

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the December 11, 2007 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, December 11, 2007 in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at Portsmouth City Hall.

Attendance

PRESENT: Mr. Kent F. LaPage (Chair), Mrs. Nancy Novelline Clayburgh (Vice-Chair), Ms. Sheri Ham Garrity, Mr. H. 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), Mr. Stephen T. Bartlett (Business Administrator), Mrs. Linda Briolat (Employee Representative), Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative), and Ms. Abigail Rockefeller (Student Representative)

Non-Public Session

Prior to the regular meeting, the School Board met in a non-public session in Conference Room A at Portsmouth City Hall to discuss the Superintendent's evaluation. This non-public session was held in accordance with RSA 91-A: 3 II. (a) and (b).

***Non-Public
Non-Session***

The Board then held a non-public non-session with Counsel in Conference Room A.

Chair LaPage called the regular meeting of the Portsmouth School Board to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at Portsmouth City Hall.

Call to Order

The Chair called for a moment of silent reflection. He said this time of year is time for joy and for reflection over the last year. He asked Board members to keep in mind those children and students within the school system, and keep them in our thoughts and prayers that they will be safe. He also asked we keep in our prayers those serving our Country in the military.

Minutes Approved

The Chair called for approval of the November 27, 2007 minutes. Mrs. Walker moved, seconded by Mr. Smith, the minutes be

approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Correspondence

Thank You Note

The Board received a thank you note from Bob Lister thanking them for their cards after his mother's death. Ms. Garrity moved, seconded by Mr. Ristaino, the correspondence be accepted and placed on file.

PHS Band Fundraiser

The Board received a notice about a breakfast fundraiser that will be held this Saturday, December 15th, at Applebee's in Portsmouth. Proceeds will benefit the High School Band's trip to Florida.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Additional Agenda Items

Dr. Shuldman requested to address the Middle School PDF files.

Mr. Hayward requested to report on the Safe Routes to School Committee.

The Chair passed the gavel to Mrs. Clayburgh and stated that he would like to provide an update on the School Board orientation offered by the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA), the NHSBA Delegate Assembly, and the Superintendent's evaluation.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

Comments From Councilor Whitehouse

City Councilor Harold Whitehouse stated this is one of the finest school boards to have worked with the City Council, and he hopes the working relationship will continue with the new City Council and School Board. He also stated that Dr. Lister is one of the finest superintendents he has seen. Councilor Whitehouse wished the Board and everyone present a Merry Christmas.

Chair LaPage thanked Mr. Whitehouse for his many years of duty to the people of Portsmouth, having previously served on the School Board and as a Police Commissioner.

Comments Re: Middle School

Ms. Sara Hamill, 579 Sagamore Avenue, Portsmouth, stated it is the end of the year and she realizes there may be a rush to finish some ongoing projects. She said the Middle School project seems to be on a fast track concerning the selection of an architect for the Parrott Avenue site. Ms. Hamill said she is very concerned about the apparent secrecy of this very important selection process, and is also concerned about what is being asked of the architects. She asked what is the proper size of the building; how many students will be

Middle School

Comments (cont.)

served, and what constraints are being placed on the architects. She stated that a project of this magnitude should include open communication with the people of Portsmouth. Ms. Hamill said there are many people in the community who are knowledgeable about the reuse of historical buildings, and that it will take time to consider all aspects. She said the view from the outside is there seems there is no agreement on all the facts needed to make this important decision.

Ms. Carol Chellman, 430 Richards Avenue, Portsmouth, stated she also wants to speak on the ongoing process to select an architect. She said that she appreciates all of the efforts that have gone into this and that will continue to go into this process. Ms. Chellman said she believes the School Board has a very important role in the selection of the architect and should be actively involved in the interview process. Ms. Chellman said the School Board should consider bringing in members of the public to participate in the interview process for an open and transparent process in all areas of government in Portsmouth. She said the Board is talking about what could be a \$40 million decision, and it needs to take its time and not rush. She said the Board does not have to do anything by the end of the year. She urged the Board to take a long time to pick the best architectural firm and to utilize the resources that currently exist in the City. She said now is the time to do that and to think outside the box. Ms. Chellman said the size of the proposed building is double the size of the present building, and that it is just too big. She said that, as a taxpayer, she does not want to pay for a building that is twice the size and she told the Board it has a duty to the taxpayers and the students. She said the taxpayers do not want to pay to build and maintain a building that is bigger than necessary. In closing, Ms. Chellman urged the Board to continue this project with as much public opinion as possible.

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

Jeremy Alex Fund

Dr. Lister stated the Portsmouth Rotary Club has been very supportive of the Portsmouth schools in various initiatives. He said the Jeremy Alex Fund was established by Mr. Ted Alex in memory of his son, and the fund has provided chess sets for the schools so that the game may be taught to students in the elementary schools. He showed two pieces representing the patio chess sets that have been donated by the Jeremy Alex Fund. Dr. Shuldman suggested offering an open house to allow individuals in the community an opportunity to watch the students play chess and the skills they have developed. Dr. Lister said that each of the schools has a chess program, which was started five or six years ago, with advisors in the schools. He said they believe the playing of chess is very important in helping kids make decisions. The Superintendent thanked the Rotary Club

***Jeremy Alex Fund
(cont.)***

for its support over the years. He said that Chair LaPage, Mr. Lyons, and Mrs. Clayburgh are proud Rotarians.

Mr. Ted Alex, a member of Portsmouth Rotary and Founder of the Jeremy Alex Fund, said the fund was started three years ago in memory of his son who disappeared, and its goal is to help kids who are at risk. He said he never anticipated the fund would grow to over \$200,000. He said the principle is invested with the New Hampshire Charitable Fund, and the proceeds go back into the community for kids at risk. He said, in the past, money has been donated to the Community Diversion Program. Mr. Alex said this year, the decision was made to purchase chess sets for each fourth grader at the three Portsmouth elementary schools and St. Patrick's School. He thanked the Superintendent for the opportunity to work with the schools and the students.

Dr. Lister said the Principals have established a plan to present a chess set to each fourth grader. He stated this will definitely be a community involvement. The Superintendent said that Mr. Ristaino is also involved with Rotary, being a member of the morning group, and was instrumental with providing financial assistance to establish a library at PASS (Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School). The Superintendent invited Board members and members of Rotary to be in the schools when the students are playing chess. Mr. Alex said they hope that, if it is successful, to continue this program each year.

Mr. Lyons said the Board talks about partnerships with the community. He said this is a big example of Rotary's relationship with the Portsmouth schools. He said that Rotary puts its money where its mouth is, and they really care about the kids. He referred to the Middle School Photography Project, and the Blue Skies Program where Rotarians mentor at the High School. Mr. Lyons said that he is proud to be a Rotarian, and especially when making a real difference for kids.

Mrs. Clayburgh thanked Mr. Alex for establishing this fund on behalf of his son. She said that, she too, is proud to be a Rotarian. She thanked the many members of Rotary who attended this evening, and said their collaboration with the schools is great. Mrs. Clayburgh said that last weekend, Rotary was short of helpers to sell Christmas trees, and some high school kids came out and helped sell the trees. She thanked Mr. Lyons for doing a superb job as President

Chair LaPage thanked Mr. Alex for his diligent work as a Rotarian, and said that many children will benefit from the Jeremy Alex Fund.

RECOGNITION OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

***Recognition of
Outgoing Board
Members***

Chair LaPage asked Mrs. Clayburgh, Mr. Lyons and Mr. Hayward to join him and the Superintendent at the podium. He said it is a great honor for him to have served as their Board Chair, and said these three individuals have served together for the last eight years, and began to know one another nine years ago. He said the Board is like a family; it calls and meets with one another, makes decisions, and has disagreements – but has always done what is best for the children. He said this Board was responsible for all-day kindergarten, and were together at the beginning of the new high school.

The Chair recognized Mr. Hayward, and thanked him for his willingness to serve on the Board. Mr. LaPage said that Mr. Hayward has willingly served on the Board when others were unable to fill their terms, and said he has always been a true gentleman who was able to get things done. The Chair said that Mr. Hayward presently serves on the Safe Routes to School Committee and served on the Athletic Committee. He thanked Mr. Hayward for his dedication to the students of Portsmouth and SAU 50 and for always doing what was best for the children. Mr. Hayward said he has filled the terms of two individuals whom he deeply praises: Dr. Arthur Hilson and Mr. Raimond Bowles. He said it has been an honor to work with the Board and administration. While serving on the Board he said that he has seen some good times and some good arguments, and things have come out for the better. He wished the new Board members the best of luck.

Mr. LaPage said it has been a great privilege to work with John Lyons, who was the eyes and ears of the Board who wanted to make sure that all the I's were dotted and all the T's were crossed. He said Mr. Lyons wants to make sure that all children in SAU 50 and Portsmouth receive and deserve the best education. Mr. LaPage said that Mr. Lyons looks out for the taxpayers, and he credited his service as a member of the Joint Building Committee that oversaw the construction and renovation of Portsmouth High School. He said the project came in under budget and was completed on time. The Chair acknowledged Mr. Lyons' legal expertise and contributions during student disciplinary hearings.

Mr. Lyons said it has been his pleasure. He said that being a lawyer, one can get a great sense of importance, yet everything really pales when you are working for kids; they truly are the assets of the community. Mr. Lyons thanked his fellow School Board members and others he has had the pleasure to work with. He encouraged the Board to support the teachers, as they are the ones who deliver services to the students. He wished the new Board good luck.

Recognition of

Chair LaPage recognized Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, and said her

***Outgoing Board
Members (cont.)***

knowledge base as a parent and school volunteer was invaluable as a Board member. He said that Nancy has strong family ties and family values are important to her and in how we treat each other. Mr. LaPage credited Mrs. Clayburgh with being a founding member and current member of the FRIENDS Project, which provides social opportunities for students with disabilities. He said she was also a founding member of PEP 2000, which was formed to raise funds for playgrounds at each of the three elementary schools. He credited Nancy for her assistance as Vice-Chair, and thanked her for all she has done and for her leadership. Chair LaPage thanked Mrs. Clayburgh for all she has done for the students of Portsmouth and SAU 50.

Mrs. Clayburgh said that as she was campaigning for City Council, she thought over and over again of what an incredible, wonderful city we live in. She used her son, Michael, as an example, and said he was never denied anything in this community. She said the Portsmouth School Department is one of the best. Her son will make a contribution to the community and not be a tax burden because of the skills he has acquired by going through the Portsmouth School System. Mrs. Clayburgh said it has been a real pleasure for her to serve on the School Board. She said that she thinks of the Board as a family, and said it will not take long for the new board to develop a chemistry. Mrs. Clayburgh thanked the Board for making the community a better place, and she wished the new Board members the best of luck. She said the Board is lucky to have Superintendent Lister. She wished everybody the best and said that she will not be far away.

FINANCIAL

***Samples of
Financial Reports***

Mr. Bartlett distributed samples of financial reports. Mr. Lyons said he thinks it should be up to the new Board to choose the reporting format for financial information. He commented on the fact that financial matters have been moved up on the agenda so the topics are discussed earlier in the evening. He said that is very important as finances and policies are the two most important things the Board does.

Mr. Bartlett answered questions from the Board concerning the formats and information contained on the various financial reporting samples.

Rules Suspended

Mrs. Clayburgh moved the Board move to agenda item VI. B. (Overnight Field Trips). Mr. Ristaino seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Overnight Field
Trip Requests***

Mr. Perrin Long, Culinary Arts Instructor at Portsmouth High School, presented a request to take six students to the Mount Washington Hotel in Breton Woods, New Hampshire to participate in the preparation of the Future Chefs Dinner on January 5 and 6, 2008. Mr. Long explained the activities that will take place and how the trip will be funded. Mr. Ristaino moved the Board approve the trip; Ms. Garrity seconded the motion. Mr. Lyons stated the Superintendent of Schools should be making decisions on whether or not to approve trips and not require them to come before the Board. He said the Board's focus should be on budget and policy. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Culinary Arts
Students to
Breton Woods,
New Hampshire***

Mr. Collins, High School Principal, extended his thanks to Mr. Lyons, Mrs. Clayburgh and Mr. Hayward for all they have done for the kids in the City of Portsmouth and SAU 50. He said their leadership and dedication have been wonderful, and he thanked them for allowing him to be part of this wonderful community.

***High School French
Students to Quebec,
Canada***

Mr. Collins presented a request for students in the French program to travel to Quebec, Canada. He said there are presently 30 students interested in going on the trip, and he reviewed the plans that are in place. Mrs. Walker moved, seconded by Ms. Garrity, the trip to Quebec, Canada be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Clubs and Groups
Affiliated w/School
Sponsored Activities***

The Board received a copy of clubs and groups affiliated with school-sponsored activities for 2007-2008. The Chair said a meeting of all groups will be held in March 2008. Mrs. Clayburgh moved the Board accept the 2007-2008 Clubs and Groups Affiliated with School-Sponsored Activities dated December 11, 2007. Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. Mr. Bartlett answered questions from the Board. After some discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

***Budget Work
Sessions***

The administration described the process that will be used during budget work sessions. The Superintendent stated that department heads will be present at a budget work session on January 22nd to discuss their programs. Mr. Ristaino said he would like to hear from Mr. Purrington to talk about the theater and performing arts budgets.

Wentworth School

Mr. Ristaino said he was watching the City Council meeting and the question came up if the School Department had budgeted any funds for the Wentworth School. Mr. Bartlett said the School Department did not budget for utilities, but did budget funds in case they needed to make repairs. He said there is \$7,864 available that could be turned back to the City, and said a memo has been sent to the City Manager stating this.

Budget Work Sessions

Mr. Bartlett and Dr. Lister reviewed the schedule of budget work sessions and presentations. They reported there will be two 15 minute presentations, and then 45 minutes will be allowed for questions.

Mrs. Walker said she would feel more comfortable knowing a percent guideline and hearing from the department heads what they would have to go without. Mr. Bartlett said the City Council has not, at this time, set forth a guideline.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Business Education Classes

The Board received a summary of business education classes that have been offered at Portsmouth High School from 1972-73 through 2002-2003. A Board member had requested this information, and the Chair stated this information would be reviewed during the budget work sessions. There was a brief discussion of State requirements for business education and how the District will meet those requirements, and the classes that are offered by members of the community through the Business Education Collaborative.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy Committee

Dr. Lister asked members of the Policy Committee if they would be available to meet on January 7th at 4:30 p.m. Mr. Smith said he would not be able to attend that evening. Mrs. Clayburgh said the Student Behavior Contract would be presented to the Board in January, and the three Board members serving on the Policy Committee have approved that policy.

Superintendent's Evaluation

Chair LaPage stated the Board met earlier to discuss the Superintendent's evaluation. He said the School Board looks forward to continued working with Dr. Lister. He said the Superintendent's contract is up in June, and another evaluation will be done during that time period. The Chair thanked everybody for their work on this evaluation, especially the sub-committee, and for getting it done before these elected officials leave the Board.

Board Orientation

The Chair stated that an orientation session will be scheduled after the holidays for the three new Board members. The Superintendent said there is a possibility the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) will offer regional training in Portsmouth in February. He also said the Board needs to discuss its retreat.

NHSBA Delegate Assembly

Chair LaPage said the NHSBA Delegate Assembly was moved to January. He said the information for the delegate packets has not yet

- NHSBA Delegate Assembly (cont.)*** been received.
- Information About Architectural Firms*** Dr. Shuldman reported that he has made a CD containing information about the architectural firms for the Middle School project and he will make arrangements to get these to the Board. Chair LaPage stated that Dr. Shuldman and Mrs. Walker will be sitting in to observe the interviews and will report back to the Board.
- Safe Routes to School Committee*** Mr. Hayward reported the Safe Routes to School Committee met on Monday, December 10th and talked about increasing its membership. He said they will request one additional Board member as well as the Middle School and Elementary School Principals and representatives from PTAs and PTOs.
- City Receives Designation As An Eco-Municipality*** Mrs. Walker reported that at the last City Council meeting, the City received a designation as an eco-municipality. The Sustainability Committee had adopted a ten-year plan to move the City in a more sustainable direction. She said that a workshop will be offered for all new City employees and elected official to provide information about the eco-municipality principles.
-

NEXT AGENDA

- Reorganization Meeting*** Chair LaPage reminded the Board that its reorganization meeting will be held on Thursday, January 3, 2008. Mrs. Walker said she received a letter from the City Clerk inviting newly elected officials to a special meeting in which they will be sworn in. After some discussion about changing the date of the Board's reorganization meeting, the Chair stated he would talk with the Superintendent and they will get back to the Board.
- Adjournment*** There was no further business to come before the Board. Mr. Lyons moved, seconded by Ms. Garrity, the meeting be adjourned. The motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.
- "Holiday Express"*** The Chair stated that tickets are still available for the "Holiday Express."

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister
Executive Secretary