

Portland Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Minutes of Tuesday, October 1, 2024 @ 7:00 pm
Portland High School Media Center

Board Members Present:

Laurel Steinhauser
Angela Hammond
Tim Lavoy
Dave Murphy
Kim Nagy-Maruschock
Meg Scata
Sarah Spear

Board Members Absent:

None

Administration Present:

Dr. Charles D. Britton, Superintendent of Schools
Sara McLaughlin, Director of Student Services
Kate Lawson, Principal Portland High School via zoom
Chuck Hershon, Principal Portland Middle School
Ryan Walstrom, Valley View Elementary School via zoom
Eric Martin, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology

Student Representative:

Caitlin Walsh
Liam Rowe

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Laurel Steinhauser, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Agenda

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

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of September 17, 2024 Board of Education Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of Out-of-State Field Trip PHS DECA to Charlotte Convention Center NC, November 14-17, 2024

M. Scata moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by K. Nagy-Maruschock. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

5. Audience of Citizens - none

6. Portland Public Schools Spotlight – Band Cadet, Middle School

Mr. Hershon introduced Mr. Hilgendorf, Director of Bands, who gave a presentation about the cadet music program and the enhancements made over the last few years.

Mr. Hilgendorf explained that a cadet is a middle school student who has not played in the band before. He reviewed the tenets of the program.

8th grade students Lily Arnold and Alex Cote shared their experience in the cadet program.

Mr. Hilgendorf shared the enrollment numbers for the band program over the years since implementing the cadet program, noting a steady increase in participation.

C. Walsh asked whether the cadet program was unique to Portland. Mr. Hilgendorf responded that he benchmarked ideas from other districts to help develop this program.

Mr. Hershon discussed the previous practice, highlighting its inequities. He noted that the cadet program allows students without prior music experience at the elementary level to participate in band, ensuring that all students have access to music regardless of their background.

M. Scata inquired if instruments are available to students. Mr. Hilgendorf said that they have a library of instruments that they can loan. The music boosters are exploring ways to get additional instruments.

Mr. Hilgendorf stated that there is a late bus available for students that choose to stay on Thursday after school for lessons.

S. Spear thanked the team for making the band program equitable and inclusive for all students.

7. Student Representative Report

Caitlin reported that the annual school dance will be on October 15th. Spirit week is coming up. The annual high school musical will be Anything Goes. Fall sports is in the last half of its season. October 3rd is the girls' soccer breast cancer awareness game.

Liam reported that open house was conducted last Thursday. The fundraisers at open house did well. Today was picture day at the high school. The musicians from band and chorus are practicing for the shoreline music festival. The concert will be held next week.

8. Communications and Updates

A. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Britton discussed today's incident in East Hampton schools. The authorities have not yet reported all the details. He extended his appreciation to the Portland Police Department.

S. McLaughlin stated that she has been in communication with the student services director at East Hampton, and we will be sending extra clinician support to help the kids process what happened.

Dr. Britton received resignations from paraprofessional H. Celinski, and English teacher K. Smith.

Enrollment report submitted

Dr. Britton shared the presentation '2024 Education Legislation Update' from the legal webinar hosted by Shipman & Goodwin. This includes statutory changes that will affect our district.

Congratulated high school student Amelia Dietrichsen for her achievement in being named a Commended Student in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Congratulated Board Chair, Laurel Steinhauser, on earning CBE's Certificated Board of Education Member designation.

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

The Director of Curriculum/Instruction/Technology report was reviewed.

Discussion on cost estimates for the Into Reading Curriculum once the pilot is completed. Mr. Martin cost compared all the state options, and this program came in the middle. They also considered the quality of the program along with the cost.

Discussion on what the plan is for kids that are still not at the appropriate reading level after third grade.

The micro credit credential program has been offered to teachers throughout the schools. There is a good mix of teachers from different teaching programs that are taking the course.

Chronic absence initiative discussed. Students are identified by rates of absence at 40 days into the school year, and then 90 days. Students who arrive late to school are handled by the school principal. An attendance review committee has been set up, this is a proven practice to help absenteeism control. This committee is required by the state if schools have over 25% absenteeism rate. The statewide average of absences is around 17-18%. This has significantly gone up since COVID.

9. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. T.A.C.O. Plans – Valley View, Middle School, High School, Portland Pupil Services, Curriculum/Instruction/Technology

Principal Walstrom reviewed the Valley View T.A.C.O. Plan

Mr. Walstrom explained the reasoning behind a separate climate and culture committee. He sees the culture part as a community learning implementation, and climate is the building of team professionals.

Discussed the rollout of the master schedule. It is going well as this allows teachers to work collaboratively every day, and also allows students to engage in social and emotional learning every week.

Principal Hershon reviewed the Middle School T.A.C.O. Plan

Mr. Hershon explained that the staff observation of classrooms was a goal previously, but they had not yet achieved the goal.

Current sixth-grade staff will be included in the operation objective for planning the addition of sixth grade.

Discussion on how to quantify achieving the objectives of culture and climate.

Mr. Hershon is passionate about focusing on school security. He petitioned for magnetic doors to be put into operation. He is also looking at expanding video security coverage as well.

Principal Lawson reviewed the High School T.A.C.O. Plan

NEASC will be visiting the school on 10/28 and 10/29. After that visit, there will be additional plans and goals to be put in place.

Ms. Lawson is concentrating on the absence levels, as this is contributing to our high percentage district-wide.

C. Walsh made note that the National Honor Society will be participating in the NEASC visit by giving NEASC tours of the school.

Ms. McLaughlin reviewed the Pupil Services T.A.C.O. Plan

Ms. McLaughlin will be collaborating with educators in the district, beyond the student services area.

Mr. Martin reviewed the Curriculum/Instruction/Technology T.A.C.O. Plan

Discussion on how the diversity goal is defined. Mr. Martin emphasized that diversity encompasses more than just skin color; it also includes factors such as language and individuals from various countries.

Discussion on strengthening the new employee onboarding process. L. Steinhauser suggested conducting 'stay interviews' to garnish feedback from current employees.

T. Lavoy inquired whether the high school plan should be approved, given that it may change following the NEASC visit. Dr. Britton responded that revisions can be made at a later date.

M. Scata moved to recommend to the Portland Board of Education that the T.A.C.O. plans for Valley View, Gildersleeve, Brownstone, Portland Middle, Portland High, Student Services, and Curriculum Instruction and Technology be adopted as the Portland Board of Education 2024-2025 goals, seconded by A. Hammond. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

D. Board of Education Policy (1st reading)

1. Policy 0521 Non-Discrimination

Dr. Britton indicated that revisions have been made to update names, replacing them with positions. Additionally, changes were made to the Title IX reference.

2. Policy 4000.1 Sexual Harassment/Title IX

Dr. Britton incorporated CAFE recommendations for changes, reflecting the final rule regarding standards for harassment and discrimination. The investigation process and definitions have also been revised. L. Steinhauser noted that the regulatory section can be further streamlined.

T. Lavoy questioned how the policy ensures protection for the respondent. Dr. Britton explained that there is a clear process in place when a complaint is made, including a model form to use. Portland has chosen to adopt the single-investigator model.

A question was raised about when the Board would be informed of grievances. Dr. Britton stated that this depends on the severity of the matter, particularly if it involves an expulsion hearing or contract termination. There was a discussion regarding parental involvement, as well as the distinction between policy and regulation. It was clarified that a regulation outlines how the superintendent implements the policy. The follow-up items include determining whether the Board approves the regulation alongside the policy and seeking clarification on parent involvement in the grievance process.

C. CAFE Board Recognition Award

The completed application was reviewed by the Board.

M. Scata moved to approve the CAFE Board of Recognition Award application, seconded by K. Nagy-Maruschock. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

D. Ratification of Portland Association of School Administrators Bargaining Unit Agreement 2025-2028 (*discussed in executive session*)

10. Old Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. Board of Education Policy (2nd reading)

1. Policy 5131.914 School Climate

M. Scata moved to approve policy 5131.914 school climate as presented, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

11. Committee Reports

A. Curriculum – K. Nagy-Maruschock– next meeting 10/16/24

B. Policy – M. Scata – next meeting 10/9/24

C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – next meeting 9/27/24

D. Buildings and Grounds – M. Scata – no report

E. Liaison

1. CREC – M. Scata – council meeting on 10/16/24

2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – reviewed the report of the Land and Building Use committee, and then disbanded the committee

3. Youth Services Advisory Board – M. Scata – met 9/24/24, discussed the Halloween on Main event and the tree lighting event.

4. Equity and Inclusion Coalition – S. Spear /T. Lavoy – met last Thursday and discussed civil discourse. Tim stated that the students attending made the meeting more meaningful. Civil discourse is a positive move forward.

5. Land and Building Usage Committee – D. Murphy – disbanded.

12. Audience of Citizens - none

13. Board of Education Member Comments

Kim Nagy-Maruschock – appreciated the band cadet presentation. Congratulated Laurel on her CAFE achievement. Expressed that she thought the TACO plans were great.

Dave Murphy – echoed Kim's sentiments.

Meg Scata – attended the conference of New England schools, they reviewed legal and communications updates. Thanked the administrative team on their work on the TACO plans. Gave kudos to the cadet program.

Sarah Spear – is encouraged to hear about the cadet program.

Angela Hammond – congrats to Laurel on her CAFE award. Thanked Dr. Britton for all the hard work he has done.

Tim Lavoy – appreciated the band presentation. He was glad to hear there will be pushback on the smart goals regarding the hiring quotas.

14. Executive Session – for the purpose of school administrators bargaining unit agreement

M. Scata moved to enter into executive session for the purpose of school administrator's bargaining unit agreement and invite the superintendent, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

Entered Executive Session: 9:34 pm

Exited Executive Session: 10:25 pm

15. Executive Session Action

M. Scata moved to recommend to the full Board to approve the agreement between the Portland Board of Education and the Portland School Administrators covering the period from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

16. Adjournment

M. Scata moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 pm, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

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