

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the May 22, 2007 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, May 22, 2007 in the Conference Room of Exchange City at the Wentworth School.

Attendance

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

ABSENT: Mr. John Lyons, Jr.

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

Non-Public Session

Prior to the regular meeting, the School Board met in a non-public session in the Conference Room at Exchange City. This non-public session was held in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II. (c).

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the regular meeting to order at 7:28 p.m.

The Chair called for a moment of silent reflection and asked people to keep in mind the men and women serving our Country overseas and at home. The Chair asked the Board to remember Paul Liff, who recently passed away, whose father is a great supporter of the schools through the Rotary Club.

Chair LaPage stated that Elisa Loeser will return to the meeting after singing in the choir tonight. He said tonight will be her last meeting with the School Board, as she will graduate from Portsmouth High School on June 8th. He said she will be recognized and thanked for her service as a student school board member.

The Chair referred to a letter in the packet from High School Principal Jeff Collins, Assistant Principal Kathleen Metterville, and

(Approved by the Portsmouth School Board on June 12, 2007.)

Police Chief Michael Magnant that was sent to the parents and guardians of high school students informing them of their concerns about rumors of celebrations involving alcohol and drugs. The letter contained State statutes regarding drugs and alcohol.

Minutes Approved The Chair called for approval of the May 8, 2007 minutes. Ms. Garrity moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Retirement Reception The Chair said the School Board will honor the 2006-2007 School Department retirees at its June 12th meeting, which will be held at City Hall.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Dr. Shuldman requested to speak on the Middle School this evening. The Chair stated this would be added under “Committee Reports.”

PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

Math Education Mr. Kishore Sasthiri, 312 White Cedar Boulevard, Portsmouth, told the Board that he has talked with Mayor Marchand and Mr. Lyons to offer his services and finding out about how math is taught in the Portsmouth schools. Mr. Sasthiri said he holds a Ph.D. in math. Dr. Lister told Mr. Sasthiri that he would contact him to schedule a meeting, involving some of the principals, so they can review with him what is presently happening with mathematics.

There were no other speakers. The Chair declared the Public Commentary Session closed.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

School Population Presentation Mr. Zadavec stated that Mr. Michener, from the New Hampshire School Boards Association, was unable to be here this evening due to a family issue and offered to come at another time. Mr. Zadavec introduced Dr. Ross Gitell, a professor at the University of New Hampshire, who presented information about student population projections. Dr. Gitell said he is a Portsmouth resident and has two children in the school system. He thanked the administration and the School Board for all the good work they do.

Dr. Gitell reviewed his experience involving projections and economic development. His colleague is Peter Francese. Dr. Gitell stated the New Hampshire population has changed in a way that no

***School Population
Presentation (cont.)***

one would have predicted. He cited the following:

- The aging of the baby boomers and their children.
- Two-thirds of adults living in Rockingham County were born in another state.
- The State of New Hampshire has the second highest overall percentage of baby boomers (Alaska has the highest percentage).
- Since 2000, New Hampshire's Asian, Hispanic, and Black populations have grown by 50%, 46%, and 41% respectively. They tend to be younger and more likely to have children.

Dr. Gitell cautioned the Board in using projections, and said they need to look at the overall area. He said that as younger families are forced to move outside of Portsmouth, the school population declines. However, in order to attract businesses to the area, the City must have the capacity to accommodate the workforce's children, otherwise these companies will not move to Portsmouth. He cautioned that if the Board follows the school-age population projections (which show a decline), it could be self-fulfilling.

Mrs. Clayburgh said the School Board needs to be concerned with a building that will meet the needs of students 50 – 75 years from now. Dr. Gitell agreed, and also said the Board and community should be concerned that there will be people in the workforce to care and serve those who live here. He said the Mayor, the City Council, and the School Board have to think about what they want the future of Portsmouth to be. He told the Board that the decisions they make are going to affect Portsmouth's economic future and its demographic future. He said the City needs to attract younger workers and it must be affordable for them to live here. He said if the City does not attract the younger workers, as we age we will have to move to where there are people who will take care of us.

Dr. Gitell answered questions from Board members. He asked them to also think about the adults who work during the week and who would probably enjoy taking classes, such as using a language lab, at night and on the weekends. Mr. Ristaino said that a lot of his friends have moved out of Portsmouth; many found it too expensive to stay and live here. Dr. Gitell said another issue, which is controversial, is affordable housing. He also said that as families are able to save money and earn more, they could move back in. He said there are a lot of different scenarios that could impact the school age population. He told the Board that if they looking at capacity building, they should look out 50 years; do not build for today's capacity.

The Chair said the City of Portsmouth enjoys a diverse population, and there appears to be many young babies in the City. Mr. Zdravec said that kindergarten registration is presently ongoing, and so far the

numbers are higher than they have been in the past. Mr. Bartlett said the Board should also take into consideration the cyclical changes that occur.

In closing, Dr. Gitell said that what the Board chooses to do will have economic implications. The Chair thanked him for coming and for presenting this information.

PERSONNEL

***Resignation
Accepted***

Mr. Zadavec presented the resignation of Sara Sanford from her position as Middle School art teacher effective the end of this school year. Ms. Garrity moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the resignation be accepted. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Professional
Nominations***

Mr. Zadavec presented the nomination of Kristen O'Connor Gunn to the position of sixth grade teacher at Portsmouth Middle School for the 2007-2008 school year. Ms. Smith moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the nomination be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Zadavec presented the nomination of Sheryl Weston to the one year position of assistant principal at Portsmouth Middle School for the 2007-2008 school year. Mr. Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the nomination be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Second Reading of
Policies***

The second reading of policies was presented for approval. Dr. Shuldman said he does not have any major issues with the policies other than the wording. Ms. Garrity said that Attorney Dwyer will work on the wording, and that the changes would not change the content or intent of the policy. The Chair stated the Board could approve the second readings of the policies, but they would not be placed in the policy book until July in order to allow Mrs. Dwyer time to work on changes. Mrs. Clayburgh moved the second reading of the policies (Awards for Achievement; Discipline; Married/Pregnant Students; Promotion/Retention; Student Drug and Alcohol Policy; and Weapons be approved in a block; Mr. Smith seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

***2007-2008 Budget
Approved by City
Council***

Chair LaPage stated that last evening the City Council approved the budget for the 2007-2008 fiscal year. In doing so, it allowed for full-day kindergarten in the City of Portsmouth. He said although there are different emotions about this, he truly believes this will have a positive impact on our schools. The Chair thanked the City Council for allowing full-day kindergarten to pass. He said the school district,

**Full-Day
Kindergarten**

along with other districts that already have full-day kindergarten, are setting the bar high for the State standards.

Dr. Lister said that kindergarten was first offered in Portsmouth in 1903, and its schedule had not changed since then. He said next year will be the first time Portsmouth will have full-day kindergarten. He said it has been a team effort to get to this point, including creative budgeting, reorganization, and sacrifices along the way. The Superintendent said it is important to encourage early education, and said the District will see the benefits of this as the children start coming through the school system.

Strings Program

Dr. Shuldman asked if \$19,000 could be found in the budget to fund the strings program. Dr. Lister said he would talk with the people in the Arts Department to determine where they could find money in their budget. Mr. Ristaino said he did not vote for the budget because it did not contain funds for the strings program, and he believes the Board did not receive an accurate number of students who participate in the program. He said the Board talks about “following the child,” and here in Portsmouth there are kids who are taking the strings program who will no longer be able to do so and would be doing nothing after school. Mrs. Walker said that a lot of children play other instruments. She also said the numbers that were given to the Board were the numbers in the Middle School during the school day. She also said the request included increasing the position to $\frac{3}{4}$, which would be a higher figure than \$19,000.

Mrs. Clayburgh said she understands what Board members are saying; however, the majority of the Board voted for the budget so it is the School Board’s budget. The Board needs to work as a group to stand by its budget. Mr. Ristaino said he continues to bring it up because he has some philosophical differences with it and, although he supports the Superintendent with nominations, he asks that they look at the way the taxpayers’ money is being spent. Mrs. Clayburgh suggested the Board move on and to discuss this for next year’s budget. The Chair reminded the Board that they have indicated they want to start next year’s budget process at the second meeting in September.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum Council

Curriculum Council: Mr. Zadravec reported the Curriculum Council serves as the District’s Monitoring Team for our District In need of Improvement (DINI) Plan. They have reviewed the plan, the goals for student learning, and the timeline of activities. He said the Council has also reviewed and given feedback on the plan for the 2007 Summer Literacy Institute. This event is planned for June 19th

Curriculum Council (cont.) through the 22nd, and there are already over 100 Portsmouth educators registered. The Institute will be held at Portsmouth High School, and will focus on defining “Power Standards” at each grade level in reading. The Power Standards will represent the most essential student understandings at each grade level and will serve as the basis of benchmark assessments used to monitor student progress.

Additional Early Release Days Mr. Zadravec said the Curriculum Council has discussed the need for additional early release time to allow educators to carry through with the use of the Power Standards. Teachers will need to be trained in the administration of the new assessments and given time to analyze student data. He said it is more productive for people to work together in teams, and the Curriculum Council had a lengthy discussion and came to the conclusion to recommend adding four early release days to the school calendar. In order to allow parents to plan, all early release days will be scheduled the second Wednesday of the month, October through May. Included in the written report were a list of the proposed early release days and the activities that will take place on those days. Mr. Zadravec explained what will occur in the schools on those days.

Ms. Loeser arrived at the meeting at this time (8:40 p.m.)

Number of Early Release Days Approved Dr. Shuldman moved the Board accept the proposal to increase the number of early release days from four to eight as proposed, including the dates published. Mr. Ristaino seconded the motion. There was discussion to the motion. Dr. Shuldman amended his motion to accepting the proposal for the coming school year (2007-2008); the increase of days to be re-evaluated by the Board at this time next year. Mr. Ristaino agreed to the amendment. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

Recognition of Student Representative Chair LaPage recognized Ms. Elisa Loeser, Student Representative, for her service on the School Board this past year. He said Elisa has been an outstanding role model for the high school students and has done a remarkable job representing her fellow students. The Chair, on behalf of the School Board, presented Elisa with a Certificate of Appreciation and a gift. Ms. Loeser said words cannot express how grateful she is to have had the opportunity to become a part of the School Board and she has truly enjoyed working with all Board members. She thanked the Board for allowing her to have a voice on issues. Ms. Loeser said she is fortunate to have been a student at Portsmouth High School. Ms. Loeser said she will introduce the new student representative at the next meeting.

Student Behavior Contract **Policy Committee:** Ms. Garrity and Mrs. Clayburgh reported that a sub-committee will meet on May 29th to begin working on a student behavior contract.

***Safe Routes to
School Committee***

Safe Routes to School Committee: Mr. Hayward thanked the Board for the opportunity of representing them on this committee. He reviewed the committee's membership and charge. Mr. John Corrigan, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, from the Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance, New Hampshire Department of Transportation, reported on Federal funding available for this program and cited an example of a walkable/livable community (Nashua, New Hampshire). His presentation was around the 5 E's: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Evaluation, and Engineering Gap Sidewalk/Bike Route. Mr. Hayward said the program is designed for students in kindergarten through grade eight, but will also help adults with bike education/safety. The Chair thanked Mr. Hayward for his report, and stated that he will ask for additional reports on a bi-monthly basis.

***Technology
Committee***

Technology Committee: Dr. Shuldman reported the Technology Committee met a couple of weeks ago with a representative from Tandberg who demonstrated video-conferencing, and a representative from Apreso who demonstrated lecture technology. He said the committee will look into Portsmouth teachers having the capability to videotape lessons, which would be available to students on the website should they miss a class or need to review the lesson while working on a project.

***Middle School
Discussion***

Middle School: Dr. Shuldman said that although the Board had said it would not discuss the Middle School, he thinks there are issues that need to be discussed now. He said the Board should be proactive and not wait until a site is chosen to figure out logistics. He said the Board should make plans to house the students should the Parrott Avenue location be selected. He also said, should the Parrott Avenue site be chosen, he would like the Board to consider obtaining the opinion of a second architect so the building meets the educational needs. Dr. Lister said he believes some of these things are being discussed within the study circles that are presently ongoing. Mrs. Clayburgh suggested the Board could start talking about this after the study circles make their presentation on June 18th. She suggested the Board try to come up with a couple of dates on which they are available to meet. Dr. Lister said at some point the Board will need to make a decision based on what is best for the students' education and for the community. The Board agreed it needs to meet and make decisions before meeting with the City Council. Mrs. Walker said she will definitely listen to the study circles discussions.

FINANCIAL

***April 2007
Financial Report***

Mr. Bartlett answered questions about the April 2007 financial report. He said there are still some invoices to be paid for the athletic and

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maintenance accounts.

Wentworth School Chair LaPage said the Board needs to make a decision about the Wentworth School, and asked that the topic be placed on the next agenda.

NEXT AGENDA

Retirement Reception The Chair reminded the Board that it will hold a retirement reception at the next meeting. He also reminded the Board that Dr. Shuldman will give a presentation about technology at the June 26th meeting.

Adjournment There was no further business to come before the Board. On a motion by Ms. Garrity, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn its meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister
Executive Secretary