

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the February 12, 2008 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, February 12, 2008 in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at Portsmouth City Hall.

Attendance

PRESENT: Dr. Mitchell Shuldman (Chair), Mr. Brendan Ristaino (Vice-Chair), Mrs. Rebecca Emerson, Ms. Sheri Ham Garrity, Mr. Kent F. LaPage, Mr. Dexter Legg, Mrs. Lisa Sweet, and Mrs. Ann Walker

ABSENT: Mr. Carson Smith

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

Budget Work Session

Prior to the regular meeting, a budget work session was held in the Board Room at Little Harbour School beginning at 5:30 p.m. The work session was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Call to Order

Chair Shuldman called the regular meeting of the Portsmouth School Board to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at Portsmouth City Hall.

Public Hearing on the School Department Budget

Mr. Peter Bresciano, 101 O'Leary Place, Portsmouth, stated that, after attending a few budget work sessions, he feels that this Board, with all of its new members, appears to be a very hard working Board with respect to the proposed budget. Mr. Bresciano further stated that he applauds the Board for looking for the best education for the children of Portsmouth. He reminded the members of the Board that money is tight and to remember during this budget season that they represent the taxpayers of Portsmouth. He further stated that the Board is obligated to hold the budget down. Mr. Bresciano also stated that some people don't realize what parents do in supporting the schools. As we get older we sometimes forget what we contributed when our children were in school. He stated that he was amazed when he heard the statistic that the PTA's at our elementary schools bring in a lot of money that offsets the school budget. For instance, Little Harbour School brings in

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\$50,000, half of which goes back into the classroom. When you look at an operating budget, not counting the teachers, it is only \$60,000. When the PTA raises that much money to go into the classroom for pencils and paper, the taxpayers do not realize what goes into and what is needed at the elementary schools other than taxpayers money. If you looked at all of the elementary schools there is approximately \$100,000 that goes into the schools raised by the PTAs. He further stated that at Dondero, there is a 21% mobility rate during the year, which plays havoc with budgets, testing and class continuity. All these things have an effect on the budget. The School Board needs to consider all of that and the taxpayers need to take a real hard look at the budget to decide if we either educate the children, our future leaders, our future fire chief, our future mechanics, our future plumbers or are we going to cut the budget and go back to the old drop out rate. Mr. Bresciano further stated that at the PASS program there are 12 Portsmouth students and 17 out of district tuition paying students. These out of district tuition paying towns help to support the PASS program and when those towns stop sending students to this program the taxpayers of Portsmouth will need to supplement this program. He further stated that this program is very beneficial and should be supported. Mr. Bresciano stated that the Special Education Program is dependent upon Federal money such as Catastrophic Aid to support the program. He further explained that as the budget is passed in June, then in the fall the Federal money is cut and because of shortfalls the school budget has to support this program as well. Mr. Bresciano stated that he sent an e-mail to Carol Shea Porter on December 10, 2007: *“At your Portsmouth town hall meeting in November, you talked about the Congress’ failure to pass the State Children’s Health Insurance Program legislation and how badly it was needed. My question to you, and I realize that you were not in Congress when it was passed, but you are on the House and Labor Committee, my question is “What do you plan to do and when do you implement the plan to see that States start receiving their full Federal share (40%) in funding for Special Education Programs. Programs that are mandated by the Federal Government.”* And I believe that the Federal Government is funding Special Education at 18%, nowhere near the 40% that we were told that we would be getting. Mr. Bresciano closed his e-mail with: *“I look forward to your answer and as soon as I receive it, I will share it with the Portsmouth School Board at their next televised School Board meeting. Special Education funding is a hot topic at the School Department and I am anxious for the Board to hear your take on the issue”*. I hope the School Board members and the City Council send their letters to Senator Gregg, Senator Sununu and Congresswoman Carol Shea Porter and say, *“Where is our Special Education funding?”*

There were no other speakers to address the Board during the public hearing on the School Department budget. The Chair declared the

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public hearing closed.

Chair Shuldman mentioned that there would be another budget work session on Thursday, February 14, 2008 in the Board Room at Little Harbour School at 6:00 p.m.

Regular Meeting

Chair Shuldman turned the meeting over to the Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Lister mentioned that before the moment of silent reflection and the pledge of allegiance, he wanted to acknowledge a few Portsmouth School Department employees who are dealing with illnesses within the School Department, Carolyn Lilly, a secretary at the high school; Jodie Clark, a former student; and Cheryl Bartlett, a paraprofessional for the Portsmouth Middle School. We would also like to remember Julie Thurber, a paraprofessional at Little Harbour School, whose brother passed away recently and Patty Wojnar, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent who passed away a couple of weeks ago. Dr. Lister wanted to thank all who sent cards and condolences, those that supported Patty's family during this very tragic time, and the tribute shown to her at the wake and funeral. Patty made a huge contribution to the Portsmouth School Department and will be dearly missed. We would also like to thank everyone for the sensitivity shown to us during this very difficult time. We feel that the Portsmouth School Department is a family and we think that it is very important to remember those we work with as we would in our own families. Mr. LaPage stated that Patty has been a very valued and dedicated Portsmouth School Department employee for over 34 years. Mr. LaPage stated that even though Patty did not have any children of her own, well over 11,000 students who graduated at Portsmouth High School had the benefit of Patty's oversight. He stated that a plaque would be designed and, with the School Board's approval, the Central Office receptionist area would be dedicated in Patty's name. He further stated that a scholarship would be established in her name to a high school graduating student furthering their education in the secretarial field. Mr. LaPage felt that this would be an excellent tribute to someone who has left us all too very soon.

Moment of Silent Reflection and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chair called for a moment of silent reflection, to be followed with Mr. LaPage leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Correspondence

New Hampshire School Boards Association

The Board received a letter from Theodore E. Comstock, Executive Director, New Hampshire School Boards Association in response to a recent letter sent to them from the School Board.

Piscataqua Savings

The Board received a letter from Jay S. Gibson, President/CEO,

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- Bank Scholarships** Piscataqua Savings Bank indicating that their Board of Trustees has approved two scholarships. Piscataqua Saving Bank has provided numerous scholarships over the past several years.
- New Franklin Gazette** A copy of the New Franklin Gazette has been provided to the School Board.
- Approval of Booster Clubs and Groups Affiliated with School-Sponsored Activities** The Board received a copy of the updated list of Booster Clubs and Groups affiliated with school-sponsored activities from Mr. Bartlett indicating that all thirty groups have completed the registration process for the 2007-08 school year.
- Celebration Graduation** The Board received a letter from Celebration Graduation requesting a donation from the School Board toward their Celebration, which happens the evening of high school graduation.

Motion: Mrs. Walker moved, seconded by Mr. Ristaino, to accept the correspondence with the exception of the request from Celebration Graduation, which would be discussed at the next School Board meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

AGENDA APPROVAL

- Added Agenda Items** Chair Shuldman stated that during the Board retreat this past summer, a change was made to the agenda allowing items to be added during the meeting, which has happened that way for the last few months. He further stated that at the Board retreat on February 9, 2008, a change in the procedure was requested by Central Office to allow more preparation time to address Board items that they would like to discuss at the Board meetings. Chair Shuldman stated that if there are additional items that Board members would like to have put on the agenda that they need to e-mail them either to the Superintendent and/or myself on the Tuesday or Wednesday prior to the next Board meeting. These items would be addressed during the preparation of the agenda on the Thursday before each meeting.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

- Read Across America** Dr. Lister recognized Mrs. Linda Marconi, Mrs. Gina Connolly, Ms. Kelly Pilgrim (Dressed as *The Cat in the Hat*) and students from Little Harbour School who were in attendance to make their annual presentation for “Read Across America Day” which will take place on February 22, 2008. He further stated that if any of the Board members wanted to participate and be readers to please fill out the form in the Board packet. Mrs. Marconi, Vice-President of the Association of

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Portsmouth Teachers (APT) and Chairman of Read Across America, thanked Dr. Shuldman, Dr. Lister and the School Board members. The APT and NEA are celebrating their eleventh year sponsoring "Read Across America Day". This program promotes the joy of reading to children of all ages by celebrating Dr. Seuss' birthday with children across America. The Mayor will be reading to the fifth grade classroom at Dondero School, the Police Chief and many police officers have agreed to read to the students at the elementary schools. Mrs. Marconi wished to thank First Student Bus Company and Saturn car dealership for providing transportation to our high school students in order to read at the elementary schools. She further reported that two fourth grade students have been elected to go to Concord on March 6, 2008 to meet with their senators and tell them why they love to read. All the schools within the system are celebrating this day. The Middle School is having a "Name your Teacher" contest by identifying photos of their teachers when they were in middle school along with their favorite book. Dondero School is having an all school read-in day. Mr. George Shea, Principal of the New Franklin School will read his favorite book to the whole school. Little Harbour School will have a "Spirit Week" with silly sock day on Wednesday, green as a Grinch on Thursday, and kid in a hat day on Friday. The School Department Nutritional Program is also serving Dr. Seuss dishes ("*One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*" nuggets and "*The Grinch is Green Beans*"). Mrs. Marconi would like to invite all of the School Board to participate in this wonderful event.

Mrs. Marconi introduced Mrs. Gina Connolly, Music Teacher at Little Harbour School, Little Harbour students from second, third, and fourth grades singing a "Read Across America" song, accompanied by Mr. Wendell Purrington.

***2008-2009 and
2009-2010 School
Calendars***

Dr. Lister introduced Ms. Roseann Vozella Clark and Ms. Joanne Matte from the high school as representatives of the calendar committee to report the recommendations of the committee to the Board regarding the school calendars for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. This committee held a public meeting seeking input from SAU #50 as well as SAU #52. Ms. Clark stated that this committee has been meeting since October with Dr. Cushing, Superintendent of Schools for SAU #52 and Dr. Lister developing the proposed calendars. These calendars are being presented for School Board approval. Dr. Lister stated that these calendars were reviewed by the School Board at their recent retreat and had one suggestion. The Board would like to recommend that school be in session on December 22, 2008 and December 23, 2008 with adjustment at the end of the year. Ms. Clark indicated that there would be no school for the children on presidential election day on November 4, 2008, with the teachers working and involved in a professional development day or workshop day. Dr. Lister believes that the

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surrounding towns have a similar schedule proposed for election day.

Motion: Mr. Ristaino moved, seconded by Ms. Garrity to accept the calendars as amended with school being in session on December 22, 2008 and December 23, 2008. Ms. Garrity wanted to know what some of the suggestions were from the public input and was told that many wanted school to start after labor day and some wanted the April vacation to be moved to the third week. She was also reassured that the April vacation is still the last week of April. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Student Government
Day***

Dr. Lister recognized Ms. Kristin Scott, President of Portsmouth High Student Council, Ms. Mary Carey Foley, Student Council Advisor, and Mr. Robert Ducharme, Social Studies teacher. Ms. Scott stated that they are seeking permission from the School Board to hold Student Government Day on March 19, 2008. Ms. Scott spoke of the value obtained by all of those students that have been involved in this program.

Motion: Mr. Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to approve holding Student Government Day on March 19, 2008. The motion was unanimously approved.

FINANCIAL

***Cost Center 207
Update***

Mr. Bartlett stated that within the Board's packet he has provided the requested information on the funding situation for the Special Education Cost Center 207. He stated that the primary revenue sources for this cost center is State catastrophic aid reimbursement, Federal Medicaid reimbursement, support from the general fund, as well as tuition charged to sending districts. He explained that last year we were very conservative in developing the 2007-2008 budget for cost center 207 and it turned out that there was a shortfall in catastrophic aid, a special education population change and a significant shortfall in outside tuition. During the last few weeks, he has been working with Central Office staff and the Special Education Department to develop a strategy to offset this shortfall. He stated that he has reviewed expenses year to date trying to ascertain where he can find some savings so that we can balance this account. Mr. Bartlett further stated that certain estimates are made during the budget process and that sometimes the actuals come out better. He stated that he was hoping that the energy budget would produce a savings. Mr. Bartlett stated that he does not want to freeze the budget at this date and will be working with the school principals to review their budgets for potential savings.

Copier Vendor

Mr. Bartlett did state that a savings would be realized by switching

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Update

copier vendors. He further noted that he is in the final stages of negotiations with a copier vendor. Mr. Bartlett stated that he has adjusted next years budget for these savings and would realize approximately \$10,000 to help with the special education shortfall.

Mr. Ristaino questioned Mr. Bartlett on the revised revenue projections report through February 8, 2008. Mr. Bartlett further explained that there have also been some Medicaid law changes that will eliminate the transportation reimbursement. He further reiterated what Mr. Bresciano stated that the State gets a certain amount for Special Education in the form of catastrophic aid and you never know how much of that money you will receive. Mr. Legg asked for a date when the plan for the shortfall would be made available and Mr. Bartlett stated that he would have the necessary financial information at the next regular School Board meeting. Mr. Legg questioned, and was reassured by Mr. Bartlett, whether these shortfalls would be taken into consideration within the 2008-2009 budget to develop a more realistic projection. Mr. Bartlett further stated that the 2008-2009 budget would also reflect the increase in the general fund of \$300,000 to help with the special education shortfalls.

***Financial Report
Samples and
Formats***

Mr. Bartlett presented all the financial report samples and formats for the Board's review. These various formats were developed as a result of e-mails and feedback from Board members. Ms. Garrity stated that she felt a work session was necessary for the Board to review all the various samples and help to develop one that all the members would be comfortable with. Mr. Ristaino stated that whatever report chosen, there needs to be a constant executive summary of cost center 207 to closely monitor these accounts. Mr. Legg stated that he does not feel the reports adequately reflect what the Board needs to see and the expenditures year to date needs to be on the format. Mr. LaPage stated that once we decide on a report format, we would need to work with it for a year and then go back and "tweak" it. Also, Mr. LaPage stated that the report would need to be consistent with requirements and needs of the State and City. Mrs. Walker stated that she felt comfortable with samples four, six, and seven and that we are heading in the right direction. Mrs. Emerson stated that instead of utilizing time this evening that a work session is needed. Chair Shuldman stated that a work session would be scheduled during the month of March.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

***Comments
Regarding Middle
School***

Mr. Mark Brighton, 285 Union Street, Portsmouth, stated that he wanted to speak about the Middle School, Parrott Avenue selection process of the architects. Mr. Brighton feels as though communication and trust has been lacking between parents, taxpayers and the School Department. Mr. Brighton feels that the School Department has a

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hidden agenda to building on Jones Avenue, as the former Board Chair said “when” and not “if” the Parrott Avenue site is found too costly. There are clear signs of deception and failure to inform the public in the recent past. We need a Middle School plan responsible to the students and responsive to the taxpayers. A good education is not synonymous with frivolous spending and padding the bill. The citizen’s group came to the conclusion that the Parrott Avenue site can work and the citizens of Portsmouth insist on it happening.

Ms. Sara Hamill, 579 Sagamore Avenue, Portsmouth, stated that she is very concerned that the School Board has not voted to renovate the Middle School on Parrott Avenue. It seems as though this project goes around and around and nothing is resolved. I believe that the next phase of the project should be to see how to renovate the building at its present location and at a reasonable cost. It should be clear to all that we can make this project work. To hire an architect before things are laid out clearly seems to be a mistake. She further stated that it has never been made clear as to how many students are to be housed in this building. Ms. Hamill further stated it has also been unclear as to how big the building will be and how many students will it hold. She has heard 550 in the present building, 650 in the new building and she has also heard the number 750 students. What is the right number? Why have the residents of Portsmouth not been informed of this? Why is this being kept a secret? This all seems to be part of the overall lack of communication. These are questions that have not been answered that we need answered to reassure the citizens of Portsmouth.

Mr. David Forman, 579 Sagamore Avenue, Portsmouth, wanted to address two topics tonight. The first is an editorial on January 31, 2008 in a Portsmouth newspaper disparaging one of the members of the School Board. Mr. Forman wrote a letter in response in support of that member. The second matter is regarding the renovation of the Middle School on Parrott Avenue. Mr. Forman believes that there should be a non-binding declaration by the School Board in support of the renovation of the Middle School to show the citizens of Portsmouth that they support that site 100% to put some unrest at ease. Mr. Forman read his letter to the editor. *“I am a member of the Portsmouth Progressive School Board Association and do not consider myself paranoid, not even a touch, as you so delicately put it. Rather I believe there is reason for some of us to question the whole process that has occurred since it was decided sometime way in the past to build a new middle school. The past School Board simply did not give the City Council an unequivocal recommendation to renovate or rehabilitate the Parrott Avenue Middle School but rather a weak recommendation with many conditions attached. We do not know what that means if some, one, or all of these conditions are not to be met. Do you? It should have simply said that the Parrott Avenue Middle School was to be rehabilitated in a*

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reasonable fashion, with reasonable specifications and at reasonable costs. You may ask what is “reasonable”, and I say when the time comes reasonable people will know what reasonable is. I believe that is what Ms. Emerson desired. She is not the enemy as your nasty editorial implied. I really believe you owe her an apology for the deprecating, unwarranted, presumptuous editorial you wrote on January 31, 2008.” If we want citizens to serve on committees in this City, we need to show them more respect.

Mr. Rob McDowell, 379 New Castle Avenue, Portsmouth, stated that there had been a number of public hearings in May and June regarding the Jones Avenue and Parrott Avenue Middle School sites. The community was very clear and very adamant that they want to renovate Parrott Avenue. Are you not listening? He has worked in a school system for twenty-five years and knows that renovation is much more cost effective than new construction. He further stated that, if less than one out of six households in the City have kids in the school system, what possible demographic projections are you looking at that bring that number up to 750 middle school kids? Mr. McDowell further stated that he is a professor of biology at the University of New England. He currently has two Portsmouth high graduates in his biology labs and they do not know how to do basic laboratory techniques such as focus a microscope. He questioned them about this and they told him that we didn't do anything in high school biology. Mr. McDowell stated that this is not a very good endorsement of the Portsmouth School system. We need to take a good hard look at this.

***Middle School
Architect Selection***

Dr. Shuldman stated that at the last meeting, a motion was tabled to accept the recommendation of the Selection Committee of the JCY Architects. The sentiment that came out of this committee was that after interviewing four firms, one stood out and many of the people on the committee realized that we needed a firm that could be clear when dealing with the public and have public sessions. This firm has the experience as they have worked on twenty-five middle schools, specifically worked on rehabilitating middle schools in urban areas on very similar footprints to the one on Parrott Avenue, with a process of building in phases without impacting the educational process and did offer the strongest views of all the firms we talked to of a vision of tying what they end up into what looks like the downtown Portsmouth. They function within themselves, function best as a team, have a clear understanding of their roles, and the references were all glowing. Basically, the references said that throughout their projects they worked with the community to make everyone happy and did it with energy and skillfulness. Dr. Shuldman stated that of all the firms that were interviewed this was the only one that stated that they felt that the 180,000 sq. feet seemed very high to them. Dr. Shuldman would like to

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resurrect the tabled motion of two weeks ago, which was to accept the recommendation of JCJ Architects. At the end of this process, we will end up with some creative alternative designs of the Middle School on Parrott Avenue with a conceptual cost of what that will be. Dr. Shuldman stated that, this Chair, intends to make Parrott Avenue work. The motion was taken off the table and readdressed.

Motion: Mr. LaPage moved that we accept JCJ Architects as the firm chosen by the Selection Committee, seconded by Mrs. Walker.

Mrs. Emerson read a prepared statement opposing the hiring of any architectural firm at this time. She stated that the Board has three responsibilities, fiduciary, education and safety. Mrs. Emerson further stated that we are going into a recession, have built a 40 million dollar high school, multi-million dollar library, and are faced with a Pierce Island wastewater treatment and must consider the taxpayers and did not want to over burden them. Further, maximum State aid has been mentioned again and again, which she feels is wonderful. The State uses three numbers to determine the maximum allowable size for financial aid; (1) building cost per square feet, (2) the maximum per square feet per student, and (3) the number of students. This demographic (the number of students) is something this Board has not provided. The architect said that there have been conflicting numbers presented regarding the number of students to plan for in the building program. If we were taking 650 students @ 140 square feet per student that means the building would be 91,000 square feet, which is smaller than the building we currently have now, would qualify for maximum State financial reimbursement. The firm has been given the number of 180,000 square feet, which is twice as large as what the State will apply aid for. Mrs. Emerson stated that she is thrilled that this firm thinks that this number is too big and it is certainly our choice that if we can provide educational backup to create a larger school, but we must let the taxpayers know. This Board needs to make a policy decision as to what we are hiring this firm to do. Is it to design as to meet State standards in order to get maximum State reimbursement, or do we want the architects to design an over-sized school regardless of the financial burden that it will put on our taxpayers? This could potentially be a difference of \$18 million dollars and I am not comfortable having so much disregard for the taxpayers. The educational responsibility figures that we are asking the firm to use are from a program created by Team Design four years ago. The selection committee is not allowing the firm to include consideration of new and future educational needs that were not anticipated in the 2004 study. By not allowing any advances in programs or philosophies, we are being irresponsible to the education of our children. Our schools will be obsolete before the student walks in the door. Mrs. Emerson further stated that since we have been stressing safety, she is not sure why we are providing a traffic study, which was

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done prior to the construction of the public library. The library brings in many visitors a year and to insure our children's safety, we must update that information. To not do so is irresponsible to the safety of our children. Mrs. Emerson wanted to make it very clear that JCJ, with the assistance of DeStefano Architects, would be able to enhance the Parrott Avenue streetscape and preserve Portsmouth's rich architectural heritage. But, unless their information out there is contrary to what she has been given, to hire any firm at this point given what the proposed scope of work is, is fiscally irresponsible to the taxpayers and irresponsible to the education and safety to our students. The scope of work contains so many restrictions and parameters; a vote at this time would be nothing more than another roadblock towards actual progress. We do not need another study. We know that the site is feasible. We need to work on our policies in order to meet our responsibilities of budget, education and safety. I would love to see this School Board commit to the Parrott Avenue site and make it work to insure that our children get the best possible education at a price that meets the needs of the taxpayers. *Here is the site. This is for how many students. Give us alternative designs that meet all State requirements with no additional parameters.* I want to move this project forward. A vote tonight, with all the roadblocks that the scope of work contains, will do nothing more than slow things down and waste taxpayer's money. For these reasons, I cannot support the hiring of any firm at this time.

A roll call vote was taken. Seven in favor (Dr. Mitchell Shuldman, Mr. Brendan Ristaino, Ms. Sheri Ham Garrity, Mr. Kent F. LaPage, Mr. Dexter Legg, Mrs. Lisa Sweet, and Mrs. Ann Walker); one against (Mrs. Rebecca Emerson). The motion passes, seven to one.

Dr. Shuldman invited Ms. Lisa DeStefano and Mr. Doug Roberts, Architect and Project Manager from JCJ to address the Board. Ms. DeStefano stated that they would be putting together a schedule and within their schedule would be planned public meetings. Mr. Roberts stated that they are very happy to be working on this project and would look at all the demographics and State standards to be sure that the right sized school is put on the site. All information, recommendations and conditions throughout the project would be brought before the School Board and the citizens of Portsmouth so that they are kept current of the ongoing progress on this project. Budgeting and construction phasing to keep in line with the State requirements would be brought before the Board so that they are aware of each step along the way to renovate the Middle School on Parrott Avenue. Chair Shuldman asked Mr. Roberts if he is confident that the Parrott Avenue site will work. Mr. Roberts stated that yes it could work, but not without challenges.

Mr. LaPage stated that this approval would now go before the City Council for their approval.

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***School Board
Retreat***

Chair Shuldman reported that the School Board retreat held on February 9, 2008 was very interesting and that it was excellently facilitated by Dr. Lister and Mr. Zadavec. Previous goals from 2004, 2005 and 2006 were looked at which allowed the Board to develop a plan for next year. The Chair stated that goals would come out next week for 2008-2009. Ms. Garrity stated that it was a very good meeting and that the information brought forward by our administrative team was excellent.

***Ben Franklin
Painting at the
Athenaeum***

Dr. Lister reported that the painting of Ben Franklin from New Franklin School that was damaged in a fire numerous years ago has been placed on loan to the Portsmouth Athenaeum. Currently, the Athenaeum has taken the painting for an assessment for the repair and restoration of this painting. Dr. Lister stated that there are other school department paintings and records that School Board members may find of interest at the Athenaeum. Dr. Lister stated that a field trip to the Athenaeum could be arranged.

Graduation Dates

Dr. Lister proposes graduation dates for the Portsmouth School Department. The reason that graduation dates are determined at this time is to allow time for arrangements (plane and hotel) to be made for out of town relatives attending graduation. The high school graduation has been scheduled for Friday, June 13, 2008 at 5:30 p.m., the Middle School graduation is on Thursday, June 12, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. at the high school auditorium, and the PASS program will have their graduation on June 6, 2008 at 10:45 a.m. at the Sherburne School. Dr. Lister expressed his concern regarding snow days, flood days, school disasters as there could be an issue with the required number of days if we have three more days off.

Motion: Mr. Legg moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, to accept the recommended graduation day dates. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Jhaimie S. Dye
Scholarship***

Dr. Lister recognized Mrs. Kathleen Dwyer, Assistant City Attorney seeking the approval from the Board for a \$5,000 scholarship established by the family and friends of Jhaimie S. Dye. Mrs. Dwyer stated that this scholarship will benefit a Portsmouth High School graduate who was active in the soccer program who will be attending an accredited two or four year college. The scholarship is to be awarded annually at graduation; payable after the student has successfully completed their first year of college. Mrs. Dwyer further stated that the scholarship should be awarded this year in the amount of \$250. The family's intent is to continue to do fundraising and the Trustees of Trust Funds, City of Portsmouth, would hold the money. Mrs. Dwyer thanked the family for working with the School Department in establishing this

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scholarship fund.

Motion: Ms. Garrity moved, Mrs. Walker seconded to accept this scholarship so that funds can be transferred to the Trustees of the Trust Funds. The motion was unanimously approved.

Rules Suspended

Ms. Garrity moved the Board to suspend the rules and move agenda item VIII B (Policy Committee –2nd reading of Bullying and Field Trip Policies), as Mrs. Dwyer is present to answer any questions. Mr. Ristaino seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy Committee

Ms. Garrity presented the *Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention Policy – Bullying* for the second reading. Mrs. Dwyer stated that spelling corrections would be made prior to this policy going into the policy books. Ms. Garrity stated that the policy committee is moving to amend the definition of bullying under Section II. Bullying Defined to read: “*Bullying is repetitive conduct that subjects a pupil to insults, taunts or challenges, conduct resulting in the exclusion of other pupils, whether verbal, non-verbal, physical in nature, including via the use of electronic methods of communication, including threats, any of which are likely to intimidate or provoke a violent or disorderly response from the student being treated in this manner. Depending on the severity of the conduct, a single act may be considered bullying*”. Ms. Garrity further moved to add the word *student* under Section IV. Notice and Reporting Procedures.

Motion: Mrs. Walker moved, seconded by Ms. Sweet to approve the amendments to the *Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention Policy on Bullying*. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Garrity presented the *Field Trips* policy for the second reading. Ms. Garrity stated that the policy committee is moving to amend the Permission for Field Trips to read: “*Upon satisfactory completion of the foregoing, the Superintendent is authorized to grant permission for the trip, subject to final approval by the School Board. The Superintendent may consider other factors in the decision to grant permission including security for the students and staff on the trip*”. Mr. Ristaino asked Mrs. Dwyer to state the difference between the new and old policies on permission. Mrs. Dwyer stated that after the first reading, this policy went back to the committee as it was felt that it is the School Board’s liability to sign off on any field trips. Mr. Ristaino stated that as long as it is done on a consent agenda format and not with the individual groups addressing the School Board at the meetings to discuss their proposed

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field trips. Mrs. Dwyer reassured the School Board that it would be on a consent agenda. Mr. LaPage stated that he is in favor of the motion but stated that the citizens in Portsmouth like to know where these students are going. Mrs. Dwyer stated that procedurally students could report back to the Board on a quarterly basis. Dr. Shuldman would like to have a checklist so that when the Board looks at the request that they can look at a checklist to be sure that all items have been completed. Mrs. Dwyer stated that this checklist would be part of their packet of information.

Motion: Mrs. Walker moved, seconded by Ms. Sweet to approve the second reading of the *Field Trips* policy. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was unanimously approved.

Curriculum Council

Mr. Zadavec reported on the Curriculum Council meeting of January 17, 2008. Mr. Zadavec stated that the Curriculum Council identified, as one of the primary areas that they wanted to focus on this year was technology and the integration of technology into the classroom. Mr. Zadavec further stated that with the help of Chair Shuldman the committee discussed examples of what is working well for the School Department now in regards to the integration of technology. It was very interesting to see some examples in each of the academic areas of the different types of technology being implemented in the classrooms. Since that meeting, we have had the release of the State's assessment results, which has been a major topic of the Curriculum Council as well. The NECAP results, which is the State assessment, received a couple of weeks ago, from assessments that students in grades three through eight took in October 2008. Mr. Zadavec was happy to report that there have been substantial gains that our students have made, especially in the area of literacy, which has been our major focus for the last two to three years, certainly if not before that. Mr. Zadavec stressed that we are very happy to see the kind of growth we are seeing with our students. We want to look at the data and look at the individual student level as to where they are in need of help and to see what programs we have that are making the best impact on student achievement. The next Curriculum Council meeting will take place on February 21, 2008.

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be Tuesday, March 11, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment

There was no further business to come before the Board. On a motion

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by Mr. Ristaino, Seconded by Ms. Garrity, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister
Executive Secretary

/vrk