

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM by the Chairman, Mr. Carpender, and the following members were present:

Mr. Richard Carpender, Chair	Mrs. Marge Levesque, Clerk	Ms. Marilyn King
Ms. Sylvia Wedge, Vice Chair	Mr. Michael Buddemeyer	Ms. Angela Volpicelli
	Mr. Jamie Heaney	

Also Present: Dr. Lusi, Asst. Supt. Jermain, Christine Tague, Patti Cofield, and Amy Larsen  
(High School Liaison)

A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and seconded by Mr. Buddemeyer to adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to R.I. Law 42-46-5, Exceptions (a)(1) Job Performance/Personnel Matters, (a)(2) Collective Bargaining and/or Litigation; or (a)(8) Student Discipline. So voted.

The Public Session recessed at 6:35 PM and resumed at 7:20 PM.

- CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Mr. Carpender reported that an Executive Session was held at 6:30 PM for the purpose of discussing negotiations and a personnel matter. No votes were taken. A motion was made by Mr. Heaney and seconded by Ms. Wedge to seal the minutes. So voted 7-0. Mr. Carpender reported that the Future Search Conference was held on Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, and Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, and it was well attended. He spoke with Barrington's School Committee chair after the conference, and Barrington is very interested in having their own Future Search Conference. The chair is on the board of the Rhode Island Association of School Committees, and he is looking to do an in-service for all of the committees in the state. Mr. Carpender reported that he attended a meeting yesterday of the Aquidneck Island Municipal Advisory Committee, and they had a lengthy discussion on regionalization and collaboration. RIPEC continues to work on the report we contracted with them to do, and that report should be finalized in February. Mr. Carpender announced a conference and an annual dinner meeting at The Trust.
- SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:** Dr. Lusi welcomed everyone attending the meeting. She stated that the Future Search Conference was held on Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, and Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, at Hathaway School. There were 63 people from the community and school department who participated from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM each day. She explained that Future Search is a very collaborative process, and the organizations present included community businesses and partners, community organizations, parent organizations, town government, teachers and staff, school administration, and school committee members. The participants spent a large amount of time in small groups talking and then coming back together and developing themes that our strategic plan should address going forward. Dr. Lusi stated that we had a very small budget for putting on the conference. She thanked Dr. Martin and her staff for hosting the conference at Hathaway and the Hathaway parents for donating baked

goods and assisting during the conference. She explained that a volunteer task force was established, and members included Kevin McCarthy, Martha Costa, Chris Carceller, Marianne Raymo, Anne Burns, George Silvia, and Priscilla Wimpres. The task force members asked area businesses for donations. Dr. Lusi thanked the following businesses for their donations: NewportFed, Chartwells, BankNewport, Custom House Coffee, Ma's Donuts, Foodworks, West Main Pizza, Ricotti's Sandwich Shop – Bristol, BJs, Shaws, Stop and Shop, Dunkin' Donuts, Crystal Spring Water Company, Clements' Marketplace, Newport County Regional Special Education – Life Skills Program. The next step in the strategic planning process is to form a smaller Steering Committee from members who participated in the conference. This group will develop a more full-fledged plan and establish priorities with the administrative team. The plan will then be brought back to the Future Search conference participants and then to the community. Dr. Lusi stated that students did not participate in the conference because there were students who did not want to miss school on Friday, and there were numerous athletic activities on Saturday. A student forum will be conducted later this month with a group of students at the secondary level.

Dr. Lusi announced that Gail Darmody is participating on the Rhode Island Instructional Leadership Council. She stated that it is an honor to have our staff participate.

Dr. Lusi announced that Ms. Tague will talk further about the Governor's proposed budget and other changes, what the general assembly may do with those recommendations, and what their timeline may be. She stated that we are watching that carefully to try to assess the impact for this year and going forward.

Dr. Lusi read a letter of appreciation from Lindsay Phillips, who is a recently hired 6<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher at Portsmouth Middle School. Ms. Phillips had worked in other states prior to coming here, and she is very grateful for her teaching position at the Middle School.

Dr. Lusi announced that the December financials are being withdrawn from the agenda and will be presented at the January 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- a) **Teaching and Learning:** Assistant Superintendent Jermain thanked Meryl Moore, our high school fine arts chair, for receiving a \$750 grant from the Beechwood Foundation. The funds will be used towards the purchase of wireless audio equipment for the high school theater and music department. Mrs. Jermain announced that five of our high school students won awards in the Rhode Island Scholastic Arts competition, and she congratulated high school art teacher, Rose Escobar, who teaches digital portfolios. The students will be invited to our next meeting to be commended. Mrs. Jermain stated that despite the budget cuts proposed by the Governor, the Administrative team met with the principals today to discuss ways to continue professional development. Mrs. Jermain congratulated the elementary principals on the science assessments. She stated that Ron DiFranzo and his team from EBEC will come to our schools to work on Formative

Assessment. They will look at science kits in order to improve our science test scores. She stated that EBEC is also trying to align the science kits as best as possible with GSEs and GLEs. We have teachers who want to pilot new kits. Training will take place in Portsmouth with Middletown and Newport. In the area of technology, the mobile lab for Melville School has been purchased, and we're trying to get the laptops ready and implemented. Now we have more up-to-date labs in all of our schools. In closing, we had a very successful trial run with the AlertNow program, the automated calling and emailing service to parents for announcements. We received a grant to use this system free of charge for one year.

- b) **Finance and Operations:** Ms. Tague reported that since the Governor announced the supplemental budget, she's been trying to get clarification on the cuts that could affect the Portsmouth School Department. The good news is that the anticipated current year operating budget cut is only approx \$180,000 for this current year, of which \$111,000 is the complete elimination of the Professional Development Fund. The other piece of the cut is \$68,000 from permanent aid that was to result from increased revenues which resulted from allowing the 24 hour gambling in Lincoln. Our cuts would total \$180,000, if professional development was included. The teachers' retirement deferral could affect the future year. The Governor is proposing that the State suspend local payments to the state retirement fund for the remainder of the fiscal year and not send the school systems the aid required to make these payments. The State will then use this money to plug the hole in the operating deficit, rather than paying it into the retirement system. While this will be a financial "wash" for our district this fiscal year, it could increase our unfunded liability in coming years and increase our required payments into the retirement system. Our total aid cuts that could impact future fiscal years is \$914,607.
- c) **High School Liaison:** Miss Larsen reported that the high school, unfortunately, wasn't able to get any students to the Future Search Conference because of time constraints, but Mr. Littlefield informed them that a session will be held in the near future for a group of approximately 50 students. Over the next few weeks, they will work hard at getting those students together. The Student Council has been working on new ideas regarding how to spend the money they have collected over the year, and they're thinking of funding a scholarship. Miss Larsen also reported that they have been getting ready for several schoolwide fundraisers. The Carnation Sales fundraiser will take place in February. The Freshman class is having a dinner at the Imperial Buffet, as well as a pasta dinner. The Senior class is planning a silent auction in the new gym in March. The Seniors will also be turning in their final drafts of their research papers and then working on hours with mentors for their Senior Project.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of the minutes of the meeting held December 16, 2008. This item was removed from the agenda.

4. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a) **Request for Leave of Absence.** A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and seconded by Mr. Heaney to approve the request for Family and Medical Leave in accordance with the backup information. So voted 7-0.

5. **BUSINESS AGENDA**

- a) **Facilities Report.** Mr. Carpenter announced that the School Committee is receiving the full Facilities Report tonight for the first time, but they have had the Executive Summary for a few days. He informed the audience that the Committee may not be able to answer all questions tonight but that comments would be taken at the end of the presentation. He stated that no decisions would be made by the Committee tonight. Mr. Buddemeyer stated that all of the Facilities Committee meetings have been open to the public, and he announced the members of the Facilities Committee: Al Grande, Steve Forand, John McDaid, and Terri Cortvriend. He explained that the report was generated to establish a long-range plan for the future of our schools, focusing on fiscal responsibility, as well as to satisfy the new Rhode Island Department of Education requirement of having an ongoing 5-year capital plan. The Committee contracted with The Robinson Green Beretta Corporation to study our facilities, and Mr. Steven Hughes of RGB was present to review the findings of the report. Mr. Hughes reviewed the four options in descending order of preference:

Option 1: Keep Grade 5 at the elementary schools and use part of the middle school for Central Administration. Close Elmhurst School and renovate Melville and Hathaway Schools so that we have two Pre-K through Grade 5 elementary schools. The total 5-year cost, including all school repairs, is estimated at \$32 million.

Option 2: Close Elmhurst and Hathaway Schools. Grade 5 returns to the middle school. Renovations and additions would be made to Melville School for early learning, and construct a new Grades 2-4 elementary school. The total cost of Option 2 is estimated at \$48 million.

Option 3: Grade 5 returns to the middle school. Close Elmhurst School and provide renovations and additions to Melville and Hathaway Schools to create two Pre-K through Grade 4 neighborhood elementary schools. The total cost of Option 3 is estimated at \$25 million.

Option 4: Renovate all three elementary schools as necessary. The total cost is estimated at \$25 million, but the cost starts to rise as you project further out because many of the physical plant issues remain. When the cost is projected out to 10 years, it actually would exceed Option 3.

Dr. Lusi stated that the report would be uploaded to the School Department's website. Mr. Heaney asked if the Facilities Committee had a recommendation, and Mr. Buddemeyer stated that the options were ranked in the order of preference. Mrs. King asked if the Rhode Island Department of Education would contribute any money into new construction, and Mr. Hughes stated that the current level of reimbursement is 30 percent but there are no guarantees how long that will last given the current financial situation in our state.

Several members of the audience asked questions or made comments. Elizabeth Harris, Vice President of the Elmhurst Parent Teachers Organization, stated that she represented concerns and questions of the Elmhurst community, particularly the short-term vision and timeline for closing the school. Mr. Buddemeyer explained that the timeline was not part of the report. Parent Dawn Cardeiro advised the Committee to choose the plan with the highest quality, since that is what keeps the families moving to Portsmouth. Parent Chris Carceller was concerned about the fire code upgrades, and PMS PTO President, Emily Copeland, was concerned with ADA accessibility at Hathaway School. Mr. Buddemeyer stated that the fire code and ADA accessibility issues were addressed in the report. One Elmhurst parent was concerned with class sizes, and Dr. Lusi explained that we have contractual class size caps. Parent Meredith Chapman advised the Committee to keep the projected student enrollment in mind with relation to the number of retired people living in the community. Elementary teacher, Mary Stockard, explained that all three of our elementary schools have the same high standard of teaching for students. Parent Joseph Hook asked if the options would be presented to the voters. Mr. Carpender stated that it would go to the voters as a referendum, but he wasn't sure if there would be more than one option. Parent Jonathan Harris suggested that the Committee hires an appraiser to evaluate the value of the Elmhurst School property, and Mr. Carpender stated that the Committee needs to figure out the best option before that can be done. He also stated that the Committee is committed to doing everything it can to ensure the quality of education in Portsmouth for our students, no matter what the buildings look like. Mr. Carpender closed the discussion and emphasized that the Committee needs to go through a process to get to the end result.

- b) **Approval of November Financials.** A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and seconded by Mrs. Levesque to approve the November financials as presented. So voted 7-0.
- c) **Report on December Financials.** This item was removed from the agenda.

- d) **Report on Medicaid Receipts and Approval of Transfer of Funds.** A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and seconded by Mrs. Levesque to approve the transfer of \$140,000 of Medicaid receipts for use as revenue for the 2008-09 operating budget. The motion was amended to approve the transfer of \$148,000 of Medicaid receipts for use as revenue for the 2008-09 operating budget. Seconded by Mr. Heaney. So voted 7-0. The original motion was approved 7-0.
- e) **Discussion of Upcoming Joint Meeting with Town Council.** Dr. Lusi stated that there will be a joint meeting between the Town Council and School Committee on Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, at 7:00 PM, in the Town Council Chambers. The discussion will center around the budget, how we will manage the proceeds coming from the wind turbine, and a progress update on the schools given the recommendations of the Berkshire Report.

6. **SUBCOMMITTEE AGENDA**

- a) **Finance.** No report.
- b) **Policy.** No report.
- c) **Facilities.** No further report.

A motion was made by Mr. Heaney and seconded by Ms. Wedge to adjourn the meeting. So voted 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patti Cofield  
Recording Secretary for:

Marge Levesque, Clerk