

**Portland Board of Education**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Minutes of Tuesday, October 15, 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  
Stephanie Fragola, Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs  
Sara McLaughlin, Director of Student Services

Student Representative:

Caitlin Walsh  
Liam Rowe

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

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

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Approval of Agenda**

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

**4. Approval of Consent Agenda**

- A. Approval of October 17 2024 Board of Education Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of Out-of-State Field Trip PHS Musical Theatre to New York NY, December 5, 2024

**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 – Bridge Program, Brownstone Intermediate**

Brownstone Principal Mr. Searson shared that the Bridge Program is located at Brownstone and supports students from kindergarten through grade 6. He highlighted the dedication and compassion of the staff, emphasizing the significant impact of their work. Mr. Searson introduced teachers Ms. Lisk and Ms. Holloway.

Ms. Lisk and Ms. Holloway shared information about themselves and the program, noting that it began with just four students but has since grown exponentially. They highlighted that all participating

students increased their peer relationships and reduced the level of support needed over time. Ms. Lisk provided an overview of a typical day in the program, emphasizing the goal of creating a safe space for children to grow while maintaining their dignity. Thanks to their hard work, the students are now thriving at Brownstone.

A video was shown featuring student Max Davis who shared his thoughts about the program. Britt Davis, a parent, discussed her experience with her child in the Bridge Program. Former student Sophia Plourde, who attended from 2020-2022, also shared her insights. Kelly Lemke, whose son participated in the Bridge Program before transitioning to the Harbor Program, spoke about her son's progress. Additionally, student Cameron Kopytko shared his own experience.

Ms. Lisk noted that last year, 10 students graduated to the Harbor Program, and the current enrollment is also 10. She emphasized that if this program did not exist, the likelihood of students being outplaced would be significantly higher.

## **7. Student Representative Report**

Liam reported that the Student Senate is organizing Homecoming, scheduled for Saturday, 10/19, at the school, where they will host over 200 students. Additionally, the annual Toy Drive will be held that night, with donations going to the Portland Food Bank. Liam also mentioned the recent Shoreline Music Festival, thanking all the participating students for their efforts; approximately 10 students took part.

Caitlin reported that the Cross Country meet will take place at Hammonasset State Park. Sports nights are being held for all fall sports. AP Government class will be visiting Brownstone school to collaborate with 5<sup>th</sup> graders on their Kid Governor campaigns. The PSAT is being administered this week for senior and juniors.

## **8. Communications and Updates**

### **A. Superintendent's Report**

Dr Britton reported he received a resignation from teacher Chelsie Anselmo.

He received a response from the Board attorney regarding the distinction between Board-approved policies and regulations. Dr. Britton referenced Board Bylaw 9313, which states that the Board is obligated to approve policies, not regulations unless required by law or requested by the superintendent. The Board attorney also confirmed this understanding.

A letter was received from Sara Elliot-Caratasios, providing insight into the costs associated with outplacements and expressing a desire to keep students within the district.

The upcoming ethics committee agenda was reviewed. Mr. Pelton is self-reporting and seeking an advisory opinion. The ethics committee, which serves as a town board, will examine the documents and provide an advisory ruling. Dr. Britton brought this to the Board's attention as it pertains to a school fundraiser for the track team. He also reviewed the various fundraising clubs and how funds are accounted for within those organizations.

A letter was received from the Connecticut Department of Education commending Gildersleeve school. Gildersleeve joined the SIG cohort in the 2021-22 school year after being identified as a 'focus' school due to high needs in math growth. Since then, they have achieved Distinction status for Math and ELA Growth. The department praised the Gildersleeve teachers and leadership team for their tremendous effort and success. Dr. Britton noted that this letter is a testament to the impressive contributions of Ryan Walstrom and Tracey Graf.

Don Brechlin, high school math teacher, received a letter from a former student who is now also a math teacher. In his letter, the student expressed how Mr. Brechlin was instrumental in inspiring him to pursue a career in math education.

Dr. Britton congratulated the Board for being recognized by CABA as a Board of Distinction. The Board will be honored at the CABA conference in November.

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

The Board reviewed the financial report for July 1, 2024, to September 30, 2024. Also reviewed was the spending comparison for Q1 24-25 to Q1 23-24 year to date.

The second round of funding for the paraprofessional educator subsidy has been received. This funding will be allocated to the para's HSA account based on coverage.

T. Lavoy reviewed Board Policy 3160, which outlines the Board of Education's ability to make quarterly transfers. He inquired about the current practice of not following this policy. S. Fragola confirmed that we adhere to town practices, which do not allow for mid-year transfers. S. Fragola will seek clarification from the town and the town charter regarding the ability to implement quarterly transfers in accordance with BOE policy. This item will be included for review at the next policy committee meeting.

There was a discussion on excess cost and their impact on the budget. S. Fragola explained the factors contributing to the deficit.

**C. Director of Student Service – S. McLaughlin**

The Director of Student Services report was reviewed.

D. Murphy referenced the McKinney-Vento Act and inquired about the rigor of our vetting process for participants. S. McLaughlin reviewed the procedures for accepting students under the McKinney-Vento Act, noting that the average percentage of participants in the state is growing. She highlighted several factors contributing to this increase and explained how investigations are conducted for anyone questioned about their residency in Portland. Dr. Britton emphasized that these situations can be complex, especially when adhering to the law, and assured that the district is following procedures by asking questions and requiring documentation.

There was a discussion about implementing an in-house evaluator and consultant. S. McLaughlin emphasized that having evaluations conducted in-house is advantageous.

T. Lavoy commented on the numbers reported for multilingual learners and asked if there has always been a breakout of this data. S. McLaughlin responded that yes, students must be monitored for four years after achieving English proficiency and this number reflects that. She noted the current numbers are average.

There was clarification regarding the pending identification numbers in the report. S. McLaughlin explained that this figure represents an IEP referral to determine if a student is eligible for services.

**9. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)**

**A. Additional Paraprofessional at Valley View**

Dr. Britton reviewed the paraprofessional request with the personnel committee.

Valley View Principal Mr. Walstrom elaborated on the request for an additional para. He provided the current ratio of paras to students, which is 1 para for every 3 students. The need arises from implementing a behavior improvement plan for the student, which requires a para and is driven by the student's IEP. S. McLaughlin explained the new addition to the plan includes the para requirement, and the impact on the budget was discussed. Mr. Walstrom mentioned that the plan states the para can be shared among other students. S. Fragola stated the cost would be the pro-rated salary of a para. Currently, this position is being filled by a substitute that the district pays for. For transparency, this expense should be recorded in the salary line, rather than the substitute line.

**M. Scata moved to approve the addition of a paraprofessional at Valley View, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

**B. Ratification of CEA-Portland Bargaining Unit Agreement 2025-2028 (discussed in executive session)**

**10. Old Business (Discussion/Possible Action)**

**A. Board of Education Policy (2<sup>nd</sup> reading)**

**1. Policy 0521 Non-Discrimination**

L. Steinhauser confirmed that this policy includes clerical updates.

**T. Lavoy moved to approve policy 0521 non-discrimination as presented, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

**2. Policy 400.1 Sexual Harassment/Title IX**

Dr. Britton stated that at the last meeting, they discussed whether the Board approves both policies and regulations. It was confirmed by Board Policy and the Board attorney that the Board only approves policies. There was a discussion about the opportunity for the Board to be involved in the process of modifying regulations when warranted. T. Lavoy expressed his concern regarding the single investigator model, stating that he feels it is not appropriate. Dr. Britton explained the deliberative process that begins at the school level and escalates to the involvement of the Title IX coordinator. He also outlined the process for adult-to-adult situations that may arise. S. McLaughlin addressed the standard preponderance of evidence, the difference between single and multiple investigator models, the expansion of the definition of sexual discrimination, and the removal of the advisor requirement. There was discussion about the involvement of parents or an adult representative of the minor in the process, and it was agreed that there were no objections to adding a representative to the practice.

**M. Scata moved to approve policy 400.1 Sexual Harassment/Title IX as presented, seconded by S. Spear.**

Discussion. T. Lavoy expressed his opposition to the implementation, citing concerns about the lack of protection for students. Dr. Britton outlined the steps that would be taken if a situation were to arise. He also agreed to send out the revised regulation for Board review once it is complete.

**5 in favor, 2 opposed (A. Hammond / T. Lavoy) MOTION CARRIES**

**11. Committee Reports**

- A. Curriculum – K. Nagy-Maruschok– next meeting is 10/16. Discussion on how to locate the meeting minutes on the website.
- B. Policy – M. Scata – met on 10/9 and received a presentation on the RULER study. Representatives from the RULER study will present at the December Board meeting.
- C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – met on 10/9 to discuss the addition of a para at Valley View. Also began discussions regarding negotiations for the administrative assistant bargaining agreement.
- D. Buildings and Grounds – M. Scata – no meeting scheduled
- E. Liaison
  - 1. CREC – M. Scata – next meeting 10/16
  - 2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – no report
  - 3. Youth Services Advisory Board – M. Scata – next meeting will be in January 2025
  - 4. Equity and Inclusion Coalition – S. Spear /T. Lavoy – the October equity inclusion newsletter was sent out by Mr. Martin

**12. Audience of Citizens - none**

**13. Board of Education Member Comments**

Angela Hammond – appreciated the Bridge Program presentation

Tim Lavoy – appreciated the Bridge Program presentation

Dave Murphy – no report

Kim Nagy-Maruschock – appreciated the Bridge Program presentation, it was very heartwarming

Meg Scata – on 10/16 the Teacher of the Year for the state is being announced. Appreciated the Bridge Program presentation.

Sarah Spear – expressed appreciation for the parents, educators, and students who shared their experience with the Bridge Program

Laurel Steinhauser – no report

Caitlin Walsh, student rep– stated it was inspiring to hear about the Bridge Program

Liam Rowe, student rep – the work they are doing in the Bridges Program is incredible

**14. Executive Session – for the purpose of the CEA-Portland bargaining unit agreement**

**M. Scata moved to enter into executive session for the purpose of CEA-Portland bargaining unit agreement and invite the superintendent, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

**Entered Executive Session: 9:20 pm**

**Exited Executive Session: 10:28 pm**

**15. Executive Session Action**

No Action

**16. Adjournment**

**T. Lavoy moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:28 pm, seconded by M. Scata. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Tricia Dean

Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk