

Poultney Town School District
Board of School Directors Meeting
Official Minutes
February 17, 2009

Attending: Mary Jo Teetor, Board Chair, and Board Members Pat Davenport, Tracee Oakman Rupe, and Al Jackson, Superintendent Tom Gallagher, PHS Principal JeanMarie Oakman, PES Principal Kristen Caliguiri, Louis Milazzo, Business Manager, Anne Colpitts, Recording Clerk, Joe DeBonis, Tammy Petty, Kandi Bradley, Bonnie Lenihan, Julie Covino, Vinnie Covino, Linda MW Smith, Susan Brayton, Sheila Nichols, Jessica Nadeau, Susan Bunker, Bill Bunker, Tim Loomis, Vanessa Duval, Alicia Marcy, Gary Marcy, Elie Clark, Pedar Kristiansen, Melissa Kristiansen, Clarena Renfrow, Nancy Schwaner, Robert Festa, Medrick Petty, James Porter, Craig Leach, Judy Cummings, Ron Cummings, Harold Wescott III, and Cristina Kumka.

Mary Jo Teetor called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Action: *Pat Davenport moved to bring General Public Comment to the top of the agenda. Tracee Oakman Rupe seconded. Motion carried.

General Public Comment:

Board Chair Mary Jo Teetor collected the following written questions from the audience:

1) What is a checkmarked school?

Principal Oakman responded that PHS is a checkmarked school, which means it has been identified by the State of Vermont as needing improvement under No Child Left Behind. PHS is checkmarked in math, reading and writing, and the results on the new science test were below the state average.

Follow-up question: What does it mean if PHS is checkmarked for another year?

Once a school is checkmarked for 2 years, it has to make an improvement plan, which PHS has already done. Sanctions, including school choice, required professional development, and the replacement of staff and administrations, can be imposed if a school is checkmarked for multiple years.

2) Are administrative raises built in to the proposed budget?

Money for raises is built into the budget and determined based on evaluations. Money could be used for other programs if not used for raises.

3) Why is there so much turnover in the position of superintendent?

The current superintendent, Tom Gallagher, was hired in an interim capacity and will just serve out the rest of this academic year. The board will be looking for a qualified candidate and hopes that the next choice will be a good fit.

4) Concerning the growing division between school staff and administrators, could an outside mediator be brought in?

Superintendent Gallagher asked for a survey to be conducted of high school staff regarding school climate in light of the turmoil of the past school year. He has been tallying the results, discussing them with administrators, and planning how to address the issues raised.

5) Is there a plan to teach students internet safety?

The schools have policies and practices in place to regulate appropriate use of the internet and computers.

Follow-up question: Students are aware of what people in the community are saying about teachers and administrators, and this can impact their relationships with these people. What is the school doing to protect them from being impacted by what they hear?

Mary Jo Teetor responded that community members should be conscious of what they say, since it is difficult to keep information from students, and the right to free speech cannot be restricted.

6) Will the decision on which positions to cut be made public before Town Meeting Day?

Mary Jo Teetor explained that they are still working on the details and consulting legal experts. The board is not required to name the staff that will be laid off until April, and may need to reevaluate the budget after Town Meeting Day. Superintendent Gallagher explained that he asked interim business manager Dick Stewart to audit student to teacher ratios and found some extremely low ratios. They are trying to make cuts that will not impact the quality of the program, and found that they can cut 4.5 teachers while maintaining the class offerings and keeping class size below Vermont averages.

7) Has the board done any comparisons with other local schools in terms of science facilities?

Architects provided the board with different options from labs that they had built around the state and the types of technology that are available in other schools, in addition to including basic upgrades of electrical systems and insulation.

8) Why does the principal sign the PDC's, when they should be signed by teachers?

Principal Oakman said that when she first came to PHS, the PDC's were not well-implemented. This year 25 of 46 seniors already have their PDC's signed-off, and the rest should be done by April. Teachers and TA's both collaborate with Principal Oakman on the PDC's, but at this point she still wants to supervise them closely to make sure that they are being fully implemented. At some point in the future, she envisions a committee of teachers, peers and community members evaluating the PDC's.

Consent Agenda:

a. Approval of Minutes: Action: *Al Jackson moved to approve Unofficial Minutes of January 20, 2009 (Regular and Continuation), January 22, 2009 (Special), and January 27, 2009 (Special) with amendments. Pat Davenport seconded. Motion carried.

b. Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Gallagher suggested that low test scores are often due to lack of alignment of curriculum, teaching and testing. All may be of high quality, but if students are not tested on what is taught, they will not be successful. The principals have attended training to learn how to conduct a curriculum audit to ensure that alignment. It is a multi-year process and will require extensive teacher participation. To be successful, expectations should be clear at the central office level so that teachers are able to be creative at the classroom level.

c. Principals' Reports:

PHS: 1) New security system: Vinnie Covino discussed the proposed new security system. Ideally, PHS would have 5 external cameras, 25 internal cameras, and 2 buzz-in entry locks. PES would have 7 external cameras, 1 internal camera, 1 buzz-in entry lock, and 1 key-pad entry. In order to add security cameras with IP addresses, some updates would need to be made since almost all currently available IP addresses are taken. Vinnie reported that he has talked to 2 companies, had 1 walk-through, and has an equipment estimate of \$35,000. Vinnie will provide estimates from 3 companies at April meeting for both equipment and labor. Superintendent Gallagher said he considers the security system a high priority, but they will need to check the budget. He will also see if it is possible to get any funds from the Department of Homeland Security.

2) Survey of 2008 graduates: Principal Oakman went over the results of a survey that was sent out to students who graduated in 2008 asking them how PHS prepared them well and how it could improve. The graduates reported that PDC's, the Wellness Center, the math program, and sports prepared them well. Many respondents commented that they did not feel prepared for college-level writing.

3) Action: *Tracee Oakman Rupe moved to accept a donation of pre-stretched canvases from Val Cook Schafer and Ken Schafer to the PHS art department. Pat Davenport seconded. Motion carried.

4) Action: *Al Jackson moved to approve the hiring of 2 golf coaches, one for junior high and one for high school, due to unexpectedly high turnout. The money is available in the FY09 budget. Pat Davenport seconded. Motion carried.

5) Update on planned senior trip: The class of 2009 is now planning to go to Ocean City, Maryland, for 3 nights and 4 days.

6) Coaching policies: In response to some recent incidents, PHS has decided to tighten procedures for coaches to ensure that coaches take the required classes and get background checks in a prompt manner. The policy will be edited to

require coaches to take required courses within one month of hiring. There are also new guidelines for spectators, and some changes to policies regarding playing time, behavior contracts, and parents with concerns about coaching.

7) Out-of-district homeschoolers who participate in activities: Principal Oakman raised the question of whether other districts should pay for their homeschoolers to participate in activities. Principal Oakman will find out if the ADM money comes to Poultney or if it goes to their home districts. If PHS already gets the ADM money, there is no need to also bill the home district.

8) Disciplinary policy: A student violated the Acceptable Use Policy for Internet Use, appealed the dean's decision to the principal, and then wanted to appeal the principal's decision. One disciplinary policy says that the principal's decision is final, but the code of conduct says that the party in question can appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent. Since the two policies are in conflict, the board will have to decide which policy to follow. For now, the superintendent will hear the appeal.

PES: Seventy-two percent of PES students achieved or exceeded the standard in reading on the NECAP, and 67% achieved or exceeded the standard in math. PES is continuing to work on professional development, particularly in writing, which is the school's weakest area. In other news, the NAEP test will happen at the end of February, board and community participation is welcome on the teacher hiring committee, and PES enrollment is at 198 again.

d. Business Manager's Report:

1. Approve Warrants:
 - a. Warrant #48, in the amount of \$127,314.18, dated 1/16/09.
 - b. Warrant #49, in the amount of \$78,930.03, dated 1/30/09.
2. Financial Reports: Louis Milazzo presented a written report including a variance analysis. The surplus balance for FY08 was \$695K with \$50K reserved for FY09.

New Business:

- a. Approve Textbooks: **Action:** *Tracee Oakman Rupe moved to approve the textbook list recommended by Principal Oakman. Al Jackson seconded. Motion carried.
- b. Approve Substitute List: **Action:** *Pat Davenport moved to approve the new substitute list. Al Jackson seconded. Motion carried.
- c. Discussion of possible special meeting date for re-organization (after Town Meeting and prior to regular March meeting): The board decided to hold the re-organization meeting on March 10, at 6:30 pm. Training on board roles and responsibilities will be held on March 18, at 5:30 pm.
- d. Update on science lab proposal: Information was sent via USPS to all taxpayers. Science labs will be open by appointment during the week of February 16 and open to the public before the informational meeting on February 26.
- e. Discuss procedure for disbursing ½ year "stipends" for advisors: When advisors split positions by semester, or only do a job for a portion of the year, it is important to make sure that the payment matches the fraction of the year worked

(someone who works through December, for instance, has not actually worked fully half the year).

f. Discuss possibility of increasing daily rate of pay for substitute school nurse/assistant to school nurse: Substitute school nurses currently get the same rate as substitute teachers through Kelly Services: \$65/day. Given what nurses make in other settings, Superintendent Gallagher asked the board to consider raising the pay rate for substitute nurses. Board will take under consideration.

Policies:

2nd/ 3rd Reading:

- i. Harassment of Employees - move to adopt
 - a. Procedures, Harassment of Employees
- ii. AIDS/HIV - move to adopt
- iii. Residency - cross reference with Students Seeking Admission Policy - move to 3rd reading
- iv. Firearms - move to 3rd reading
- v. Limited English Proficiency (replaces English as a Second Language) - move to adopt
- vi. Participation of Home Study Students - move to adopt
- vii. Hazing - move to adopt
- viii. Pupil Privacy Rights - move to 3rd reading
- ix. Education Support System - move to adopt
- x. Student Conduct and Discipline - move to 3rd reading
- xi. Selection of Instructional Material - move to 3rd reading
- xii. Head Lice - move to adopt
- xiii. Wellness - move to adopt

Action: *Al Jackson moved to adopt the policies that had been moved forward for adoption. Pat Davenport seconded. Motion carried.

Action on Personnel:

a. New Hires

- i. Keith Harrington, History Day Advisor, PES
- ii. Scott Holliman, Production Supervisor, PHS (prorated)
- iii. Martha Potvin, Substitute School Nurse (RN), PES/PHS

Action: *Pat Davenport moved to approve new hires. Al Jackson seconded. Motion carried.

- b. Resignations - None
- c. Terminations - None

Next Regular Meeting: March 17th, 2009, 6:30 pm, PHS.

Mary Jo Teetor adjourned the meeting to move to executive session at 9:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Colpitts, Recording Clerk