Portland Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Minutes of Tuesday, September 16, 2025 @ 7:00 pm
Portland High School Media Center

Board Members Present:
Laurel Steinhauser, Chair
Stacey Benham
Kim Nagy-Maruschock
Dave Murphy
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**

3. **Approval of Agenda**

   L. Steinhauser requested that item #7, Spotlight, include recognition of the Gildersleeve Blue Ribbon Award.

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

4. **Replacement of Board of Education Member**

   D. Murphy moved to recommend to the Board of Education to approve Karen Renner as the replacement Board of Education member, seconded by S. Benham.
   Discussion: M. Scata asked K. Renner about her advocacy work, what motivates her to join the board, and how she would remain impartial while serving. S. Spear inquired about her position on school consolidation. K. Nagy-Maruschock asked for her opinion on the SEL curriculum. L Steinhauser noted that it is unusual timing to replace a Board member with an election so close. M. Scata, S. Spear, and K. Nagy-Maruschock each expressed their concern about appointing a member so close to the election, with only two meetings remaining beforehand. D. Murphy and S. Benham expressed support for appointing K. Renner.
   2 in favor (D. Murphy, S. Benham), 1 opposed (M. Scata), 3 abstentions (L. Steinhauser, K. Nagy-Maruschock, S. Spear)
   MOTION CARRIES

   Town Clerk Tierney swore in Karen Renner. She then joined the Board.

5. Approval of Consent Agenda

A. Approval of September 2, 2025 Board of Education Meeting Minutes
B. Approval Out-of-State Field Trip PHS Cross Country to Thetford, VT, October 3-4, 2025

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

6. Audience of Citizens - none

7. Portland Public Schools Spotlight – Gildersleeve Blue Ribbon School of Distinction Award

Dr. Britton provided background on Gildersleeve Elementary, highlighting the school's progress from being identified as a focus school to earning recognition as a Blue-Ribbon Award-winning school. Principals Walstrom and Graph shared the school's success story. Dr. Britton noted that this marks the third time the Portland District has been honored with the Blue-Ribbon award.

8. Student Representative Report

Liam Rowe reported on fall sports, noting that the new athletic director is seeking slogan ideas from students. He also shared that alumni games are scheduled for next week. Additionally, the marching band will be performing at the Big E and at UConn Band Day.

Ana Piascik introduced herself as the new board student representative. She reported on the PHS Open House, semi-formal dance, and upcoming alumni game, and gave a shoutout to the new athletic director.

9. Communication and Updates

A. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Britton reported that all non-certified employees will receive notification of a new payroll tax, CT Paid Sick Leave, which will affect them. He also provided details on the state's sick leave policy. K. Nagy-Maruschock noted that recent legislation may address the use of one-hour increments, and Dr. Britton will investigate further.

Dr. Britton informed the board that a state trust will be established in 2027 to assist families with PreK costs. He reviewed the rules for accessing the funds and the reimbursement rates. Dr. Britton will be arranging a meeting with the Commissioner of Early Childhood to explore future opportunities for expanding PreK. K. Nagy-Maruschock shared her insights on PreK teaching and offered her assistance if the district moves forward with expansion.

B. Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs

Dr. Britton presented the Year-End Report and Authorized Spending Report.
L. Steinhauser noted that the upcoming increase in minimum wage will affect substitute rates for this fiscal year.

C. Director of Student Services – Sara McLaughlin

The Student Services report was submitted and reviewed.

10. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. T.A.C.O. Plans – Valley View, Gildersleeve, Brownstone, Student Services

<u>Principal Walstrom reviewed the Valley View T.A.C.O. Plan</u>
S. Spear inquired about strategies for closing the gap in screen time for second graders.

Principal Graf reviewed the Gildersleeve T.A.C.O. Plan
M. Scata inquired about Smarter Balanced testing and the use of computers.
D. Murphy asked about absenteeism and requested a report comparing absenteeism numbers year to year. S. Spear inquired about the inclusion of language instruction.

Principal Santavenere reviewed the Brownstone T.A.C.O. Plan
There were no questions

Director of Student Services, Ms. McLaughlin, reviewed the Student Services T.A.C.O. Plan
M. Scata inquired about fleet maintenance for the vans and asked whether the Family Round Table meetings will be reinstated.

B. Addition of One Paraeducator

S. McLaughlin reviewed the different funding sources for paraeducators and explained the reasoning for the requested funding shift. She asked for approval to shift funding for a paraeducator position to support a student who recently moved into the district.

M. Scata moved to approve the shift in funding for a paraeducator from the Open Choice fund to the LEA fund, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

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

12. Committee Reports

A. Curriculum – K. Nagy-Maruschock– next meeting is in October
B. Policy – M. Scata – several first reads coming up. The next meeting is on October 21st.
C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – set negotiation dates for custodian and paraeducator. Transportation negotiation is tomorrow.
D. Buildings and Grounds – M. Scata – no report
E. Liaison
   1. CREC – M. Scata – next meeting 9/17
   2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – discussion on the school presentation. He noted that meetings going forward will be held at the library.
   3. Youth Services Advisory Board – M. Scata – discussed the Halloween on Main event, 5K race, and that they are looking for members for the Juvenile Review Board
   4. Safe Schools and Inclusion Coalition – S. Spear – next meeting will be in October.

13. Audience of Citizens - none

14. Board of Education Member Comments

Kim Nagy-Maruschock – great initiatives currently underway, and offered congratulations on the blue-ribbon award.

Meg Scata - congratulated the team on the school improvement plans and expressed a desire to see outplacement numbers decrease. She noted the upcoming CABE webinar.

Sarah Spear – welcomed Karen and shared that she attended the joint BIS/GS PTO meeting. She noted that a tree will be planted to honor the Blue-Ribbon Award.

Stacey Benham – commented positively on the student council expansion at GS and BIS.

Dave Murphy – congratulated the Gildersleeve team on the Blue-Ribbon Award

Karen Renner – shared that she is scheduled to do a CABE training next Wednesday.

Laurel Steinhauser – shared that incredible work is happening daily in the district and reminded the board about a CABE webinar tomorrow.

Liam Rowe – expressed support for the expansion of the student council to GS and BIS, enjoyed hearing about the Owlett program, and shared his positive impressions of the opportunities in the PreK program.

Anna Piascik– expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to serve as the student representative.

15 Executive Session - none

16. Executive Session Action - none

17. Adjournment

M. Scata moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 pm, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tricia Dean
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk