

Portland Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Minutes of Tuesday, April 1, 2025 @ 7:00 pm
Portland High School Media Center

Board Members Present:

Laurel Steinhauser [via remote]
Stacey Benham
Dave Murphy
Kim Nagy-Maruschock
Meg Scata
Sarah Spear

Board Members Absent:

Angela Hammond

Administration Present:

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

Student Representative:

Caitlin Walsh

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Meg Scata called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Agenda

Remove item #8.C. Director of Student Services Report

K. Nagy-Maruschock moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by S. Spear. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of March 18, 2025 Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of Planet Aid Donation to Brownstone Intermediate School, \$38.75

D. Murphy moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by K. Nagy-Maruschock. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

5. Audience of Citizens - none

6. Portland Public Schools Spotlight – Gildersleeve Robotics

Principal Graf introduced teachers Jen Pickett and Emily Davidson, who gave a presentation on FIRST Robotics. Gildersleeve students then shared their projects and discussed what they enjoy most about participating in the program.

Board members shared their sentiments about the program and the great things the students are accomplishing. Ms. Pickett and Ms. Davidson also updated the Board on how the Gildersleeve Grant funds will be used to support the program in the upcoming school year.

7. Student Representative Report

Caitlin shared several highlights, including the completion of the Spring PSAT and SAT. Juniors will be taking the NGSS science test this Friday, and the spring sports season has officially begun. She also updated the Board on upcoming events, including the successful “Anything Goes” play, the upcoming prom at Glastonbury Hills Country Club, and the recent sophomore auction. Additionally, Project Grad has ongoing fundraisers, such as the Dueling Pianos event and the Flamingo Yard Flocking.

8. Communication and Updates

A. Superintendent’s Report

The enrollment report was submitted. Dr. Britton reported that the Kindergarten enrollment for next year stands at 80 to date. D. Murphy noted that the new apartment building has started opening units, and we should monitor for any new enrollees from that development. Budget comparison reports from other districts have been submitted, we are in line with what we see across the state. S. Spear pointed out that, compared to districts in our DRG, we are in the lower range for budget increase percentages. Last week, budget deliberation took place, and Dr. Britton appreciated the comments from the Board of Selectmen recognizing our need for capital improvement funds. A \$50,000 cut was made to the BOE, but those cuts have not yet been identified. Resignations have been submitted by teachers S. Williams and H. Constantinescu, as well as IT Technician K. Hatem. Dr. Britton updated the Board on plans following the resignation of the IT technician. ASOS will conduct an audit and service of our systems, and a report on the status will be submitted. After receiving the report, he will bring it to the personnel committee to discuss next steps. There was also a discussion about potentially contracting out the position, along with additional discussion on how we are currently utilizing ASOS.

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

The Financial Report and Spending Report for Q3 were submitted and reviewed. The substitute line item was discussed, as it is currently over budget. D. Murphy requested a data update on ESS, and Dr. Britton will provide that once it’s received from ESS. L. Steinhauser also reminded the Board that the recent increase in the minimum wage rate could contribute to the higher cost.

9. New Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. Board of Education Policy (1st reading)

1. Policy 5114 Discipline

M. Scata stated that there are significant changes from the current policy. Dr. Britton confirmed that the current policy, 5144, will be removed and replaced with 5114. S. Spear inquired whether the Policy committee had reviewed current and recent disciplinary data and if the revised policy reflects insights gathered from that data. Dr. Britton responded that it was taken into consideration.

B. ED-099 Healthy Food Certification

Motion: To recommend to the full Board that the Portland School District approve the following considerations as outlined in the SDE Operational Memorandum February 24, 2025 requiring each local board of education or governing authority for all Connecticut public school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to take action annually to certify whether all food items sold to students separately from reimbursable meals will or will not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS).

Consideration #1 Healthy Food Option: Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Portland Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups

Moved by S. Spear, Seconded by D. Murphy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

Consideration #2 Combined Food and Beverage Exemptions: The Portland Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales.

Moved by S. Spear, Seconded by D. Murphy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

C. Nominate a Staff Member to sit on the American 250 / Portland CT Committee

TABLED

D. Acceptance of PEGPETIA Grant, \$12,000

Dr. Britton explained that this grant provides educational support and will be used to purchase desktops units to replace the aging ones.

K. Nagy-Maruschock moved to accept the PEGPETIA grant in the amount of \$12,000, seconded by S. Benham. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

E. Sarah St. Amand Leave of Absence Request

K. Nagy-Maruschock moved to approve the extended leave of absence request for Sara St. Amand, seconded by S. Benham. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

10. Old Business (Discussion/Possible Action)

A. Gildersleeve Grant, BIS Artist in Residence

Dr. Britton explained that the grant is for \$8,000 and will be used to bring artists in-house for 5th and 6th graders.

S. Benham moved to recommend to the Portland Board of Education approval to submit a Gildersleeve Grant to fund the BIS Artist in Residence, seconded by D. Murphy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

11. Committee Reports

- A. Curriculum – K. Nagy-Maruschock– next meeting is 4/23/25
- B. Policy – M. Scata – next meeting is 5/6/25
- C. Personnel – L. Steinhauser – next meeting is 4/9/25, this date will also be for the nurses negotiations.
- D. Buildings and Grounds – M. Scata – no report
- E. Liaison
 - 1. CREC – M. Scata – next meeting is 4/16/25, and the annual meeting is 5/20/25
 - 2. Selectmen – D. Murphy – budget workshops are ongoing, and the public hearing for the boiler is 4/2/25
 - 3. Youth Services Advisory Board – M. Scata – no meeting scheduled
 - 4. Equity and Inclusion Coalition – S. Spear – Dr. Britton updated that they are working on a civil discourse trainer. The dignity index was explored. Dylan Bernard gave an update on the civil discourse draft.
 - 5. Strategic Capital Improvements Committee – L. Steinhauser – they conducted a walk-through of Gildersleeve and Valley View. The next meeting is 4/3/25.

12. Audience of Citizens - none

13. Board of Education Member Comments

Stacey Benham – she enjoyed the robotics spotlight and thanked everyone for the member appreciation gifts. Additionally, April is Occupational Therapy Month.

Dave Murphy – no report

Kim Nagy-Maruschock – she enjoyed the robotics club presentation

Meg Scata – on 4/11, there will be the MS Personal Interest Projects. April is both Library Month and Poetry Month. Tomorrow is Autism Awareness Day.

Sarah Spear – she appreciated the Gildersleeve student's presentation and thanked everyone for the member appreciation gifts.

Laurel Steinhauser – congratulated Caitlin and Liam for their outstanding work onstage and in the band at the play. Gratitude was also expressed to Charles and Stephanie for representing the school so well at the budget deliberation meetings with the Board of Selectmen. Upcoming events include the HS Band Extravaganza on 4/9 at 7 pm and the Choral Extravaganza on 4/10 at 7 pm. The public hearing is scheduled for 4/2.

Caitlin Walsh, student rep – she enjoyed seeing the Gildersleeve students present.

14. Executive Session – none

15. Executive Session Action - none

16. Adjournment

S. Spear moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 pm, seconded by D. Murphy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tricia Dean
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk