

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2008

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 7:00PM [or thereafter]

At 6:00 p.m., the School Board met with legal counsel regarding personnel in Conference Room A.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Shuldman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: DR. MITCHELL SHULDMAN (CHAIR), BRENDAN RISTAINO (VICE CHAIR), KENT LAPAGE, SHERI HAM-GARRITY, ANN WALKER, DEXTER LEGG, LISA SWEET, REBECCA EMERSON, LESLIE STEVENS, DR. ROBERT LISTER (SUPERINTENDENT) STEPHEN ZADRAVEC (ASST. SUPERINTENDENT), STEPHEN BARTLETT (BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR). JEFF COLLINS (PRINCIPAL PHS), SUSAN BIRRELL (IT DIRECTOR), JOHN STOKEL (PRINCIPAL PMS)

Absent: DEXTER LEGG

III. INVOCATION

Superintendent Lister asked members of the board to remember during a moment of silence Ms. Carolyn Lilly, a secretary at the high school who recently passed away and Kathleen Dwyer's father who passed away August 4, 2008.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Dr. Shuldman led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

V. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – JULY 08, 2008

Ms. Walker moved to approve and accept the minutes of the July 8, 2008 School Board meeting. Seconded by Ms. Garrity and voted.

VI. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – JULY 18, 2008

Ms. Walker moved to approve and accept the minutes of the July 18, 2008 School Board meeting. Seconded by Ms. Garrity and voted.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

1. A thank you card was received from Ms. Jan McManus who retired from Dondero Elementary.
2. Mr. Kent LaPage requested a letter sent to the Honorable Mayor Ferrini be re-drafted to correctly reflect the vote of preference taken for the middle school. Mr. LaPage voted in opposition to the left. Correction so noted and a new letter will be drafted.
3. A thank you letter from Assistant Principal Kathleen Metterville was presented to the school board thanking them for the opportunity to participate in a trip she and the students took this previous school year.
4. Assistant Chair Ristaino requested a letter or card be sent to Ms. Kathleen Dwyer on behalf of the board in memory of the passing of her father. Supt. Lister stated flowers were sent on behalf of the School Board and Central Office staff and he would be more than happy to send a card on their behalf.

VIII. RECOGNITION OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

Chair Shuldman remembered something that John Lyons used to say. When new personnel are voted on, things seem very procedural on camera. A name is stated, a brief history is given and they are voted in. He assured the public that all applicants have been thoroughly assessed and discussed during non-public sessions.

1. Leaves of Absence
 - Cindy Fitzgerald – Reading teacher at Dondero Elementary. Ms. Fitzgerald was on leave of absence for the 2007-2008 school year and has been employed for 6 years. Moved by Ms. Garrity, seconded by Mr. Ristaino and voted.
2. Resignations
 - Michelle Smith – Resource teacher at Dondero Elementary. Ms. Smith was originally hired June 2008.
 - Marcus Santy – Social Studies teacher at Portsmouth Middle School. Mr. Santy was originally hired in 2001 and will complete 7 years with the Portsmouth School Department. Moved by Ms. Garrity, seconded by Mr. Ristaino and voted.

3. Nominations (Moved to accept all hires by Ms. Ham-Garrity. Seconded by Ms. Walker and voted)

Amanda Cook	Pre-School	PEEP	William McElroy	Math	PHS
Vera Haus	Business	PHS	Katherine Prentiss	Reading	Dondero
Luis Insausti	Spanish	PHS	Christina Rocca	Grade 3	Dondero
Shayna Kennedy	Grade 1	Dondero	William Schefer	Welding	PHS
Jeanette MacDonald	French	PHS	Erik Schlapak	Soc. Stud.	PHS
			Judy Blouch	English	PASS

4. Retirements

- Victoria Orkin, a Grade 1 teacher at Little Harbour Elementary will be completing 35 years with the Portsmouth School Department and for her last 18 years she was at Little Harbour. Ms. Garrity motioned to accept. Seconded by Ms. Walker and voted.

5. Other

- Ms. Walker was invited to and attended the NEA New Hampshire Summer Learning Banquet held on Wednesday, August 6, 2008. Reverend Arthur Hilson received an award at the banquet for the Champion of Human and Civil Rights. This award is presented to an individual who is dedicated, flawless and committed to the cause of maintaining human rights for individuals who face adversity. Ms. Walker believes Portsmouth High School's Social Studies department nominated the Reverend. She also had the honor of watching Dr. Lyonel Tracy received the Friend of Education award from NEA New Hampshire.

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IX. FINANCIAL

Mr. Bartlett provided the board with year-end results for Food Services. Exhibit B showed that, despite the best efforts of all employees and the Food Services Director, the program ended up with a deficit of \$3,000.00 this year but has continued to reduce, as it has for the last four years. Revenues increased by 2.2% and expenditures increased by 1.9%. Exhibit C shows the beginning fund balance to be \$4,700.00 with an ending fund balance of approximately \$1,600.00. As discussed in the past, before budget season Mr. Bartlett will be presenting the board with some alternative ways to relieve some pressure off salary lines and perhaps achieve better results next year. Cost of food is escalating and lunch prices can only be increased by so much.

Chair Shuldman inquired about the Financial Report of July 08. Mr. Bartlett stated a glitch in the new format kept the report from being generated. The format discussed by the board is being used, showing the results by month and year to date. For the initial run of the plan, Mr. Bartlett is taking a five-year history (by month) to try to get an average to use as a starting point in the new format. Mr. Bartlett should have the new report complete in the next couple days and will directly mail out to all board members so they can comment and see if the new format meets all expectations of the board for next year. Traditionally, the board is provided the end of year packet at the first meeting in September, which will include June 08. It was decided that at the first meeting in September, Mr. Bartlett would provide the board with July and August in the new format and the end of year packet, including June 08.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

1. Mr. Bob Hopley, 175 Library Street, Portsmouth, NH. Mr. Hopley, Commissioner of NH Softball League and President of Portsmouth's Men's League, expressed his concerns regarding the taking of land and removing the only legitimate softball field in Portsmouth, Alumni Field. He also disagreed with an article in the Portsmouth Herald quoting Mr. Rice stating he did not want to see another softball field. Mr. Hopley was not sure what that meant and stated Mr. Rice is not even a citizen of Portsmouth. Mr. Hopley also stated he had heard rumors regarding another option to expand the middle school had been abandoned because it would interfere with the dog park. Over the years, approximately \$150,000.00 has been spent to build and maintain Alumni Field at no cost to the city.
2. Mr. Alan Nelson, Marcy Street, Portsmouth, NH. Mr. Nelson thanked the School Board for doing their part for the city and he appreciated the board's efforts. As a general member of the public, Mr. Nelson stated it has been difficult getting information on the new middle school and specifics on some of the options. Mr. Nelson called 4 board members and tried to receive a reason why option number 1 was dismissed and did not receive a good answer. Dr. Shuldman provided Mr. Nelson with reasons he believed not to be valid at least as an option. Mr. Nelson would like to see a more detailed explanation as to why option number one was taken off the table. After contacting members of City Council, Mr. Nelson does not believe due diligence or homework has been done. He feels city officials have shown indifference to deed restrictions and it seems the board is invested in the "left" option.
3. Ms. Kirsten Barton, Court Street, Portsmouth. Ms. Barton expressed her concern for the lack of specific information. She understood the board is following program needs in the building of the new middle school, but believes if the board published a document called "Educations Specifications" developed by Team Design, it would be extremely helpful to the public. Monadnock Regional High School provided this information to the public broken down by what they currently have, what they need and what they would like to see. Ms. Barton would like to see what spaces the middle school needs for their programs and what the state requires.

XI. AGENDA

1. Field Trips - Dr. Lister provided members with a list of Field Trips taken first quarter and reminded the board permission has been granted to the Superintendent to meet with each group for overnight trips and go over necessary protocol. Calls are made before groups leave, when groups arrive and when they arrive back home. Dr. Lister also reminded the board that at any time, participants of field trips would be more than willing to attend a meeting and provide a brief synopsis of their trip.
2. PHS Update - Mr. Jeff Collins provided the board: an informational packet given to every eighth grader in October, a list of where the class of 2008 is heading for further education, a semester one calendar of events and a copy of the welcome back letter. Mr. Collins thanked volunteers and the community for their involvement allowing Project Graduation to be celebrated in a safe and worthy manner. Summer school, under the guidance of Amy Donovan, a counselor at PHS, offered two enrichment courses that were well received. Through increased collaboration with Portsmouth Middle School, the high school is now able to identify students who are in need of help transitioning from the middle school to high school and through the leadership of Hannah Dul and Sam Tombarelli, (two teachers at the high school) the high school piloted a program called "Clipper Camp". The goal of Clipper Camp is to equip students with the essential academic skills and social confidence necessary to achieve excellence in their high school career. Mr. Collins participated in teaching a class and believes the tools the students are receiving will give them building blocks needed to succeed throughout their high school years.

Mr. Collins believes that many initiatives talked about at a recent conference he and several staff members attended are already in place at Portsmouth High. It is simply a matter of making sure all initiatives already in place work together. Mr. Collins stated off-campus privileges have been in place since 1995 and have been re-evaluated by two previous administrations in 2004 and in 2007. Both administrations findings were similar. Although off campus privilege creates some difficulties, opportunity to teach accountability and provide a reward for students who earn good grades and maintain good attendance seem to outweigh the negative. Approximately 50 to 60 students leave campus during lunchtime daily. Privileges are suspended during inclement weather. Other New Hampshire high schools utilizing open campus are Exeter, Hanover, Winnacunnett and Souhegan. Safe guards and procedures are all in place with signed parental permission for each student on file. Within the 40 minute lunch period for the entire student body, Mr. Collins has witnessed the "true magic" of Portsmouth High and what goes on during lunchtime. Students are able to seek out teachers and receive extra help or make up tests. Students meet with informal advisories on a daily basis and teachers are meeting with students that do not even attend their classes. He believes the connections being made between staff members and students outweighs the difficulties created by open campus. Clubs and organizations meet and flourish during this time and PHS is ahead of their time with more and more schools looking to implement a time of day where students can do exactly what Portsmouth High School is already doing.

Mr. LaPage commended the work Mr. Collins is doing at the high school. In 1995 and in 1998 Mr. LaPage did not vote for open campus during lunch. He agrees with seniors receiving first and last period privileges and asked Mr. Collins if he would be surprised to hear that better than 65% of the disciplinary hearings last year to come before the School Board dealt with instances that happened during lunchtime. He questioned liability concerns and disagrees with assigning staff to monitor cars leaving and returning at taxpayer's expense. Mr. LaPage believes keeping students on campus during lunch builds Clipper pride and long lasting friendships.

Mr. Ristaino inquired if the quality of food or two separate lunch periods had been explored. Mr. Collins stated if lunch were separated, lines would still be long in the beginning, as they are now. Students would no longer be able to visit teacher's classrooms because classes would be in session and would lose contact time with teachers. Clubs and organizations would also be affected and students would possibly need to choose between athletics and other after school activities if this time were altered. The numbers for the food service program are not acceptable and Mr. Collins will be working with Ms. Laska to improve lunch choices and entice more students to purchase lunch from the school. Mr. Ristaino asked Ms. Rockefeller what she personally does during her lunch period. Ms. Rockefeller stated she belongs to four organizations that meet during lunch and that she has noticed most people coming back from off campus are carrying iced coffee.

Ms. Garrity asked if Mr. Collins believed forty minutes was enough time to allow students to leave, eat and return in a safe manner. Mr. Collins stated most are going to Fresh Market or Dunkin Donuts and he is not running into many returning late. She then asked him to estimate how many issues were dealt with resulting from students leaving during this time. Mr. Collins stated lunchtime is an interesting time at any high school and he would need to access last years records to provide an accurate account to the board.

Ms. Garrity inquired how many students the cafeteria accommodates. Dr. Lister reported roughly 920. Ms. Garrity asked if Mr. Collins if there was any other way to do lunch instead of one 40 minute lunch. Is there anything he can think of outside the box to help the lunch program if it isn't creating two lunches out of the 40-minute block? Mr. Collins believes there are two separate issues that need to be addressed. How to improve getting students to purchase lunch in the cafeteria and how we utilize lunchtime presently. Mr. Collins reported discussions with students found the quality and price of the food to be unacceptable. No other food sales are allowed during lunch hours with the exception of Culinary Arts Gourmet Club who sells lunches on Fridays as part of their program.

Ms. Emerson inquired what time lunch was served. Lunchtime runs between 10:40 am and 11:20 am. Instead of dividing into two lunches, she wondered if it could be divided into two waves where one half of the student body ate while the other met in clubs and in teachers rooms to receive extra instruction so there would be a continuous line, only smaller. She also inquired as to what percentage of the student body used lunch period to do other things instead of eating.

Mr. Collins guessed approximately 50/50. Last year 135 seniors qualified for off campus privileges and 96 juniors. Ms. Walker wondered if lunch lines could be staggered and stated she has mixed feelings due to the motivation aspect and would like to have room to provide lunch for all. Mr. Ristaino tasked Ms. Rockefeller to poll students on what they would like to see for lunch options and do these choices fit within our wellness policy. Ms. Rockefeller will report back the first meeting in October.

3. Technology Update - Ms. Susan Birrell thanked the board for inviting her to provide a brief update on the Technology Plan evolving throughout the district. She then thanked all staff members who have worked diligently this summer entering information into the new student database, Infinite Campus. Based on new initiatives, we now have the opportunity to do needs assessment on the learning that occurs with technologies within our school system. Transforming and reinventing the learning environment are themes that will guide actions plans that we will need to build based on the learning needs of our students and the learning they enjoy. Schools cannot continue teaching technology like it did in the 1990's when computer education was first introduced. How do we get to where we want to go? Ms. Birrell provided an informational packet including goals laid out for the district and a time frame in meeting them.

Ms. Birrell stated that all students are now required to save work in a portfolio. A plan needs to be created stating which grade level will fulfill each requirement needed to complete this portfolio by eighth grade graduation. Portsmouth School District is not meeting state requirements presently. Teachers need to receive more training (approximately forty hours of instruction) to better understand the concept of global learning. This fall elementary schools will take a thirty-minute test to assess what students already know and test results will help plan for different projects based learning activities. LoTi results show Portsmouth School Department teachers to be lacking, falling into level two. A concrete plan needs to be implemented as to how the district will reach step four and ultimately level six.

Replacement Cycle: Replacing all administrative machines and servers. Three labs at the high school, one at PASS and at least one mobile lab will need to be replaced. What technology is chosen will be driven by what the curriculum requires. Possible sub-notebooks may be purchased. (Much cheaper and more mobile.)

Infinite Campus – (Addressed in Goal Five.) IC is up and running and the grading portion of the program will be implemented soon. Training will be the first two weeks of school. A benefit of Infinite Campus already being noticed is the ability of parents to access their child's schedule directly on line.

Acceptable Use Policy: Needs to be updated and revised, then approved by the school board. A policy on copyright will need to be drafted as well as email. Susan hopes to work with the public library on the copyright policy.

White Board technology – Fun to teach with and allows teachers to see answers to questions instantly by students responding from their desks. The teacher knows which students have answered correctly but students do not. This allows the teacher to assess whether she is ready to move onto the next chapter. Three are being used in classrooms as of today's date.

Staff Changes: Joe Schofield left and was replaced by Jim Barrett, a technician from Bottomline Technologies.

Dr. Lister inquired if part of the replacement cycle is to put wi-fi into all buildings. Ms. Birrell stated the district definitely would need to put wi-fi everywhere. She is very concerned about security. Ms. Birrell noticed she was not able to log onto the web at City Hall until given a password. The school system will need to implement the same protocol to maintain security on its servers.

Ms. Emerson asked the difference between portable labs and laptops and why looking at sub notebooks would be a better option. Ms. Birrell stated a portable lab consists of a cart with electricity and 24 to 25 laptops for teachers to use in their classrooms when they can't book a desktop lab. She stated teachers have had problems logging all 24 laptops on, getting all authenticated to the network and keeping the batteries alive. When adding on time needed to shut down the laptops and put away, the teacher loses on average 15 minutes instruction time. It has also been noted teachers sometimes misuse portable labs. (For instance to read To Kill a Mocking Bird.) The district does not have enough bandwidth to accommodate all logging on to the same website simultaneously.

Ms. Sweet requested Ms. Birrell compile a list of other districts that are scoring better on the LoTi and what they are doing compared to Portsmouth School Department. Ms. Birrell stated she would research and report back to the board. Dr. Shuldman stated there are many reasons why teachers are still on step two in Portsmouth. One being the technology they must work with is archaic and difficult to do what is necessary to instruct effectively. As the middle school is renovated, decisions will need to be made regarding wiring and if wireless makes sense.

Mr. Zdravec thanked Ms. Birrell for her leadership and her ability to identify leaders capable of helping other teachers in the learning community. He also stated with new hires, Portsmouth School Department is looking for a certain set of skills to move us in the direction of integration.

Dr. Shuldman requested that when the technology plan is completed, Ms. Birrell sit with Dr. Lister and administrative council to provide a complete update. Dr. Lister will then provide the final plan to the School Board.

4. School Board Retreat August 02, 2008 - Ms. Emerson stated the board discussed drafting an outline for the middle school renovation's education specifications and making available to the public. This would help explain to taxpayers this is what we are trying to do and why.

5. School tours prior to board meetings – Superintendent Lister announced he would like to encourage community members to take tours of each school with school board members prior to board meetings. He also stated there have been suggestions that every board meeting be held at City Hall in order for all meetings to be televised. Dr. Shuldman stated the board discussed and decided to continue to attend all schools during the year. Dr. Lister stated it may be possible to have all meetings televised and that he will be working closely with the City Manager to see if resources are available. Board members had requested Dr. Lister to inquire switching televised board meetings to the second meeting held every month at City Hall. Dr. Lister reported that it would not be possible to switch due to scheduling conflicts with meetings already scheduled at City Hall.
6. Other: School Board Work Session to be held August 27 2008, 7 PM. This meeting will begin the search for the new Superintendent of Schools.

XII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Middle School Update: Presentation from JCJ postponed, Mr. Stokel provided wonderful explanation of the middle school program. Members visited other schools and saw space allocations. It is now clear Portsmouth Middle School's programs are very robust, allowing students to experience technical educational programs most students elsewhere do not experience. Dr. Shuldman stated September 9, 2008 a vote would be taken on the board's preference in the new middle school architectural plans.

Ms. Emerson requested Mr. Stokel provide a list of what our middle school currently offers compared to other local schools. She then asked for clarification on the differences between technical education and computer education. Mr. Zadravec stated Technical Education is what was formally called industrial arts such as woodworking.

Ms. Walker stated after visiting other schools, she did not realize other local districts do not offer any international language until the end of 8th grade. Music and art are substantially less as well.

2. Parent Liaison Committee: Mapped directly to goal number six under communications. The Portsmouth School Department would like to develop specific strategies for improving communication and community relations including frequent communication about Portsmouth schools and opportunities to engage the community in conversation about school related issues. Ms. Stevens and Ms. Mayer will be working together to coordinate PTA and parent groups throughout the district.

3. Special Educational Task Force Report: Identified four guiding questions to guide their work:
 - What are needs of our Special Education students and how are we currently meeting them?
 - What is the cost?
 - What is our vision for Special Education?
 - What sustainability issues need to be addressed in order to prioritize our critical resources?

Ms. Sweet stated the Task Force is hoping to better articulate what we need, that we already have, understand the costs and what funding is available. Comparisons to other districts will be researched to identify the best practices.

4. Mr. Zdravec stated that next week Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday a Math Institute will be held at Portsmouth High School. How the district assesses and plans for intervention, both universal and targeted will be mapped out. Mr. Zdravec invited the board to attend. He then stated on Wednesday at 9:00 a.m., Dr. Shuldman is doing a demonstration on intervention.

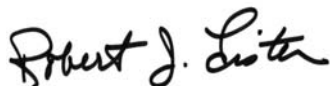
XIII. NEXT AGENDA ITEMS

1. Prior to vote, Mr. LaPage requested legal clarification on whether the state would have any approval or objections toward not having the property so noted, where City Council is projecting it will take six to nine months.
2. Are we voting on any type of financial bonding issue? If so, Mr. LaPage believes it needs to be posted accordingly. Dr. Shuldman clarified, that if we are recommending a vote that a certain amount of money is attached to city council than that requires a public meeting. Dr. Shuldman requested that Dr. Lister follow up with Ms. Dwyer.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:20 p.m., voted to adjourn

Respectfully submitted by:



Dr. Robert J. Lister
Superintendent of Schools