

## PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES FOR MAY 5, 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

PORTSMOUTH, NH

DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2009

TIME: 7:00PM [or thereafter]

**6:00 – 7:00 p.m. (Conference Room A) – Non-Public Session in accordance with RSA 91-A: 3 (5). Consideration or negotiation of pending legal claims or litigation.**

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### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

### **II. ROLL CALL**

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

Absent: ANN MAYER

### **III. INVOCATION**

### **IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Motion:** A motion to seal the minutes from the May 5, 2009, Non-Public I session for two years was made by Ms. Garrity

**Second:** Mr. Legg

**Discussion:** None

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

### **V. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

1. April 7, 2009 Work Session with JCJ Architects

**Motion:** Motion to approve by Ms. Emerson

**Second:** Ms. Walker

**Discussion:**

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

2. April 14, 2009 Regular Board Meeting

**Motion:** Motion to approve by Ms. Emerson

**Second:** Mr. Ellis

**Discussion:** Ms. Walker requested that a motion in the minutes be corrected. Ms. Walker motioned to move technology up in the agenda, not Mr. LaPage as stated.

**Vote:** Unanimously approved, pending above correction.

## **VI. COMMUNICATIONS**

1. FRIENDS – A Night in the Far East Event/Auction
2. May Elementary Lunch Menu
3. Harbour Lights Newsletter
4. Foster's article on Alex Bock – Alex is also an accomplished musician.
5. Class size article - City Council recently asked the superintendent for more information re: class size. Mr. LaPage requested that this article is given to all councilors. Research clearly shows that students will begin to fail if class size continues to “creep”.
6. New Franklin Nutrition – Portsmouth's Food Services program was recently recognized. Dr. Lister recognized Ms. Joanne Curtis and Mr. Don Clark for their hard work and for involving students in the program.
7. Letter of appreciation from Ms. Nancy Roy regarding Ms. Rebecca Emerson. – Ms. Roy, principal of PASS, thanked board member Ms. Emerson for crafting a grant proposal to the Portsmouth Garden Club. Her proposal was approved and funds were received and used to create a flower garden in honor of Mrs. Carolyn Lilly, a former secretary of PASS who recently passed away.
8. Dr. Lister encouraged community members and staff to refer to the All School Activities calendar often.

## **VII. RECOGNITION/UPDATE OF STAFF AND STUDENTS**

1. Portsmouth High School Percussion Presentation – Mr. Cirillo, Christopher Vinciguerra and Marley Conway thanked the school board for the opportunity to travel to Ohio and perform. When the percussion ensemble was created, it was not with the intent to compete, but to simply teach students how to play at the highest level possible. PHS percussion has now been competing since 2003 and has never placed under second place. Mr. Cirillo thanked Superintendent Lister for accompanying the group on the trip.

Mr. LaPage stated that, over the past several years, the music department has needed to do more with less. He asked Mr. Cirillo what his secret was. “What makes it so successful, even though you have received major cuts?” Mr. Cirillo uses every penny wisely and where the department will reap the largest benefit. Mr. Cirillo works very hard to justify what is needed in his budget. The music department has a mission statement and Mr. Cirillo diligently tries to live within the department's means and still deliver a program worthy of Portsmouth. Mr. LaPage then asked Mr. Cirillo “if it wasn't for parents, would the kids have been able to travel to Ohio and compete nationally?” Mr. Cirillo stated that they would not have been able to take the trip. Parents of the music club and the students traveling worked very hard to raise enough money to cover the cost of the trip.

2. PHS Costa Rica Presentation - Ms. Nancy Wheaton-Modern and Ms. Wemple thanked the board for approving the trip. Ms. Modern also mentioned Ms. Wemple's recent travels to Costa Rica. Had it not been for her personal connection to locals in the village where they stayed, the school would not have had the opportunities they did. Students that addressed the board were: Abby Rockefeller, Devin Scott, David Hutchinson and Sonja Loeser.

Students shared how the culture differs from what they experience as Americans. It seemed that, even though families had considerably less than Americans, they were happier and closer as a community. They also found that their Spanish improved dramatically by simply being immersed in the culture and unable to communicate by English. The students appreciated the natural beauty of the country and felt as though the trip had made a lasting impact in their lives.

3. Alex Bock – Dr. Lister recognized the recent accomplishment of sixth grader Alex Bock, making it all the way to the semi finals state Geography Bee. Congratulations Alex!
4. PHS Student Council/Clipper Foundation Annual Auction – The first ever annual auction raised \$14,000. Dr. Lister thanked community members, school board members and students that attended the event and worked hard to ensure that the event was a success. Dr. Lister recognized Mr. Bob Ducharme for his involvement in not only the auction, but also the foundation as a whole.
5. Resignations:

Misha Tepper-Stewart: Misha is resigning from her position as the Athletic Trainer at Portsmouth High School. She was hired the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year and will complete five years with the Portsmouth School Department.

**Motion:** Motion to approve the resignation of Misha Tepper- Stewart by Mr. Legg

**Second:** Ms. Walker

**Discussion:** Mr. LaPage stated that the district continuously hires trainers that do an outstanding job. Mr. LaPage believes that Misha connected with many students and will be greatly missed. He also believes that it is a tough economy to find the "right fit" replacement for her.

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

6. Retirements:

Ms. Robin Burdick – Ms. Burdick is retiring after a total of thirty-six years with the Portsmouth School Department. She has worked as an elementary teacher, Special Education teacher and elementary math and science coordinator. She has been the principal of Little Harbour Elementary School since 1999.

**Motion:** Motion to approve the resignation of Robin Burdick by Ms. Emerson

**Second:** Ann Walker

**Discussion:** The board thanked Ms. Burdick for her many years of service. She will be missed.

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

Ms. Paulette Hoeflich – Ms. Hoeflich is retiring from her position as Director of Student Services. She will complete twenty-eight years with the Portsmouth School Department. Paulette has worked in the special education department as an educator and a counselor and was the principal at Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School from 1992 – 2002. In 2002, she became the Special Education Director for the district.

**Motion:** Motion to approve the resignation of Paulette Hoeflich by Ms. Emerson

**Second:** Ann Walker

**Discussion:** The board thanked Ms. Hoeflich for her many years of service. She will be missed.

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

Ms. Carol Melchor – Ms. Melchor will be completing eleven years with the Portsmouth School Department. She was a Spanish teacher eight of the eleven years at the elementary level.

**Motion:** Motion to approve the resignation of Carol Melchor by Ms. Emerson

**Second:** Ann Walker

**Discussion:**

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

7. May 3-9 is National Teacher Appreciation and May 6-12 is National Nurses Week – Dr. Lister appreciates what Portsmouth teachers do in their classrooms and beyond into the community. He encouraged the community to take a moment to thank the district's teachers and nurses for their dedication and service to our students.

8. Other - Leave of Absence:

Ms. Jill Fast – Ms. Fast is requesting a leave of absence for the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year through December 2009. She is expecting a child in July and will complete two years with the Portsmouth School Department.

**Motion:** Motion to approve a leave of absence for Jill Fast by Ms. Emerson

**Second:** Ann Walker

**Discussion:**

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

## VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

1. Other

## IX. FINANCIAL

1. Stimulus Update – Mr. Bartlett reported that funds for school construction bonds will be available, providing financing for construction projects with interest free borrowing. Ken Linchey and Mr. Bartlett are putting together the necessary documents to apply for funds and, perhaps the district will be able to chip away at a few of the overdue projects. The funds are competitively awarded, with a deadline of May 12, 2009. Due to the quick deadline, many schools did not submit paperwork, which only increases Portsmouth's chances.

Mr. Zdravec is working with the Student Services Director and the Title I Director on how best to utilize funds received for Title I and IDEA. There are many restrictions and regulations that do not allow any supplanting of funds already in the budget. This limits the students that can actually be supported with stimulus funds.

Funds can be used for professional development and collaborative work sessions over the summer, focusing on how the district can lower the drop out rate to zero and help all students reach standards set by the federal government.

Timeline – IDEA funds are becoming available now. Title I stimulus funds will start this summer and the beginning of the next school year. Flexibilities for spending Title I funds are still not known. Dr. Shuldman stated that Title I is based on the percentage of students who receive free and reduced lunch. Mr. Bartlett stated that Little Harbour recently lost their Title I status and will no longer be eligible for stimulus aid through Title I. Several board members expressed disappointment in the entire stimulus process and the way awarded funds are being restricted. Dr. Lister voiced agreement with the board and believes it will be important to update the community on the many strings attached to any funds the school district receives.

Mr. Bartlett briefly discussed the month-end report. Salaries are running consistent with last month, making up on the short funding of the teachers agreement. Benefit areas under life and disability will provide savings that can be put towards the salary short fall.

Cost center 165 - Relates to identified students who have recently moved into the district, creating more pressure on the budget. Within the last two weeks, new students have moved into the district, costing \$86,000 more than anticipated.

Maintenance overage can partially be addressed with recovery funds that have been received from FEMA for the ice storm. \$15,000 has been received so far and more is anticipated.

Mr. Legg stated that the district was running under budget by approximately \$200,000. If the school district comes in under budget, can those funds be applied to 2010? Mr. Bartlett stated that the city manager would need to open the door for that discussion. Mr. Legg requested that Mr. Bartlett inquire further with the City Manager regarding this topic.

Ms. Emerson inquired how much an energy audit would cost. Mr. Bartlett reported that the district has had two audits and that Mr. Linchey has attended training at PSNH to increase the district's energy savings. Further energy savings changes will be made with school construction funding from the state.

## 2. Other

# X. AGENDA

## 1. Presentation on Class Size -

Dr. Lister believes that class size is an important issue to teachers and the community. What is reasonable class size? What are some ways that Portsmouth addresses its need for reasonable class size?

What are some effects of small class sizes that Dr. Lister has witnessed?

- Students in the lower grades with reasonable class sizes achieve more.
- The PASS program for students has a smaller class size ratio than the high school. More one on one attention allows students, who may drop out, to stay in school.
- Teachers with smaller class sizes have a higher morale.
- More collegiality with other teachers is observed.
- Personal construction and differentiated instruction are better provided.

Suggested class sizes are now outlined in the teacher contract because teachers were concerned with class sizes increasing. Weights are outlined in contract as well. Ms. Walker believes that teachers cannot possibly effectively teach with such high weighted counts. (A weighted count takes into consideration how many students in that particular classroom have Individual Educational Plans and 504 plans.)

Dr. Lister wants the board to be prepared to convince the community, if necessary, that students learn better in small class sizes. Teachers that stay are teachers that feel supported in the classroom. The recent presentation made at a city council work session stated that people move to the Portsmouth area because of the school department. If that is the case, class size is, and will be, a huge impact.

Ms. Emerson wondered if the Policy Committee should create a class size policy. Mr. LaPage cautioned on creating a "policy". How would the board enforce? Perhaps a mandate for administration to enforce could be written. Mr. LaPage is concerned with paraprofessionals being spread too thin. He would like to ask City Council how many more paraprofessionals do they expect to be removed from classrooms and still have teachers effectively teach?

Dr. Shuldman believes it would be beneficial for the policy committee to look at other districts guiding principles on class size and work with administration in creating a guiding principle for the Portsmouth School District.

2. Middle School Update – JCJ will be presenting to City Council some time in June. Dr. Shuldman requested more information on fields and parking for the next board meeting. What are the proposed field sites? Submittal to the state would only need to be amended if the choice somehow involved another waiver. JCJ has no intention of moving the existing field until a new field is constructed, which will fulfill the state's educational requirement.
3. Other – Mr. Ellis felt it important for the public to know that item number four on the recent letter received from Mayor Ferrini was not discussed at the recent work session with city council. The mayor is now asking the superintendent for scenarios UNDER 0%. All board members were uncomfortable that the board would not have time to discuss the scenarios before they were submitted.

## **XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

1. Other – Sustainability Fair – Ms. Walker encouraged other board members to attend the upcoming Sustainability Fair and kindly help Portsmouth beat Keene, NH with whom they are in a friendly competition.

Mr. LaPage encouraged the community to attend the dinner at Momma D's for the Patricia A. Wojnar Memorial Scholarship fund this coming Tuesday, May 26, 2009 at 5:30 P.M.

Ms. Stevens stated that a clarified newsletter to the community would be posted on the school web page shortly.

## **XII. NEXT AGENDA ITEMS (May 19, 2009 Council Chambers, City Hall)**

1. Other

## **XIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

1. Whiteboard demonstration at Little Harbour Elementary – May 19, 2009
2. Cable Television – Meeting scheduled for May 12, 2009

## **XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** Motion to adjourn by Ms. Emerson at 9:10 P.M.

**Second:** Ms. Garrity

**Discussion:**

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

Respectfully submitted by:

Dr. Robert J. Lister  
Superintendent of Schools