristaino to approve the minutes. Mrs. Walker requested the minutes be corrected on page eight to reflect that Susan Christmas has 21 years in the Portsmouth School Department, and Kevin Rafferty has taught 36 years in the Portsmouth School Department. The minutes were amended and then unanimously approved.

Correspondence

***Letter of Support for the Strings Program*** The Board received a letter from Joanne Fuller (139B South Street, Portsmouth) supporting the strings program. Dr. Shuldman said he received a letter at home that presented different numbers of students participating in the strings program than what was presented by the administration. He requested to receive more information about the strings program. Mr. Ristaino agreed that he, too, would like more information. The Chair instructed the Superintendent to ask Wendell Purrington to attend a Board meeting to present information to the Board. The Board unanimously voted to accept the letter and place it on file.

***Letter of Support for Middle School Concept*** The Board received a letter from Deborah Stokel (777 Middle Road, Portsmouth) supporting the middle school concept of grades six, seven and eight and the reasons why. Mr. Lyons moved the letter be accepted and placed on file. Mr. Ristaino seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Letter Supporting PEEP Remaining at Community Campus*** The Board received another copy of a letter from Bruce Boley (100 Newcastle Avenue, Portsmouth) supporting the Portsmouth Early Education Program (PEEP) be allowed to remain at the Community Campus. (The Board had received this letter prior to its last meeting; the Chair had asked the letter be provided to the Board again so they have time to read it before the meeting.) Mrs. Clayburgh moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the letter be accepted and placed on file. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Middle School Newsletter*** The Board received a copy of the Middle School newsletter. Mr. Lyons said this newsletter is also e-mailed to parents and Board members. He said the amount of information contained in the newsletter is spectacular. He moved the Board accept and place on file the newsletter, and asked Principal Stokel to thank everyone on staff who helps put this together. Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mrs. Clayburgh said that she knows Deborah Stokel professionally and she is very impressed with Mrs. Stokel's knowledge of education and what is best for children. Mrs. Clayburgh said that when people talk of the educational narrative, Mrs. Stokel understands it and can speak to it at any grade level. She asked Board members to please

(Approved by the Portsmouth School Board on April 10, 2007.)

read her letter carefully as it is interesting information that is backed up by a real professional.

***Letter Re:  
Sabbatical Process***

The Board received a letter from Mike Anderson, elementary teacher at Dondero School, regarding the sabbatical process. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, the letter be accepted and placed on file. The motion was unanimously approved.

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**PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION**

***Comments In  
Support of the  
Strings Program***

Mr. Steve Scott, 377 Richards Avenue, Portsmouth, spoke in support of the strings program. Mr. Scott said he does not have a child in the school system; however he attended the recent concert. He said it was apparent the kids were trying very hard and doing their best; yet at the same time, they are not accomplished musicians, and that is okay. Mr. Scott said he was disappointed to recently learn that the Board was talking about eliminating the strings program. He said it now appears there was some misinformation about the number of students. He asked the Board to allow Mr. Purrington and whoever is in charge of teaching the strings program to provide information. Mr. Scott said he lives in a community that is really very rich in the arts, and it would be a shame to pull out the foundation. He said students who receive music training are challenged to keep up with the others while performing. He urged the Board not to eliminate the strings program.

There were no other speakers to address the Board. The Chair declared the public commentary session closed.

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**RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS**

***Report on Fifth  
Grade Trip to  
Franconia Notch***

Ms. Jenn Dunham, grade five teacher at Dondero School, was present with two of her students, Kyle Siverts and Patrick Glynn, to report on their trip to Franconia Notch last fall. A video was shown in which the students were interviewed and mentioned what they learned. Ms. Dunham said the trip was designed to follow the principles of raising students' aspirations: sense of accomplishment, fun and excitement, sense of adventure, leadership and responsibility, and confidence to take action. She said she was very pleased with the interaction of the people from UNH. Mr. Siverts said the students were prepared before the trip and learned how to pack for a long trip. Mr. Glynn said they learned how to work together and how to build a fire. Ms. Dunham and the students answered questions from Board members. Dr. Shuldman said this is what it means when talking about educating the whole child.

***Dondero Fifth  
Grade Ecology  
School***

Mr. Michael Anderson, representing the fifth grade teachers at the Mary C. Dondero Elementary School (Michael Anderson, Jenn Dunham, Sharon Svirsky, and Deb Twombly), presented their request to take their fifth grade classes at the Ferry Beach Ecology School in Saco, Maine from Tuesday, May 8, through Friday, May 11, 2007. He distributed an information sheet about the Ferry Beach Ecology School. Mr. Ristaino moved the Board approve the fifth grade teachers' request to take their classes to the Ferry Beach Ecology School in Saco, Maine. Ms. Garrity seconded the motion. Mr. Anderson answered questions from Board members who were concerned that some students of that age might have anxiety about being away from home, the student/chaperone ratio, and the students' schedule while at the school. The motion to approve the trip was unanimously approved.

***PASS Senior Trip  
Approved***

Mr. Bryan Mascio, teacher at the Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School (PASS), presented a request to take the PASS Seniors to Orlando, Florida from May 18 through May 24, 2007. He reviewed his written request which stated that students need to fulfill academic, behavioral, and fundraising requirements in order to be eligible for this trip. Mr. Ristaino moved the Board approve the PASS senior trip to Orlando, Florida. Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. Mr. Mascio answered questions from Board members. He stated the students will hold a yard sale later this spring and half of the proceeds will go to the elementary schools' summer activities and the other half will go towards the senior trip. The motion to approve the trip was unanimously approved.

***High School  
Students'  
Experiences in  
Washington, D.C.***

Mr. Ashton Braun, a junior at Portsmouth High School, spoke to the Board about his experiences as a member of the United States Senate School, Fall Class of 2006. He said he was appointed by Senator Judd Gregg during the summer to be a Senate Page (only 30 Senators are allowed to have a page). He attended the United States Senate Page School and became an employee of the United States Senate. Mr. Braun said the Senate School began at 6:15 a.m., and usually lasted for three hours, depending on the Senate schedule. The pages then went to work on the Senate floor in the Chambers until the Senate adjourns. He said his longest workday was one that started at 8:00 a.m. and they worked until 5:00 a.m. the next morning. He said they were able to attend a State of the Union Address and to be on the floor with the House of Representatives. He said the other students came from across the country, and they stayed in a dormitory. He said that he still needed to complete his homework, so it was not unusual for a typical day to begin at 4:30 a.m. and end at 11:00 p.m.

Mr. Gamble Morrison, a sophomore at Portsmouth High School, said he was nominated by his guidance counselor to attend the National Young Leaders Conference in Washington, D.C. He was assigned to

***High School  
Students'  
Experiences in  
Washington, D.C.  
(cont.)***

the fall session and attended the last week in November. The students stayed in a 4H Boys' Club right outside the City. He said a schedule of speakers was developed. The students were divided into groups, and each group was charged with developing a bill to address a conflict. He said it was a great learning experience. Their day started with breakfast at 5:00 a.m.; they then left for Washington. Mr. Morrison said they met our Senators and Congressman.

Dr. Lister asked the students where they attended school. Mr. Morrison said he attended Little Harbour School (Mrs. Briolat was one of his teachers), and then Portsmouth Middle School. He said that he has always been interested in politics and government. Mr. Braun said he attended Rye Junior High School, and his high school social studies teacher, Mr. Tombarelli, really got him interested in politics. Both students answered questions from Board members.

***PHS Percussion  
Ensemble Trip to  
Ohio***

Mr. Jeff Collins, High School Principal, said both students are a credit to their school system and have done extremely well at Portsmouth High School. Mr. Collins introduced Steve Cirillo, who was presenting a request for the Portsmouth High School Percussion Ensemble to travel to a competition in Dayton, Ohio. Mr. Cirillo said the New England Championship is this weekend. Mr. Ristaino moved the Board approve the trip to Ohio as presented. Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

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**PERSONNEL**

***Professional  
Retirement***

Mr. Zadavec presented the professional retirement of Pamela MacArtney, Career/Technology Director, effective the end of June, 2007. Ms. MacArtney has served a total of 21 years with the Portsmouth School Department. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the retirement be accepted. Mrs. Clayburgh said that Ms. MacArtney was responsible for the District obtaining the additional \$4.5 million for renovation of the Career/Technology Center at Portsmouth High School. Dr. Lister said she has made great contributions to the School Department and has written other grants to get money into the school system. The motion to accept her retirement was unanimously accepted with regret.

***Administrative  
Nominations***

Dr. Lister presented an administrative nomination list for the 2007-2008 school year. He reported a screening committee is ongoing for the position of Career/Technology Director. The Superintendent stated the Board received a letter from High School Principal, Jeff Collins, supporting the nomination of Shawn Donovan to remain in the position of High School Assistant Principal. Dr. Lister reminded the Board that, because of the new administration at the High School, Mr. Donovan had been hired on an interim basis for the 2006-2007

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school year pending a recommendation by the High School Principal. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the Board approve the administrative nominations as listed and presented by the Superintendent, including Shawn Donovan as one of the two Assistant Principals at Portsmouth High School. Mrs. Clayburgh said the school system is very fortunate to have such talented and dedicated people on the administrative team, and the Board should be very proud of the people on this list. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

***Leave of Absence  
Approved***

Mr. Zdravec presented a request from Anne Ellis, Assistant Principal at Portsmouth Middle School, for a leave of absence for the 2007-2008 school year. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the request be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Request to Extend  
Leave Approved***

Mr. Zdravec presented a request from Cindy Witte Conrad, grade one teacher at Dondero School, to extend her maternity leave of absence to return on April 30, 2007. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the request be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Coaching  
Nomination***

Mr. Zdravec presented the nomination of Kim Murphy to the position of varsity cheerleading coach. Ms. Garrity moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the nomination be approved.

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**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

***Sustainable  
Practices Committee***

Mrs. Walker reported that she is the Board's representative on the Sustainable Practices Committee. She said the Committee is very interested in the Middle School project.

***Athletic Committee***

Mrs. Clayburgh asked members of the Athletic Committee to briefly get together after tonight's meeting to schedule a committee meeting.

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**NEW BUSINESS**

***First Reading of  
Policies Approved***

Ms. Garrity reported the Policy Committee met and reviewed the policies which are being presented tonight for first reading. Assistant City Attorney Kathleen Dwyer assisted the Committee in revising these policies. Mr. Lyons moved the Board approve the first reading of the following policies as presented: Awards for Achievement, Discipline, Married/Pregnant Students, Promotion/Retention, Student Drug and Alcohol Policy, and Weapons. Mr. Smith seconded the motion.

*(Approved by the Portsmouth School Board on April 10, 2007.)*

Ms. Garrity reported the Policy Committee will meet again on Monday, April 2, 2007 at 5:00 p.m.

Mrs. Clayburgh said the Board has been reviewing and updating the Policy Book for the last eight years. There was discussion of how the policies are revised to keep current with Legislation. In a roll call vote, the motion to approve first reading of the policies was unanimously approved.

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### **CONTINUING BUSINESS**

#### ***School Safety***

Dr. Lister reported that donations from Crime Stopper, Inc, and the Rotary Club have allowed the school district to look at and work on safety measures at all of the schools. He said that Ken Linchey, Maintenance Supervisor, has been working on this project and expects all schools to be equipped with a camera and buzzer system by May first. Dr. Lister said it will be important for the Principals to communicate with the community so that families are aware of the new system. The Superintendent also reported the administration is looking into a photo identification process so that all staff members and School Board members will wear a picture ID when in the school buildings.

#### ***Comments Re: Middle School***

Mr. Lyons, referring to the Middle School project, said there are still people who are concerned about the safety of the Jones Avenue site. He said that, after listening to the engineers' explanations at the last special meeting, he does not share those concerns. He said there are concerns about what will happen to the Parrott Avenue building. He suggested the Board may want to discuss this as a group. Mr. Lyons said his second concern is regarding the work session requested by the City Council, which will take place tomorrow evening. He said the School Board has been falsely charged with presenting witnesses that they have a relationship with regarding the middle school project. He said he would hope that the same questions are asked of the City Councilors. Mr. Lyons stated that no one on this Board has voiced a preference of one site over another. He said that Councilor Dwyer has voice her preference to the Parrott Avenue site, and Councilor Dwyer has brought in the two speakers who will present to the City Council tomorrow night. Mr. Lyons said he would encourage people to question the backgrounds of these individuals in relevance to education and their relationship to Councilor Dwyer. Chair LaPage stated that he, along with the Superintendent and Business Administrator, will be late to that meeting as they have to attend a previously scheduled meeting with the Board Chairs from SAU 50. He said these meetings are scheduled in advance.

The Chair agreed with Mr. Lyons that no Board member has declared

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a site preference for the middle school. He said the School Board will have to make a decision and then the City Council will have to do their work on the School Board's recommendation.

The Chair stated the School Board has given Superintendent Lister permission to include the Board in the "Portsmouth Listens" study circles proves. He said the Ann Walker, Sheri Ham Garrity, and Clay Hayward have agreed to represent the Board participating in this process.

Mrs. Clayburgh said she received a phone call from the Mayor, who stated it incredibly important for Board members to communicate with City Councilors. He told her the City Council would appreciate receiving updates from the School Board.

Dr. Shuldman said he watched the video-cast from last week's special meeting, and suggested the transcript be available on the website. He said reading the information is different from watching it or hearing it. Dr. Shuldman also agreed that he has never heard a Board member state a preference regarding a site for the Middle School.

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### **FINANCIAL**

There was no financial business to come before the Board.

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### **NEXT AGENDA**

***"Green" Products*** Mr. Ristaino requested the Board discuss using environmentally friendly products to clean the schools. The Superintendent suggested that Mr. Ristaino meet with him and Mr. Linchey to review what is presently in place.

***Student Government Day*** The Chair reminded the Board that April 11<sup>th</sup> is Student Government Day. The Student City Councilors will hold their meeting in Council Chambers at noon, and the Student School Board will hold their meeting at 5:00 p.m.

***Next Agenda*** The next agenda will contain the Superintendent's recommendation for graduation dates for Portsmouth High School, Portsmouth Middle School and the Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School (PASS). The Chair requested that Mr. Wendell Purrington, Department Head for the Arts, attend the next meeting and give a presentation about the strings program.

***Adjournment***  
***Adjournment*** There was no further business to come before the Board. The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Mr.



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Ristaino, the Board adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.  
The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister  
Executive Secretary