

**Portsmouth School Board  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

**Minutes of the May 13, 2008 Meeting**

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, May 13, 2008 in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers, City Hall.

***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), Ms. Abigail Rockefeller (Student Representative) and Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative).

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

The non-public meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

***Call to Order***

Chair Shuldman called the regular meeting of the Portsmouth School Board to order at 7:00 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. Dr. Lister asked that during the silent reflection we keep in mind Herald Echert (who became ill at the City Council meeting on Monday evening), Jim Johnston (whose mom passed away), and the victims from hurricanes, twisters and earthquakes. Dr. Lister recognized how blessed we are to have homes that are intact. He also welcomed Abbi Rockefeller back from her recent injury.

**Approval of Minutes**

***Approval of Minutes***

The minutes of the April 8, 2008 Board meeting were presented for approval. Mrs. Walker made the motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Ms. Ham Garrity. The motion was unanimously approved.

Communications

- Mr. Peter Smith*** Dr. Lister presented a letter from Peter Smith, principal of Greenland Central School, thanking the Portsmouth School Department staff for their support as they dealt with a recent tragedy.
- Attorney Robert Sullivan*** Dr. Lister reported that Mr. Sullivan would be addressing the board later in the evening about E-mail.
- Portsmouth Middle School Kitchen Renovations*** Dr. Lister presented a copy of a letter sent to Mr. Robblee and students from Portsmouth High School who renovated the Portsmouth Middle School Kitchen.
- SAU 50 Board Letter of support*** Dr. Lister stated that the letter from the SAU 50 Board, addressed to The Honorable Tom Ferrini and the Portsmouth City Council, supports the Portsmouth School Board's proposed 2008-2009 budget.
- Mexico Trip*** Dr. Lister shared an e-mail he received from Maxene Feintuch stating what a wonderful trip her daughter (Hannah) had with students and staff on a recent trip to Mexico.
- Menu*** Dr. Lister presented the Elementary School Menu for May 2008.
- Quarterly Communications*** Dr. Lister stated he sent a letter to Mr. John Bohenko, City Manager, proposing the School Board meet with City Council on a quarterly basis to discuss educational issues.
- Task Force Packet*** Dr. Lister discussed briefly the Special Education Task Force packet, which resulted from the Board Retreat. There has been one meeting so far. The report will be discussed later in the meeting.
- Newsletter*** Dr. Lister presented the Board with the Portsmouth High School Newsletter and ***Harbour Lights*** from Little Harbour School.
- Water Country Day*** Dr. Lister mentioned that Water Country is again allowing city employees to enjoy free admission to Water Country on Saturday, June 14 2008 from 11:30 - 6:00 p.m.

**RECOGNITION OF STAFF AND STUDENTS**

- Attorney Robert Ducharme*** Mr. Ducharme, a Social Studies teacher at Portsmouth High School, is working with Mary Carey Foley and Student Council on an educational endowment. The Student Council wishes to take the school to a higher level, create a different culture and appeal to a more diverse student body. A topic currently being researched is an exchange program with students from China since Chinese is a language taught at Portsmouth High

School. Rachel's Challenge is a good example of a program that could be brought to Portsmouth and paid for by the endowment, rather than using school funds. The students working on the program right now may never see results of this program, but are moving ahead for the benefit of future generations. The committee is working on a web page and letters of support. They have also met with the City Attorney and will eventually present their complete findings to the School Board and City Council after revealing to the student body.

***Retirements***

Mr. Zadavec presented 4 retirements.

Joanne Dodge, Portsmouth High School Computer Integrator Teacher, will complete 2 years with the Portsmouth School Department.

Cynthia Whitney, Little Harbour School Resource Room Teacher, will complete 8 years with the Portsmouth School Department.

Mary Carey Foley, Portsmouth High School English Teacher, will complete 30 years with the Portsmouth School Department.

Robin Burdick, Little Harbour School Principal, has announced her intention to retire at the end of the 2008 - 2009 school year.

Mrs. Walker moved to accept these retirements. Ms. Ham Garrity seconded. This motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Zadavec presented the nomination of Jill LeMay as Principal of Dondero Elementary School.

Mr. Brendan Ristaino made the motion to accept. Ms. Ham Garrity seconded. The nomination was approved unanimously.

***Leave of Absence Requests***

Mr. Zadavec presented the Leave of Absence Request from Ms. Dana Gray, Social Studies teacher at Portsmouth High School. She has requested leave for the 2008 - 2009 school year to care for her three children after just giving birth to a set of twins.

Deborah Miller, French Teacher at Portsmouth High School, is requesting a Leave of Absence for the 2008 - 2009 school year. She is expecting her first child.

Ms. Ann Walker made the motion to accept these requests. Ms. Ham Garrity seconded. The nomination was approved unanimously.

***Superintendent's Contract***

Chair Shuldman asked for a motion to approve a one year contract for Dr. Robert Lister, Superintendent. Mr. Legg made the motion to approve and Mrs. Walker seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the board approved

the contract unanimously. Dr. Lister thanked the members of the board.

### **FINANCIAL**

#### ***March Financials***

Mr. Bartlett reviewed the March Financial Report. An unexpected expense has been the transportation of homeless students. There has been a savings in the energy budget, but repairs maintenance has had to make have offset it. The 2007 budget has a revenue shortfall as indicated before. At the March 27th school board meeting, Mr. Bartlett will present the April Financial Report and projections for the rest of the school year. Mr. Legg asked about the estimate of the shortfall. Mr. Bartlett stated the shortfall is at \$180,000.00 and still trying to be trimmed. Ms. Ham Garrity inquired about the School Board budget, which Mr. Bartlett said is pretty stable. She also inquired about the tutor expense. Mr. Bartlett explained that due to the needs of the students, staff is frequently moved around to ensure students' needs are met. Mr. Shuldman asked when the new financial report format would begin and will it include the 2007 budget. Mr. Bartlett stated the new format will begin in July and the 2007 budget and finances from PASS will be at the bottom of the report.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION**

#### ***EF Educational Homestay***

Ms. Rachel Josephs of Rye, New Hampshire spoke regarding the EF Educational Homestay, a non-profit organization from Cambridge, Massachusetts. EF will be bringing 150 students from France, Spain, Hong Kong and Thailand to live with host families and learn the English language. The organization has a lease agreement with Portsmouth Christian Academy to conduct classes in the morning and the afternoon will be filled with activities. Their stay will be from July 9 - August 4th. The students, along with 2 - 3 adult chaperones, are in need of host families. The students range in age from 13 to 18. Ms. Josephs requested permission to send information home with Portsmouth High School students. Mr. Cushing has already authorized distribution in SAU 50. She has been working with Superintendent Lister.

#### ***Dondero Science Day***

Ms. Emily Healy, Dondero a third grade teacher, invited the board and community members to Science Day at Dondero Elementary School all day Friday, May 16th. In attendance and on display will be an energy efficient car, a replica of a whale that can be walked through provided by the Blue Whale Society, a meteorologist, University Sea Life, The Seacoast Science Center and a beekeeper. She welcomed everyone.

## AGENDA

### *Patricia Wojnar Memorial*

Mr. LaPage asked the board take up item number D.a., since one speaker needed to go back to work. Ms. Ham Garrity moved to approve. Mr. Ristaino seconded. The board unanimously approved the motion.

Mr. LaPage introduced Richard Wojnar (both brother of Patty Wojnar and a Dondero employee) and Kathy Anania, a Portsmouth High School Graduate and Portsmouth School Department employee. They, along with a committee, are requesting the placement of a bench and garden area outside Central Office to be known as **Patty's Place**. Mr. Wojnar said Patty would be both embarrassed and honored by this and the scholarship in her name. Ms. Patty Wojnar was a 30-year employee with the Portsmouth School Department right out of high school. This scholarship would be for a student who is interested in becoming an administrative assistant or clerical worker who may or may not be attending higher education. Ms. Kathleen Dwyer will be working with the committee to insure the first recipient is a 2008 Portsmouth High School graduate.

Mrs. Walker made the motion to approve. Mr. Ristaino seconded. The motion was approved with Mr. LaPage abstaining.

Mr. LaPage also thanked Momma D's for hosting a fundraiser for the memorial and scholarship.

### *JCJ Architect Report*

Mr. Jim LaPosta, Mr. Doug Roberts, and Ms. Lisa DeStephano made a presentation to the board about findings thus far with renovating the Portsmouth Middle School. Two drafts, broken down by Option One and Option Two, were handed out. The two options included information regarding New Hampshire Department of Education guidelines and interviews with staff, students and administrators. Mr. LaPosta suggested state representatives meet with board members over the next two weeks at a work session to answer questions. The architectural firm took measurements throughout the school and spent 3 days with faculty and students looking over the entire school. There were two community workshops held in order to give and receive information. From these meetings, two options were developed. Each option presented compared differences in what we now have to what would be needed in the future. Middle School layouts are unlike elementary or high school. Elementary schools are built around self-containing classrooms. Departments dictate the structure of high schools. Determining the areas needed for a new middle school is based on the team concept. The amount of teams needed per grade dictates design and size of a middle school.

The two options presented were based on student numbers ranging from 636 to 696. Square footage for Option 1 consisted of 162,290 square feet. Option 2, 132,510 square feet. Both are based on 40% of the space

needed for hallways and walls. Option 2 would be scaled down with some rooms needing to multi-function.

3 waivers may be needed from the Department of Education;

- Site Size
- Class size (square footage requirement per student)
- Parking

Ms. Emerson thanked the presenters for last weeks community workshops and the back and forth discussion. The waiver for size she thought was for new construction and wondered why this was needed. Mr. Roberts met with Mr. Ed Murdough of the Department of Education and said that based on the amount of work needed, the new middle school would be considered new construction. Ms. Emerson also wondered if the parking issue could be resolved since there is municipal parking near by. Mr. LaPosta said requesting a written agreement to allow parking in the municipal lots could be an option to meet the requirements. Ms. Emerson wondered about the demographics. Were the options based on demographic reports? Mr. LaPosta said the building was based on the teams needed for each grade. Ms. Emerson is concerned with building a school for 600 students when there is only a need for 517 students. Mr. LaPosta said the school is to be built in a way that will meet the needs for another 100 - 200 years, with maintenance of new windows and certain upkeep to be expected around 50 years. He said the state would accept a reasonable number of projected students. The Board will need to decide on a number the architectural firm will be working with. Mr. LaPosta informed Mr. Legg that team structure is typical of other schools. Mr. Legg asked if a 3rd option could be worked up with 650 students and 6 teams. He also passed out growth population projections from 2000 to 2030 based on statistics taken from the last national census. Mr. LaPage asked that the board meet with JCY Architects on the May 27 before the regular scheduled meeting. This would allow the firm time to answer further questions and allow the board time to look over the entire report. Mr. Bartlett will have available the PowerPoint presentations from tonight and earlier. Community members were asked to submit questions and comments on the website by Friday, May 16. He will forward copies to all board members. Ms. Sweet asked what would happen to students during construction. Mr. LaPosta said that a plan would be created minimizing student impact through each step of the process. The project would be broken down into sections. Each section would be completed and students reassigned before the next section is started. Mr. Legg would like to see 25-year projections, since 5 years have proven meaningless. Those who do have documentation showing 25-year projections should send them to the board. The board can review all projections at the workshop and decide if they wish to invite them to the May 27th board meeting. Mr. Shuldman scheduled the board workshop with JCY Architects for Tuesday, May 20 at 6:30 p.m. in the Little Harbour School

Board Room. Mr. LaPosta asked the boards' questions be sent to him before the workshop.

***E-mails:***

Mr. Robert Sullivan, City Attorney, spoke of issues that have surfaced over e-mails between members of a neighboring towns' city board. The Right to Know Law was developed before electronic devices. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, State Legislature adopted an amendment to the Right to Know Law. There are two issues that need to be understood when e-mails are sent between elected or appointed officials. First, because e-mail addresses are assigned by the city, they are a matter of public record. Second, when a number of elected officials exchange e-mails, this could be considered conducting an illegal meeting. A 24 hours notice must announce any meeting conducted by city officials and minutes would need to be taken and made public. As of July 1, 2008 the Right to Know Law will be amended. Conducting simultaneous e-mails with a majority of members would be considered a meeting and be in violation of the Right to Know Law. Mr. Sullivan suggests not corresponding via e-mail, since it will be more difficult to comply with the Right to Know Law. Traditional meetings should be conducted instead. Mr. Sullivan and Dr. Lister have been discussing this issue and felt the board should be notified. Mr. Sullivan will distribute a document soon. Ms. Emerson asked about setting up a blog or chat room that would be public. Mr. Sullivan said that all forms of communication would need to be looked at to assure they satisfy the board's needs and the law's new requirements. Mr. Sullivan also mentioned that communication with staff is public record with some exceptions. He also stated that one-way communication is acceptable; i.e., thoughts or information. Mrs. Walker asked that the board go to item number V. H., since a member of the audience is present to speak on this subject. Mr. Ristaino made the motion to take up item number V.H. Ms. Ham Garrity seconded the motion. The board approved unanimously.

***Early School Start Report***

Ms. Walker stated that 10 years ago, a committee was formed to look at a change in the start time of school. The committee ended but was resurrected two years ago, due to the Portsmouth Middle School Aspirations discussions. There is a packet including 20 years of research the committee is working on and a host of information that can be found on the web. The committee wants to look at a time schedule that gives students the best chance at success, but still addresses all student safety concerns. The committee will be distributing surveys to parents, staff and students in grades 4 - 12. The surveys will be distributed through school packets or sent via e-mail. They hope to have the surveys back by the end of June. Ms. Erin Bakkom from the Middle School said there is a lot of information that needs to be systematically looked at to determine what is best for the students. Ms. Emerson asked where the information came from. Ms. Bakkom said it was a culmination of sites on the web and other sources. Mr. LaPage said this is the 3rd time this has been looked at. Two areas that prevented this from happening were costs (such as busing and

scheduling) and the effect on after school activities (such as athletics). Ms. Bakkom said once the data is collected then a discussion would include these and other issues. Mr. LaPage wondered if SAU 50 would be included in the distribution of the surveys. Ms. Meyer suggested this go through Mr. Cushing for approval. Mr. Shuldman asked when the committee expected to come back with results for the board. Ms. Bakkom said this would be determined by how long it takes to collect and analyze the data, but hopes to come back to the board next year.

***Scholarship  
Requests***

**Lillian P. Goldin Educational Fund**

Dr. Lister presented a scholarship request from the family of Lillian Goldin, who was a substitute teacher and clerical at Portsmouth High School for many years. Lillian Goldin's daughter Susan and her husband Steven established the annual scholarship for a Portsmouth High School graduating senior who will be pursuing a teaching degree. The first distribution will be for \$500. Mr. LaPage made the motion to accept the request, seconded by Mrs. Walker. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

**Harold and Ruth Whitehouse Scholarship Fund**

Dr. Lister presented the proposal from Harold and Ruth Whitehouse for an annual scholarship for a Portsmouth High School graduating senior who has been accepted to a post-high school education program. This would include, but not be limited to a vocational institute, technical institute, university or college. The first distribution will be for \$500. Mr. Whitehouse is a former City Councilman, a former school board member, and he and his wife, Mrs. Whitehouse, are active members of the community. Mr. Ristaino made the motion to accept the proposal, seconded by Mrs. Walker. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Dr. Lister thanked them for the scholarships and for the thousands and thousands of scholarship dollars available to Portsmouth High School graduating seniors.

***PHS Field  
Memorial:***

Mr. LaPage informed the board that a stone, honoring five individuals whom the Portsmouth High School athletic fields are now named for would be placed at the entrance. The fields, completed in 1994, have been dedicated over the years. In 1996, funds were allocated for the stone but renovations of the high school and athletic building prevented it from being carried out.

***AYP Report:***

Mr. Zadravec presented to the Board the Annual Yearly Progress Report. Earlier in the year a report was given on the October 2007 NECAP results. The students were tested in Reading, Math and Writing in grades 3 - 8 and grade 11. The State calculations are based on the No Child Left Behind Act to determine AYP. It is based on certain percentages that have



to take the test and reach the targeted Annual Measurable Objective as well as elementary attendance or high school graduation rate. There are a variety of population sub groups that must meet indicators used to determine results. The Portsmouth School District shows progress but there are sub groups such as educationally disabled, economically disadvantaged and limited English proficient, which must also pass. If just one sub group does not make it, then the school or district does not meet AYP standards. Although there was tremendous gain, there were also areas identified as weaknesses that still need improvement.

Two years ago, the district was identified as a District In Need of Improvement. The district passed last year but did not make APY this year. We will remain a District In Need of Improvement because all standards must be met for 2 years in a row in order to be taken off the District In Need of Improvement list. The district has a plan in place working on literacy. Teachers have been working collaboratively to meet the needs of the students. Although we met the standards in math and we did not fall into the DINI group. Portsmouth will continue to work on and improve math scores. This summer administration will be working with teachers similarly to literacy last summer. Ways to better meet the needs of students in math will be examined.

Little Harbour and Dondero both made progress but one sub group from New Franklin did not make standards. This school is now considered a School In Need of Improvement in math.

This is the first year the High School was tested using the NECAP test. One sub group did not make it in reading and math. A school is not considered a School In Need of Improvement until it fails 2 years. The district needs to define what students need to know and find ways to better measure students/learning.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

***Technology:***

Mr. Shuldman said Ms. Susan Birrell, Portsmouth High School's Technology Director, has a group looking at the new Technology Vision plan. This plan must be updated with the State every three years. A meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday and all principals are being asked to attend.

***Special Education  
Task Force Report:***

Ms. Sweet stated there has been one meeting of the Special Education Task Force and dialogue has begun in the district to gather information about what drives services. The committee includes staff from the Special Education Department, elementary teachers and Chris Dwyer, a city council member. Dr. Cushing and Mary Lyons have both been invited to attend the meetings. The legislative delegates were invited, including

Carol Shea Porter.

The next meeting will be June 17, 2008. Ms. Sweet would like to hear from board members about their concerns.

***Student Conduct  
and Extra  
Curricular Activity  
Policies:***

Dr. Lister presented the Student Conduct Policy for second reading. It is hoped that this would be in the Student Handbook by August 2008. Mr. LaPage asked if it was still the policy that, if the parent/student did not agree with the decision, they could come to the Board and appeal. Mr. LaPage made the motion to accept the policy for second reading. Mrs. Walker seconded the motion. Ms. Sweet was informed that this policy covers all school activities. Mr. Ristaino wanted to know what the statute of limitations is on penalties. Ms. Ham Garrity stated that the penalty will vary, but would be no longer than 12 months. Consequence would be immediate. The committee deciding on the consequence would not include the director of any activity the student is involved in. An example would be the lead in the drama play. The drama director would not be on the committee to decide the consequence. The athletic director would be on the committee to decide a consequence of an athlete. Ms. Rockefeller said the policy is designed to ensure equality for all. Dr. Lister said the new policies would set the tone for what is expected of all students and hopes they will be in effect for the 2008-2009 school year.

Mr. LaPage mentioned that the Police Department would continue to inform the school of any students who break the law. The committee would give out the appropriate consequence.

Mrs. Walker understood the policy has changed, in that students who are in the presence of alcohol do not face a consequence, only students who were consuming alcohol would be in violation of the policy and receive a consequence.

Ms. Sweet would like the board to hear more about the policy and get a better understanding if there are two policies or just one. There are still more questions.

Dr. Lister said the committee is meeting on Friday, May 16, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. He will get copies of the old and new copies of the policies for the meeting May 27.

Mr. LaPage agreed to table the motion and Ms. Walker withdrew her second.

**NEXT AGENDA**

Dr. Lister invited the board to attend the Futures barbecue at Four Tree Island on June 3, 2008.

Dr. Lister will be attending the NHSBA workshop in Concord on Thursday, May 15, 2008 at 5:15 p.m. along with Mr. Zadavec and board members.

***Agenda Items for  
Next Meeting***

1. Quality Education Index
2. Infinite Campus/Virtual High School
3. Student Conduct and Extra Curricular Activity Policies
4. Ben Franklin painting - Art-Speak
5. History of graduation at PHS report
6. On Tuesday, June 10, 2008 the Board will hold it's regular School Board Meeting from 5:30 p.m. - 6:55 p.m. JCJ will hold a community information session beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Mrs. Walker congratulated all the sports that are having great success this season.

**NEXT MEETING**

***Next Meeting***

The next meeting of the Board will be Tuesday, May 27, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Portsmouth High School library. There will be a retirees' reception beginning at 6:00 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

***Adjournment***

There was no further business to come before the Board. On a motion by Vice-Chair Ristaino, seconded by Ms. Ham Garrity, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister  
Executive Secretary