

Portland Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Minutes of Tuesday, September 3, 2024 @ 7:00 pm
Portland High School Media Center

Board Members Present:

Laurel Steinhauser
Angela Hammond
Tim Lavoy
Dave Murphy
Meg Scata
Sarah Spear

Board Members Absent:

Kim Nagy-Maruschock

Administration Present:

Dr. Charles D. Britton, Superintendent of Schools
Stephanie Fragola, Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs via zoom
Eric Martin, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology
Sara McLaughlin, Director of Student Services via zoom

Student Representative:

Caitlin Walsh
Liam Rowe

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Laurel Steinhauser, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Agenda

Agenda item 10.B. Approval of superintendent's evaluation moved to executive session.

M. Scate moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of August 6, 2024 Board of Education Meeting Minutes
- B. Accept Donation from Jessica DeRing to PHS Girls Soccer team, \$3,411.65
- C. Approval of Out-of-State Field Trip PHS Band to Big E Agawam, MA, September 18, 2024

M. Scata moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by T. Lavoy.

S. Spear asked about the donation. Dr Britton explained the correct fundraiser form was not filled out, therefore the parents submitted it as a donation.

Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

5. Audience of Citizens - none

6. Portland Public Schools Spotlight

A. Educator of the Year, Jenna Ford

Dr. Britton introduced Jenna and gave an overview of her accomplishments.

B. Paraeducator of the Year, Danitza Goldburn

Dr. Britton explained the meaning behind naming the paraeducator of the year award as The Mandy Peck Paraprofessional of the Year Award. Dr. Britton introduced Danitza and gave an overview of her accomplishments.

- C. New Teacher Video – Dr. Britton submitted resumes of all new teachers to the Board. The video presented highlighted all the new teachers to the district.

7. Student Representative Report

Caitlin reported that freshman orientation was held on 8/21. The student representatives ran a club and sports fair. Upcoming fundraisers listed.

Liam reported that this week was spirit week at PHS, the theme was USA. Fall sports season is in full Swing. The band is going to Rentschler Field to perform at UConn Band Day this Saturday.

8. Communications and Updates

A. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Britton reported that the Portland community has lost Dr. Howard Rosenbaum. He was the chair of the Gildersleeve Trust fund. He passed at 93 years old. Dr. Rosenbaum has done extraordinary work in Portland. He has been on the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen, and a founding member of the Brownstone Quarry. Dr. Britton listed some of the many grants he supported for our schools. Dr. Rosenbaum has left a wonderful legacy behind.

Received communication on 8/26 from the Department of Administrative Services that the third round of HVAC grant funding is on hold.

Enrollment report submitted.

Resignation received from physical education teacher C. Serra. To date, all certified positions are now filled. Only two para positions are open at this time.

B. Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs – S. Fragola

1. 2023-2024 4th Quarter Report, Year End Summary – distributed and reviewed.

Ms. Fragola reported that \$14,153.79 will be returned to the town. As of now, accounts are looking good, especially with the savings from transportation. She wasn't sure if we are impacted by the public benefit cost by Eversource. An increase typically happens in the summer. She will look at the next bill to see if there is a significant increase.

L. Steinhauser noted that we realized some significant savings due to upgrades at the school facilities.

2. Financial Report - Authorized spending report distributed and reviewed.

L. Steinhauser noted that the transparency and communication over the last 8 months in the financials is thorough. Ms. Fragola reported that there is a surplus in the certified line item. The equipment line is negative due to the purchase of the van. However, the savings in transportation will help offset that. Facility improvements, such as painting, have been drawing funds from the LEA budget.

C. Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology – E. Martin

Report distributed and reviewed. Discussion on K-3 literacy and ongoing curriculum work.

Mr. Martin gave a shoutout to the IT department for fulfilling students and new hires with technology needs. The replenishment cycle for chrome books is 250 a year potentially.

Summer Learning program discussed. Participation has been decreasing year over year. Uptick in online program. Transportation not inclusive in the summer program and may be an issue for parents. Mr. Martin stated that gauging success in the program for improving student grades is hard to determine. Most attending are receiving intervention services during the school year. Discussion

on surveying parents going forward on if they value the service, and would they like to see the summer program continue.

9. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. Addition of Two Paraeducators

Ms. McLaughlin explained that a new student with an IEP that requires a paraeducator through the Open Choice program started. Open Choice para's get billed back to Hartford. In pre K, currently have one para that shares classrooms. Students are typically very high needs due to the model program. Last year we covered the need through substitutes in ESS. There is a placeholder savings in certified salary line item that can be used to fund the para. Ms. Fragola noted that ideally you want to put the para funding in the budget for transparency vs through ESS. These will be full day paras.

M. Scata moved to approve the addition of two paraeducators, one in pre-k and one 1:1, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

B. Transportation

1. Purchase of Mini-Van

Dr. Britton stated that this is the work of Ms. McLaughlin. She put together the proposal and the budget numbers. Ms. McLaughlin reviewed the student services van purchase and cost savings. Insurance and workers comp for the additional drivers have not been factored into the cost estimates. Dr. Britton confirmed that the insurance and workers comp is covered through the towns CIRMA policy. Maintenance on the van cost are typically low and able to be done in house with the town garage. Ms. Fragola was not sure if we pay property tax on the van, she will look into. Fuel cost was also not factored in to the cost estimate, but it will be lower than what we pay through M&J. We will need a full year to see what the actual cost of running the van will be. All vans will be marked as carrying school children. This has moved forward with the full support of the building and grounds committee.

Discussion on some other cost savings opportunities discussed.

M. Scata moved to approve the purchase of a mini-van, seconded by D. Murphy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

2. Hiring Drivers

Three drivers have been hired, two main drivers, and one substitute. The substitute van driver is paid for on an as needed basis.

M. Scata Moved to approve the job description and hiring of van drivers for the 2024-2025 school year, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

C. Portland Association of School Administrators Memorandum of Agreement (*discussed under Executive Session*)

10. Old Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. 2024-2025 Board of Education Goals

L. Steinhauser stated this is a new process for the Board. These are not district goals, rather personal Board members goals as a group. They came up with three goals; professional development, student voice at Board meetings, and community relations.

S. Spear moved to adopt the 2024-2025 Board of Education goals as presented, seconded by A. Hammond. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

B. Approval of Superintendent's Evaluation (*discussed under Executive Session*)

11. Committee Reports

- A. Curriculum – L. Steinhauser –next meeting 9/10/24
- B. Policy – M. Scata – next meeting 9/11/24
- C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – still in negotiations with teachers bargaining unit.
- D. Buildings and Grounds – M. Scata - met twice in August. Thanks to all for the work on the van purchase. HVAC was discussed and how to improve air quality. Asked for Mr. Shea to attend a future Board meeting to discuss how to proceed without the HVAC grant. GS and VV roofing needs to be addressed.
- E. Liaison
 - 1. CREC – M. Scata – next meeting 9/19/24
 - 2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – discussed the proposal for the new water infrastructure.
 - 3. Youth Services Advisory Board – M. Scata –next meeting on 9/24/24
 - 4. Equity and Inclusion Coalition – S. Spear – working on the new schedule
 - 5. Land and Building Usage Committee – D. Murphy – no report

12. Audience of Citizens - none

13. Board of Education Member Comments

Tim Lavoy – congrats to teacher and para of the year

Meg Scata – attended the state dept. of education rollout on guidelines of cell phones. Attended summer leadership conference. Participated in social justice speech making day. Asked for Laurel’s convocation speech to be shared with Board members and the public.

Sarah Spear – read the CAFE journal, we were well represented. Congrats to all on the start of the school year.

Angela Hammond – attended her first CAFE meeting. Talked about the program 119K disconnected students. Congrats to teacher and para of year. Condolence to Dr. Rosenbaum. Welcome to all new hires.

Laurel Steinhauser – attended the CAFE new board member conference. Talked about learning about the process of the superintendent evaluation. Learned about the vulnerability of 9th graders.

Liaison newsletter submitted. Legal issues workshop will be held in October. CAFE Board Leadership Award discussed and whether to pursue again this year. Due date is the 1st week in November. Consensus to move forward with Laurel pulling together the information.

14. Executive Session – for the purpose of Portland Association of School Administrators Memorandum of Agreement and Approval of Superintendent’s Evaluation

M. Scata moved to enter executive session for the purpose of Portland Association of School Administrators Memorandum of Agreement and Approve Superintendent’s Evaluation, and invite the superintendent, seconded by T. Lavoy.

Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Entered Executive Session: 9:12 pm

Exited Executive Session: 9:38 pm

15. Executive Session Action

T. Lavoy moved to approve the Portland Association of School Administrators Memorandum of Agreement, seconded by M. Scata. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

S Spear moved to accept the superintendent evaluation as presented, seconded by A. Hammond. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

16. Adjournment

**T Lavoy moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:39 pm, seconded by M. Scata.
Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

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