

PORTLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Joint Meeting with the
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
January 17, 2024 AT 6:30 PM

BOE Present: Laurel Steinhauser, Tim Lavoy, Meg Scata, David Murphy, Kim Nagy-Maruschock,
Sarah Spear; via zoom Stacey Benham

BOE Absent: None

BOS Present: First Selectman Ryan Curley, John Dillon, Robert Hetrick, Shaun Manning, Michael
Pelton, James Tripp; via zoom Michael Hernandez

BOS Absent: None

Others Present: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Charles Britton

1. First Selectman Ryan Curley called the special joint meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Presentation from Great Blue Survey Results

Seamus McNamee, Vice President Research, stated the main goal of the survey was to understand the preferred plan for Portland Public School System. An overview of the full breadth of the areas of investigation within the survey was given. Great Blue employed a dual-mode research methodology for data collection. The primary data collection was done through a mail-to-digital recruiting process, in which all registered voters were mailed a postcard with a QR code and weblink providing them access to the survey instrument. Community members were also able to access the survey through the town website, school website, social media pages, and other official Town digital assets. Participation total was 1,000 residents, which is a high participation rate compared to similar surveys.

Respondent demographic profile reviewed. Demographics included age, gender, political party, income, real property, and if respondents were a parent or not.

Sara Spear, BOE member, asked how the respondent demographic vs known demographics is accurate. Seamus stated he doesn't have much more information beyond the age/gender.

Survey asked about perceptions such as quality of life, overall importance of Portland Public Schools and plans to leave Portland in the near future. There was a 59% awareness of the facilities study committee. The survey asked what the awareness of school system infrastructure needs were. Next category was importance of future goals for the Portland schools. They were very mindful of intentional balance on how the issues were viewed. 90% of respondents viewed maximizing safety, air quality, and ADA compliance as important. An equal percentage also focused on the town to do improvements in a way that optimized space while minimizing cost. 64% of respondents acknowledged that something needs to be done within one to three years. Proposal options were reviewed.

The individual district choices were;

- 1) Plan 1-decommission Gildersleeve 41.9%
- 2) Plan 2-decommission Gildersleeve and Brownstone 56.9%
- 3) Plan 3 – three elementary schools to remain 49.8%

The preferred grade levels for a new Valley View School were – 48.7% Prek-5, 36.9% Prek-6, 14.4% didn't know. A survey question asked about the secondary schools and the level of support for improvements. There was a higher percentage that would be in favor of support. At the end of the survey was a question that asked what the most important factor was – 71% of respondents stated it was the final mill rate increase, with the next highest percentage that said the length of time to complete construction improvements. Respondents indicated that the preferred method of communication was mailings/direct mail, followed by email and newspaper.

Dr. Charles Britton, Superintendent, asked in reference to the individual district choice, could they glean from that if there was only an offering of 2 plan options how would that look. Seamus stated that plan 2 was significantly higher favored than plan 1 or 3.

Laurel Steinhauser, BOE member, asked about data with parents vs the general respondents and if there were any other notable differences. Seamus stated that yes, with the demographic information.

First Selectman Ryan Curley stated that the full presentation will be available on the website. The public can email him with any questions.

3. Adjourn
Shaun Manning moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:04 pm, seconded by Michael Hernandez. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

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