

## SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES

COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
DATE: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2008

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

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

### **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), JOHN STOKEL (PRINCIPAL PMS), MS. ABIGAIL ROCKEFELLER (STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE), MS. LINDA BRIOLAT (EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE), AND MS. ANN MAYER (SAU 50 REPRESENTATIVE).

Absent:

### **III. INVOCATION**

Chair Shuldman asked School Board members to reflect in a moment of silence.

### **IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Vice Chair Ristaino led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

### **V. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

#### **1. October 7, 2008 School Board Work Session**

Motion to accept the minutes of the October 7, 2008 School Board Work Session by Ms. Garrity. Seconded by Ms. Walker. Voted and approved.

#### **2. October 7, 2008 Regular School Board Meeting**

Motion to accept the minutes of the October 7, 2008 regular School board Meeting by Ms. Emerson. Seconded by Ms. Walker. Voted and approved.

### **VI. COMMUNICATIONS**

1. Vice Chair Ristaino had requested that Mr. Stokel present enrollment numbers on the middle school KIDS program and students with special needs. Both were included.
2. Portsmouth will once again be collecting volunteers and sponsors for the Holiday Express. Superintendent Lister asked board members to save the date of December 13, 2008.
3. A letter from a concerned citizen was provided to the board.
4. Little Harbour's newsletter was provided to the board.
5. The November Elementary lunch menu was provided to the board.

6. School board members received a letter from the Taxpayers Association under separate cover.

## **VII. RECOGNITION OF STAFF AND STUDENTS**

Ms. Garrity asked Assistant Superintendent Steve Zdravec if there were any positions yet to be filled and Mr. Zdravec stated the district is fully staffed.

## **VIII. FINANCIAL**

### **1. Other**

Mr. Bartlett stated that in September, a memo was provided to the board on the district's substitute rate. Mr. Bartlett stated that paraprofessionals are at a critical shortage and long-term paraprofessionals are even harder to secure. Mr. Bartlett requested the board approve the hourly rate for long-term subs from \$10.00/hour to \$11.34/hour. Ms. Walker inquired as to what is the window for long term and Mr. Bartlett stated that more than 30 days is considered long term. Mr. Shuldman asked why we would hire a long-term substitute instead of filling the position. Ms. Briolat stated that usually it is in the circumstance that someone needs to seek medical treatment or is on maternity leave. A roll call vote was taken to increase the hourly rate of long-term substitutes from \$10.00/hour to \$11.34/hour. Motion passed unanimously.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION**

Chair Shuldman address people in the community by stating that after a work session with the City Manager and Attorney Bob Sullivan, who presented information to the board about the middle school, it is fair to say it would be prudent to spend some more time before voting. Chair Shuldman stated the board will continue a conversation with City Council about the middle school size, site and cost and vote at a later date.

Public commentary –

Mr. Kevin Slover, of 20 Odiorne Point Road, expressed concern about spending \$40 million and not getting everything that would be needed. He also expressed busing students to a different location for athletic practices and games. He also believes that if students were closer to the high school, it would build team participation and community.

Carl Diemer –337 Aldrich Road asked the board to please consider alternatives. Mr. Diemer believes the current proposal is missing portions that directly relate to educational value. He also believes the entire project should be able to be completed for \$35 million and can be done with parking and fields as well. Taxpayers that need to pay the bill should be respected. Mr. Diemer passed out some handouts to board members as well.

Mr. Dave Forman – 579 Sagamore Avenue. Mr. Forman had expected to congratulate the board for voting. He stated that a new school will cost more than rehabilitating Parrott Avenue and he was glad to see that the board will be working with City Council.

Mr. Rick Chellman –430 Richards Avenue. Mr. Chellman stated he was a little concerned that the work session held before the public hearing was posted as a non-public work session. He asked the board to be creative but not to over state their numbers.

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Mr. Allen Nelson, 225 Marcy Street. Mr. Nelson was very enamored with keeping the middle school down town at first but feels that he hasn't received definitive answers that other options have been considered and felt the board had not explained why they wanted to spend the amount of money necessary to keep the Parrott Avenue site. Perhaps the Sagamore Hill option may be something that the board will need to explore.

Harold Whitehouse of 58 Humphreys Court stated that by delaying the vote, the board got his attention and he appreciates the concern. Mr. Whitehouse supported the decision to stay on Parrott Avenue. But with all the recent circumstances, maybe it is time for the board to look at other options and believes that the middle school is the most important issue the city has had in last the fifty years.

## **X. AGENDA**

### **1. Middle School Update**

Chair Shuldman stated it was important for the board to analyze where they were and what needed to be researched further. It was stated in the work session that the board felt it important and necessary to look further into the cost of two recently built middle schools and to assess reasons for the difference in cost.

The board also stated the parking issue needed to be further addressed and hoped to collaborate with the City Council to come up with solutions.

JCJ stated they were lacking a current traffic study for the library. Results provided to the firm were from 2003 and were not even used in the final plan. 66 spaces are needed total. JCJ discussed some alternatives and believes there are potential parking spaces, but will need to work with the city.

Mr. LaPage expressed concern that the 100 spaces required by the state are specifically for employees and felt that the plan is 25 to 30 parking spaces short for visitors. At a minimum of 4 times a year, parents will need to park for annual events as well. Daily activities need additional 25 or 30 spaces. JCJ believes another 25 could be found by collaborating with the city.

Ms. Emerson asked if currently, teachers park somewhere else and was interested where they park? Mr. John Stokel stated that behind the building there are 10 spaces designated for faculty that teach in more than one building and need to travel. These are the only designated spots. Some faculty park adjacent to building, some on Parrott Avenue and some near the library.

Mr. Legg then asked if it was possible with diagonal parking to gain spaces on the south side of Parrott Avenue? If it meant widening the street, could more cars fit? JCJ stated they would need to research the possibility. Other possibilities were discussed as well.

Chair Shuldman asked if Parrott Avenue were to be widened would there be a certain distance from the water? JCJ stated that new legislation in June, called Shoreland Protection, would need to be looked at further and a whole series of criteria would need to be met.

Mr. LaPage then addressed the board on the athletic fields situation. One of the greatest concerns with losing all field space at the middle school was physical education, which cannot be compromised. How do we make sure that at least the field immediately next to school is kept? In the work session prior, the board was assured that once the property was turned over, the grassy space left would meet physical education requirements, but nothing more.

Mr. LaPage believes that Mr. Rus Wilson did an outstanding job in researching 11 sites, both private and public, but none are attached to the middle school. Any multi purpose field would need to meet requirements of lacrosse, soccer and field hockey. Mr. Wilson also wanted to make sure it was available long term. Mr. Ed Murdough confirmed that the state would only approve the fields to go up in size. None of the current fields are in compliance with athletic regulations. Two playfields could fit in the Sagamore area. Mr. Wilson would also like to see an all-purpose field, where currently we have our football field, with artificial turf. The field itself would cost about one million dollars and unfortunately is cost prohibitive, according to JCJ Architects.

One field could be located at the Stump Dump, but the other would need to be located elsewhere. Mr. LaPage strongly believes the program should put the two fields together to keep it cost effective.

One concern from fields being off site would be athletes showing up before coaches arrive. If fields were at the high school, there would at least be people around. Ms. Emerson asked, "Is it the groups recommendation that the Sagamore site is the only site that would host both fields?" Mr. LaPage responded yes. Mr. Bartlett stated that whatever the middle school has for athletic programs, that is what the district will need to maintain.

Ms. Garrity then asked if the middle school took over fields across the street **and** built fields needed in Sagamore area, would we still be reimbursed? Mr. Bartlett answered that the standard answer from the state is if it supports your middle school program and middle school sports have priority, the state will support reimbursement. The state looks at safety first, requirements second and then everything else.

Ms. Emerson asked where the city fits into all this? Mr. LaPage stated that Mr. Wilson is presenting Mr. Bohenko and the city with options. He looks at the entire recreational needs and has the authority to recommend options.

Ms. Sweet inquired how to proceed. Did the board need to make a motion to postpone the vote?

Mr. Legg motioned to postpone the vote in order to schedule a work session with city council members to review specific items discussed tonight. Seconded by Ms. Walker. Unanimously approved.

At the next board meeting three field trip groups will be invited to make a brief presentation.

## **XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

1. Safe Routes to School – Ms. Emerson stated there was a good turnout to the National Walk to School Day and the committee hopes to do another walk to school event in the spring, which individual schools will take ownership of. Superintendent Lister thanked teachers and parents that participated, especially due to the event happening during NECAP testing.
2. The Communications Committee met and posted the FAQ and timeline on the middle school database. Next meeting, the committee will discuss how best to rearrange the on-line material by adding descriptions and breaking up into logical chunks.
3. Newsletter – Ms. Stevens asked if the board liked the format and idea of the draft newsletter? Some information was questioned as to whether it should be on a newsletter such as school board names and addresses. This information can be found on line. Ms. Stevens felt strongly that it should be all in one central location and simply was another space that people could access. Mr. Lapage reminded board members that the newsletter would need to be provided in hard copy in some places. The board asked Ms. Walker and Ms. Stevens to complete the first edition and return to the board.
4. Superintendent Search Committee – Ms. Walker stated that the committee met to brainstorm ideas for the leadership profile. This profile will help assess applications received. Mr. Zadavec should receive the packets at Central Office by November 20 from NHSBA and tentative interview dates have been set up, as well as candidate days and nights. These dates will be given to school board members and available to the public in the near future.

Names of the Superintendent Search Committee:

Ms. Leslie Stevens, Ms. Sherri Ham-Garrity, Mr. Jerry Hejtmanek, Ms. Linda Briolat, Ms. Anne Walker, Mr. Bob Smith, Mr. Steve Zadavec, Ms. Ann Mayer, Ms. Hannah Feintuch, Ms. Maureen Donnelly, Mr. Joe Onosco and Dr. Mitchell Shuldman.

Motion to accept members of the committee by Mr. Ristaino. Seconded by Mr. Legg. Approved unanimously.

Chair Shuldman stated that there were many other members throughout the district and community that would be interviewed by Dr. DeMinico as well.

The next task of the committee is to research a range of salary and recommend to the board on November 18, 2008.

5. Special Education Task Force – Ms. Sweet stated the committee met through the summer and last week with great discussions about roles, challenges, opportunities and directions for the future. A presentation in January for the board will help explain what drives the cost. Next meeting in November will be a “bring a friend” meeting in order to broaden the discussion as the formal work of the Task Force comes to an end.

Ms Emerson inquired when the board would be getting a list of all committees?  
Superintendent Lister stated it would be added to the November 18 agenda.

Ms. Walker stated that tomorrow evening would be candidate's night for executive council and the state senate in Council Chambers, televised.

Vice Chair Ristaino stated he would be resigning as a member of the school board and as Vice Chair, with a letter to follow in November. He and his family will be relocating to Connecticut.

**XII. NEXT AGENDA ITEMS (November 18, 2008)**

1. List of all committees and their members

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT** At 9:10 p.m., voted to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:

Dr. Robert J. Lister

Superintendent of Schools