

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by the Chair, Mrs. Perrotti, and the following members were present:

Cynthia Perrotti, Chair; Jonathan Harris, Vice Chair; Marilyn King, Clerk; David Croston, Thomas Vadney, Angela Volpicelli, and Sylvia Wedge

Also Present: Dr. Lusi, Asst. Supt. Jermain, Mark Dunham, and Patti Cofield

Absent: Madison Burns

A motion was made by Mr. Harris to adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to R.I. Law 42-46-5, Exceptions (a)(1) Job Performance/Personnel Matters, and (a)(2) Collective Bargaining and/or Litigation. Seconded by Mrs. King. So voted 7-0.

The Public Session recessed at 6:30 PM and reconvened at 7:00 PM.

1. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Mrs. Perrotti reported on the following:

- An Executive Session was held prior to this meeting, and one vote was taken. The School Committee voted unanimously to move into mediation with the teachers' contract. A motion was made by Mr. Harris to seal the minutes of the Executive Session. Seconded by Mrs. King. So voted 7-0.
- Mr. Vadney and Ms. Wedge attended the Aquidneck Island Study Group meeting yesterday. RIPEC issued a report in June 2009 about feasibility of regionalization, and they are working on updating that report.
- Mrs. Perrotti visited Hathaway and Melville elementary schools. She praised the principals for making the transition from three elementary schools to two. She looks forward to going to the PMS and PHS this month.

2. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:** Dr. Lusi reported on the following:

- Little Compton:
 - Presentation went very well, and she thanked Mr. Littlefield. The next steps are visits to PHS and a smaller negotiating session regarding rates.
- Audit:
 - The School Department was completely ready for the audit. She thanked Mr. Dunham and his staff. The audit firm would like to hold off with the writing of the management letter and final presentation until all aspects are complete, including auditing of UCOA compliance. UCOA is new this year and has been substantially delayed by the State. The Auditor General has extended the timeline for the UCOA audits through February 28th.

- Announcement:
 - Dr. Lusi will not be seeking renewal of her employment contract when it ends on June 30, 2011. She made the decision in large part last year but is making it official now. She is enormously proud of the accomplishments of this district and the people who have brought those accomplishments about. It has been and remains her honor and privilege to serve as Portsmouth's Superintendent, but she thinks it is time for her to seek out new opportunities and challenges. She thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve and looks forward to continued work together over the remaining months.
- a) Teaching and Learning: Assistant Superintendent Jermain reported on the following:
 - Teachers have been participating in Professional Development opportunities.
 - Attended the PHS science fair this morning and encouraged the School Committee to take a look.
 - The PMS 7th Science Fair is next Thursday.
 - Race to the Top – Portsmouth will be collaborating with Middletown and Newport on teacher training in the Common Core in August. We will be able to train an additional 20 teachers from Portsmouth because of this collaborative effort with the two island communities without any additional expenses.
- b) Finance and Operations: No report.
- c) High School Liaison: Absent.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Harris to approve the minutes of the meeting held December 14, 2010. Seconded by Mrs. King. So voted 7-0.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- a) **Appt. – Media/AV Clerk, PMS.** The Superintendent recommends adoption of the following resolution, "that the Committee affirms the Superintendent's appointment, Recommendation #1-1/11/11, to the part-time position of Media/AV Clerk at Portsmouth Middle School, effective 1/12/11." A motion was made by Mr. Harris and was seconded by Mrs. King to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. So voted 7-0. Dr. Lusi announced the appointment of Courtney Kellogg to the position of Media/AV Clerk.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Alan Shers stated that the Town cannot afford any new facilities right now. New avenues of funding need to be discovered besides property tax. Real estate development and

values have dropped 20-25 percent and could possibly drop more. The AIM Academy is a positive step. He thinks the School Department should look into public/private partnerships, working with the private sector on various issues. Tenure needs to be readdressed. When the time is right, one grade school would be right for the town. He suggested that a small group of people that think outside the box be formed to come up with suggestions to come back before the committee.

- Larry Fitzmorris stated that he may have contributed to the rumor mills regarding the audit delays. Mr. Fitzmorris stated that any time an audit is delayed should be cause for concern from the citizens. He wants responses from the Administration. Dr. Lusi reiterated that the School Department delayed nothing, and everything was submitted on time. The delay in correcting the UCOA data is a statewide issue over which neither Portsmouth nor the audit firm has any control. Braver, the audit company, asked and recommended that they write the management letter after it is done.

6. **BUSINESS AGENDA**

- a) **Response to Intervention (RTI) Presentation.** Assistant Superintendent Jermain and Student Services Coordinator, Mrs. Lisa Moy, gave a presentation on Response to Intervention, which is a regular education initiative. It is a problem-solving process meant to determine which students are having academic, behavioral, or social/emotional difficulties, what those difficulties are, and what interventions will eliminate or improve those difficulties. RTI supports all students in meeting their fullest potential. The three tiers of RTI and the Process Flow Chart were reviewed, as well as how it will be implemented in Portsmouth. The goals of RTI are: increasing the success rate of students receiving instruction in the general education setting; providing research-based instruction as an early intervention to students; providing critical data needed to design, implement, and monitor instructional interventions; and reducing the need for referrals to special education.
- b) **Special Education Presentation.** A PowerPoint presentation on the Newport County Regional Special Education program and budget was given by Mrs. Trish Martins, Director of Special Education. An overview was given on the federal and state regulations, the Newport County Regional Special Education Program, the 2010-11 framework, Portsmouth School Department, and budget planning.
- c) **Appointment of Subcommittee.** Mrs. Perrotti announced that she wanted to appoint a subcommittee for the Superintendent search. She is seeking volunteers and asked interested parties to email her by January 20th. The request will be sent out on the district-wide listserv.
- d) **Appointment of Superintendent as Designee to EBEC Board of Directors.** A motion was made by Mr. Harris and was seconded by Mrs. King to appoint Dr. Lusi as Portsmouth's designee to the EBEC Board of Directors. So voted 7-0.

- e) **Report on November Financials.** Mr. Mark Dunham gave an overview of the November financials. All the revenue is being received as projected. There have been no notices (or rumors) of a reduction in State aid to education for the year ending 2011; however, as has been previously noted, this type of action is always a possibility in the current economic conditions. The total expenditure line item has a year-end projection of zero variance at this time. As we move forward into the year, the budget may be impacted by events such as adverse weather conditions, student placement and registration, the difficult financial climate, and the outstanding unsettled labor agreement with the teachers. All these conditions will be continuously monitored and the budget will be managed accordingly. By far, the most significant unknown which will have the largest effect on the budget is the expired agreement with the teachers (NEA). The manner in which these and similar events occur and are resolved will have an impact on the end of year result of the 2010-2011 budget.
- f) **Budget Transfers.** A motion was made by Mr. Harris and was seconded by Mrs. King to approve the budget transfers as presented. So voted 7-0.

8. SUBCOMMITTEE AGENDA

- a) **Alternative Revenue.** Mr. Croston reported that tomorrow's subcommittee meeting is being moved to Thursday at 7:30 PM at the PHS Library. The AIM Academy and Little Compton will be discussed.
- b) **Facilities.** Mr. Croston reported that a Facilities Subcommittee meeting will take place on Thursday at 6:30 PM in the PHS Library. The discussion will be about what our goals are and what we are trying to achieve.
- c) **Finance.** Mrs. Perrotti reported that the Finance Subcommittee has not met yet. She hopes to schedule a meeting by the end of January.
- d) **Health and Wellness.** Ms. Volpicelli reported that the last Health and Wellness Subcommittee meeting was held on December 6th. The group agreed that Mrs. Jermain would visit the PTOs and address the Health and Wellness concerns. The next meeting will be held on February 7th at 6:00 PM at the Administration Building.
- e) **Healthcare Commission.** Mr. Harris reported that the first meeting of the Healthcare Commission will take place on January 19th at 9:00 AM at the Town Hall. The meeting is open to the public.
- f) **Negotiations.** Mr. Harris reported that this Committee inherited an unsettled teachers' contract. We did vote to go into mediation because we are not getting anywhere with negotiations.

Our teacher's union contract expired in August. As such, our teachers have been working without a contract using the same salary schedule from the 2009-10 contract year. This means that any teacher that would move up a ladder in salary step has not moved up because no contract exists.

The prior school committee met with the union several times and was unable to reach any agreement with the union prior to the November election. A few offers were made that, in a nutshell, asked teachers to pay 20% for health insurance costs and offered reduced salary step increases for a half year, starting in January 2011.

It is difficult, as an employee, to hear that you will not be receiving what you expect in compensation or benefits and is even more difficult to be the negotiating representatives of a union and have to deliver that kind of news back to your membership. It's not easy for us, as the elected officials to have to present this to our employees either. We are in extraordinary economic times, the result of a 30 year credit expansion that has deflated. We are now in an economic period coined, "The New Normal". It is an extended period of time where unemployment will remain stubbornly high; the general population has become more thrifty, saving more, which reduces economic growth, thus reducing tax revenue for government.

The New Normal affects all of us. Additionally, our school budget growth rate will be limited by several other factors. The new state funding formula reduces aid to Portsmouth by close to \$2M over the next decade, Senate 3050 limits the amount that property taxes can fund our operations, and we face a \$4.5M unfunded OPEB liability that we must address.

Hard decisions need to be made in every town and city hall across our nation. Here, we have a fiduciary role to our students to provide them the highest quality education we can. We are also under a legal mandate to not run our budget into a deficit. We expect that the taxpayers of our town will, as they have done in the past, shoulder their fair share of inevitable cost increases. We as a school committee are committed to finding any and all levels of efficiency and new revenue sources within our district. Putting forth fair, respectful and sustainable employment contracts with our valued employees must also be part of the solution going forward.

At our first meeting as a newly elected school committee we made it our first priority to organize a new negotiating team and to meet with the teachers' union. We held our first meeting with them on December 2nd, approximately two weeks after we were sworn into office. After spending many hours reviewing our current budget challenges and next year's budget projections we presented a two year contract offer to our teachers.

The new contract offer provided all teachers on steps a retroactive salary scale increase to November 1, 2010. It also added a one-time annual deductible to the health plan which

would only trigger if a patient were to be hospitalized, needed outpatient surgery or physical therapy. Otherwise the plan is the same chassis they have now and office visit, walk-in, ER and prescription benefit co-payments remain the same. The financial offer also asked for teachers to pay 20% of the premium costs of their health coverage, up from the 13% they pay today and it extended the salary step scale from 10 years to 12. We also offered to permanently grandfather all step 9 and 10 teachers to the highest salary scale. For the current year we needed to have the changes to the health plan to fund the salary step payments and we needed to implement our plan no later than late January 2011. Having presented the offer on December 9 we also added an expiration date of the offer to be January 10, 2011 at 9:00am. The union did not respond to our offer within the specified time and that offer has now expired. They have claimed that our offer is regressive to the prior offers they have received prior to the newly elected school committee taking office. They have also accused the current school committee of negotiating in bad faith and have indicated they will file a complaint as such.

Our position is that our offer is not regressive. I also do not believe that the actions of a prior committee will bind the hands of newly elected government body. I can assure all citizens that our proposal to the union was done with careful consideration, competent understanding of the budget issues we face and with good intentions towards our teachers.

- g) **Policy.** Mrs. King stated that she met with Dr. Lusi, and they identified about 7 or 8 policies that need to be reviewed. The first Policy Subcommittee meeting will be held on Thursday at 5:30 PM at the PHS Library.

A motion was made by Mr. Harris and was seconded by Mrs. King to adjourn the meeting. So voted 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 9:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patti Cofield
Recording Secretary for:

Marilyn King, Clerk