

Portland Board of Education  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Minutes**  
**November 9, 2021**

**Meeting was held in person with faculty and administrators and public attending via ZOOM.**

Attending: : Chairwoman S. Peters, M. Scata, L. Christensen, D. Murphy, and T. Lavoy, L. Steinhauser. Also in attendance were Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Charles Britton, Eric Martin, Business Manager, Stephanie Fragola, student representatives Shawn Laverty and Leah Masal, and members of the public.

Opening Statement by Sharon Peters, Board Chairperson

GOOD EVENING,

I AM SHARON PETERS THE CHAIR OF THE PORTLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION. I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THOSE OF YOU JOINING US ON ZOOM OR YOUTUBE. WE ARE HAPPY YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO JOIN US AS WE DISCUSS THE DISTRICT'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS, DISCUSS INFORMATION AND MAKE POLICY DECISIONS FOR THE EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF THE DISTRICT.

TONIGHT, IS A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD, TO CONDUCT THE BOARD'S BUSINESS OF GOVERNING THE SCHOOL SYSTEM. EVERYTHING WE WILL BE DISCUSSING AND MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT HAS BEEN PUBLICLY POSTED AS REQUIRED BY LAW. AS WE ALL ARE AWARE THE ELECTION LAST WEEK WAS NOT WITHOUT CONTROVERSY. NEITHER THE ELECTION NOR ANY SUCH CONTROVERSY ARE APPROPRIATE ISSUES TO COME BEFORE THIS BOARD.

WHILE OUR MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, THEY ARE NOT MEETINGS WITH THE PUBLIC. WE WELCOME COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE CONFINED TO THE TIMES DESIGNATED ON THE AGENDA. OUR MEETINGS ARE RECORDED AND IF YOU CHOOSE TO ADDRESS THE BOARD, PLEASE BE SURE TO PROVIDE YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS. TIME ALLOTTED TO EACH SPEAKER SHALL BE 2 MINUTES. PURSUANT TO OUR BYLAWS WE WELCOME OBJECTIVE CRITICISM OF DISTRICT OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS. THIS IS NOT A FORUM TO OFFER COMPLAINTS ABOUT INDIVIDUAL DISTRICT PERSONNEL WHETHER A TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR OR MEMBER OF THIS BOARD, AND ESPECIALLY NOT A STUDENT. IF YOUR COMMENTS ARE OF THAT NATURE, I WOULD ASK THAT YOU CONTACT SUPERINTENDENT BRITTON DIRECTLY WITH YOUR CONCERNS SO THAT IT MAY BE ADDRESSED THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE CHANNELS. IT IS NOT THE BOARD'S INTENTION TO STIFLE PUBLIC COMMENT BUT SPEAKERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT IF THEIR STATEMENTS VIOLATE THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS UNDER THE LAW OF DEFAMATION OR INVASION OF PRIVACY, THEY MAY BE HELD LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE. OUR MEETINGS ARE EFFECTIVE ONLY IF WE ARE ABLE TO HEAR EACH OTHER. I WOULD ASK THAT YOUR CELLPHONES BE MUTED AND PLEASE DO NOT SPEAK UNLESS YOU ARE RECOGNIZED BY THE CHAIR. DECORUM AND COURTESY ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CIVIL DISCOURSE AND ONE OF OUR GOALS IS TO FOSTER SUCH DISCOURSE NOT JUST HERE BUT THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT. ALL COMMENTS MADE TO THE BOARD ARE TAKEN UNDER ADVISEMENT AND WILL NOT BE DIRECTLY RESPONDED TO. WE WELCOME YOUR INPUT AND ARE HAPPY THAT YOU CHOSE TO JOIN US THIS EVENING.

**Call to Order**

S. Peters called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

**Approval of Agenda**

**Motion:** To approve the agenda for the November 9, 2021, Board meeting as presented.

Moved by T. Lavoy, seconded by M. Scata. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

**Motion:** To approve the consent agenda inclusive of the October 19, 2021, Board of Education Meeting minutes, the October 26, 2021, Board of Education Meeting minutes, the out-of-state field trip for the PHS Band/Chorus to Virginia Beach, VA, April 7-11, 2022, and the donation from Turner Home Improvement to Portland Public Schools for \$240.00.

Moved by L. Steinhauser, seconded by T. Lavoy. The motion passed unanimously.

**Audience of Citizens**

**The following citizens addressed the board:** D. Lopez of 22 Old Carriage Rd., D. Schneider of 12 Carrousel Dr. C. Mackay of 88 Cross Rd.

**Portland Public Schools Spotlight**

“See Something...Say something”

C. Hersh informed the board about the newest safety protocol from Sandy Hook Promise: “Say “Something”. Students will learn how to use the anonymous reporting system for reporting incidents that threaten the health and safety of students and the schools. The

program empowers students to make anonymous reports to trusted adults. The reports are sent to a central location and reviewed by trained personnel who will react by contacting local law enforcement, school administration and other community resources. The app is being added to Chromebooks and cell phones and training will be given to school personnel and students.

### **Student Representative Report**

S. Lavery reported that the Student Senate is planning the annual Winter Ball that will take place in the first week of December. They are also organizing the annual food drive to support Thanksgiving needs.

L. Masal shared local veterans were invited to speak about their military experiences and what it means to be recognized for their service. The cross-country team at the high school sent eight students to the State Open and came in 2nd place. The Portland-Cromwell football team is doing exceptionally well, and both the boys and girls soccer teams made it to “states”.

### **Communications and Updates**

#### **Superintendent’s Report**

Dr. Britton handed out the calendar for the budget considerations with meetings scheduled for dates in January. The Superintendent's Budget will be presented on January 4th, 2022. with the Board approved budget sent to the Selectman January 28th, 2022.

#### **School Enrollment**

School enrollment numbers for November 2021 were shared. The total student body is 1,236 down from October 2021 enrollment of 1,237. It is common to see some fluctuation in the numbers as students move in and out of the district.

#### **Enrollment Study**

Peter Prowda was hired to produce an Enrollment Study for the Facilities Study Task Force. The enrollment projections will be presented at a Board meeting in the future, a special meeting may need to be scheduled for it.

#### **Resignation**

Dr. Britton shared a letter of resignation for Dr. Anna Keogh, a science teacher at the Middle School. He wished her all the best in her future endeavors.

#### **Election Results**

Dr. Britton welcomed newest board member, Stacey Benham and congratulated Sharon Peters, Dave Murphy and Tim Lavoy who have won their elections to the board for new term of four years. The oath of office will be given on November 17, 2021, at the Waverly Center. Dr. Britton will invite Ms. Benham to tour the schools and meet with district personnel. A Board Retreat is scheduled for December 18, 2021, with plans to discuss the roles of Board members.

#### **Screen and Stay**

Dr. Britton reported on the latest Covid protocol from the Governor and the DPH. “Screen & Stay” would allow students who have low risk exposure (less than 15 minutes), while wearing masks, who shows no symptoms, can attend school providing they participate in a screening each day to monitor for symptoms.

Russ Melmed of the Chatham Health District further explained the protocol, acknowledging that this newest way to keep students and teachers in school is available to a small and specific group. All other protocols for contact tracing and quarantining remain in effect. There are no changes to social distancing, masks and mitigation procedures. Athletic protocols remain the same with no ability to use the Screen and Stay. If a student uses the “Screen and Stay” program, they are not allowed to participate in their sports events.

#### **Vaccination Clinic for Ages 5 – 11**

Dr. Britton announced that there is a vaccination clinic for ages 5-11. at Portland Middle School from 4-7 PM on Friday, November 12, 2021, with a follow-up second-dose clinic in two weeks.

#### **Business and Financial Affairs**

S. Fragola reported on the monthly expenditures to date. She noted there are accounts that are down more than others because money is spent up-front. She has no concerns at this time. A full report on COVID expenses will be available at the December meeting.

#### **School Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI)**

Eric Martin shared that Portland has received a grant for a School-Based Diversion Initiative for the 2021-2022 school year for \$38000. Discipline data is collected each year and reported to the state. . Portland’s report card showed a higher than acceptable level of suspensions with a disproportionate number for students of color. The grant funds a stipend for a certified teacher to take the lead to examine practices and policies and report the necessary changes and develop goals and actions to close the gap. The process will take a year to complete and is compatible with the other work of the district including Social, Emotional Learning, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## **New Business**

2022 Board of Education Meeting Dates

The Board reviewed meeting dates for 2022.

**Motion:** To approve the 2022 Board meeting dates as presented.

Moved by T. Lavoy, seconded by M. Scata. The motion passed unanimously.

## **2022-2023 School District Calendar**

The Board reviewed the 2022-2023 school district calendar and discussed setting the graduation date for 2022. The Board discussed snow days. There is no remote learning for 2021-22. A report from the State task force for Virtual Learning may address remote snow days

## **Old Business**

Transportation Memorandum of Agreement

This will be discussed in the Executive Session.

## **Committee Reports**

Curriculum No report

Policy No report

Personnel Meetings will continue contract negotiations until all the bargaining units are completed

Buildings and Grounds No report

## **Liaisons**

Conservation and Renewable Task Force No Report

CREC The CREC Council Meeting is November 10, 2021

Board of Selectmen No report

Task Force on Solidarity Meeting is November 9, 2021

Equity and Inclusion Coalition Members are asked to share the Equity Definition with stakeholders and report back

School Facilities Study Committee - Meeting is December 13, 2021

## **Audience of Citizens**

Kim Marushock of 97 Middlesex Ave Ext.

## **BOE Comments**

L. Christensen thanked the leadership team for doing the important equity work.

She also said that she spoke with a parent/community member that wondered if the community should be asked what their thoughts are on school security. She also shared concerns about not allowing the public to speak during the audience of citizens fully and wondered what the proper channel is for any audience members that have a concern about any Board member. She did not enjoy seeing a member of the public be turned away from speaking.

T. Lavoy stated that the Board needs to collaborate more. He also said everyone needs to absorb the change of the election in our town and that multiple comments were said by many people. The Board needs to stick together.

D. Murphy congratulated the Board on the election . He

M. Scata stated that public comments are at the pleasure of the Board. The Board wants the public to speak on Board matters and the proper channels are set up for information to be shared with the Chairman of the Board.

L. Christensen clarified that she only is sharing a concern about silencing a community member when they are trying to share their concerns.

S. Peters shared that they are planning a tentative Board retreat in December to address civil discourse.

**Motion:** To move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussion of Transportation Memorandum with an invitation for Dr. Britton to attend.

Moved by S. Peters, seconded by M. Scata. The motion passed unanimously.

**Executive Session began at** 9:21 pm.

Return to Regular Meeting

Moved by M Scata, seconded by L Steinhauser. Passed Unanimously

Return to Regular meeting at 9:36 pm

No action taken at this time

Motion to adjourn Regular Meeting

Moved by L Steinhauser, seconded by L Christensen. Passed Unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 9:38 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Meg Scata  
Secretary of the Board of Education