

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the January 6, 2004 Reorganization Meeting

The Portsmouth School Board held its reorganization meeting in the Board Room at Little Harbour School on Tuesday, January 6, 2004.

Attendance

PRESENT: Mr. Raimond Bowles, Mrs. Roseann Vozella Clark, Mrs. Nancy Novelline-Clayburgh, Mrs. Nansi Craig, Mr. Clay Hayward, Mr. Kent LaPage, Mr. John Lyons, Jr., Mr. Charles Vaughn, Mrs. Ann Walker

PARTICIPATING: Dr. Lyonel B. Tracy (Superintendent of Schools); Dr. Robert J. Lister (Assistant Superintendent); Mr. W. Peter Torrey (Business Administrator); Mr. Adam Irish (Student Representative); Diane O’Leary McGee (Employee Representative)

Call to Order

Dr. Tracy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Lister called the roll. Dr. Tracy called for a moment of silent reflection. Mrs. McGee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dr. Tracy said his role this evening is to facilitate the election of a Board Chair. He said that Mrs. Clayburgh had asked to be recognized.

*Call for
Nominations*

Mrs. Clayburgh nominated Kent LaPage as Chair of the Portsmouth School Board. Mr. Vaughn seconded the motion.

*Nomination of Kent
LaPage for Chair*

Mrs. Clayburgh stated that when one thinks of the Board’s many accomplishments under the leadership of Mr. LaPage, it is easy to think about him continuing in this role. She said the Board secured funding in the amount of 36 million dollars for construction and renovations at Portsmouth High School under Kent’s leadership. She said Board members should feel pride when they drive to school and see the construction in progress. She credited Mr. LaPage for serving as Co-Chair with Councilor Joanne Grasso on this building project.

Nomination of Kent

Mrs. Clayburgh said the Board had the difficult task of cutting one million dollars from its budget last year. She said Chair LaPage was very considerate of speakers throughout this process and as the individual votes were taken.

***LaPage for Chair
(con't.)***

Mrs. Clayburgh said the Board has embarked upon a process to review the educational concept and needs of the Portsmouth Middle School. Mrs. Clayburgh also credited Mr. LaPage for his deep interest in athletics and other extra-curricular programs in the schools, and for his outstanding leadership at the State level (he was recently elected as President of the New Hampshire School Boards Association). Mrs. Clayburgh said Mr. LaPage is always honest, fair, and calm, and has proven to be an effective leader who gets the job done.

Nominations Closed

Mr. Vaughn moved the nominations be closed and the secretary cast one vote for Kent LaPage as Chair of the Portsmouth School Board. Mr. Lyons seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Superintendent Tracy cast the vote for Mr. LaPage and welcomed Mr. LaPage to his seat as Board Chair.

Chair Elected

***Nominations for
Vice-Chair***

Chair LaPage entertained nominations for the position of Vice-Chair. Mr. Vaughn stated that John Lyons has served as an outstanding vice-chair and moved that he nominated unanimously as Vice-Chair of the Portsmouth School Board. Mr. Bowles seconded the motion. Mr. Lyons said he is honored by the support, but that he would decline the nomination.

Mr. Lyons nominated Nancy Novelline-Clayburgh as Vice-Chair to the Portsmouth School Board. Mr. Vaughn seconded the nomination. Mr. Lyons said that Mrs. Clayburgh is hard-working, cares about the children, and is honest and loyal. He said she would make a spectacular vice-chair, and he urged his fellow Board members to support this nomination. Mr. Lyons said he has enjoyed serving as Vice-Chair to the Board, but he believes it is time for Mrs. Clayburgh to assume this role.

Nominations Closed

Mr. Vaughn moved the nomination be closed and the Chair cast one vote for Nancy Novelline-Clayburgh as Vice-Chair of the Portsmouth School Board. Mr. Bowles seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved and the Chair cast the vote for Mrs. Clayburgh. Mrs. Clayburgh took her seat next to the Chair.

Vice-Chair Elected

***Request to Discuss
Item Not on Agenda***

Mr. Bowles requested permission to discuss an item that is not on the agenda. The Chair said he would grant this after his comments.

***Comments from
Chair***

Chair LaPage said he was most surprised by Mrs. Clayburgh's presentation. He said he is greatly humbled and honored that the Board and City of Portsmouth continue to have faith in him by electing him to remain in this position. He said he does not take this honor lightly. He said the nine elected Board members sitting around this table are leaders themselves, and any one of them could fulfill the

Comments from

Chair (con'.) role of Board Chair.

Mr. LaPage quoted from two books that he recently read, "Profiles in Courage For Our Time" by Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg (a continuation of the book her father wrote in the 1960s recognizing the journey of conscience undertaken by public servants); and "It Doesn't Take a Hero," an autobiography of retired General Norman Schwarzkopf.

Mr. LaPage read the following, which appeared in President Kennedy's book, "Profiles in Courage," and has been reprinted in Ms. Kennedy's book. "In whatever arena of life one may meet the challenge of courage, whatever may be the sacrifices he faces if he follows his conscience – the loss of friends, his fortune, his contentment, even the esteem of his fellow men – each man must decide for himself the course he will follow. The stories of past courage can define that ingredient – they can teach, they can offer hope, they can provide inspiration. But they cannot supply courage itself. For this, each man must look into his own soul." Mr. LaPage said the Portsmouth School Board has followed its conscience and has met the challenges over the years in dealing with budget issues and "adequate yearly progress" as outlined by "No Child Left Behind."

Mr. LaPage thanked his family and friends for their support, as well as the teachers, administrators and staff who work in the schools.

He said the Board can look forward to the new construction and renovation of the High School. He said they are also looking at the needs of the Middle School. He said the Board will also work to improve each of the elementary schools as there are needs in each of those buildings. Mr. LaPage said the Board wants to make sure that all children of Portsmouth get the best possible education. He said people forget there are children in the world that must struggle just to have a meal every day, and education is not available to them.

Chair LaPage quoted a closing statement from General Schwarzkopf's book, ". . . I don't know what that responsibility will mean to the future of our great country, but I shall always remain confident of the American people's ability to rise to *any* challenge." Mr. LaPage said he knows the Portsmouth School Board will rise to any challenge that is presented to it.

In closing, Mr. LaPage thanked the Board for the great privilege of serving as Board Chair to represent the members of the School Board, administration, faculty, and children of the City of Portsmouth.

The Chair recognized Mr. Bowles.

***Comments re:
2004-05 Budget
Process***

Mr. Bowles asked if the Board could begin the development of the school department budget for next year. He stated the City may be in a temporary position of having the rate for the Statewide property tax reduced to \$3.24. If this is not changed by the Legislature, it would mean that all of the donor towns will be sending less money to the State. The City would “save” 4.1 million dollars, and he suggested there may be the possibility of a “little wiggle room” for the School Department budget. He said funds have been appropriated to cover obligations of the City’s collective bargaining agreements. Mr. Bowles reminded the Board that last year the School Department and Municipal budgets adhered to the guidelines voted by the City Council. Mr. Bowles suggested the School Board revisit some of the areas that it had to cut last year, keeping in mind the possibility of reinstating some of those positions or programs. Mr. Bowles suggested that the Board submit a supplemental budget in addition to the budget prepared by the Superintendent.

***Comments re:
2004-05 Budget
Process***

Dr. Tracy stated that he appreciates Mr. Bowles’ position for advocating for the students and for “doing his homework.” The Superintendent said, however, that he is compelled to remind the Board, as its CEO, that there is a protocol and a process for presenting the budget that has been successfully used over the last three years. He said the major goal is to offer a quality education to all students at an affordable cost to the taxpayers. Dr. Tracy said that he met with Mr. Torrey today to examine the preliminary budget figures for 2004-05. He said all budgetmakers have turned in the educational narratives, and he believes it would be premature for this Board, without that comparative base, to make decisions about an alternative budget prior to a close examination of the Superintendent’s budget.

Dr. Tracy also addressed the assumption that the Central Office is not revisiting last year’s budget reductions. He said that each Principal is reviewing, in a comprehensive way, the reductions that were presented and approved in last year’s budget and how these reductions have affected the students’ education. He said this information will be provided to the full Board. He said the Board may choose to do an alternative budget, but he advised that would be premature for the Board to do this prior to seeing the Superintendent’s proposed budget.

Mr. Bowles said he did not suggest an alternative budget, but rather a supplemental memo in those instances where it might be possible, if money were available. He said he wants the Board to have some flexibility if there is an opportunity for that within the next 45 days.

The Chair stated there will be much discussion when the Board gets

To be voted by the Portsmouth School Board at its next scheduled meeting.

into its budget sessions, and there will be difficult decisions to make. He suggested that if Board members have questions on the budget, that they be directed to the Superintendent, Business Administrator, or Assistant Superintendent. Mr. LaPage said last year the Board made very difficult decisions concerning budget cuts. He said the budget, second to disciplinary hearings, is one of the most difficult things Board members have to do. He suggested the Board wait until it receives the Superintendent's proposed budget.

***Committee
Assignments***

The Chair handed out a sign-up sheet for committees along with a description of the various committees. He asked the Board members to indicate their preference of committees on which to serve, and to return it by Friday of this week so that committee assignments may be made at next week's meeting.

***School Board
Retreat***

The Chair announced the location of the Board Retreat (scheduled for Saturday, January 17) has been changed to "Exchange City" at the Wentworth School at 8:30 a.m.

Adjournment

Mr. Vaughn moved the Board adjourn its meeting; Mr. Lyons seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.
Executive Secretary