

**Portland Board of Education**  
**BOE Regular Meeting, Buck Forman Room**  
**September 7, 2021**

The Portland Board of Education held a Regular Meeting in the Buck Forman Room at 265 Main Street, 2nd Floor, on Tuesday, September 7, 2021. Board members in attendance: Chairwoman S. Peters, M. Scata, L. Steinhauser, T. Lavoy, L. Christensen, D. Murphy, and C. Darby. Also in attendance were Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Charles Britton, Stephanie Fragola, administrators, student representatives, and members of the public.

**Call to Order**

S. Peters called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Approval of Agenda**

**Motion:** To approve the agenda for the August 10, 2021 Board meeting as presented.

Moved by L. Steinhauser, seconded by M. Scata. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

**Motion:** To approve consent agenda for the August 10, 2021 Board of Education meeting minutes, the Special Board of Education Retreat meeting minutes on August 12, 2021 and August 19, 2021, and the PHS Band out-of-state field trip to the Big E in West Springfield, MA on September 22, 2021. Discussion followed with the following correction made to the August 19, 2021 Special Board of Education Retreat minutes to state meeting adjourned at 7:39 PM

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

**Audience of Citizens**

No report

**Student Representative Report**

Student rep shares that the students are happy to be back in the building with less restrictions. They reported that the high school had a mini-spirit week last week. They shared that the Portland Secondary Schools Instagram page (@portlandct712) is up and running and is going well.

**Communications and Updates**

Superintendent's Report

Opening of the 2021-2022 School Year

Dr. Britton shared that Johnna Cunningham has accepted an administrative position at another district. He wished her well and was grateful for her hard work here in Portland.

Dr. Britton shared that our new hires are a remarkable group of individuals and he is very happy that they are in Portland. He shared that he is very impressed with their qualifications and is excited to see the work that they do with their students. Dr. Britton stated that we are fully staffed with one exception, the 0.6 French teacher in the high school. He reported that the position is still posted but currently is being filled by one of the Middle School teachers, Stephanie Junker, who has a dual certification in Spanish and French. M. Scata asked if we hire a 0.6 French teacher at the high school and there are only 3 sections, could we have an immersion program in the lower grades.

Dr. Britton recognized the individuals that have served in Portland for their years of service. He recognized Hope Larson, Krista Larson, Michelle Wright, Tonianne Bankoski, Kristina Kelly and Linda Martin for 10 years of service, Dave Opuszynski, Natasha Distin for 15 years of service; Sharon Fuller, Steve Bengston, Kim Baldwin, Michelle Stotler and Katherine Tomlinson for 20 years of service; Karen Radziewicz for 25 years of service; and Lisa Kuczynski for 30 years of service.

Dr. Britton shared that the number of students registered in Portland are lower this year. He stated that Kindergarten enrollment is lower than expected, coming in at 77 students so far. He also shared that the High School freshman class dropped considerably, where 8 students went to Mercy, 3 to Xavier, 17 to Vinyl Tech, 2 to a vocational agricultural school, 1 transferred to Manchester High, and 1 to Hartford Academy of the Arts. The freshman class is currently enrolled at 78 students. Dr. Britton also shared the following enrollment information: Valley View is down 32 students, Gildersleeve is up 7 students, Brownstone is up 9 students, PMS is up 1 student, and PHS is down 37 students. Overall, there is a net decrease of 52 students.

Dr. Britton stated that part of his work with the facility committee is to do an enrollment study and determine why students are leaving our district in such high numbers/not enrolling in Portland. L. Steinhauser asked if he knew if the low numbers in Valley View were because families wanted their children to be homeschooled, or attend private schools. Dr. Britton responded that he wants a professional vendor to come in and look at localized markets and plan for future enrollment numbers to see if this is a long term trend. S. Peters asked if the numbers at the high school are typical year to year, and Dr. Britton shared that Vinyl increased their numbers of Portland students by about half a dozen.

Dr. Britton shared that Portland is down 3 bus drivers for various reasons. He understands that there is a lot of frustration out there with bus routes and transportation, and he knows the difficulties that families are facing with the extended length of bus routes and run times. He plans on communicating with the parents tomorrow. M. Scata stated that the issue with bus drivers is not just Portland but it is a statewide issue.

Dr. Britton shared that, per executive order, all faculty and staff are required to be vaccinated. He is working with ESS, Sodexo, and M & J, and other vendors we work with to share information on how to become vaccinated by September 27, 2021. He received 172 responses, over 94% of the faculty and staff are fully vaccinated. Out of the remainder, a large percentage plan to be fully vaccinated by September 27th. He shared that 7 people have claimed religious exemption, a medical exemption, or refusal to get vaccinated. He is working with those individuals to help them understand that they are expected to get a negative weekly COVID test. L. Christensen asked if the staff are getting tested on work time or on their personal time, and Dr. Britton said that they are required to test on their personal time. L. Steinhauser asked what the repercussions will be if those 7 people do not produce a negative test when required. Dr. Britton shared that he wasn't sure what the response will be in that scenario and he will get back to them on it.

#### *Business and Financial Affairs Report* *Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Year-End Summary*

S. Fragola presented on how they spent the end-of-the-year funding, and where that money came from. S. Peters asked if this is the authorized vending report that was shared with them, and S. Fragola confirmed. She reported that she did a brief summary of some of the accounts that needed further explanation, and welcomed any questions (negative means we went over budget and positive means we stayed under budget). S. Fragola shared a source of funding document with the Board that outlines what they receive per year through various grants.

#### *Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Year-Beginning Summary*

S. Fragola shared that we are starting the year pretty much at a wash, and Portland is in a pretty good place. She stated that the gas leak cost about thirty-three thousand dollars to fix. She stated that other than the gas leak, the line items are spot on for September. She explained where certain line items come out such as the gas leak.

T. Lavoy asked if there were any grants that we were waiting to hear about. Dr. Britton shared that the three grants we are waiting to hear about are the Connectivity Grant for reimbursement for the Chromebooks, and two other security grants that total about eighty thousand dollars. S. Peters asked about the SIG Grant as a source of funding in the 2021-2022 document, and S. Fragola shared that the grant was Ryan's for Gildersleeve for Gildersleeve School. S. Peters asked if the SIG Grant was a one-time opportunity and S. Fragola shared that she was unsure but assumed it could be applied for multiple times.

## Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology Report

E. Martin recapped the summer offerings in Portland. The 4 day program at Valley View and Gildersleeve serviced about 50 students for targeted intervention for students that showed necessity in their literacy assessments in the 2020-2021 school year. The instruction at the Middle School survived about 30 students. The High School participated in a credit-recovery program where 30 students participated in an online credit-recovery program with Middletown Public Schools. He shared that the online enrichment program was successful with 15 Portland educators overseen by teachers Corey Toussaint and Elisha Millerd. E. Martin shared that the experience was project-learning based and had a participation number of about 150 students. He shared that the professional development was a success as well. The new teacher orientation was a 2-day module where they learned about Portland Public Schools, and got their feet under them in their schools with their principals. He shared that the first day for all staff was Wednesday, where the administrative staff travelled school to school for individual convocations to allow for Covid safety to be followed.

E. Martin shared that the Equity and Inclusion Coalition meetings will start up, virtually, on Tuesday, September 21st, 2021. Stephen Jewell will be stepping up to be one of the two equity coordinators this year along with Kate Bohannon. He also stated that the buildings will be putting together Equity and Inclusion Leadership Teams in their buildings composed of teachers and staff, and later on they will be extending the groups to students and families. Portland has hired instructional interventionists/coaches in Valley View, Gildersleeve and Brownstone to help our teachers. Portland is excited to have these individuals help us get teaching and learning to a higher level and get the most out of our educational experiences in the district. E. Martin shared that fall assessments will begin in the next couple of weeks via aimswebPlus in the areas of literacy and mathematics. He also shared that Running Records will be utilized as secondary data points to determine which Portland students will be needing additional support and instruction.

Portland has acquired 95% of the 510 new Chromebooks, with 400 devices earmarked for students in grades 9-12 and the other 110 devices for certified staff district-wide. He shared that the Chromebooks roll-out will begin the week of September 21st, with the certified staff roll-out will begin the following week. Our building based newsletters have changed this year. Portland started using S'more which is a web-hosted newsletter which can be translated to dozens of languages so that our families whose first language is not English do not lack access to this important resource.

## **New Business**

### Policies (1st Reading)

#### Policy 0200 Board of Education Goals

Portland does not have a Board of Education Goals Policy 0200. Dr. Britton shared it is exactly what Portland does at the Board level each year. The policy outlines the social-emotional learning for Portland students, and he suggests adding the policy to the Portland Board of Education Policies.

#### Policy 1110.0 Community Relations

This policy change outlines that parents would be allowed to attend parent-teacher conferences via Zoom, Google Meet, or other means. The policy allows us to run our parent-teacher conferences remotely.

#### Policy 3542.43 Food Services Charging Policy

The policy states that we do not shame students or let them go hungry if they run a deficit in their account. In the case of debt, the district would need to reach out to the parent and alert them to resources available to them for lunch programs. The policy would allow students to get the regular lunch even if they are in debt.

Dr. Britton shared that S. Fragola and he will have to keep an eye on the debt that the district is incurring.

#### Policy 4118.11 Nondiscrimination

This policy adds that hairstyles are now included in the nondiscrimination policies. They cannot be discriminated against for their hairstyles, and Dr. Britton stated that it is no problem to add this policy to the Board of Education policies.

### Policy 5113 Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal

Dr. Britton shared that this policy will be read through for the first time at the next meeting/reading. He briefly summarized that it outlines all students K-12 now have the ability to take 2 mental health days and they will not be penalized and it will be excused. The mental health days cannot be taken consecutively.

### Policy 5131.911 Bullying

This policy outlines who we need to have on the committees. At the high school level at least one student will be present on the committee, one teacher selected by the bargaining unit, and mental-health school safety personnel. A broad representation on the committee is needed.

### Policy 5141.3 Health Assessments and Immunizations

This policy is a response to the legislation that sincerely held religious exemptions are no longer allowed past April 28th, 2021. S. Peters shared that the students are able to be grandfathered in if they are currently enrolled and have the exemption on file from Kindergarten and up.

### Policy 6146 (A) Graduation Requirements

This policy requires that the student success plans include computer science, technology, and other components into the student success plans. Dr. Britton shared that we do that already so it is not an issue for Portland.

### Policy 6146.11 Weighted Grading

Policy requires us to notify parents that we have a weighted grading system and provide information about what that grading system looks like. L. Steinhauser shared her concern for the first statement in the policy which states that the Board is in favor of weighted grading. Dr. Britton agreed with L. Steinhauser, and he further recommended that the policy committee meet and involve Kate Lawson, and that the policy be changed to remove the first statement.

### Policy 6159 Individualized Education Program/Special Education Program

Dr. Britton shared that he wants to replace the entire policy, with agreement from D. Davis. This policy will be read through in the future, possibly at the next meeting.

## **Old Business**

No report.

## **Committee Reports**

Curriculum - No report.

Policy - No report.

Personnel - Close to mediation on a few contracts and hoping to finish them up in the near future.

Buildings and Grounds - No report. The planning committee wants to take another walk around the track, but they are not funding any projects right now.

Conservation and Renewable Task Force - No report.

CREC Liaison - Next meeting is on September 18th, 2021.

Facilities - Next meeting is on September 13th, 2021. There is a walk around at the schools on Saturday, September 11th, 2021.

Selectmen Liaison - No report.

Task Force on Solidarity Liaison - No report.

Equity and Inclusion Coalition Liaison - No report. Next meeting is on September 21st, 2021.

**Audience of Citizens** - No report.

## **BOE Comments**

D. Murphy shared that it is hard to hear members of the Board. He wishes to have resolution to this issue in the future.

L. Steinhauser shared that the Board received an email from a community member this morning. She also thanked the social media coordinators for their time and energy and thinks that the social media is going to be a wonderful asset to

the community. L. Steinhauser also issued an apology to D. Davis for the tone of the meeting last month, and stated that D. Davis is a valuable asset to our community.

T. Lavoy shared that he believes that the financial numbers, when presented to the board, should be solid and concrete so they know what they are making decisions on.

C. Darby shared his gratitude for Portland's teachers and staff for preparing his children for their new endeavors.

L. Christensen shared her thankfulness for the staff for getting this school year off to a wonderful start.

S. Peters shared that they will address the issue from the last meeting in the Board of Education self-evaluation in executive session.

### **Executive Session**

**Motion:** To move into executive session at 8:42 PM and extend invitation to Dr. Britton for the purposes of finalizing the Superintendent of Schools Annual Evaluation Report and conduct the Board of Education Self-Evaluation/Goals for Governance of Board.

Moved by M. Scata, seconded by L. Steinhauser. The motion passed unanimously.

**Motion** to come out of Executive Session

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

### **Executive Session Action Item**

Motion to the full Board to accept the Evaluation of the Superintendent as presented tonight

Moved by M. Scata, seconded by L. Steinhauser. Motion passed unanimously

### **Adjourn**

Moved by L. Christensen, seconded by T. Lavoy to adjourn at 9:41 PM. The motion passed unanimously

Respectfully submitted,  
Elliot McBride, Board Recording Clerk

Draft minutes until approved at the next Board of Education Regular Meeting