

**Portland Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, February 6, 2024 @ 7:00 pm**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Laurel Steinhauser, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

BOE Members Present: Laurel Steinhauser, Meg Scata, Kim Nagy-Maruschock, Sarah Spear, Dave Murphy, Stacy Benham, Tim Lavoy

Members Absent: none

Administration Present: Superintendent Dr. Charles Britton, Stephanie Fragola Assistant to Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs, Director of Student Services Dawn Davis

Student Representative: Caitlin Walsh

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Agenda

M. Scata moved to approve the agenda, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of January 23, 2024 Board of Education Special Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of January 25, 2024 Board of Education Special Meeting Minutes
- C. Accept Donation from Shutterfly to Valley View Elementary School, \$1,303.19
- D. Accept Donation from Donald Chamberlin (Middlesex Vocal Cords Member) to Portland High School, \$100.00
- E. Approval of Out-of-State Field Trip PHS DECA to Anaheim CA, April 25-30, 2024

Dr. Britton reviewed the donation from Donald Chamberlin to Portland High School.

M. Scata moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

5. Audience of Citizens - none

6. Portland Public Schools Spotlight – none

7. Student Representative Report – Caitlin reported winter sports are wrapping up. The indoor track team placed top three in some events at ECC. Cheer team has their first competition this weekend. Project grad is hosting a fundraiser at Burger Heaven. Bake sale will be held at the boys senior night basketball game. Music rehearsals going well.

8. Communications and Updates

A. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Britton reported he received retirements from Special Education teacher Chris Mazzei, and Director of Pupil Services Dawn Davis. Resignation was received from paraprofessional Shannon Royce. Correspondence submitted. Enrollment report submitted. Schedule for professional development day on 2/16 shared with the Board. State Dept. of Education offered a 4 million dollar donation grant program to teachers in the state. Portland teachers submitted request, and some have received approval. Next meeting the list of donations received will be on the Board agenda for approval. Posted Director of Pupil Services this past Monday, it will then go externally next Monday. In March, early April will start the process of screening and interviewing candidates. There will be a screening committee, interview committee, and performance task committee. Insurance rate came back with a 9.9% increase, which is lower than originally slated at 12.7%. The Board has two options to choose from; 1. Reduce \$75,782 from the adopted budget and amend the budget to reflect a 4.76% increase (down from the current 5.08% increase) or 2. Leave the amount and apply the funds to restore some of the cuts made during the budget development process or use it as a placeholder for additional support services. If we want to amend budget would need to go on the next agenda for action. Discussion on which option Board members have a preference with. Dr. Britton explained the special education budget and the increase in support services associated with new student outplacements. Dr. Britton feels it's fair to bring the awareness to the first selectman and the board of selectmen on the situation. He will be sending a letter outlining the projected deficit. Discussion on items that are causing deficit. D. Murphy would like to view numbers to be able to tie out to the deficit amount. Dr. Britton explained how amounts can be made up in cost, such as hiring a replacement teacher at a lower salary. L. Steinhauser suggested adding a synopsis to the financial report on what the deficit is to date and what the offsets will be to bring it down.

B. Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs – Financial report submitted. Discussion covered under superintendent report.

C. Director of Student Services – Report submitted. D. Davis shared there are 24 students outplaced, highest in many years. Budgeted only for 17. She reviewed the process involved for having a student go to outplacement. Explained the transportation piece as well. Disproportionality report reviewed. Identification of students with autism report reviewed. Special education division sent a letter stating we met requirements for special ed determinations.

9. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. Open Choice Seats 2024-2025

Current and proposed numbers for 2024-2025 reviewed. Number we will try to reach is 65. Dr. Britton explained class sections and numbers of students we can accommodate without contributing to budget difficulties. Requested opening seats for 68, which would include all current Open Choice students with 7 new seats in Kindergarten, 2 seats in second grade, and 1 seat for fourth grade. Need to submit in March. Stephanie explained funding. T. Lavoy shared his concerns for numbers of kindergartners and questioned the sibling additions.

M. Scata moved to recommend to the Portland Board of Education that the district declare up to 68 seats to include 7 Kindergarten seats, 2 second grade, and 1 fourth grade seats in the Open Choice Program, with the ability to add up to 2 sibling requests during the 2024-2025 school year, seconded by K. Nagy-Maruschock.

Discussion; T. Lavoy feels that the seats should reflect 70, to include the 2 sibling spots.
6 in favor, with one opposition by T. Lavoy. MOTION CARRIED.

B. Post-budget Recap – Dr. Britton shared the internal budget timetable, which also includes the timeline for the Board workshops and submittal date to the town. D. Murphy asked if a retreat could be scheduled to talk about finance, budget, and timetables. T. Lavoy discussed finance subcommittee possibility, similar to what other towns have. He would like to have the item under discussion at the retreat. M Scata shared that she likes discussing the budget as a whole Board. S Spear would like to be involved in the strategy and goal setting before receiving the budget in January. Board agreed to conduct a retreat this spring to start conversations on organizing budget timelines as well as a finance conversation.

10. Old Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. Board of Education Policies (2nd reading)

1. Policy 4117.6 – Exit Survey/Interviews

T. Lavoy moved to approve Policy 4117.6 Exit Survey/Interviews as presented, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

2. Policy 9323 – Bylaws of the Board/Construction of the Agenda

M. Scata moved to approve Policy 9323 Bylaws of the Board/Construction of the Agenda as presented, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

B. Reflections on Great Blue Survey Results and Ongoing Facilities Improvement Planning - Dr. Britton, L. Steinhauser, B. Shea, R. Curley along with Friar walked Valley View. They reviewed the school to see possible costs to renovate Valley View to a K-5 school. Friar will give suggestions and a rendering on what a K-5 school would look like. This should be produced in 4-6 weeks, along with projected costs. This was what the survey determined was the top choice for the future of the schools. The next step would be a spec ed plan. D. Murphy feels this is the right direction. He feels we need consensus and collaboration with the BOE and BOS. K. Nagy-Maruschock shared her feelings of this not being the best choice. She likes the small town feel and this would feel more like a busy city environment. Also brought up traffic concerns on High St. She feels it's not prudent to have four schools. T. Lavoy agrees with Kim for the same reasons. Feels traffic study needs to be done. He feels the survey may misrepresent the community's sentiments. Also feels three elementary schools is not feasible. L. Steinhauser feels maintaining three schools is not an option. S. Benham feels this is the right path for the concept of one elementary school. Every point of transition is a vulnerability for the children. The sense of community can be obtained in one elementary school community. S. Spear is in support of one elementary school. If we don't reduce costs, we will face budget hardships every year. M Scata reviewed the reimbursements amount for maintenance vs build as new. She feels the model k-5 is the best choice for our students. L. Steinhauser's hope is that the Board can get on the same page as the selectmen to move forward in collaboration. Dr. Britton stated the traffic study is a reimbursable expense. The elementary school and secondary school dismiss at different times. He gave an example of the secondary school traffic that is not problematic. An estimated

timeline Friar gave stated it would be likely a year planning process, with breaking ground not until June 2026.

11. Committee Reports

- A. Curriculum – L. Steinhauser – next meeting 2/21/24
- B. Policy – M. Scata – next meeting 2/14/24
- C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – next meeting 2/22/24
- D. Buildings and Grounds – K. Nagy-Maruschock – no report
- E. Liaison
 - 1. CREC – M. Scata – 2/14/24 & 2/21/24 next meeting
 - 2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – no report
 - 3. Youth Services Advisory Board – T. Lavoy – next meeting 3/19/24
 - 4. Equity and Inclusion Coalition – Sarah Spear – next meeting 2/12/24

12. Audience of Citizens - none

13. Board of Education Member Comments

- S. Spear – emphasized her feeling that D Davis is a valued member of the school community.
- M Scata – February is support of schools month
- L. Steinhauser – attended CAFE area 8 legislative breakfast with Sara and Meg. Conversation around reading, curriculum, and budget challenges.

14. Executive Session – none

15. Executive Session Action - none

16. Adjournment

**M. Scata moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 pm, seconded by S. Spear.
Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Tricia Dean
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk