

(Amended and approved by the Portsmouth School Board on November 27, 2007.)

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the November 14, 2007 Special Meeting

A special meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Wednesday, November 14, 2007 in the Board Room at the Little Harbour Elementary School.

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, Mrs. Ann Walker

ABSENT: Mr. Carson Smith

PARTICIPATING: Dr. Robert J. Lister (Superintendent of Schools), Mr. Stephen Zadavec (Assistant Superintendent), Mr. Stephen T. Bartlett (Business Administrator), and Mrs. Kathleen Dwyer (Assistant City Attorney)

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the special meeting to order at 8:04 p.m. He stated the agenda for the meeting is the repayment of the special education deficit to the City.

***Comments About
Eliminating the
Special Education
Deficit***

Mr. Lyons discussed his concerns regarding the method of repayment of the special education deficit. He reviewed the year-end report dated 6/30/07 that indicated a remaining balance of \$738, and a report given to the Board on September 11, 2007 that showed a balance of \$527,991 and a subsequent transfer for the repayment of the deficit. He voiced his concern that there had been no explanation of where the funds had come from and that the Board had not voted on the repayment.

Mr. Lyons then referred to information supplied in an October 19, 2007 memo prepared by the Business Administrator wherein he discussed the transfer of \$500,000 to the 207 account and a line-by-line summary of savings on expenses. Mr. Lyons expressed his concern that the receipt of unanticipated revenue from Medicaid reimbursement in the amount of \$412,355 had not been disclosed to the Board and that it had then been disbursed without notice to the Board. He again expressed his concern that the Board had not been fully and properly advised of these line items so that they could participate in the decision making. Mr. Lyons also expressed that there needs to be better oversight and accounting for the 207 account to the Board. He indicated that he wanted to express his concerns in the public session of the Board meeting. He stated that he would like better reporting of financial information to the Board in the future.

Mrs. Clayburgh stated she disagrees with Mr. Lyons and that she felt the Board had been given the information in the format it has been receiving during her eight years on the Board. She said Board members had the

(Amended and approved by the Portsmouth School Board on November 27, 2007.)

***Special Ed. Deficit
(continued)***

opportunity to ask questions, and that she had asked questions directly of the Business Office and had been supplied with the answers.

Mrs. Clayburgh said the current administrative team, including Superintendent Lister and Business Administrator Bartlett, have done a lot of good for the School Department, including the selection of a new principal for the High School, the hiring of Rus Wilson as the athletic director, and the smooth budget process last year.

Mr. Zadavec suggested that, as the new Board takes office, they should discuss the issue of the Board's role in financial oversight. There are many ways to present information, and changes can be made.

Mrs. Walker said that Board members, if they want additional information, need to be specific about the information they want.

Mr. Lyons stated that, in his view, the two most important functions of the School Board are financial oversight and the consideration and adoption of policy.

Mr. Ristaino said he would like the Board to look at whether or not the financial reports section of the School Board agenda should be moved up earlier in the meeting.

Dr. Shuldman stated that financial matters are very complicated and that he feels the Board had varying degrees of confidence in the information that had been given to them. He said this is really a communication and manner of communication issue, and it is a matter of the process.

Chair LaPage said the Board should re-examine the current system of information dissemination, and said that he hopes the Board has now had a chance to fully examine the issue of the retirement of the deficit.

Ms. Garrity suggested that Board members could "pair up" with new members of the Board and be their mentor.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister
Executive Secretary