

PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES FOR JUNE 9, 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
DATE: TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2009

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

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

II. ROLL CALL

Present: MITCHELL SHULDMAN (CHAIR), SHERI HAM-GARRITY (VICE-CHAIR) REBECCA EMERSON, PATRICK ELLIS, DEXTER LEGG, KENT LAPAGE, ANN WALKER, LESLIE STEVENS, LISA SWEET, DR. ROBERT LISTER (SUPERINTENDENT), STEVE ZADRAVEC (ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT), ANN MAYER (SAU 50 REPRESENTATIVE), LINDA BRIOLAT (EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE) AND ABIGAIL ROCKEFELLER (STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE)

Absent:

III. INVOCATION

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - Ms. Abigail Rockefeller led in the pledge of allegiance.

V. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

1. MAY 5, 2009 – NON-PUBLIC I – On May 5, 2009, during the Portsmouth School Board's Public Session, the May 5, 2009 minutes were sealed for two years by a vote of 7 Aye, 1 Abstention. Minutes will be reviewed in May of 2011.

Motion: Motion to approve the minutes of May 5, 2009 Non-Public I by Mr. Legg

Second: Ms. Garrity

Discussion:

Vote: Unanimously approved

2. MAY 5, 2009 – PUBLIC SESSION

Motion: Motion to approve the minutes of May 5, 2009 Public Session by Ms. Stevens

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion: Mr. LaPage requested that him being absent be changed to present

Vote: Unanimously approved.

3. May 19 – PUBLIC SESSION

Motion: Motion to approve the minutes of May 19, 2009 Public Session by Ms. Walker

Second: Ms. Sweet

Discussion: Page 7 – teachers agreed to provide \$567,000.00. Correct number is \$57,000.00.

Vote: Pending change, unanimously approved.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Technology projects, district wide – Provided by Susan Birrell. A letter outlining technology content within the district and a link taking board members to a website was provided. Members were invited to visit the site to see targeted skills and integrated standards of students' portfolio projects. Chair Shuldman stated that the idea behind the request for information from Ms. Birrell is to provide the board with a sense of where teachers are technology wise and what principals believe their needs are for technology within their buildings. It was also noted that teachers participate in the LOTI survey every year. This survey is used to assess how comfortable teachers are with integrating technology into their lesson plans. Results of this survey will be shared at a later date.
2. Letter of Thanks – Mr. Andrews
3. Letter of Thanks – Ms. White
4. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – Response from Commissioner Tracy – This letter is in response to a proposal submitted by Mr. Bartlett, requesting approximately \$2 million from funds the state set aside to be awarded for infrastructure changes. Unfortunately, Portsmouth was not funded. Mr. LaPage congratulated Somersworth for getting \$24 million but also requested that Dr. Lister and Mr. Bartlett follow up with Mr. Murdough at the Department of Education to find out why Portsmouth was not chosen. Ms. Sweet requested the list of which districts actually made the deadline, the submitted proposals and which ones were chosen. Mr. Ellis commented that \$32 million total was set aside and Somersworth received approximately 20 million.
5. Proposed School Board Meeting Dates 2009-2010 – It was noted that the first board meeting in July was perhaps too soon after the transition between superintendents. Board members decided to move back the date to July 21, 2009. If Council Chambers in City Hall is not available, the meeting will be held at Little Harbour Elementary. It was also noted that a special election would need to be held after board members were elected in November to choose a school board chair and vice-chair.
6. Transition Plan - Mr. Ed McDonough – will be recognized under staff and students.
7. Other – Ms. Sweet provided board members with the national state and graduation rates.

Mr. LaPage requested that a letter be sent to national delegates stating the boards disappointment and concerns with how the federal government demanded that stimulus money be spent. A draft will be provided to board members, prior to sending, for signature.

VII. RECOGNITION/UPDATE OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

1. Leaves of Absence/Resignation.

Elizabeth Phillips – Liz is expecting a child and is requesting a leave of absence for the first semester of the 2009-2010 school year, beginning September 8, 2009. She has completed five years with the Portsmouth School Department.

Motion: Motion to approve Ms. Phillips leave of absence by Ms. Walker

Second: Mr. Legg

Discussion:

Vote: Unanimously approved

Kristin O'Connor Gunn – Kristen is expecting a child and is requesting a leave of absence the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, returning November 30, 2009. She has completed five years with the Portsmouth School Department.

Motion: Motion to approve Ms. Gunn's leave of absence by Ms. Walker

Second: Mr. Legg

Discussion:

Vote: Unanimously approved

Danielle Herman – Danielle is expecting a child and is requesting a leave of absence the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, returning approximately January 29, 2010. She has completed five years with the Portsmouth School District.

Motion: Motion to approve Ms. Herman's leave of absence by Mr. Legg

Second: Ms. Garrity

Discussion:

Vote: Unanimously Approved.

Phyllis Ellis –Phyllis is resigning from her position as a Resource Room Teacher at Portsmouth Middle School. She was hired the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year and will complete eight years with the Portsmouth School Department.

Motion: Motion to approve Ms. Ellis's resignation by Ms. Sweet

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion:

Vote: Unanimously approved

2. Other

Mr. Ed McDonough is excited to begin in Portsmouth and outlined his transition plan - a systematic and efficient way to meet individual members of the Portsmouth community. Interviews will be conducted in order to assess what the strengths and challenges are of the community. Data will be collected and reported back to the board in December. Mr. McDonough stated the importance of being a good listener during this transitional process. Chair Shuldman stated that he appreciates the time Mr. McDonough has spent meeting with individuals throughout the district and the city.

Other –

- Dr. Lister reminded board members that graduation for the middle school is Thursday, June 11th and the high school graduation is Friday, June 12th.
- Career Technical Education had their first awards ceremony.
- Portsmouth Alternative Secondary School (PASS) graduated ten students this year.
- PHS Girls tennis becomes state champions. Baseball and softball are still in final playoff games.
- Dr. Lister also thanked the clerical, paraprofessional, supervisor custodial and administrative unions for the concessions they recently made. He hopes that city councilors will not forget their sacrifices when their contracts are once again up for negotiation in 2014.
- Dr. Lister also recognized Ms. Abby Rockefeller for her hard work and dedication in serving the school board throughout her high school career. The board wishes her success as she heads to college this fall.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTARY SESSION

None

IX. FINANCIAL

1. Stimulus Update – The Title I and Special Education Directors are attending local meetings and web casts to stay up to date on how funds can be used. In the following weeks a list will be created on how best to utilize all stimulus funds within the parameters allowed. Unfortunately, funds will not be eligible for new technology like the district had hoped.
2. Tri-State ASBO Scholarship (Association of School Business Officers) - While attending a recent conference, Mr. Bartlett's name was chosen out of a hat to receive a \$500 scholarship. This one time scholarship will be given to a graduating PHS student studying business.
3. Union Contract Negotiations Update – Mr. Bartlett will provide a spreadsheet on budget impacts. Chair Shuldman once again expressed the boards appreciation to all four unions stating, “The city needs to truly appreciate the sacrifice these unions made. A 2.98% COLA reduction for one year is actually taking a loss of that percentage over the lifetime of their careers and saves the district a vast amount of money.”

Mr. LaPage reminded the board that a finalized budget has not been voted on. The board should deliberate soon on exactly what should be cut from the budget in order to reach the 0% increase. Mr. LaPage raised concerns with the athletic trainer position being cut and the complications in hiring an outside provider. The board must vote on a final budget prior to July 1st.

Mr. Legg requested that Mr. Bartlett report out on a surplus in the district's operating budget and total fund budget and the possibility of creating a reserve fund at the next meeting. Assuming fund authorization, what opportunities would the board have to take this surplus and fill the gaps in fiscal year 2010/2011?

Mr. Ellis raised concern with a statement he heard regarding City Council not approving anymore contracts if not agreed upon soon. Has City Council made a clear declaration to that effect? Mr. LaPage stated that it was important for City Council to recognize that there is a process that needs to be followed.

Ms. Stevens requested that the board receive legal advice on how to proceed with the two remaining union contracts.

4. Other –Superintendent Contract – Mr. McDonough offered 3% back on his base salary, decreasing it from \$134,000.00 to \$129,980.00. The board must vote on the amended contract.

Motion: Motion to approve Mr. McDonough’s amended contract to reflect a base pay of \$129,980.00 by Mr. Legg

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion:

Roll Call Vote: Unanimously approved

A letter stating his intent to reduce his salary will be sent to human resources to accompany his amended contract. Dr. Shuldman believes this is an incredible gesture and another indication that the board hired the right person to become the next superintendent of Portsmouth. Mr. McDonough is listening and paying attention to the beat of Portsmouth.

1. Other – Ms. Walker questioned if Title I tutors were removed from paraprofessional union status. Dr. Lister stated that they are now employees at will. This was the union’s decision.

X. AGENDA

1. Proposed **Late Start Days** – 2009/2010. Assistant Superintendent Steve Zdravec presented a proposal showing the need for collaborative time for teachers. After hearing the concerns with the amount of early release days and the loss of instructional time, Mr. Zdravec went back and revisited the need for nine days with Curriculum Council. A survey was drafted and distributed to staff members at different schools.

Survey results showed that paraprofessionals did not value days as highly as teachers did. This is something that will be addressed in the coming year.

Motion: Motion to amend the original proposal by Mr. Zdravec to reflect eight days instead of nine late start days by Mr. Legg. Administration will report quarterly to the board, providing assessment and recommendations for the 2010-2011 school year.

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion:

Vote: 4 Ayes, 5 Opposed. Motion fails

Motion: Motion to accept proposal of nine late start days, as presented by Mr. Zadravec by Mr. Ellis. Administration will report quarterly to the board, providing assessment and recommendations for the 2010-2011 school year.

Second: Ms. Walker

Discussion: By starting late, instead of releasing early, students will miss two hours of instructional time instead of three. Breakfast will be available as always on late start days. Mr. LaPage applauded Mr. Zadravec for being creative. Although Ms. Mayer raised strong concern for nine late start days, the new proposal does cut back on the loss of instructional time by 33%. Board members thanked Mr. Zadravec for hearing their concerns and coming up with such a creative solution. Mr. Zadravec will report back to the board on what is planned for professional development and the results throughout the year.

Ms. Stevens stated that it would be crucial to keep parents apprised of the reason nine days are needed. Parents will need to understand the benefits to their kids. Although the nine days was concerning to some board members, the case was thoroughly made for the need for all nine. (Proposal attached to the end of these minutes.)

Vote: Unanimously approved

2. Attendance Policy – Second Reading – Tabled until next meeting. There will be a meeting on Thursday, June 11, 2009.
3. Middle School Update – The New Hampshire Senate put building aid back into the state budget. Mr. Bartlett expects to hear the final recommendations around June 18th. City Council will not vote on bonding until the state votes on the final budget. Dr. Lister had a conversation with Mr. Sullivan regarding eminent domain. Mr. Sullivan has not heard anything new.

The recreation board will be holding its first meeting June 16th at 6 p.m. in the Little Theatre at the high school. After a lengthy discussion between board members regarding the timeline and what needs to happen with meeting field requirements, it was decided that Dr. Lister would arrange a meeting with Mr. Bohenko to discuss board concerns surrounding the middle school timeline.
4. Other – Ms. Sweet proposed that the school board create listening groups over the summer to hear what different community groups have to say. Dr. Lister stated that National Night Out, coming up in August, would be the perfect avenue to connect with community groups and listen to their concerns.

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Safe Routes to Schools –Ms. Emerson stated that grant money was received to create a travel plan. The City’s Legal Department is reviewing the plan. The travel plans purpose is to improve student’s ability to bike and walk to school. Six to eight “weebles” will be ordered and community members will have the opportunity to adopt a weeble in hopes of extending the lifespan of these crossing signs. Bike racks have become a bigger job than originally expected due to environmental concerns. Mr. Ellis will provide Ms. Emerson with some porous cement options on the market that may satisfy the city’s concerns.
2. Other – Ms. Walker, a member of the Sustainability Committee, distributed bookmarks highlighting heating and water usage saving tips.

Ms. Stevens stated that the School Board newsletter published its second edition and requested feedback. Board members thought that an email for public feedback might be beneficial. Ms. Noble will investigate and report back to the Superintendent.

Motion: Motion to accept the second edition of the School Board newsletter, as presented by Mr. Legg

Second: Ms. Garrity

Vote: Unanimously approved

XII. NEXT AGENDA ITEMS (June 23, 2009, Little Harbour Board Room)

1. Budget Status Report
2. Other

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Motion to adjourn by Ms. Garrity at 9:07 p.m.

Second: Ms. Walker

Vote: Unanimously approved

Respectfully submitted by:

Dr. Robert J. Lister
Superintendent of Schools