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**Portsmouth School Board  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

**Minutes of the March 25, 2008 Meeting**

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, March 25, 2008 in the Board Room at Little Harbour School.

***Attendance***

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

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

***Non-Public Meeting  
with Counsel***

The non-public meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

***Call to Order***

Chair Shuldman called the regular meeting of the Portsmouth School Board to order at 7:15 p.m.

***Moment of Silent  
Reflection and  
Pledge of Allegiance***

Chair Shuldman called for a moment of silent reflection, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Ms. Rockefeller. Dr. Lister mentioned that during the silent reflection we should keep in mind the loss of Chair Shuldman's father who passed away recently. Dr. Lister stated that our thoughts and sympathies go out to the family.

**Approval of Minutes**

***Approval of Minutes***

The minutes of the March 11, 2008 Board meeting were presented for approval. Mr. LaPage moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker. The motion was unanimously approved.

*Minutes corrected to properly reflect Ms. Emerson and not Mrs. Emerson.*

**Communications**

***School Board Goals***

Dr. Lister stated that the School Board Goals for the 2008-2009 school year are included for further action by the Board.

***Rachel's Challenge*** Dr. Lister reported that Rachel's Challenge is returning for the second time to Portsmouth High School on Thursday, April 3, 2008. Ms. Rachel Scott was the first student to be killed at Columbine High School and her brother, Craig, was a student in the school library during the shootings. Mr. Craig Scott will be meeting with all sixth, seventh, and eighth graders from SAU 50 and SAU 52, with a community meeting in the evening at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Lister stated that the message that Craig relates is very powerful and encourages all to attend either the assemblies at the high school or at the evening community meeting. Dr. Lister will e-mail the assembly times to the Board members.

***Youth Risk Behavior Survey*** Dr. Lister stated that he will be sending the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to the Board next week and wanted to place this on the agenda for informational purposes. This is a behavior survey administered in 2001, 2005 and 2007 to high school students across the State to provide information regarding adolescent behavior. Some of the questions on the survey relate to drugs, alcohol, and safety. Dr. Lister has met with Dr. Cushing from SAU 50 to schedule a press conference with the police, other departments in the City, and the media to highlight some of the issues for community involvement. This conference will take place at City Hall and Dr. Lister will notify the Board of the date and time once the press conference is organized.

***Student Health/Prevention*** Dr. Lister stated that he is working with the principals, nurses, maintenance and custodial staff regarding the proper disinfecting of tabletops to prevent the spread of germs within the school department. Mr. LaPage stated that proper hand washing should also be instilled in all of our children. He further stated that the sharing of water bottles should be discouraged. Mr. LaPage stated that all bathrooms in the school system need to have soap for the children to use at every grade level. Mrs. Walker stated that at the elementary school level, the children wash their hands in the classroom supervised by their teachers. She further stated that the Middle School bathrooms lack hot water. Dr. Lister would like to have this topic brought up at the next Policy Committee Meeting to develop a policy and procedure for infection control. Vice-Chair Ristaino suggested a hand washing procedure could be taught at the elementary schools to carry forward as they go through the school system.

***Article from Attorney Robert Sullivan regarding e-mails*** Dr. Lister informed the Board that Attorney Robert Sullivan would be in attendance at the next meeting on April 8, 2008, to discuss the use of e-mail exchanges as a form of a public meetings and how this may violate the "*Right-to-Know Law*".

***Sample  
Administrator  
Contract***

Dr. Lister stated that within the Board packet was a sample of the Management Group Contract for the Board's review.

***List of  
Administrator  
Nominations***

Dr. Lister further stated that the list of administrators for nominations was also included in their packets and will be presented under the agenda by Mr. Zadavec.

**RECOGNITION OF STAFF AND STUDENTS**

***Band Trip Request***

Mr. Steve Cirillo was present to discuss an overnight band trip to Pennsylvania from March 28 through March 30, 2008. This trip is for the Percussion Ensemble from Portsmouth High School to participate in the Winter Guard International Percussion Ensemble Regional Competition. Mr. Cirillo reviewed the itinerary, permission slips, emergency medical information forms, and the Superintendent's checklist of necessary requirements in order for permission to be granted for his proposed student trip. He further stated that the twenty-seven students and six chaperones will be staying at a hotel and will travel on a coach bus. Mr. Cirillo stated that he is very proud to bring this group of students anywhere as they are excellent representatives of Portsmouth High School.

Motion: Mr. LaPage moved, seconded by Ms. Garrity to allow the Percussion Ensemble to travel to Pennsylvania from March 28 through March 30, 2008 for the Winter Guard International Percussion Ensemble Regional Competition. The motion was unanimously approved.

**FINANCIAL**

***District Nutrition  
Program Financial  
Statement***

Mr. Bartlett reviewed the *Nutrition Program Financial Statement* for February. Mr. Bartlett stated that he has been regularly monitoring the finances of the Nutrition Program for the Portsmouth School Department. He has provided a financial statement that compares this year to last year, which indicates that the revenues have decreased and the expenditures have increased. Mr. Bartlett further reviewed a report comparing the daily meal count from last year to this year indicating that the average lunches sold per day (year-to-date) have dropped from 1,060 in 2007 to 972 in 2008. He explained that when the meal count is down, typically, the a-la-carte sales increase, which in this case is true according to the February month-end revenues. Mr. Bartlett stated that there are numerous reasons why the meal counts drops; open campus, demographics, inflation, nutrition perception, and competing food sales within the school during lunch period. Mr. Bartlett would like to have a one-hour worksession with a presentation by Mrs. Pat Laska, Nutrition Program Director along

with outside consultants to develop a plan to identify the issues and move forward. Mr. Bartlett stated that over the last two years, the Department of Education and the School Nutrition auditors have informed Mr. Bartlett that the Nutrition Program has lost money and need to know what the plan of action is for reversing this situation. He further explained that the loss is getting less each year with a current fund balance of \$4,764 to absorb for this year compared to the year before of \$9,820. Efforts have been made this year with staff reorganization and the automated point of sale system to help increase revenues. The point-of-sale system allows parents to pay ahead for meals, which reduces the handling of cash on a daily basis. This system also provides anonymity to the “free and reduced” students because all of the children carry the same food card to swipe before they pick up their lunch. Mr. Legg questioned whether or not the cost of food has increased. Mr. Bartlett stated that food costs have increased by four percent with an add-on for the increase in transportation costs. Mr. Legg also asked Mr. Bartlett if he had a sense for the price elasticity. Mr. Bartlett stated that reasonable increases in the meal costs are assessed each year and compared with other districts in the area. He further stated that Mrs. Laska is the former president of the School Nutrition Association of New Hampshire and has her sources throughout the State that help her in assessing the Nutritional Program at the Portsmouth School Department. Mrs. Walker stated that, according to the handout, the free and reduced lunch count at Dondero and New Franklin has decreased. Mr. Bartlett responded that if the parents do not fill out the paperwork for whatever reason it is reflected in the number of free and reduced lunches. Mr. LaPage agreed that a worksession is needed with the Board, Mrs. Laska and all of the principals to help brainstorm this situation. Mr. LaPage supports closing the campus for not only increasing food sales but that fact that it is safer for the children to be under the school’s roof during the lunch time. He further indicated that fundraisers during the school lunch period compete for food sales. Mr. LaPage stated that this has been discussed over the last few years and needs to be stopped. Ms. Rockefeller stated that many of her friends bring their own lunches and she does not feel that if the campus were closed that her friends would purchase lunch at the school department. She stated that it is the quality and selection of the foods offered. Vice-Chair Ristaino asked whether or not a suggestion box would help to offer input from the students. Ms. Garrity questioned Mrs. Laska about the a-la-carte. Mrs. Laska stated that her a-la-carte sales are going up, thus causing her reimbursable lunches (government reimbursed) to go down. Ms. Garrity asked Mrs. Laska to contact her in one month to confirm that a meeting with Mr. Jeff Collins and a group of students has been scheduled to obtain their opinions and suggestions. Also, discussion took place regarding the fact that one lunch period hurts lunch sales. Ms. Emerson questioned the freshly made pizza that is offered and was informed that the dough is frozen but the toppings are fresh. Chair Shuldman suggested a

worksession could be scheduled in April. Dr. Lister stated that Mr. Collins would be very happy to discuss open campus and other lunch period issues.

***Year End Financial Projections***

Mr. Bartlett distributed his latest version of the month end financial report for discussion at the worksession on Monday, March 31, 2008 in the Board room at Little Harbour School. He stated that he does not feel a budget “freeze” will be necessary this year and will have a better idea with the March report. Mr. LaPage questioned the paraprofessional line item 106. Mr. Bartlett stated that at the beginning of the school year it was unknown how many special education paraprofessionals would be needed. Mr. Bartlett further stated that in order to get cost center 207 to balance some paraprofessionals needed to be moved to the general fund under the elementary special education with a professional moved to cost center 207. Mr. LaPage also questioned the substitute line item 121. Mr. Bartlett stated that there have been quite a few employee illnesses and injuries this year that have required some long-term substitutes. Mr. LaPage also questioned the space rental line item 197 that has a negative \$32,000. Mr. Bartlett explained that this line item did not have a budget, as space for the PEEP program had not been determined during the budget process last year.

**PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION**

No one in the audience signed up to address the Board. Mr. LaPage praised the Foster’s reporter, Ms. Gretyl Macalaster, regarding her recent donation of hair to “locks for love”.

**AGENDA**

***Middle School Update***

Chair Shuldman reported that the City Council has voted to accept the School Boards’ letter and have approved JCJ Architects. He reported that the first report to the City Council on the Middle School is scheduled for April 16, 2008. He further stated that JCJ has already started to work and the full design team, Jim Lapasta, the lead architect, Doug Roberts, structural engineering teams, and mechanical engineering teams were on site at the Middle School today observing the bus flow, student flow, and parent pick up. The team entered the building once the students were gone. He stated that public commentaries with the architects will be set up in early May and another in June, evening and daily public session. These sessions will enlighten the public on any problematic issues, Middle School concept, and programs. Ms. Emerson questioned the process of presenting the monthly report. Chair Shuldman stated that he has been asked by the City Council to these monthly reports. He reassured the Board that they would be apprised of all the information that he will be presenting to City Council as well as report back from the

meeting at every School Board meeting. Mr. Legg would like a copy of the timeline once it has been made available. Chair Shuldman stated that JCJ is trying to gather as much information as possible to make a presentation in June. Mr. LaPage asked Chair Shuldman if there has been any discussion of the development of a Joint Building Committee (JBC). Chair Shuldman stated that once the bonding has been obtained by the City for this project then a JBC will be formed.

***Cable Commission***

Chair Shuldman explained that during the budget discussions on the Tech Education budget at the high school, there had been discussions regarding a television broadcasting class at the high school. Chair Shuldman wanted to follow up by speaking to Mr. John Gregg from the Cable Commission to learn more about the commission's goals and negotiations with the City. Chair Shuldman stated that there currently is the municipal channel, with possibilities of adding a public access channel, and an educational channel. Chair Shuldman would like to invite Mr. Gregg to the April Board meeting to discuss an educational channel with the Board. Mr. LaPage would like to also include Mr. Alan Brady, City Webmaster, from City Hall to be engaged in this discussion with the Board. Chair Shuldman stated that it would be up to the School Department to pay for the costs involved with an educational channel.

***Board Retreat  
Minutes***

Chair Shuldman thanked Mr. Zadavec and Dr. Lister for doing a great job in formalizing the discussed goals from the Board retreat. Mrs. Stevens stated that the Board goals were very well written and an excellent document. Ms. Emerson expressed her desire that the Board utilize these goals and to not put them aside. Chair Shuldman stated that these goals are to be worked on regularly. Ms. Garrity stated that these goals are to be reviewed at the next Board retreat in six months. She further indicated that instead of the word "goals", the word "objectives" had been agreed to be used. Mr. Legg stated that objectives are obtainable and a much better word to use to represent the Board's intent.

Motion: Mr. LaPage moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to adopt the 2008 School Board objectives from the February 9, 2008 retreat, with the amended language added to objective number three to read:

Create an Ad Hoc committee to explore issues related to Special Education and report back to the school board with the goal of engaging the community in developing a shared knowledge, *proposed approaches and recommendations with costs and funding* of special education programs and goals.

The motion was unanimously approved.

***Special Education  
Task Force***

Dr. Lister stated that letters have been sent out to the special education staff, parents, teachers, and administrators seeking members to the *Special Education Taskforce*. Dr. Lister also stated that he has sent a letter to Mayor Ferrini asking him to appoint a City Council member to this taskforce. Dr. Lister also asked Chair Shuldman to appoint a representative from the School Board to participate in this group. The letter stated that this taskforce would address all aspects of special education from funding, current practices, reorganization, increasing the needs of special education and to come up with recommendations. This meeting will take place between now until the first week of December with the intention of making a presentation to the School Board at its first meeting in December. Dr. Lister further stated that he sent this letter to Representative Carol Shea Porter and Representative Paul Hodes inviting them to participate. Chair Shuldman has asked the members of the School Board to e-mail him of their interest in serving on this committee. There will be one or two members serving from the School Board.

***Student Trip  
Checklist***

Dr. Lister presented the final version of the *Student Trip Checklist* to the Board for their approval. Ms. Emerson would like to add a question to the checklist as to whether the group has gone on this trip previously. Dr. Lister stated that all *Student Trip Checklists* will be on file in his office and the Board may look at them at anytime. Groups will also be expected to appear before the School Board upon return, on a quarterly basis, to provide a brief presentation of their trip.

Motion: Mr. LaPage moved, Ms. Garrity seconded to accept and activate the process of the Student Trip Checklist *with the addition* of a question as to whether or not a group has gone on a this particular trip before. The motion was unanimously accepted.

***Educational  
Funding***

Chair Shuldman stated that he wanted everyone to know that the School Board is concerned as to where things stand on the constitutional bill on educational funding and will report back on any updated information that he receives.

Mr. Zadravec presented the list of fourteen administrative nominations for Board approval for the 2008/2009 school year.

***Administrative  
Nominations***

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mr. Legg to approve the administrative nominations. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was unanimously accepted.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Curriculum Council  
Early Release  
Update**

Mr. Zadravec reported on the Curriculum Council's discussion of early release and in-service days. Mr. Zadravec distributed a packet of information outlining the professional development scheduled for the early release days during the 2007-2008 school year, a sample of the short term grade level goals for the elementary schools; and a sample of the end of course competency forms used at the high school. He stated that the teachers have been able to move their conversations forward in collaboration, developing interventions and responses to the data that has been received, to share resources and expertise in working with children and making the best use of these early release days in a variety of ways. Mr. Zadravec stated that the high school has done something different with their early release time throughout the year as they have been focusing on a requirement to develop end of the course competencies. He explained that those are critical expectations for all courses at the high school (core and elective courses). Mr. Zadravec stated that this is a huge undertaking. He further explained that the next step would be the assessment of these competencies. The administrative team will take all the information provided by the Curriculum Council to develop the goals and initiatives for next year. Mr. Zadravec stated that the Curriculum Council has established six early release days for next year with the equivalent of one day for teams to work together. Ms. Garrity stated that she is in favor of the six early release days with the one-day using substitutes in order to not lose an additional day of instruction time for students. Ms. Garrity also hopes that election day in November can be used as a day for teachers to work on professional development. Dr. Lister stated that this is a topic that will be addressed during negotiations. Ms. Emerson has a concern regarding taking instructional time away from students. Ms. Emerson stated that she had a teacher relate to her that she is not getting enough out of her half-day professional development and preferred to be in the classroom with her students. Ms. Emerson stated that when there are professional development days that they are fully saturated and that the time is of value to the teachers. Mrs. Walker stated that she understands what that teacher is feeling and stated she felt the same way when she was a teacher on the first *Teacher and Learning*, which was at that time called *School Improvement* at Dondero. She further informed the Board that this took a full day a month out of the classroom, which neither she nor the parents were happy about. Mrs. Walker stated that she came to the realization that you need to focus on the total vision and that the only way this work can be done is through groups. Mrs. Walker would also like to see the election day used as a professional development day. Mrs. Mayer stated that professional development at the elementary and middle school levels is very different from the high school level. Mrs. Mayer stated that there needed to be more collaboration within departments and with other departments at the high school.

***AREA Committee  
versus Secondary  
Advisory Committee***

Mrs. Mayer explained the difference between the *AREA Committee* versus the *Secondary Advisory Committee*. She stated that the *AREA Committee* has been around for a number of years and meets semi annually in the fall (September or October) and then again in May with administration and school board members from both SAU 50 and SAU 52. She stated that discussions are focused around the start of school, transition of ninth graders, registrations, class size, sports participation, etc. and then in May to assess how the year turned out.

Mrs. Mayer further explained that the *Secondary Advisory Committee* has been started more recently with Dr. Lister, Mr. Zadravec, Dr. Cushing, Board Chairs, and some board members from SAU 50 and SAU 52. She explained that this committee meets once per month to discuss concerns and issues with no formal meeting minutes. Mr. LaPage stated that he formed this committee seven to eight years ago when he was Board chair for the purpose of brainstorming and communication (not goal setting or precedent setting like the *AREA Committee*). He stated that it used to be called the *Area Chair or Representative Committee*. He further stated that business administrators from both SAUs were also part of this committee because of any financial questions. He stated that discussions have taken place regarding the high school principal, the middle school and more recently budgetary discussions.

Chair Shuldman reported that at the last *AREA Committee* meeting many of the board members expressed how happy they were with Principal Collins and his open communication between the high school and the feeder schools. Feeder schools are now talking with the high school teachers and there is a clear expectation of what the students have or should have when they come into the high school, getting information down to the middle school students and teachers as to what Portsmouth High School expects. He further reported that everyone seems to think that some changes should be made to the freshman orientation, which is down to three quarters of a day, when in past, it was three days. Chair Shuldman further reported that there are growing concerns regarding the class sizes and scheduling concerns at PHS and the number of early release days this year. He further reported that Mr. LaPage's father wrote the original *AREA* agreement and that it is out of date and needs to be re-written. Chair Shuldman stated some of the SAU 50 concerns: more business and math positions; class size; foreign language levels; perception that students in SPED and honors are taken care of more; and a reminder from SAU 50 that for every one dollar of budgeted money that goes into PHS, Portsmouth taxpayers only pay sixty-six cents of that dollar because one third of the high school students have their tuition paid by them. Dr. Lister stated that the next meeting is April 15, 2008.

***Safe Routes to  
School Committee***

Ms. Emerson reported that at the recent *Safe Routes to School Committee* meeting, a signal for the front (Woodbury Avenue entrance) of the New Franklin School was discussed and found that it does not meet the criteria for a signal. Ms. Emerson would like the School Board to contact the Portsmouth Traffic and Safety to look at the flow of traffic at New Franklin School. Dr. Lister stated that a meeting would be set up with the police and the Traffic and Safety to look at alternatives and options to this safety issue. He further stated that not only do you have staff, parents and busses turning in and out of the entrance to New Franklin School, but also the traffic from the rotary, highway and two hotels.

Motion: Ms. Emerson moved, seconded by Mr. Legg to ask the Portsmouth Traffic and Safety to study the flow of traffic for New Franklin School and report back to the School Board with a recommendation for improving safety. This request includes the Woodbury Avenue and the Dennett Street entrance and exits. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Technology  
Committee***

Mr. Zadavec reported that at the last Technology Committee discussion took place regarding taking the next steps in the technology plan. He stated that now that there is a goal around developing a vision for technology integration, this technology committee would take a major role in the school department moving forward in this goal. Mr. Zadavec further stated that the committee discussed infinite campus, which is now up and running within our schools, with the teachers taking attendance as the first step. Mrs. Briolat stated that the system is fine, but when technology fails, then the software cannot be used.

***Other***

***Athenaeum Tour***

Ms. Garrity stated that the Athenaeum tour was fantastic. She further stated that it is unbelievable that there is such a wonderful resource within our City. Ms. Garrity requested that notes from the high school (high school version of Harbour Lights) be e-mailed to the Board members.

***“Are you Smarter  
Than a Dondero  
Fifth Grader?”***

Mrs. Walker wanted to remind everyone about the Dondero fifth grade fundraiser to support the fifth grade class trip to Camp Calumet in Center Ossipee in May 2008. This fundraiser, game show, “Are you Smarter Than a Dondero Fifth Grader?” will take place on Friday, March 28, 2008 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Portsmouth High School.

***Little Harbour  
Auction and  
Spaghetti Dinner***

Mrs. Stevens wanted to inform everyone about the Little Harbour auction and spaghetti dinner on Thursday, March 27, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.

***Mr. PHS***

Ms. Rockefeller wanted to inform everyone about the Mr. PHS beauty/talent pageant on Wednesday, March 26, 2008.

***Monthly Financial  
Reports  
Worksession***

Dr. Shuldman reminded everyone of the worksession on Monday, March 31, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. in the Board room.

**NEXT AGENDA**

***Agenda Items for  
Next Meeting***

1. Attorney Sullivan E-Mails
2. Cable Commission- John Gregg
3. Student Conduct Policy
4. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Press Conference Update
5. Lock-Out Drill Process
6. New Franklin Traffic and Safety – Letter for approval

Chair Shuldman stated that if there are other items for the next agenda, please e-mail them to him.

**NEXT MEETING**

***Next Meeting***

The next meeting of the Board will be Tuesday, April 8, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at Portsmouth City Hall.

**ADJOURNMENT**

***Adjournment***

There was no further business to come before the Board. On a motion by Vice-Chair Ristaino, seconded by Mr. Legg, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister  
Executive Secretary