

PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL BOARD MEETING AGENDA FOR APRIL 14, 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
DATE: TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2009

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

6:00 – 7:00 p.m. (Conference Room A) – WORK SESSION RE: Recreation Board and Connie Bean Center plans.

I. CALL TO ORDER Chair Shuldman called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: CHAIR MITCHELL SHULDMAN, KENT LAPAGE, PATRICK ELLIS, DEXTER LEGG, REBECCA EMERSON, VICE CHAIR SHERI GARRITY, LESLIE STEVENS, LISA SWEET, ANN WALKER, Dr. ROBERT J. LISTER (SUPERINTENDENT), STEVE ZADRAVEC (ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT), STEPHEN BARTLETT (BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR), LINDA BRIOLAT (EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE) AND ABIGAIL ROCKEFELLER (STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE).

Absent:

III. INVOCATION Dr. Lister recognized Ms. Doris Regan who recently passed away. Ms. Regan was a nurse at Portsmouth High School throughout the 60's, 70's and 80's and was well respected in the medical profession, as well as by her peers.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Chair Shuldman led in the pledge of allegiance.

V. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

1. March 24, 2009 Regular Board Meeting -

Motion: Motion to accept the minutes by Mr. LaPage

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion:

Vote: Unanimously approved

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

1. None

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

1. NHSBA Orientation and Refresher Workshops flyer- Dr. Lister encouraged anyone to attend who has not been before. If anyone were interested, Dr. Lister would make arrangements.
2. Dondero Newsletter – “Donderiffic!”
3. April lunch menu
4. PHS 2009 Scholarship Book - Provided to board members every year. This reflects only the tip of the iceberg available to PHS graduates.

5. Clipper Foundation Auction letter – Dr. Lister stated that Student Council organized the auction, with the help of Robert Ducharme, in order to raise funds for the Clipper Foundation. Ms. Abigail Rockefeller encouraged the community to attend and stated that the Foundation expected that current second graders would be the first benefactors of the endowment. Tickets are \$35.00 each and can be purchased at the front office at Portsmouth High School.
6. Other - Dondero Student Art Exhibit – Information was provided by Art teacher, Sara LaCasse. Dr. Lister welcomed members of the board and community to attend.

VIII. RECOGNITION/UPDATE OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

1. Resignations

- Luis Insausti – PHS Spanish Teacher hired in 2008-2009. Mr. Insausti will complete one year with the Portsmouth School Department.
- Jeffrey Hollar – PHS Math Teacher hired in 2006-2007. Mr. Hollar will complete three years with the Portsmouth School District.

2. Leaves of Absence

- Nicole Smith – Ms. Smith is expecting a child and requests a leave of absence for the 2009-2010 school year. She has completed four years with the Portsmouth School Department.
- Nicole Keil – Ms. Keil is requesting her leave of absence be extended for another year. She was granted a leave of absence through May 29th for the birth of her first child. Ms. Keil has been with the Portsmouth School Department for a total of seven years.

3. Other – Dr. Lister recognized community members and Bryan Rogers who organized the Special Olympics New Hampshire basketball tournament. Dr. Lister also wished to thank SAU 50 for all their assistance in making the tournament a success. He especially thanked Peter Smith, Principal of Greenland, for offering Greenland's facilities.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

1. Other

X. FINANCIAL

1. **Extension of Drivers Education Contract** - 2 ½ years ago, the district put the drivers education contract out to bid and received two responses. Pro-Staff was awarded the contract. Skepticism was expressed that a new company at this particular cost level might not be sustainable. Therefore, a two-year contract was signed. Pro-Staff would now like the district to consider an extension. Staff at Portsmouth High School highly endorses the company and only had positive comments regarding Pro-Staff. If a two-year contract is reached, Pro-Staff will hold an increase scheduled to go into effect next year of \$10/student. (2%)

Mr. LaPage inquired why students received ¼ credit if completing drivers education with Pro-Staff, but not if they completed drivers education with another company. Dr. Lister stated that the issue has never arisen and if it did, he would not be opposed to awarding credit, pending the enrollment is thoroughly documented and the company is a registered company.

Motion: Motion to extend the Drivers Education Contract for another two years by Mr. Legg

Second: Mr. Ellis

Vote: Unanimously approved

2. **March Financials** – Mr. Bartlett provided the budget sheet and summary sheet for March and discussed areas of concern. Salary seems to be well within tolerance. Out Of District tuition will not be transferred until the end of the budget cycle. 151, 152 and 153 differences offset each other. School Board incurred extra expenses due to off-site taping of school board meetings. Technology concerns seem to be timing issues. Toner estimates will need to be adjusted.

Maintenance is running over budget due to equipment breaking. Mr. Ken Linchey is diligently working on keeping overages to a minimum and meets with Mr. Bartlett weekly to address concerns. Mr. Bartlett is anticipating that energy savings will generate some savings costs that can be applied to offset maintenance overages. Tuition for the final quarter will provide Mr. Bartlett with a better picture on how much of the \$400,000 will be needed to offset other areas.

Dexter inquired if Mr. Bartlett thought that the \$500,000 would hold or if he thought most concerns were due to timing issues. Mr. Bartlett responded that energy was expected to come in under budget. The district is purchasing kilowatts from another vendor and saving costs. This would contribute enough savings to offset the funding necessary for the teachers agreement.

Mr. LaPage stated that he had full faith in the Superintendent and Business Administrator to do whatever necessary to maintain a balanced budget, even if it meant freezing the budget, and requested that all board members support the superintendent's decisions to maintain the budget throughout the rest of the year.

Chair Shuldman requested that, if at all possible, the budget and summary sheets be included in packets delivered on Friday, allowing members time to fully digest budget issues prior to a meeting. Mr. Bartlett agreed to email the spreadsheets to board members on Monday if monthly information was not complete for Friday's mailing.

Mr. Legg requested that Mr. Bartlett meet with the City Finance Department to explore the possibility of a reserve fund and report back his findings to the board.

3. **Special Needs Transportation Costs breakdown** – Mr. Bartlett reported that amounts shown in 153 included all transportation, including field trips, to and from school, etc.
4. **Other**

Motion: Ms. Walker motioned to move Technology up in the agenda

Second: Ms. Garrity

Vote: Unanimously approved

XI. AGENDA

1. Technology Plan

Ms. Susan Birrell, Director of Information Technology, reported that the Technology Committee has worked hard over the last three years to create a technology plan for the Portsmouth schools. The committee, first and foremost, agreed that student learning would be the focus of this plan. They then focused on writing a blueprint to engage learning while still implementing all state and federal requirements for technology. Six goals were created.

1. Maintain and increase our technology infrastructure to support our vision for teaching and learning in an ever-changing technology rich environment that is increasingly cognizant of using tools that allow us to teach and learn globally.
2. Design and implement a District Technology Architecture that uses the strengths of our existing human resources in an effective and efficient manner to achieve an integrated learning model for 21st Century skills.
3. Define and align our expectations for student learning with state and national technology and media literacy standards, as well as with 21st Century skills necessary for post secondary success.
4. Develop a technologically fluent staff and administration that utilize technology tools and 21st Century skills in professional collaboration, instruction, and communication with parents, and professional learning. Whenever possible new communication tools will help us share and augment our learning globally.
5. Utilize technology tools to increase efficiencies in student information management, reporting requirements, parent and community engagement, student assessment data analysis, and instructional planning and delivery.
6. Create a safe and accessible technology environment while addressing digital citizenship norms.

The new technology plan is based on all students, K-8, participating in a digital portfolio. According to state and federal mandates, all students must be computer literate by high school.

Other highlights of the plan include:

- Action plans have been created for each school and plans are updated on a monthly basis.
- The replacement plan for computers helps in meeting the federal mandate in creating portfolios. (Replacement will be based on age of computer.)
- Infinite Campus has been implemented and the parent portal has been launched. Infinite Campus, over time, will allow parent involvement to increase.

- Access challenges have been addressed by purchasing netbooks, which have been distributed at the middle school. By the end of the week, all three elementary schools will receive netbooks.
- Whiteboards are being used to engage students in the elementary schools.
- Two technology integrators have been hired to help teachers' progress from the low level currently to the next level of technology implementation.
- A new acceptable use policy has been implemented. The Policy Committee will be approving in the near future.

Some challenges facing Ms. Birrell and IT staff are:

1. Bandwidth
2. Credit Recovery
3. Software costs and how information is saved and delivered
4. Software storage solutions for portfolios
5. If a student is not computer literate at the end of eighth grade, what will be available at the high school level?
6. As different technologies are introduced, more tech support will be needed

Mr. LaPage expressed frustration with the state and mandates that have been made without any financial assistance backing them up. Mr. LaPage requested Ms. Birrell investigate how other school systems are handling the situation. He then requested that the board write a letter stating, "enough is enough". Laws are passed, yet help in complying with new laws isn't offered. Ms. Birrell stated that she would be travelling to Washington, DC to attend a stimulus update and would be more than happy to deliver a letter. Ms. Birrell leaves on Thursday, April 30th.

Motion: Mr. LaPage motioned to send a letter with Ms. Birrell, stating that school board delegates request that the state fulfill their obligation as well.

Second: Ms. Walker

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Emerson wondered why school technology is not included in the City Improvement Plan. She believes it to be an investment of more than five years and therefore, could be considered infrastructure. Ms. Emerson wondered if this could be pursued.

Mr. Bartlett stated that whether it was included in the CIP or the school's budget, the result would be the same. Both would affect the tax rate.

Ms. Stevens questioned why elementary students learn on Macs and middle school and high school students learn on HP's. Ms. Birrell answered that elementary teachers preferred Macs but would need to change venue with the new netbooks. Notebook prices have all reduced significantly except the Macs. The initial reasoning in purchasing Macs was the amount of educational software available. This too has changed and will be taken into consideration in future purchases.

Ms. Sweet asked Ms. Birrell about the phasing out of old computers. Ms. Birrell stated that some computers are over 8 years old currently and will be updated over the summer. Ms. Briolat stressed the importance to provide newer computers at the elementary schools where current ones are constantly breaking down.

Mr. Legg inquired if the district was looking to see if stimulus money has been set aside for technology, and if so, are we putting grants together in response? Dr. Lister stated that most stimulus money so far, has been designated for IDEA and Title I.

It was clear that the Science and Music Departments were approaching Ms. Birrell and presenting her with a clear vision for what they would need to achieve that vision. Are other departments providing Ms. Birrell with their needs as well? Are we working to create a vision on best practices from other districts? Ms. Birrell reported that she works closely with principals to see what needs should be addressed first. With the needs being so great, Ms. Birrell tries to address as many needs as possible.

Mr. Ellis noticed that two positions has been added to the 2009-2010 budget for a librarian at the high school and an integration teacher at the middle school. Ms. Birrell stated she believed it to be critical that the positions move forward.

Mr. Zadavec commended Ms. Birrell and the Technology Department on their vision for integration. Being involved with teachers and schools, Mr. Zadavec understands how challenging of a task this is. One thing working well is the personnel side. Positions are being analyzed by Ms. Birrell to see how the district can model work and better work with teachers. How do we build that "team capacity" for teachers to work together to achieve student success?

Chair Shuldman wondered if portfolios were not mandated by the state, would we be spending time on something else? Ms. Birrell stated that the district couldn't do as much as it should be doing with integration; currently there is one teacher at each grade level doing a project. The state mandate says that every teacher should be creating portfolios with students. Portsmouth simply does not have the staff or resources to fulfill this mandate at this time.

Chair Shuldman believed it would be beneficial for the board if a catalog of all technology projects were created. He asked Ms. Birrell to possibly work with the principals over the summer to create a list of the 10 best projects being completed in the district. Ms. Birrell is already in the process of speaking with principals about future projects and challenges in each school that must be addressed. She intends to make the final list available on line when complete.

Chair Shuldman would like to see the district work more closely with Ms. Birrell to see if she should oversee librarians and also felt it would be beneficial to spend time talking about how technology will be implanted and put into practice with the librarians.

The district is completing its first year under new standards and Ms. Birrell intends to discuss the year with the committee and focus on where the gaps are.

Chair Shuldman asked Ms. Birrell if she attended the stimulus meeting with the Superintendent and Business Administrator. She did not attend that particular meeting, but has attended a meeting specifically dealing with technology. Supposedly, there is \$3 Billion earmarked for technology in the State of New Hampshire and will be divided between all districts. However, this money will have many strings attached. The district will have to prove that all kids are becoming tech literate. The rules and guidelines on how a district can spend the money are expected to be lengthy.

2. "The Story" – Dr. Lister, along with other administration, is preparing a budget presentation for City Council. All city departments will be in attendance to defend their budgets. Dr. Lister sent messages to parents stating it was the district's goal to provide quality education for all students and to maintain reasonable class size.
3. Recreation Work session Update – After meeting with the Recreation Department and City Manager Mr. John Bohenko, it is evident that the "stump dump" location is not a viable alternative for a field replacement site. The field issue will need to be further researched quickly.
4. Sustainability Fair – May 9, 2009 Sustainability fair – Dr. Lister encouraged board members and the public to stop by and see activities student and staff are involved in. Ms. Walker is a member of the city's sustainability committee and also encouraged the public to attend.
5. School Board Retreat and Highlights – The retreat's purpose was to assess each goal's progress for the year. Many objectives were added to agendas over the past year. Mr. Ed McDonough was in attendance and later commented he was impressed with the level of conversation.

Motion: Mr. LaPage motioned to accept the adjusted/updated objectives and goals sheet.

Second: Mr. Legg

Vote: Unanimously approved

6. Presentations to school parent groups - Dr. Shuldman reported that presentations were made to different parent groups throughout the schools. A major parental concern was maintaining reasonable class sizes. Parents were encouraged to attend the city council budget hearing on April 15, 2009. Ms. Sweet would like more information on what cuts were made, what cuts were not made and how those decisions were derived.
7. Middle School Update – A recent work session with JCJ Architects revealed updated costs and timetable for renovating the Portsmouth Middle School. The first reading on bonding is scheduled for April 20, 2009. In order for it to move forward, it will need a majority of five votes.

Ms. Emerson inquired if a letter was sent to Connie Bean, encouraging them to join the middle school project now before blue prints are created. Chair Shuldman stated that a letter had not been sent.

Ms. Sweet recognized that some of the Recreation Board's questions are questions board members also ask. Where are kids going to have physical education? Where are the teachers going to park? Are these issues that the JBC will decide once it is formed? Is the board asking the right questions?

Chair Shuldman stated that some phases could only be set after a contractor is hired. The field issue will be further studied to assure all T's are crossed and I's are dotted.

Mr. LaPage did not feel that the board has been provided with an adequate answer on the survey of the foundations. There are questions lingering and more money to be spent. The school board needs a presentation perhaps the first meeting in May. Mr. LaPage inquired as to why an extended study needs to be done?

Mr. Bartlett stated the initial study was to determine that there were no safety issues and was paid for by operating budget money. The next step was thought to be excavation but was washed out due to weather. Mr. Bartlett was notified a week later that original plans existed and could be reviewed at public works. JSN and Gillespie viewed the plans and confirmed that there are no pilings. It is a floating pier foundation. Borings need to be assessed next to see what exactly is affecting the foundation.

Estimates are beyond what can be afforded this year. If the board waits until June, it will be close to bonding and Mr. Bartlett can put in for reimbursement through the process. After bonding, investigation into the pilings can be considered part of the investigation phase of the process.

Mr. Legg stated that he did not believe it was solely the school board's responsibility to figure out the ball field situation and that the School Board should collectively reach out to the city manager and Recreation Board before the April 20th hearing to identify a process in how best to answer/field questions.

Ms. Sweet believes the parking issue needs to go through the same process and will need the city's help.

8. AYP Update

Determinations are based on how each sub group performs. If any sub group does not make AYP, the whole school does not make AYP. In order to remove the status of a School In Need of Improvement (SINI), a school needs to make AYP two years in a row. This is Portsmouth's first of two years necessary. Mr. Zdravec reported that most schools state wide have some level of AYP status.

Ms. Rockefeller wondered if results for SAU 50 could be compared with SAU 52.

Ms. Sweet asked if the state corrects at all for sub group size. Mr. Zdravec answered that a school can meet the target index score or can fall within confidence interval. The smaller the sub group, the smaller the variability from year to year. A third way to make AYP is to show enough growth from one year to the next.

Mr. LaPage wondered how many high schools made AYP. Thirteen schools made AYP state wide. Mr. LaPage stated the district should be celebrating, considering less than 25% made AYP.

Ms. Emerson asked what the penalties or advantages of making AYP were to a district.

Mr. Bartlett stated that the State requires Title I grant funds to improve test results. In order to improve test scores, amounts need to be set aside to pay for supplemental educational services. This takes away from programming. The district has had to cut back on summer programs in order to fund the other activities. A number of schools are entering year 4 or 5, which can lead to a state take over of schools. Every year becomes more restricted on how a district can spend money.

Dr. Lister reminded everyone that NECAP is only one assessment tool and that Mr. LaPage was correct. The district should be celebrating the excellent teaching throughout all the Portsmouth schools.

9. Other Master calendar – Dr. Lister encouraged board members and community members to refer to the All Schools Activity Calendar frequently. Flurries of activities are happening this time of year in each school.

XII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Other –Ms. Emerson reported that there will be a Safe Routes to School Committee meeting April 15, 2009 at St. Patrick's school, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

XIII. NEXT AGENDA ITEMS (May 5, 2009 Council Chambers, City Hall)

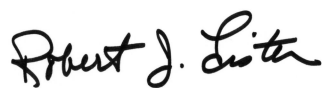
1. Other

XIV. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Whiteboard demonstration at Little Harbour Elementary May 19th.
2. Teacher Evaluation Update – All evaluations of teachers have been completed.
3. Cable Television – A meeting is scheduled for May.

XV. ADJOURNMENT - At 9:30 p.m., a motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Stevens. Seconded by Ms. Walker. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by:



Dr. Robert J. Lister
Superintendent of Schools