

**Portland Board of Education  
Regular Meeting  
Minutes of Tuesday, February 4, 2025 @ 7:00 pm  
Portland High School Media Center**

Board Members Present:

Laurel Steinhauser  
Stacey Benham  
Angela Hammond  
Dave Murphy  
Kim Nagy-Maruschock  
Sarah Spear

Board Members Absent:

Meg Scata

Administration Present:

Dr. Charles D. Britton, Superintendent of Schools  
Stephanie Fragola, Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs

**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**

**K. Nagy-Maruschock moved to approve the agenda, seconded by S. Benham. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

**4. Approval of Consent Agenda**

- A. Approval of January 21, 2025 Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of Reading for Education Donation to Gildersleeve Elementary School, \$29.38
- C. Approval of Planet Aid Donation to Brownstone Intermediate School, \$28.25
- D. Approval of Hopkins-Pineda Family Donation to Portland High School Girls Basketball, \$200.00

**A. Hammond moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by S. Benham. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED**

**5. Audience of Citizens - none**

**6. Portland Public Schools Spotlight – Portland Pathways Transition Program**

S. McLaughlin shared that the program serves young adults with disabilities, aiming to equip them with essential training, services, and real-world job skills. This marks the second year of the program. Ted Pinto, the Transition Program teacher, presented an overview of the Portland Pathways transition program, outlining its vision and goals. Sara Elliott, from the Waverly Senior Center, was in attendance and represents one of the businesses providing job site opportunities for students. Mr. Pinto mentioned that the current setup is incomplete due to the absence of a dryer to complement the washer, as the necessary ductwork was not included in the room's design. However, he noted that the kitchen set up is functional. He also expressed a need for assistance in connecting with additional businesses to expand vocational opportunities for students. Mr. Pinto's

ultimate vision is to open a used bookstore and coffee shop, run by the transition students. He highlighted that other districts have implemented similar programs and expressed a desire to secure paid internships for graduating students, further enhancing their employment prospects. The program currently serves 7 students, with plans to accommodate up to 8 students next year. New this year is the requirement for the program to be held in a location that meets specific criteria – it cannot be hosted in an elementary school, but must be in a high school or offsite location.

K. Nagy-Maruschock praised Mr. Pinto, stating that his drive and passion for the program are truly remarkable. She thanked him for bringing attention to the program’s mission and emphasized that the board will do its best to provide support moving forward.

**7. Student Representative Report - none**

**8. Communication and Updates**

**A. Superintendent’s Report**

The enrollment report was submitted. A letter was received from Kate Brown, a special education teacher, advocating for the retention of a special education position that has been cut in next year’s budget. Additionally, CASBO has compiled data on superintendent and board budgets in the state. The average increase across districts is currently 5.4%.

The tennis courts are in poor condition due to the impact of snow, wind, and ice, and will need to be repaired. While repairs completed last year will be covered by the contractor, new cracks have developed, making the court unplayable. Bob Shea received a quote for \$20,800 for the necessary repairs, which Dr. Britton has authorized. The funds will come from the repair line item.

A question was raised about whether the town should contribute to the repair costs, given that the courts are also used for park and recreation pickleball. Dr. Britton responded that last year when the district was facing a deficit, the town provided a supplemental appropriation, part of which was used for the tennis court repairs. D. Murphy suggested that it would be beneficial to have an estimate for the total cost of completely repairing the facility. L. Steinhauser proposed that this might be a good opportunity to bring the issue before state representatives to explore the possibility of securing funding through bonding.

Dr. Britton provided an update on the increasing concern among districts regarding undocumented students. The Connecticut State Dept. of Education recently released guidance outlining the rights and responsibilities of school districts in this area. Dr. Britton will be attending a webinar hosted by Shipman to gain further insights on the topic. He plans to brief staff on all communications related to this issue and will share the same information with the board to keep them informed.

Governor Lamont announced that he will allocate funding to help districts develop in-house programs for special education. This discussion also touched on federal funding, as of now, districts still have access to the funds that were originally budgeted.

The Office of Civil Rights has set the expectation that districts revert to the 2020 version of the Title IX policy. The Policy committee will meet on February 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss the necessary changes, and the updated policy will be presented as a first read at the next board meeting.

**B. Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs – S. Fragola**

The Authorized Spending Report was submitted and reviewed. It was noted that the district has received the McKinney-Vento grant. The report also included a review of any negative line items, with explanations provided for the shortages. Specific areas discussed included outplacements and electricity costs.

**9. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)**

**A. Open Choice Seats 2025-2026**

Dr. Britton reviewed the current enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year and presented the proposed enrollment numbers for the 2025-2026 school year. The proposal includes opening 10 new kindergarten seats and three new first-grade seats.

**S. Spear moved to recommend to the Portland Board of Education that the district declare up to 69 Open Choice seats to include 10 new kindergarten seats and 3 new first grade seats, with the ability to add up to 2 sibling requests during the 25-26 school year, seconded by K. Nagy-Maruschock. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED**

**B. Superintendent of Schools Mid-Year Review (Discussed in Executive Session)**

**10. Old Business (Discussion/Possible Action) - none**

**11. Committee Reports**

A. Curriculum – K. Nagy-Maruschock– next meeting scheduled for 2/19/25

B. Policy – M. Scata – next meeting scheduled for 2/20/25

C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – next meeting scheduled for 2/5/25

D. Buildings and Grounds – M. Scata – discussed tennis courts at the last meeting

E. Liaison

1. CREC – M. Scata – no report

2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – continue to organize committees, and discussed the possibility of moving meetings back to the library. A comment was made by a member of the Strategic Committee regarding one of the replacements on the committee.

3. Youth Services Advisory Board – M. Scata – no report

4. Equity and Inclusion Coalition – S. Spear – next meeting 3/27/25, need an additional liaison for this committee.

5. Strategic Capital Improvements Committee – L. Steinhauser – Mike Sorano from Friar presented an overview of the needs and challenges at the three elementary schools. He explained that the challenges with using the capital improvement fund is that it is primarily allocated for maintenance plan items. If the funding exceeds a certain percentage threshold, it can trigger code issues in older buildings, which then need to be addressed. Mr. Sorano will return to the next meeting with updated cost estimates and various configuration plans for the schools.

**12. Audience of Citizens - none**

**13. Board of Education Member Comments**

Stacey Benham – she expressed that the transition program presentation was great and she hopes we can help open new opportunities for the students.

Angela Hammond – she thanked Mr. Pinto for his presentation and she hopes the board can assist.

Dave Murphy – he appreciated the Transition Program presentation and mentioned that the program may be eligible for a Gildersleeve grant to help with creating new opportunities. Additionally he shared that Friday is Starbuck’s grand opening.

Kim Nagy-Maruschock – hopefully we can make some small but meaningful changes to the Transition Program to help improve opportunities for the students.

Meg Scata – no report

Sarah Spear – she appreciated the Transition Program presentation.

Laurel Steinhauser –CABE is hosting a webinar on Thursday, 2/6, about the Governor’s budget. Additionally, at the end of the month, there will be another webinar focused on the CT Freedom of Information Act.

**14. Executive Session – for the purpose of Superintendent of Schools Mid-Year Review**

**K. Nagy-Maruschock moved to enter into executive session for the purpose of superintendent of schools mid-year review and invite superintendent Dr. Britton, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

Entered Executive Session: 8:20 pm

Exited Executive Session: 9:49 pm

**15 Executive Session Action - none**

**16. Adjournment**

**S. Benham moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 pm, seconded by A. Hammond. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Tricia Dean  
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk