
**Portsmouth School Board
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Minutes of the June 10, 2008 Meeting

A meeting of the Portsmouth School Board was held on Tuesday, June 10, 2008 in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at Portsmouth 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 Zadravec (Assistant Superintendent), Mr. Stephen T. Bartlett (Business Administrator), Mrs. Linda Briolat (Employee Representative) Mrs. Ann Mayer (SAU 50 Representative) and Ms. Abigail Rockefeller (Student Representative)

Call to Order

Chair Shuldman called the regular meeting of the Portsmouth School Board to order at 5:35 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 mentioned that during the silent reflection we should remember the veterans and those that serve in the military around the world. He further stated that he would like us to remember Mrs. Christina M. (Hopley) Magalhaes, a 1992 PHS graduate and class president, who passed away on June 7, 2008. As senior class president, she was honored by delivering the commencement address at her graduation ceremony. Dr. Lister also wanted to keep in our thoughts Mr. John Stokel, PMS Principal, as his mother passed away recently.

Approval of Minutes of May 13, 2008

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May 13, 2008 Board meeting were presented for approval. Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker. The motion was unanimously approved.

Minutes corrected to properly reflect on page 10, under Student conduct and Extra Curricular Activity Policies, that the athletic director “would” be on the committee to decide a consequence of an athlete.

***Approval of Minutes
of May 27, 2008***

The minutes of the May 27, 2008 Board meeting were presented for approval. Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker. The motion was unanimously approved.

Minutes corrected to properly reflect on page 12, under the motion to suspend the rules and go past 10:00 p.m., that the actual vote was "seven" in favor, "two" against (Mr. LaPage and Ms. Garrity).

Communications

Dr. Lister reviewed communications received over the past two weeks.

***Thank you Notes
Regarding Retirement
Reception***

Thank you notes for the retirement reception were received from Ms. Mary Carey Foley, retiring high school teacher, Mr. Joe Wesolowski, retiring high school teacher, and Ms. Karen Cox, speech therapist at Dondero School.

***Green Start and
Biodiesel Fuel***

Dr. Lister received a letter from Green Start regarding discussions on the use of biodiesel fuel for the school buses. Dr. Lister included a copy of the letter that he wrote to Green Start indicating that he and Mr. Bartlett met with First Student Bus Company to discuss biodiesel fuel use in the buses. Dr. Lister stated that the Portsmouth School Department was a co-sponsor of the recent *First Annual Portsmouth Sustainability Fair* and that he looks forward to working with the Piscataqua Sustainability Initiative on issues such as biodiesel fuel. Dr. Lister stated that Mrs. Walker is also a member of the Piscataqua Sustainability Initiative.

RECOGNITION OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

Resignations

Mr. Zdravec reported that Mr. Pablo Guerra-Monje is resigning from his position as a Spanish Teacher at Portsmouth High School. He was originally hired the beginning of the 2007-08 school year and will complete one year with the Portsmouth School Department.

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Ms. Garrity to accept the resignation of Mr. Pablo Guerra-Monje. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Zdravec further reported that Mrs. Crystal Speck-Tritter is resigning from her position as a part-time Art Teacher. She was originally hired the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year and will complete one year with the Portsmouth School Department.

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to accept the resignation of Mrs. Crystal Speck-Tritter. The motion was

unanimously approved.

***Professional
Nominations***

Mr. Zadavec presented the following professional nominations for School Board approval:

Ms. Kara Kelley

Ms. Kara Kelley, Math Teacher at PHS. Ms. Kelley has her Master's in Civil Engineering from the University of MA, Lowell.

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to accept the nomination of Ms. Kara Kelley as a Math Teacher at PHS. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Michelle Smith

Ms. Michelle Smith, Resource Room Teacher at Dondero Elementary School. Ms. Smith has her Master's in Special Education from Lesley University, Cambridge, MA.

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to accept the nomination of Ms. Michelle Smith as a Resource Room Teacher at Dondero Elementary School. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Kelly Whelan

Ms. Kelly Whelan, Grade 1 Teacher at New Franklin Elementary School. Ms. Whelan has her Master's in Elementary Education from the University of New Hampshire.

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to accept the nomination of Ms. Kelly Whelan a Grade 1 Teacher at New Franklin Elementary School. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Callie Brinkman

Ms. Callie Brinkman, Outreach Therapist at New Franklin Elementary School. Ms. Brinkman has her Master's in Social Work from the University of New Hampshire.

Motion: Ms. Garrity moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Ristaino to accept the nomination of Ms. Callie Brinkman, Outreach Therapist at New Franklin Elementary School. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ian Fleischer

Mr. Ian Fleischer, Grade 1 Teacher at New Franklin Elementary School. Mr. Fleischer has his Master's in Education Teacher Preparation from the University of Washington, Seattle.

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to accept the nomination of Mr. Ian Fleischer, Grade 1 Teacher at New Franklin Elementary School. The motion was unanimously approved.

Laurel Hamlin-Lebar Ms. Laurel Hamlin-Lebar, Kindergarten Teacher at Little Harbour Elementary School. Ms. Hamlin-Lebar has her Master's in Literacy, Reading, Writing and Language Arts K-12 from Lesley University, Cambridge, MA.

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to accept the nomination of Ms. Laurel Hamlin-Lebar, Kindergarten Teacher at Little Harbour Elementary School. The motion was unanimously approved.

Joseph Wesolowski Mr. Joseph Wesolowski, a retired teacher returning part-time for the position of Electricity and Robotics Teacher at Portsmouth High School.

Motion: Mrs. Walker moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Ristaino to accept the nomination of Mr. Joseph Wesolowski, Part-time Electricity and Robotics Teacher at Portsmouth High School. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Laura Barone Ms. Laura Barone, a retired teacher returning as a Science Teacher at Portsmouth Middle School.

Motion: Ms. Garrity moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Ristaino to accept the nomination of Ms. Laura Barone, Science Teacher at Portsmouth Middle School. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Bartlett stated that all of these positions would be funded from the General Fund.

Chair Shuldman stated that all new hires have Master's degrees and one had more than one Bachelor's degree. He is very pleased with highly qualified candidates.

FINANCIAL

May Financials Mr. Bartlett stated that the May financials and year-end analysis were not ready for this meeting and would be ready for the June 24th meeting. Ms. Emerson requested from Mr. Bartlett a district-wide general report of funds received and distributed. Chair Shuldman stated that this information would be available on the new revised budget presentation with a comparison to the previous year. Mr. Legg further stated that when Mr. Bartlett was asked to provide samples of financial reports for monthly reporting to the Board, it was for the purpose of the Board agreeing on one report as the monthly financial report. This was to avoid various requests for different types of reports. Mr. Legg further stated that we should live with the report for a while and, over time, if it doesn't answer the questions of the Board, it could be tweaked to give

the Board what they need, but being sensitive to administrative time. Chair Shuldman recommended that Board members could meet with Mr. Bartlett with budgetary questions or issues for clarification.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

Public Commentary Session

There were no requests to address the School Board.

AGENDA

Quality Education Index

Chair Shuldman stated that the *Quality Education Index* is one of the goals from the Board retreat. He stated that the *Quality Education Index* is a broad look as to how the district is doing overall and then measures of an index is developed, looked at, and compared from year to year as a broad spectrum. Items such as enrollment over the course of the year, mobility throughout the course of the year, the drop out rate, and the costs of tuition could be measured throughout the district.

Mrs. Sweet stated that she feels that the Board needs to have a longer discussion. There is a lot that the Board might like to measure which is not quite as quantifiable, but more qualitative. Mrs. Sweet further stated that the Board needed to determine what it is that we want to measure, what we are trying to achieve with *Quality Education Index* and whom we want to compare to. Core items such as test scores, graduation rates, growth of a student from year to year, engagement of students, and other interpersonal skills that might not show up on a test score could be measured.

Vice-Chair Ristaino agreed with Mrs. Sweet that there are numerous items to measure and questioned what the end goal is for the *Quality Education Index*.

Mr. Zadravec stated that during a curriculum council meeting a year or two ago, a discussion took place as to what characteristics would you hope to see in a PHS graduating student, if they embodied the elements of a quality education. He stated that we should begin with the end in mind. Looking at their post secondary success and how are we gathering information about that. Not only college acceptances, but also five years out how they are doing. Mr. Zadravec stated that reading skills in the early grades are shown to be predictors of success. He stated that there are a number of assessments that could help us measure that. Mr. Zadravec further stated that we need to decide what are the indicators we are looking for towards the values we hope to see in this education.

Mr. Legg agreed with Mrs. Sweet that the Board needs a thoughtful discussion regarding this. He further stated that what this represents to him is trying to understand what the core drivers are of the performance. There should be a handful of core items to look at to compare to a peer group and to compare progress over time. Mr. Legg suggested that the administration list the core items.

Mr. LaPage agrees with Mrs. Sweet that the Board needs a more substantive discussion. He thought that possibly a committee could be formed to include a couple of Board members, others within the school system along with one administrator. Mr. LaPage stated that when he worked at Fedex he was given the task of measuring the service quality indicator, which only looked at one indicator with many branches, which was the outcome. He stated that acceptance to college is the end result of an educational goal, or the outcome. Mr. LaPage stated that an excellent *Quality Education Index* indicator could be once accepted to college, how long did the student stay in college, or are they succeeding in other areas. He further noted that if the school system stays true to the mission statement, the indicator would be that we make life-long learners. Mr. LaPage stated that in Fedex it was “people service profit” and in this case it is “people service progress”. Are we progressing on a yearly basis, are we showing outcomes, and to what extent do we help adults after they leave the Portsmouth school system? Mr. LaPage stated that there are a large number of scholarships once you graduate from high school to help those that want to go continue on to college. He stated that outcome and feedback are two items that should be looked at. We want to know what the parents and students feel about the Portsmouth education and are they getting the quality of service that we ask for year after year within our budget.

Chair Shuldman agreed with Mr. LaPage that we should survey the postgraduates.

Vice-Chair Ristaino stated that Mr. Zadravec summarized it well by saying that we should “begin with the end in mind”. He agrees with Mr. Legg that we should charge Dr. Lister and Mr. Zadravec, with possibly Mrs. Hoeflich, to come back with the core items and then move forward.

Mrs. Walker commented that, in working with the curriculum council, most of the indicators were subjective versus the teachers saying that, “this is what I noticed at this point”. We could look at how that could be determined to be measurable.

Chair Shuldman suggested that this topic could be continued over the summer at the retreat. What teachers are assessing above and beyond

***Proposed School
Board Meeting Dates
and Locations for
2008/2009 School
Year***

the tests, classroom work and homework that we necessarily cannot put a number on.

Dr. Lister provided a list of proposed School Board meeting dates and locations for the 2008/2009 school year as well as a school calendar. He noted that these dates are similar to previous years. Dr. Lister stated that he tried to accommodate Board member suggestions to have more meetings in the Council Chambers at City Hall. He does feel that there is value in continuing to meet at each of the schools, allowing the Board the opportunity to come into the schools for a tour and having the Principal host the meetings.

Mr. LaPage stated that it is extremely important to have at least one meeting at each of the schools. He further noted that this allows parents to attend the meetings at their own schools. Mr. LaPage stated that it is very difficult to record these meetings for public broadcast, but feels that it is still very important to have Board meetings within the schools.

Mrs. Sweet stated that she agrees and likes the current balance of meeting locations and that the public should also feel welcomed to attend the meetings at the school locations.

Mr. Ristaino also agrees that we should continue to change venues and meet at the schools. He would like to meet within the Career Technical Center (CTE) or the culinary arts at the high school to see different aspects of schools and feels that is very important to not only the Principals and teachers, but to the students as well. Tours of each school prior to the meetings should be not only for the Board but for the public as well.

Mrs. Walker also agrees that we should continue the current schedule of meetings at City Hall for the first meeting of every month and the second at a school. For as many times that she has taken a tour of a school, she stated that she is always surprised to see something new. Mrs. Walker also noted that the meetings in January are usually the second and fourth and not the first and the third as listed on the new schedule. Dr. Lister stated that there was a conflict at City Hall when putting this schedule together and that he would confirm that the dates are accurate.

Ms. Emerson would prefer to have the meetings at City Hall where the meetings are televised. She stated that she does enjoy going into the schools for Board meetings but would prefer going when the teachers and students are there and would definitely prefer to have them recorded for the archives or for Channel 22.

Dr. Lister stated that if the majority of the Board wants him to rework the schedule that he would be more than happy to do so. He further stated that the City does not have the resources to move all of the equipment to televise at each location and that the quality of the sound as attempted at Dondero School was terrible.

Ms. Garrity would prefer to have the second meeting at City Hall in order to present the financials for a televised discussion.

Motion: Mr. LaPage moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to accept the dates proposed by the Superintendent for the 2008-2009 school year, but not to accept the locations. Also, ask Dr. Lister to come back after the July 8, 2008 meeting with the schedule of locations. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. LaPage stated that by City Charter, the dates for the School Board meetings needed to be submitted before the first meeting in the new fiscal year. Chair Shuldman stated that there are eighteen dates and that he would also like to have some of the meetings at each of the schools. He further noted that when a large turnout of the public was expected, City Hall was made available for those meetings.

***Infinite
Campus/Virtual High
School Update***

Chair Shuldman stated that he spoke to Mrs. Susan Birrell today and she agreed to speak to the Board over the summer on the technology plan. Infinite Campus has been utilized for one-year within the schools. Chair Shuldman stated that after his conversation with Mrs. Birrell he was very pleased with Infinite Campus. Chair Shuldman noted that Portsmouth was the first school system in the State of New Hampshire to implement Infinite Campus. He was informed by Mrs. Birrell that initially there was difficulty, as the company didn't have anyone with school experience. Mrs. Birrell worked with the company to assist them during the transition and since then they have hired "school based" people who understand the needs of the teachers. Mrs. Birrell is very happy with the program. She suggested asking the secretaries what their opinions are on the software. The high school schedule for next year was done in three-days when in the past it had taken three-weeks. Dr. Lister, Mr. Zadavec and Mrs. Birrell have been working with the Rochester School District, who has now signed on with Infinite Campus.

Chair Shuldman stated that another part of the technology plan is the virtual high school, which the Board may need to focus their attention on during the year. Mrs. Birrell took the initiative to teach a virtual high school class. Dr. Shuldman explained that the only way it works for us is that for every Portsmouth teacher that teaches an on-line course, we get to place up to twenty-five students in any on-line course

(up to twenty-five different one-line courses that other people teach). Chair Shuldman stated that this may not continue next year as no one has signed up to teach a course. In the short-term that is all right, but in the long-term this kind of on-line teaching, offering on-line courses and offering new enrichment courses is something that we would never be able to hire faculty to teach, as we wouldn't have enough students interested to take them. Students can take fully credited high school courses throughout the day and Chair Shuldman thinks that this is something we should possibly push to get our teachers to teach an on-line course. Dr. Shuldman further stated that this could be a way to handle the gifted and talented students.

Mrs. Walker stated that she has spoken to many people regarding this and the students taking these courses have to be very self-disciplined. Chair Shuldman stated that these courses are harder to take, require more work and it does require a disciplined person.

Vice-Chair Ristaino wanted an explanation of how these on-line courses are taught. Chair Shuldman stated that they are either synchronies and asynchronies, synchronies being when everyone sits together at the same time and takes the class where asynchronies allows the student to take these classes at their own time. Most courses are asynchronies. Mrs. Birrell taught an asynchronies class. Chair Shuldman stated that the first semester teaching is a lot of work but gets easier and easier after that.

Mr. LaPage would like to know what Mrs. Birrell's goals and needs are for the technology plan. He further indicated that he would not want to see virtual high school go away. Dr. Lister stated that he has not heard of this going away and that there are frustrations regarding the teachers teaching and the students signing up for these on-line courses. Everyone needs to see this sustainable vision and that this is the technology plan in action. Mrs. Birrell has a vision and is involved with the library, the Media Center and computer labs. Dr. Lister further stated that Mrs. Birrell could fully explain her goals when she comes to speak to the Board over the summer.

***History of
Graduation/PHS
Report***

Dr. Lister stated that the middle school graduation will be held on Thursday, June 12, 2008 at the high school and the high school graduation will be held on Friday, June 13, 2008 in the high school gymnasium. Dr. Lister explained that the high school fact sheet has been used for many years. This fact sheet provides information regarding the school enrollment, faculty, community, curriculum, programs, grading system, SAT statistics, at what colleges PHS students have been accepted to, and the clubs/activities/co-curricular options and sports that are offered at the school. Dr. Lister provided high school

statistics from 1980 through 2007 indicating (a) how many students are enrolled in the high school, how many students are in the senior class, how many students went on to a four-year college, how many students went on to a two-year college, how many students went into the military, and how many students went into the working world. Dr. Lister stated that this would show you the various trends. Ms. Emerson noted that the years 1988 and 1989 were missing, and that the college information only tells us of those that were accepted and that we do not know if they ever completed their college education. Dr. Lister explained that the guidance department at the high school could not find the fact sheets for 1988 and 1989 in their archives. He further explained that they look at the number of students who have applied to a college, look at those that have been accepted at a college, those that have been accepted at more than one college, and then at the end of the first year students are contacted to inquire about their college status. Dr. Lister stated there was a time when students were contacted four years out to inquire of their status. He noted that this is very time and labor intensive.

Dr. Shuldman stated that he recently read that 54% of students that start college as a freshman receive a degree six years later, and in the year 2000, one out of every three American college students dropped out of college.

Mr. LaPage noted that another statistic that could be monitored would be those students that take a year or two off before starting college. They would need to request their transcripts for this purpose. Dr. Lister will speak to the high school guidance department to see if this could be monitored and added to the list of statistics.

Dr. Lister noted that in the next Board packet for the June 24, 2008 meeting would be a list of what colleges the current graduating students have been accepted to.

Vice-Chair Ristaino would like to know the percentage of CTE students that go on to the apprentice program at the shipyard. Dr. Lister will speak to that department to see if they have those numbers.

Authorization for Superintendent to employ over summer months

Dr. Lister explained that every year the Superintendent asks the Board at this time of year for permission to continue interviewing candidates, hiring people, offering contracts, and accepting letters of resignation before the next Board meeting. He further explained that this would allow us to move forward, selecting the best teachers possible for our students. All nominations will be brought before the Board at the August meeting.

Motion: Mrs. Walker moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Ristaino to allow the Superintendent to continue issuing contracts for employment to candidates prior to their nomination before the School Board. The Superintendent may also continue to accept letters of resignation. The motion was unanimously approved.

Other

Chair Shuldman requested that Dr. Lister send out another e-mail to the Board seeking dates for the Board Retreat in August.

Chair Shuldman reviewed upcoming dates with respect to JCJ Architects:

June 10, 2008 7:00 p.m. Second Community Meeting with JCJ

June 23, 2008 6:30 p.m. Joint School Board and City Council

Presentation by JCJ. Chair Shuldman stated that he would be on vacation on June 23rd. He has spoken to Mr. Bohenko and it was agreed that he would be in attendance via the telephone.

After a discussion by the School Board, it was decided to invite Ms. DeStefano to the June 24, 2008, regularly scheduled School Board meeting in case there are any questions regarding the June 23, 2008 presentation. A special Board meeting would be held on July 1, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of voting on JCJ's recommendation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum Council

Mr. Zadavec reported that the Curriculum Council met a couple of weeks ago for the last time this year. The major topic of discussion was around extended learning opportunities. He explained that these are other ways students can learn, such as virtual high school, and how students can gain information in curriculum outside the classroom. Mr. Zadavec also mentioned that internships fall under this as well. These are all items that have been looked at in the past, but now have to be framed around a new Board policy. The Curriculum Council looks forward to contributing to the Extended Learning Policy.

Administering Medication to Students - Second Reading

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to approve the second reading of the Administering Medication to Students.

Ms. Garrity clarified that all typographical errors would be corrected as noted from the May 27, 2008 first reading.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion was unanimously approved.

First Aid/Emergency Care - Second

Motion: Vice-Chair Ristaino moved, seconded by Mrs. Walker to approve the second reading of the First Aid/Emergency Care.

Reading

Ms. Garrity clarified that all typographical errors would be corrected as noted from the May 27, 2008 first reading.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Garrity noted that these policies would be available on-line.

**Technology
Committee**

Ms. Emerson reported on the Technology Committee meeting, which was held today from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Ms. Emerson stated that discussions took place regarding mini labs in every classroom instead of the portable labs, the need for increased band width, the Technology Plan, and digital portfolios for our students and teachers.

Other

Chair Shuldman stated that the Board needed to start thinking about the hiring process for the Superintendent and putting together a search committee.

NEXT AGENDA

**Agenda Items for
Next Meeting**

1. AREA Agreement
2. Superintendent plan for filling three administrative vacancies

Mrs. Sweet would like to add educational impact of class sizes at all levels on the agenda for the August Retreat. Ms. Emerson in preparation for that, she would like to know what the State recommends and what contractually has to be followed for all classes broken down by grade. Mrs. Sweet would like to have some historical perspective. Mrs. Stevens would like to have information on the “weighted” students and how that is determined.

Vice-Chair Ristaino stated that when the Board members respond to Dr. Lister’s e-mail on dates for the August Retreat that we also give him two or three agenda items and put the drivers in that we want to talk about.

Mr. LaPage would like to add to a future agenda item on open campus (financially, human, and liability).

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be Tuesday, June 24, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room at Little Harbour School.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment

There was no further business to come before the Board. On a motion by Vice-Chair Ristaino, seconded by Ms. Garrity, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Robert J. Lister
Executive Secretary

/vk