

**Portland Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Minutes of Tuesday, October 21, 2025 @ 7:00 pm
Portland High School Media Center**

Board Members Present:

Laurel Steinhauser, Chair
Stacey Benham
Kim Nagy-Maruschock
Dave Murphy
Karen Renner
Meg Scata
Sarah Spear

Board Members Absent:

None

Administration Present:

Dr. Charles D. Britton, Superintendent of Schools

Student Representative:

Anna Piascik
Liam Rowe

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Laurel Steinhauser, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

L. Steinhauser acknowledged that this is Stacey Benham's final meeting before the election and expressed gratitude for her dedication and hard work.

3. Approval of Agenda

L. Steinhauser requested the following changes to the agenda: Change item 8.B., "Director of Student Services Report," to "Director of Teaching & Learning Report." Remove items D.4. and D.8. Add under new Business item F. "CABE Delegate Convention."

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

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

A. Approval of October 14, 2025 Board of Education Special Meeting Minutes

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 – Fall Fest, Gildersleeve

Principal Graf thanked the teachers for their work with the students in preparing the presentations. She then introduced the students, who shared details about what Fall Fest includes. A video highlighting events from Fall Fest was also shown.

7. Student Representative Report

Liam Rowe reported that Fall Sports Senior Nights are being celebrated. He also noted that the AP Government class worked with the fifth-grade finalist for the Kid Governor Program.

Ana Piascik reported that the PHS band and chorus performed at several community events. She announced that the spring musical will be The Adams Family. Homecoming recently took place, and the National Honor Society inductees were announced. Additionally, the PSATs were administered on October 15th and 16th.

8. Communication and Updates

A. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Britton reported that resignations were received from paraprofessional A. Sowa and secretary S. Webb; both positions have since been filled. He The enrollment report was submitted. He provided an update on facilities, including the sewage spill at the high school on October 7th and the status of the boiler at Brownstone. Contingency plans are in place in the event the boiler is not delivered in time for cold weather. Dr. Britton also discussed a request for an \$85,000 supplemental appropriation, which will be presented at the next Board of Selectmen meeting to cover architectural services, financial planning, bond counsel, and related expenses. If approved, the request will move to a Town Meeting on November 5th. Additionally, he reviewed the educational specification plan and demographics study. Finally, he provided an update on the transportation bid waiver process and noted that a draft of a formal waiver will be brought to an upcoming Board of Selectmen meeting.

B. Director of Teaching & Learning – Chuck Hershon

The Director of Student Services' report was submitted and reviewed. D. Murphy requested that future reports include absenteeism percentages by school, with comparisons to previous years.

9. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. School Improvement Plans – Portland Middle School, Portland High School, Teaching & Learning

Principal Searson reviewed the Middle School Improvement Plan

There was discussion regarding the rewards earned by students.

Principal Lawson reviewed the High School Improvement Plan

There was discussion regarding the operations goal of records retention. Also discussed was the decrease in chronic absenteeism this year compared to last year.

Director of Teaching & Learning, Mr. Hershon, reviewed the Teaching & Learning Improvement Plan

There was discussion regarding the Social Emotional Learning curriculum. Mr. Hershon confirmed that each building has established a Climate and Culture Committee and that their work is underway.

M. Scata moved to recommend to the Portland Board of Education that the school improvement plans developed for Valley View Elementary School, Gildersleeve Elementary School, Brownstone Intermediate School, Portland Middle School, Portland High School, Portland Student Support Services, and the Office of Teaching and Learning be adopted as the 2025-26 Portland Board of Education Goals, seconded by S. Benham. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

B. 2025-2026 School Calendar

1. Discussion on Secondary School Closure

Dr. Britton recommended taking no action on the school calendar. He explained that state law requires districts to offer 180 school days, and the current calendar includes 181 days. Under the proposed adjustment, PreK-6 students would attend 181 days, while secondary students would attend 180 days, absorbing the additional day without adding to the calendar.

No action taken.

2. Early Release for High School

Principal Lawson explained the service-learning program, which is designed to help students make informed decisions as they transition from middle to high school. She requested Board endorsement for PHS Showcase Day for 8th graders, noting that approximately 50 high school students would remain to assist with facilitation. Principal Lawson also requested Board consensus to dismiss the high school early, at 1:00 pm, on December 3rd to support the event, and reviewed the corresponding bus plan. The Board expressed support for the idea.

C. Adjustment to the ESS Rate for Teacher and Paraeducator Substitutes

Due to minimum wage requirements, the teacher substitute rate increases to \$114.35, and the para substitute rate increases to \$105.88.

M. Scata moved to recommend to the Portland Board of Education the adjustment to the ESS substitute rates to \$114.35 per day for certified teacher substitutes and \$105.88 per day for paraeducator substitutes, effective January 1, 2026, seconded by S. Spear.

Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

D. Board of Education Policies (1st reading)

1. Policy 6161.12 Library Material Review & Reconsideration

These are required changes to our current policy.

Consensus to move forward to a vote at the next meeting

2. Policy 6161.13 Collection Development & Maintenance

These are required changes to our current policy.

Consensus to move forward to a vote at the next meeting

3. Policy 6161.14 Library Display and Program

These are required changes to our current policy.

Consensus to move forward to a vote at the next meeting

4. Policy 6171 Special Education

This incorporates a new reporting requirement, which will still adhere to student confidentiality.

Consensus to move forward to a vote at the next meeting

5. Policy 5118.2 Educational Opportunities for Military Children

This is a new policy.

Consensus to move forward to a vote at the next meeting

6. Policy 3160 Transfer of Funds Between Categories

This policy was updated to align with the current process, which is determined by the capabilities of the town-implemented software. Since we do not have the ability to modify the town's system, the policy language was adjusted to reflect what can be implemented within the software.

Consensus to move forward to a vote at the next meeting

E. Discussion and Possible Action: Formation of Ed Specifications Task Force

Dr. Britton stated that this committee will be tasked with developing the Educational Specifications Plan and will include Board of Education members, Board of Selectmen members, a teacher, and community representatives. The committee will build upon the work of the former Strategic Planning Committee and collaborate with the construction company and other stakeholders. Its purpose will be to make a recommendation to the Board regarding the Educational Specifications Plan.

M. Scata moved to recommend to the Portland Board of Education that the Board authorize the formation of an Educational Specification Task Force to guide the development of educational specifications and planning related to future school facilities work, seconded by K. Renner

Discussion: It was noted that FOIA requires this committee to follow the same rules and procedures as other committees.

Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

L. Steinhauser appointed K. Nagy-Maruschock and D. Murphy to the Task Force for the BOE.

F. CABA Delegate Convention

This event will take place on November 20th. L. Steinhauser explained the responsibilities of the delegate position, and Board members were invited to express their interest in serving as the Board's delegate.

10. Old Business (Discussion/Possible Action) - none

11. Committee Reports

- A. Curriculum – K. Nagy-Maruschock– the first meeting was held last month and included a review of the curriculum policy. Also discussed was the data presentation that will be brought to the board in November.
- B. Policy – M. Scata – the committee worked through the August 8th CABA updates.
- C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – negotiations are set to begin next week. The discussion also included transportation, custodial, and para positions, as well ESS wage adjustments.
- D. Buildings and Grounds – K. Nagy-Maruschock – reviewed ongoing projects, the custodial position, the DRIP program, and full-day PreK.
- E. Liaison
 - 1. CREC – M. Scata – discussed trying to get districts to use CREC services
 - 2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – discussed the gate on Butler Lane and next steps on SCIC.
 - 3. Youth Services Advisory Board – M. Scata – Halloween on Main this Friday

4. Portland Public Schools Climate Coalition – S. Spear –Most of the school climate specialists were in attendance and discussed the new school climate law. There is a desire for parents to join the school committee and the group brainstormed ways to get the word out to parents. Next meeting Dec. 9th.

12. Audience of Citizens

Amanda Bertrand, 1st-grade teacher at Valley View – spoke about the school consolidation process and the formation of the task force. She asked if there would be consideration for holding a meeting with Valley View teachers and emphasized that their input would be valuable to the process.

13. Board of Education Member Comments

Kim Nagy-Maruschock – thanked Stacey for her time on the board.

Meg Scata – thanked Stacey for her time on the board. She attended the CABA legal issues seminar. She reviewed upcoming webinars. She also enjoyed the Fall Fest presentation.

Sarah Spear – thanked Stacey for serving on the board. Stated that cuts have been made to the Department of Education, and noted that this board has always stood by students who require special services. She also shared that she enjoyed the Fall Fest and is looking forward to attending the CABA conference.

Stacey Benham – thanked fellow board members for their kindness and stated that she has enjoyed working with everyone.

Dave Murphy – thanked Stacey for her time and enthusiasm.

Karen Renner – thanked Stacey for her service to the board.

Laurel Steinhauer – reported that the DRIP program was approved by the legislature but is currently being held up. She encouraged everyone to advocate to the Governor to release the funding and noted that she submitted testimony to the Governor in support of this. She also shared that Meg has been nominated to serve as the CABA President.

Liam Rowe – stated that he likes the shadowing idea at the high school and offered congratulations to Stacey Benham for her service to the board.

Anna Piascik– stated that she loved the shadowing idea at the high school with middle school students.

14. Executive Session – none

15. Executive Session Action – none

16. Adjournment

M. Scata moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 pm, seconded by S. Benham. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tricia Dean
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk