

PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL BOARD PUBLIC MINUTES FOR JANUARY 31, 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

PORTSMOUTH, NH

DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2013

TIME: 6:30 [or thereafter]

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- I. **CALL TO ORDER** - Chair Stevens called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.
- II. **ROLL CALL** – LESLIE STEVENS (CHAIR), TOM MARTIN (VICE CHAIR) ANN WALKER, KENT LAPAGE, PATRICK ELLIS, DEXTER LEGG, MITCHELL SHULDMAN, MARY OLEA, ED MCDONOUGH, (SUPERINTENDENT), STEVE ZADRAVEC (ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT), STEPHEN BARTLETT (BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR) OLIN JOHANNESSEN (EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE) AND ANN MAYER (SAU50 REPRESENTATIVE).
- III. **INVOCATION**
- IV. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Chair Stevens led in the pledge of allegiance.
- V. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES** - NONE
- VI. **PUBLIC COMMENT** - NONE
- VII. **WORKSHOP SESSION ON FY 2014 BUDGET**
- i. **SPECIAL EDUCATION** – Ms. Simons opened the workshop with a PowerPoint highlighting the following statistics:
- Number Of Identified Students And How They Transition Through K-12
 - Special Education Staffing Levels
 - Proposed Changes For 13/14
 - Looking To Move 1 Case Manager From LHS To PMS To Meet The Needs Of The 31 Students Moving Into The 6th Grade
 - Looking To Use PEEP Staff Differently By Providing Afternoon Student Contact Time At The Elementary Level
 - Anticipated SPED FY14 Budget Breakdown
 - Funding Sources For Special Education Broken Down By Federal, State And District
 - District Funded Items
 - IDEA Funded Items
 - What The 207 Budget Funds
 - Out Of District Information As Of January 25, 2013
 - Facts About Out Of District Placement
 - Medicaid Reimbursement – What It Is All About
 - Catastrophic Aid
 - Special Education Challenges Moving Forward

Board members followed up with the following comments and questions:

Clarification on the difference between last year's budget and this year. Staff numbers remain the same. Change is around the increase in salary and benefits. The only minor difference is more funding is being allocated towards contracted services.

Clarification on \$400,000 that the School Board voted to reallocate from the General Fund to the 207 fund in FY13.

Does Special Education track students by disability? Yes and Ms. Simons has noticed an increase in the field "other health impairments" over the past few years.

Do 504 plans require Special Education support and, if so, are they captured in students being tracked by disability? 504 students often require additional supports or accommodations. Many times they require support from Special Education staff but may not be identified. If a student receives a 504 plan and is not identified the district does not receive Medicaid reimbursement. Regardless, the student may require extra supports to be successful in the classroom and the costs for such supports come out of the Special Education budget. Ms. Simons also speculated that the need for 504 plans may increase due to better awareness and education surrounding student athletes and concussions.

What have been the advantages of PEEP moving to Dondero? "Peepers" located at Dondero are adjusting well. Ms. Simons is fascinated to observe the different perspectives in teaching between PEEP staff and Dondero staff. Ms. Simons, along with administration, is working on blending the two approaches to assure that the district is preparing these students for full day kindergarten. Peep staff members are also being utilized in the afternoon by working in kindergarten classrooms helping last year's students that need extra support transitioning successfully to full day kindergarten. An extra savings has occurred by utilizing Dondero's nurse for PEEP.

Special Education costs had been trending downward until this year where they have flat lined. Do you see a need for long term planning...and as a board, is there something we can start working on to assist you in long term planning? There are two factors that must be taken into consideration while planning long term: 1) The Portsmouth School Department is a great school district. These results in parents inquiring about the different services offered to students with learning disabilities and high needs. There is an attraction to our district because of the great work we do. 2) An in depth analysis of all instructional supports and how effective they are. Is the district seeing the benefits of those resources? Ms. Simons believes the benefits are clear at the elementary level but, beginning at the middle school level, the number of students being identified begins to grow. Ms. Simons will objectively look at all programming district wide to see if perhaps up-front costs could benefit the district long term, such as a full time ABA specialist. Once a program is established, other districts may choose to tuition students in, offsetting the costs for Portsmouth over time. Ms. Simons is continually looking for any grant funding opportunities available.

Is there a developing trend away from inclusion? Districts are seeing a larger percentage of students with increasing needs being placed in classrooms. Are all our teachers capable of working with these students? Districts are beginning to look at inclusion a bit differently

only in the way of asking “what are the best practices for these students so that they can be with peers for the most amount of time and still be successful?”

The State of New Hampshire’s rules and guidelines go above and beyond federal guidelines, which come with a cost. Ms. Simons thinks there are pieces that could be adjusted around supporting students. Federal Law states that a student is to receive a “free and appropriate education”. Does an “extended school year” for example, meet that requirement or go beyond what the law intended? The State of New Hampshire also requires that notices to go out much quicker than federal guidelines, which is extremely difficult on staff members. Regardless of all extra responsibilities, the Special Education department is audited every year and programming is audited by the state government every few years. All audits have been extremely successful.

How many staff members are there to support students with emotional needs? An in school psychologist evaluates students and provides functional behavior assessments. A total of 2.0 FTE’s supports the remaining students.

Is there a high level of confidence that the district is finding all items that could possibly be reimbursed? Ms. Simons is positive that all is being done to receive any reimbursement possible to the district.

When a student is placed Out Of District, is it a cost decision driving that placement? OOD placements are usually academic or emotional needs driven that the district cannot provide and programming needs to be put in place immediately. All interventions have been explored and the student is still not succeeding in district. There are two types of OOD placements; students that we, as a district, place and students that are court placed. Students that are court placed are much more difficult for the district to have a voice in the final decision being made for that student.

- ii. UPDATE FROM JANUARY 30, 2013 INFORMATIONAL MEETING – Mr. McDonough will prepare minutes for the next meeting. Mr. LaPage thanked administration for taking the time for these two meeting which allowed a new board member to better understand the budget and encouraged this practice for any new board members in the future.
- iii. Mr. Zadravec provided PowerPoint slides highlighting the districts newly released NECAP scores. Overall, Mr. Zadravec is very pleased with the effort of all staff and will share the data more in depth at a later date.

VIII. **ADJOURNMENT** - Motion to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. by Mr. Legg and seconded by Mr. Martin. Unanimously approved.