

**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the January 13, 2004 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, January 13, 2004 in the Council Chambers at the Portsmouth Municipal Complex (City Hall).

Attendance

PRESENT: Mr. Kent LaPage (Chair), Mrs. Nancy Novelline Clayburgh (Vice-Chair), Mr. Raimond Bowles, Mrs. Roseann Vozella Clark, Mrs. Nansi Craig, Mr. Clay Hayward, Mr. John Lyons, 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), and Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative)

Call to Order

Chair LaPage called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He called for a moment of silent reflection and asked people to keep in their thoughts High School math teacher, Stan Lyford, who recently underwent surgery and who is now home recuperating. Mr. LaPage remembered Corey DeRochemont, a high school student who died during the holidays, as someone who touched the hearts of the high school students, who came together and held various fund-raisers for Corey during her illness.

Newly elected Vice-Chair Nancy Novelline Clayburgh led the Pledge of Allegiance.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes Approved

The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the December 22, 2003 meeting. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the special meeting of December 22, 2003. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Chair called for approval of the minutes of the reorganization

meeting of January 6, 2004. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Correspondence

Informational Items The Chair made reference to the following items that were either included in the Board packet or in the folders this evening: a letter from Diane O’Leary McGee inviting the Board to read to students on March 2, 2004 (the 100th birthday of Dr. Seuss and “Read Across America Day”); information on the Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday breakfast to be held at Yoken’s Conference Center on January 19; a sheet to list topics for the January 17 School Board Retreat; information about the National School Boards Association conference to be held in Orlando, Florida in March; and information from the Trustees of the Trust Funds regarding scholarships.

Recognition of Teachers in Iraq Chair LaPage read a letter from Raymond A. Priske, P.E., LTC Battalion Commander, recognizing Sgt. Dexter Robblee, a teacher at Portsmouth High School, for serving in the United States Army and participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Dr. Lister said that Mr. Robblee is home for two weeks and will be returning to Iraq next week. He also said that Michael Rowe, a math teacher at Portsmouth High School, was home during the holidays and is now back in Iraq.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

Comments About Political Speaker Mr. William St. Laurent, 253 Colonial Drive, Portsmouth, congratulated the newly elected and re-elected members of the Board. Mr. St. Laurent stated that he and other local residents were upset by comments made by Terry McAuliffe, Democratic National Chair, at his recent visit to Portsmouth High School. He commended Dr. Tracy for acting swiftly and sending a letter to Mr. McAuliffe indicating that some of what he said was inappropriate. Mr. St. Laurent requested the Board address the matter of information brought in from outside of the school curriculum. He said he is making this request for the welfare of the students.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF/STUDENTS

“Amigos Program” Ms. Amy Mercier (guidance counselor at Portsmouth High School), Ms. Tracey Gilroy (science teacher at Portsmouth High School), and Ms. Meg Ronchi (Spanish teacher at Portsmouth High School) were present with high school students to talk about the “Amigos Program.” Ms. Mercier said they are very proud of the students who are committed to this program.

“Amigos Program”
(con’t.)

Students Katie Randall, Mandy Blanchette, Lindsay Douglas, Andrew Thorne, and Jay Berman told the Board they go to Little Harbour and Dondero Elementary Schools and work with third graders. They said they enjoy working with the younger children and being role models for them. They credited their advisors, Ms. Mercier, Ms. Gilroy and Ms. Ronchi for the success of the program. In two years, the number of high school students participating in the Amigos Program has doubled to 50 students. Ms. Mercier said they hope to be able to add New Franklin School in the future. At the present time, there are five or six high school students waiting to be matched with an elementary student. The elementary students are selected for this program through an application process with assistance from the elementary school guidance counselors. Board members congratulated the students for participating in this program and for befriending the elementary students. They said the high school students are making a difference for these elementary students.

PASS Trip to Washington, D.C.

Ms. Carol James, Principal of the Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School (PASS), was present to request permission for two students and two staff members to attend the National Leadership Forum sponsored by the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. Dr. Lister said the opportunity for this trip came through the Portsmouth Safe Schools Team and will be fully funded through the Drug and Alcohol Grant obtained by the Portsmouth School Department. Ms. James said that upon return from the conference, staff and students will implement a school-wide initiative that supports the learning from this conference. Ms. James answered questions from the Board. Ms. James said they have discussed which students to ask and will select students who will benefit from the conference, who plan to stay at PASS and will be able to bring back information to the others. Mr. Lyons moved the Board approve the request for two PASS teachers and two PASS students to attend the National Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C. from January 20 – 23, 2004 as outlined in Ms. James’ memo of January 9, 2004. Mr. Bowles seconded the motion. Mr. Lyons amended his motion to include the trip be approved with the understanding that the Superintendent of Schools has the discretion to cancel the trip based on information concerning safety codes. Mr. Bowles seconded the amendment. The motion was unanimously approved.

Speakers at PHS

Mr. Forrest Ransdell, Principal of Portsmouth High School, was in attendance to present two requests for student trips. He informed the Board that Jayne Millerick, State Republican Chair, will speak to students at Portsmouth High School on February second and will talk about the workings of an incumbent party preparing for an election. He also stated that Congressman Bradley will visit Portsmouth High School and share with the students some video and photographs taken during his recent trip to Iraq.

***Madrigal Singers’
Request to Travel to
Montreal, Canada***

Mr. Ransdell said the Madrigal Singers have submitted a request for participation in an overnight field trip to participate in a competition festival. He said that performance groups require independent adjudication of their performance as part of their growth and development. Mr. Ransdell said he is familiar with the organization selected, Heritage Music Festivals, and they operate well-regarded programs. He introduced Ms. Gwen Baker.

Ms. Baker told the Board she has been in Portsmouth for six and one-half years and has decided to take the Madrigals on a trip so they can seem for themselves how the rate with other performing groups. She said performing groups from around the world will be at the Heritage Music Festival. She said the Madrigal Singers are made up of 23 students, and all of them plan to participate in this trip to be held in Montreal, Canada on April 22- 25, 2004. She outlined fundraising activities that have taken place throughout the school year. Mrs. Craig asked how many students are 18 years old. She said it is legal for 18 years olds in Canada to consume alcohol, and she asked what precautions would be taken to prevent our 18 year old students from consuming alcohol on this trip. Dr. Tracy said it is made clear to all students and chaperones that there is to be no consumption of alcohol allowed by students on any trip no matter how old they are. Mrs. Baker said the term of the contract with the Heritage Music Festival states that it is a violation for participants to consume alcohol. Mr. Vaughn moved the Board approve the request for the Madrigal Singers to attend the Heritage Music Festivals in Montreal, Canada on April 22 – 25, 2004. Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

***Request for Junior
World Council to
Travel to Cuba***

Mr. Ransdell said the Junior World Council has the unique opportunity to visit Cuba, which has a completely different society. He said the terror alert has been lifted, and he is constantly checking the State Department’s web-site to see if there is anything specific to Cuba. At this time, there is no threat associated with traveling to Cuba.

Ms. Maya Glos, Junior World Council Advisor, said the Junior World Council participates in activities based on national and international events. She said that she traveled to Cuba in 2000 with students and Dr. Lister and Mr. Arnstein. She said they are not proposing a Caribbean vacation; Cuba offers a wonderful educational opportunity for students.

Mr. Joseph Arnstein said Cuba is an extremely safe country in which to travel with students; the Cuban people are extremely friendly and are happy to see the American students; and the students who traveled there in 2000 returned home more appreciative of the

***Request for Junior
World Council to
Travel to Cuba***

freedoms in the United States.

Ms. Shannon Fernald, social studies teacher, said traveling to Cuba is a unique opportunity for the students. She said students will view the country's architecture, will engage in conversations with Cuban people, and will provide humanitarian aid to the Cuban people by bringing medical supplies and school supplies.

Mr. Steve Sanger, father of former School Board student representative Sarah Sanger, told the Board that Sarah was on the trip to Cuba in 2000. He said she is extremely supportive of this trip and was much more appreciative of the United States of American after returning from Cuba. He does not think she would have learned that if she had not gone to Cuba. He said a long time ago Cuba was exporting military supplies and weapons; today it exports doctors as they have some of the finest medical universities. He urged the Board to approve the trip.

Mrs. Aly Greenberg told the Board that her oldest daughter had the honor of traveling with the Junior World Council to England. She asked the Board to approve the trip to Cuba. She said Cuba is one of the most beautiful places in the world; the most precious jewel of the Caribbean. Ms. Greenberg said that she is Cuban. She asked the Board to approve the trip as it will provide the students with an opportunity to visit a country that is very difficult to visit because of United States travel restrictions. She said the country is full of culture, and the Cuban Government strongly supports the arts. She said the students will be able to see first-hand a country under Communism and will really appreciate the democracy under which they live. She said there are lots of lessons that can be learned during this trip.

Ms. Glos reviewed the cost per student and said a talent show will be held this Thursday as a fundraising event. She said the students will need to travel to Cuba through another country, as the United States has placed a restriction on travel to Cuba. A system will be in place so that staff and students will be able to communicate with the school and with their homes. She said no school days will be lost for students taking this trip.

Dr. Lister said this trip has been an historic event in Portsmouth over the years. Portsmouth High School was the first high school in the United States to receive a license to visit Cuba. In the past, travel was restricted to doctors and business people. Dr. Lister said it was agreed by all that our students represented our community and the United States in a very nice way. He said that teachers and educators from Portsmouth and the area have traveled to Cuba over the past couple of years; Mrs. McGee and her husband traveled with them.

***Junior World
Council Trip
(continued)***

He said the trip is linked to the curriculum for social studies and international languages.

Mr. Torrey said this trip would carry the same school insurance as other trips; it would insure the school department and its employees and chaperones. He said there are no travel restrictions to Cuba at this time. He said the parents should have their children fully insured and should sign an “informed consent” release.

Ms. Glos said they only expect about 20 – 30 students to sign up for the trip.

Mr. Vaughn moved the Junior World Council trip to Cuba be approved; Mrs. Craig seconded the motion. Mrs. McGee said she went on the second trip to Cuba. She said it was an amazing trip and your life is changed when you come back. She said it is such a gift for these students to be able to see this part of the world. She said the Cuban people are courteous, and she has never felt more safe on a trip.

Chair LaPage said he has wrestled with this trip. He agreed that as of 5:00 p.m. today, there was no travel advisory for Cuba. He said there is great culture in Cuba; yet people risk their lives to flee the country on make-shift rafts, and there are strained relations between Cuba and the United States. He reminded the Board that after September 11, there was no air travel. He said should there be another tragedy and air travel is banned, our students would be stuck in Cuba. He said the Board needs to consider the risk factor. He stated it is the Board’s decision as to whether or not a trip is approved. He said it is important the Superintendent be given the right to cancel the trip for the safety of the students at any time prior to leaving.

Cuba Trip Approved

After further discussion Mr. Vaughn moved the question. The motion to approve the Junior World Council trip to Cuba passed in an eight to one vote (Mr. Bowles, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Clayburgh, Mrs. Craig, Mr. Hayward, Mr. Lyons, Mr. Vaughn and Mrs. Walker voted for the motion; Mr. LaPage voted against the motion).

PERSONNEL

There were no personnel issues to come before the Board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

***Joint Building
Committee Report***

Mr. Torrey referred to his memo dated January 9, 2004 discussing a rebate received from Public Service Company of New Hampshire and

***Joint Building
Committee Report
(continued)***

furniture, fixtures and equipment. He reported that under the “Energy Savers Rebate Program,” the High School has qualified for and received \$18,000 in rebates from Public Service Company of New Hampshire for energy efficient lighting and fixtures now in place at Portsmouth High School. He requested the School Board accept this amount on behalf of the building project and authorize the administration to proceed to have it applied to the funding of the project.

Rebate Accepted

Mr. Lyons moved the Board accept the \$18,000 rebate as outlined in Mr. Torrey’s memo of January 9, 2004 and that the money be used appropriately. Mr. Hayward seconded the motion. Mrs. Craig suggested the money be placed right back into the high school project. Mr. Lyons agreed to amend his motion to include that provision; Mr. Hayward accepted the amendment. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Torrey reported there are approximately 250 exterior windows that need some type of window treatment. He reported the High School Principal and a “committee” of staff members have made recommendations for the bid/purchase process. The recommendation is for most of the exterior windows to have vertical, roller blind window shades. A few rooms would need full darkness capability, and vertical “blackout” shades were recommended for those areas. The specifications were outlined in Mr. Torrey’s memo of January 12, 2004 regarding window shades. He requested the School Board authorize the Joint Building Committee to proceed with the window shades as requested and designed.

In addition to the window shades, Mr. Torrey requested the Board’s permission to proceed with the purchase of the following items: custodial equipment (\$35,000); whirlpool for athletics (\$4,000); supplemental art equipment (\$15,000); miscellaneous classroom items (\$15,000); and pull down screens (\$8,500).

***Approval for JBC to
Obtain Bids and
Purchase Items***

Mrs. Craig moved, seconded by Mrs. Clayburgh, the Board authorize the Joint Building Committee to bid and purchase the items listed in Mr. Torrey’s memos of January 9 and 12, 2004. Mrs. Craig seconded the motion. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

***Disposition of
Furniture and
Equipment***

Chair LaPage briefly discussed a possible plan for the disposition of furniture and equipment in the present high school. At the present time his thought is to: (1) offer to the faculty in all schools, (2) offer to other school districts; (3) offer to the community; and (4) check with salvage yards for the remaining items.

Report on Delegate Assembly
Report on Delegate Assembly (con't.)

Mr. Vaughn and Mr. Hayward presented a report on the New Hampshire School Boards Association Delegate Assembly. Mr. Vaughn distributed information from the Association regarding legislation and an article from the New York Times (January 2, 2004) about school districts challenging the President's education law. He spoke on the various resolutions and said, in most cases, the majority voted the same as the Portsmouth School Board. Mr. Hayward said it was a privilege and an honor to represent the Board at the Delegate Assembly. The Chair thanked them both for attending on behalf of the Board. He encouraged Board members to participate in the activities of the State and National School Boards Association, including the annual conference.

NEW BUSINESS

Committee Assignments

The Chair announced the following committee assignments. He said there are still vacancies to be filled.

AREA	Roseann Vozella Clark
Athletic Committee	Nansi Craig, Clay Hayward
Business Collaborative	John Lyons
Chamber of Commerce	John Lyons
Curriculum Council	Roseann Vozella Clark, Charlie Vaughn, Ann Walker
Facilities Committee	Ann Walker
GPEPC	Ann Walker
Joint Budget Committee	Rai Bowles, John Lyons, Charlie Vaughn
Joint Building Committee	Kent LaPage, John Lyons, Ann Walker
Joint Loss Committee	John Lyons
Library Board of Trustees	Rai Bowles
Middle School Facilities Committee	Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, Nansi Craig, Clay Hayward
Policy Committee	Nansi Craig, Clay Hayward
Recreation Board	Kent LaPage
Staff Development	Charlie Vaughn
Technology Committee	Clay Hayward
Title One Advisory Committee	Nancy Novelline Clayburgh

The Chair stated he will ask Board members to remain on the negotiations committees to which they were previously assigned.

Mr. Bowles stated he would be willing to serve on the Athletic Committee. The Chair said he will finalize the assignments in the near future.

Review Redistricting Chair LaPage said that in May he will ask Board members to volunteer to serve on the Redistricting Committee to review the plan that was previously approved. He said one of the recommendations within that plan was to conduct a full student re-balancing review in five years to insure “ideal” student populations remain relative to the original plan. The formation of a committee would be the first step in meeting that recommendation.

Committee to Develop Scholarship Criteria The Chair declared that the Superintendent of Schools will lead the committee for the John F. Leary and Olga Leary Scholarship Fund. He said that Mrs. Walker has volunteered to serve on the committee. Mrs. Craig and Mrs. Clark also expressed interest in serving on the committee. The committee’s recommendation will be brought before the full Board for approval.

Dr. Tracy said the School Department is delighted to receive this scholarship. He said there is a need to draft criteria for awarding of the scholarship. Mr. Charles Griffin (Mr. Leary’s legal representative), School Board members and teachers will be included in this process. The full Board will have the opportunity to discuss the recommendations and vote on the criteria. The Superintendent asked that Board members interested in serving on this committee contact him.

Mr. Lyons said it is important for students to be aware of scholarship money that is available to them. He sits on the Board of some organizations that offer scholarships, to which no one has applied.

C-SPAN Bus to Visit Portsmouth The Superintendent stated there is an opportunity for the C-SPAN Bus to come to Portsmouth on January 27, 2004. Dr. Tracy said both the High School and Middle School Principals have indicated an interest in having the bus visit their schools, and he asked that the Board come to a consensus about this. Board members were agreeable to this. Mr. Hayward moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker, that the C-SPAN Bus be allowed to visit Portsmouth High School and Portsmouth Middle School on January 27, 2004. The motion was unanimously approved.

Retreat Discussion Topics Board members received a form to complete and bring with them to Saturday’s retreat indicating discussion topics. Mr. Bowles asked if there would be an opportunity to discuss the budget process. Dr. Tracy said the purpose of having the retreat is to review the Board’s goals for 2003 and to develop goals for 2004; they try not to do business at the retreats. He said it is acceptable for the budget to be

listed as a discussion topic.

Budget Schedule

The Chair distributed a schedule of budget completion dates. The schedule listed the dates on which the Board will receive the budget, the work sessions, tentative dates for public hearings, and when the Board is scheduled to vote on the budget. The Superintendent plans to present a preliminary budget summary to the Board on January 27. The Board will receive the budget books on Wednesday, February 4. The first budget work session will be held on Thursday, February 5.

FINANCIAL

***December 2003
Financial Report***

Mr. Torrey presented the December 2003 financial report. He stated the budget, at this time of year, is approximately 52% spent and that most line items are on target. He indicated that he is closely watching the following line items: substitutes, physical plant, benefits, disability insurance, and unemployment.

***Authorization to
Apply for Funds***

Mr. Torrey said there is need for an annual motion to allow the Superintendent of Schools to apply for and receive funds. Mr. Vaughn moved, seconded by Mrs. Craig, the Superintendent be authorized to apply for, receive and encumber funds for the Portsmouth School Department. In a roll call vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

NEXT AGENDA

Next Meeting

The Chair stated the next meeting will be held on January 27, 2004 at Portsmouth Middle School at 7:00 p.m.

OTHER

***Superintendent's
Evaluation***

The Chair stated the Board will receive on January 27 the form to complete the Superintendent's evaluation.

"Penguin Plunge"

Mrs. Clayburgh reported the "Penguin Plunge" to benefit Special Olympics will take place at Hampton Beach on February 8, 2004. She said that Dr. Lister will once again participate in this fundraising event. She also reported the girls' basketball team is currently undefeated.

Mrs. Walker commended Vice-Chair Clayburgh for her comments in the newspaper regarding the IDEA legislation.

(Approved by the Portsmouth School Board 1-27-04.)

Dr. Tracy stated there were four basketball games, the first one starting at 3:30 p.m., at the high school today.

Adjournment

There was no further business to come before the Board. On a motion by Mr. Vaughn, seconded by Mrs. Walker, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyonel B. Tracy, Ed.D.
Executive Secretary