

Portland Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Minutes of Tuesday, June 3, 2025 @ 7:00 pm
Portland High School Media Center

Board Members Present:

Laurel Steinhauser
Stacey Benham
Dave Murphy
Kim Nagy-Maruschock
Meg Scata
Sarah Spear

Board Members Absent:

Angela Hammond

Administration Present:

Dr. Charles D. Britton, Superintendent of Schools
Stephanie Fragola, Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs

Student Representative:

Liam Rowe
Caitlin Walsh

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Laurel Steinhauser, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Agenda

L. Steinhauser asked to remove item 8.C. Director of Student Services

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

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of May 20, 2025 Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of CT Historical Society Bus Reimbursement to Gildersleeve Elementary School, \$200

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

5. Audience of Citizens - none

6. Portland Public Schools Spotlight

A. Retirement Recognitions – Dr. Britton recognized Beth McCormick, Joanne Choquette, and Tricia Allen for their service to Portland and wished them well in their retirement.

B. Student Representative Recognition – Caitlin Walsh was thanked for her service on the Board, and the superintendent and Board wished her well in her next steps after graduation.

7. Student Representative Report

Liam shared several highlights from recent and upcoming school events, including the senior breakfast, yearbook signing, graduation rehearsal and luncheon, and the traditional walk-through at Valley View. He also noted that DECA is holding a 'Kiss the Seniors Goodbye' fundraiser.

Caitlin shared several highlights from recent and upcoming school events. The Class of 2025 senior breakfast was recently held, and upcoming activities include yearbook signing and a luncheon during graduation rehearsal. With graduation just two weeks away, Caitlin noted that this would be her final meeting. She reflected on what she has learned through the experience and how it has positively impacted her. She expressed gratitude to the Board for the opportunity to serve as a student representative and thanked Dr. Britton for his letter of recommendation.

8. Communication and Updates

A. Superintendent's Report

The enrollment report was submitted, along with a retirement notification from Joann Choquette, Spanish teacher. Dr. Britton presented data on the ESS fill rate, noting that each building currently has one permanent building substitute. There was discussion about the possibility of expanding the substitute pool or adding a floater. Dr. Britton also reviewed recently passed legislation as of May 30th. One bill sets a standardized rate for what special education outplacement facilities can charge. Another provides a \$30 million grant for districts looking to expand in-house special education programs to reduce outplacements. A third bill raises the age range for developmental delay diagnosis from age 5 to 8. Additional legislation includes provisions to address special education workloads. There are also discussions at the state level about expanding daycare opportunities through a \$300 million grant, and an additional \$10 million grant aimed at helping districts reduce outplacements. The Juneteenth celebration, presented by the Solidarity Committee, will be held on June 14th. Graduation is scheduled for June 13th.

B. Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs

S. Fragola submitted and reviewed the Authorized Spending Report.

9. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. Board of Education Policy (1st reading)

1. Policy 3171.1 Non-Lapsing Education Fund

Dr. Britton explained that, similar to Fund 11 and the Fund 5 School Lunch Fund, a non-lapsing fund could be established by the Board. Once created, the Board would be able to allocate up to 2% of unexpended funds into this account earmarked for unexpected or emergency needs. While this cannot be implemented for the current fiscal year, it is an option for future years. There was discussion around the potential uses of the fund, including whether it should be designated solely for special education. Questions were raised regarding legislative guidelines and limitations on how the funds may be used. It was agreed that more clarity is needed, and the matter will be referred back to the Policy Committee for further research into applicable legislation and any stipulations associated with the use of such funds.

B. PPS District Personal Device Statement

L. Steinhäuser reviewed the process of drafting the district's core belief statement, which is intended to serve as a foundation for developing a formal policy. Dr. Britton shared that while elementary schools are currently enforcing this directive, the high school is seeking Board support to implement a similar policy. There was discussion around the procedures for

enforcement and considerations for potential exceptions. The Board reached consensus in favor of moving forward with the development of a policy restricting cell phone use.

10. Old Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

- A. Superintendent of Schools Contract 2025-2028 (discussed under Executive Session)
- B. Superintendent of Schools Evaluation (discussed under Executive Session)
- C. Board of Education Self-Evaluation (discussed under Executive Session)

11. Committee Reports

- A. Curriculum – K. Nagy-Maruschock– the NEASC report was discussed, and a full presentation will be made to the Board in the fall.
- B. Policy – M. Scata – the committee discussed the student safety policy and the cell phone policy.
- C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – no report
- D. Buildings and Grounds – M. Scata – no meeting scheduled
- E. Liaison
 - 1. CREC – M. Scata – no report
 - 2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – grant funding secured for water main replacements.
 - 3. Youth Services Advisory Board – M. Scata – kick off to summer event scheduled for June
 - 4. Equity and Inclusion Coalition – S. Spear – the group’s name has been changed to the Safe Schools and Inclusion Coalition. The meeting included a discussion on civil discourse and school climate.
 - 5. Strategic Capital Improvements Committee – L. Steinhauser – the group is closing in on final recommendations and hopes to wrap up by the end of the month. There was also discussion on cost estimates and potential alterations. The next meeting is scheduled for June 16th.

- 12. Audience of Citizens** – John Dillon, Board of Selectmen member, congratulated Caitlin on her accomplishments and thanked her for all she has contributed to both the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen

13. Board of Education Member Comments

Stacey Benham – congratulated the retirees and Caitlin, shared that it was a great experience at the awards ceremony.

Dave Murphy – congratulated the retirees and Caitlin, and noted that the 24-hour track marathon is this weekend.

Kim Nagy-Maruschock – congratulated the retirees and Caitlin. She expressed her gratitude that they are addressing the implementation of a cell phone policy, and shared that her only concern is causing inequities to students.

Meg Scata – congratulated the retirees and Caitlin. Shared that Pride month activities are upcoming.

Sarah Spear – congratulated the retirees and Caitlin

Laurel Steinhauser – congratulated the retirees and Caitlin. Wished Meg Scata a happy birthday

Liam Rowe, student rep – thanked Caitlin for being a fellow Board representative

Caitlin Walsh, student rep – thanked the Board and superintendent for the card and gift

- 14. Executive Session - for the purpose of the superintendent of school’s contract, superintendent of school’s evaluation, and board of education self-evaluation**

M. Scata moved to enter into executive session and invite Dr. Britton, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

Entered Executive Session: 8:48 pm

Exited Executive Session: 9:44 pm

15. Executive Session Action

M. Scata moved to recommend to the full Board to extend Dr. Britton's contract for a third year to 2028 and to award him an increase of 3% to his annual salary, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

16. Adjournment

M. Scata moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 pm, seconded by D. Murphy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tricia Dean
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk