

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**August 18, 2008**

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the Portage Public Schools held on Monday, August 18, 2008, was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Johnson in the Community Room of the Administration Building, 8111 S. Westnedge. She welcomed an audience of 20 people and all in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Trustees Present: Shirley Johnson, Melanie Kurdys, Wendy Mazer, Deb Polderman, Dale Posthumus, Rusty Rathburn, and Jennifer Whistler

Board Trustees Absent: None

**PUBLIC HEARING ON BREAKFAST PROGRAM**

President Johnson invited the Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Mr. Tom Noverr, to share background information on the School Code requirement to hold this Public Hearing. Johnson opened the Public Hearing on the subject of not offering breakfast service at West Middle School for the 2008/09 school year. Seeing no one come forward, President Johnson closed the Public Hearing. Mr. Noverr responded to Trustee questions pertaining to notification to families at West Middle School, demand for the program, and historical information on the program.

**REPORTS**

**Superintendent's Report:** Superintendent Wells reiterated current District programs and activities regarding safe and healthy learning environments. The District works with students and families to provide better information about prevention through curriculum. She asked Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Dr. Ric Perry, to provide an overview of District programs and activities, speak about student conduct, and violations relative to substance abuse, and next steps.

Mr. Perry introduced four participants who recently attended the National Association School Resource Officers (NASRO) Conference: Police Liaison Officer, Mr. Ray Scott; Assistant Principal from Northern High School, Ms. Leslie Hainrihar; Community High School Administrator, Mr. Craig Ross; and Portage Police Sergeant, John Blue. Mr. Perry discussed changes to the Student Code of Conduct, student assistance programs, random canine drug detection services, Police Liaison Officer assistance, parent information sessions, teacher training to help with detection, assistance teams, other programs or presentations, and Silent Observer (269-343-2100). NASRO conference attendees are sharing knowledge gained at this Conference with District Administrators.

Sergeant Blue commented the NASRO conference goal was to gain knowledge about school violence, gang related issues, and substance abuse. He discussed the District reaction plan that is in place dealing with school security and substance abuse. Sergeant Blue and Mr. Perry answered several Trustee questions pertaining to tips and communication mechanisms, ongoing investigations, and new detection technologies being a deterrent.

Superintendent Wells stressed the District wants to be as vigilant as possible and welcomed further information from others who may know of programs or partnerships across the country between schools, business, and families to contact her office. The schools being the center of the community can provide the link to bring this all together.

Ms. Hainrihar shared some of the background information received at the NASRO conference, responded to a Trustee question, thanked the District for supporting their attendance at the conference, and commented on the further development of thoughts from this conference and updates would be coming to the Board. President Johnson informed the audience that attendance at this conference was made possible by an Excellence In Education Grant.

Superintendent Wells introduced Mr. Jeff Patton, Executive Director of the Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and asked him to share information about wrap around support services available to the District. Mr. Patton introduced Ms. Pat Weighman, Deputy Director for Services for Children and Families, the Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Mr. Patton discussed his global focus, local programs to continue prevention and intervention services, proposed community education forums, action plans, training, and treatment. Ms. Weighman discussed integrating mental health and substance use that fit in well with the community.

President Johnson recognized the individual recipient of the Regional Exceptional Service Award, Mr. Scott, and the department recipient of the Regional Exceptional Service Award, the Portage Police Department represented by Sergeant Blue. Mr. Scott and the Portage Police Department were selected to receive the NASRO Awards based on several criteria and their exceptional contributions and dedication to the School Resource Officer Programs in Portage.

Superintendent Wells invited Mr. Tom Vance, Community Relations Manager, to update the audience on back-to-school activities. He informed the audience all information will be published in the *Kalamazoo Gazette* and on the District website, [www.portageps.org](http://www.portageps.org). Mr. Vance also described changes to the District page in the *Portage Gazette* will now focus more on strategic issues and will appear on the first Monday of the month.

Superintendent Wells reminded the audience of the construction underway on the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Elementary and soon to begin at Northern High School. Please use caution in and around these sites and be sure to allow extra time in transporting students.

**Treasurer's Report:** Mrs. Polderman presented the Treasurer's Report of Bills Approved for Payment as of June 25, 2008, July 9, 2008, July 23, 2008, and August 7, 2008, General Fund bills in the amount of \$11,544,320.04, Building & Site Fund bills in the amount of \$323,652.27, and Bond Construction Fund bills in the amount of \$1,911,100.45, for a grand total of \$13,779,072.76.

## **COMMENTS OR COMMUNICATIONS**

President Johnson opened the comments and communications portion of the meeting and asked if there were any citizens who would like to speak to the Board. Mrs. Polderman explained guidelines the Board uses for this portion of the meeting.

Ms. Diana Bernard, 5555 Whipporwill, a citizen, inquired about the District's next steps pertaining to substance abuse prevention and responsibility for the canine drug searches.

Mr. Mark Anthony Martin, 10519 Dandale, a citizen, thanked the *Kalamazoo Gazette* for their substance abuse articles as well as Central High parent Ms. Dawn Wagner and Central High Principal, Mr. Eric Alburtus, for their efforts on the issue. He shared concerns pertaining to more aggressive action by parents as well as parents and community working together.

Ms. Millie Taraszka, 410 Marylynn Ct., a citizen, commented on the relocation of the District bus and maintenance facility and shared concern with math curriculum and the Academic Achievement Review process.

Mr. John Zull, 416 Barberry, a citizen and County Commissioner, shared information from a substance abuse program. He encouraged the District to follow through to see what "networking" efforts can be done regarding this issue.

President Johnson opened the floor to comments from fellow Board members.

Mrs. Polderman acknowledged and appreciated the reports given and stressed the District is moving forward with ideas regarding substance abuse concerns.

Mr. Posthumus commented on the possibility of collaborating with Mr. Patton. He stressed that the District is concerned with well thought out options and collaboration. Mr. Posthumus congratulated the Portage Athletic Foundation on the success of their fundraiser golf outing stating the event raised over \$40,000 for athletic teams and departments.

Mrs. Mazer thanked Ms. Julie Mack and the *Kalamazoo Gazette* for the recent substance abuse articles.

Mrs. Kurdys thanked the Central and Northern High School parents who worked so hard to bring the drug search dogs into the District and the parents that brought this issue forward. She thanked Superintendent Wells for the substance abuse presentation. She asked if the outline for creating safer schools could be added to the District web site. She inquired about a redistricting timeline and also requested two future Agenda items for further discussion: International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program and the Gallup Strengths Initiative.

Mr. Rathburn shared thoughts on substance abuse issues and thanked the *Kalamazoo Gazette* for creating the public awareness.

Mrs. Whistler thanked the community for their comments and stressed that the substance abuse issue is country-wide concern. She agreed with other Trustees about coordinated efforts and doing things the right way the first time.

President Johnson agreed with the comments from fellow Trustees. She thanked the Superintendent and Mr. Patton and his organization for tonight's report. She discussed the importance of cooperation in coordinating prevention efforts while focusing on evidenced based, best practice models regarding substance abuse prevention.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda items noting the revisions to the Minutes of July 7, 2008 Organizational Meeting and the new teacher appointments. Mrs. Kurdys requested the August 4, 2008 Committee of The Whole Work Session Minutes be removed from the Consent Agenda. Included on the Consent Agenda was the approval of revised Minutes of July 7, 2008 Organizational Meeting; July 24, 2008 Governance Retreat Meeting; August 1, 2008 Governance Retreat Meeting; and August 2, 2008 Governance Retreat Meeting; and the revised recommended new teacher appointments as follows: Mrs. Ann Alburtus, Mr. Josh Bartz, Ms. Jessica Bierhalter, Ms. Stacy Bonine, Mrs. Autumn Brasher, Ms. Elizabeth Chau, Ms. Nicole Dee, Ms. Heather Erbe, Ms. Emily Francis, Ms. Rachelle Gamble, Ms. Pamela Gordon, Mr. David Grohs, Ms. Amanda Hoke, Ms. Leah Juhl, Ms. Dolores Lapekas, Ms. Julie MacKellar, Ms. Katherine Millar, Ms. Jehan Olweean, Mr. Christopher Palmer, Ms. Anne Schnurstein, Mr. Dan Stahr, Ms. Kristin Stanfill, Mr. Michael Vreeland, and Ms. Karen Whitmyer. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **ACTION ITEMS**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Polderman, supported by Mrs. Kurdys, that the Board of Education ratify the Custodial and Maintenance Contract, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

President Johnson split the next motion into two parts and appointed Mrs. Kurdys as a delegate for the 2008 Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) Delegate Assembly to be held October 30, 2008.

**Motion offered by Mrs. Polderman, supported by Mrs. Kurdys, that the Board of Education cast a ballot for Ms. Susan Buckley as MASB Board of Director, Region 6, three-year term, as presented.**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, that the Board of Education cast a ballot for Mr. Burl Ghastin as MASB Board of Director, Region 6, three-year term, as presented.**

**Motions offered by Mrs. Whistler nominating Mr. Burl Ghastin and Mrs. Polderman nominating Susan Buckley as MASB Board of Director, Region 6, three-year term, were both rescinded.**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education discuss the candidates for the MASB Board of Director, Region 6, three-year term.**

**All Trustees discussed both candidates and Mr. Rathburn acknowledged he would be abstaining from the vote.**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that that the Board of Education cast a ballot for Mr. Burl Ghastin as MASB Board of Director, Region 6, three-year term, as presented.**

**Upon a roll call vote, Mrs. Mazer and Mrs. Kurdys voted for Ms. Buckley; Mrs. Whistler, President Johnson, Mrs. Polderman, and Mr. Posthumus voted for Mr. Ghastin; and Mr. Rathburn abstained.**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education approve the August 4, 2008 Committee of the Whole Work Session Minutes.**

**A revised motion was then offered by Mrs. Kurdys, seconded by Mrs. Mazer, that the Board of Education attach the speaker handouts submitted at the August 4, 2008 Committee Meeting of The Whole Session to the approved Minutes.**

After extensive discussion it was determined that further review would be needed before a revision could be considered. All motions were rescinded so that the items could be tabled until the next meeting. Mrs. Kurdys requested a future agenda item to discuss the level of detail captured in the Board Work Study Meeting Minutes.

**Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mrs. Polderman, that the Board of Education table the approval of the August 4, 2008 Committee of the Whole Work Session Minutes for further review. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **CLOSED SESSION**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Polderman, supported by Mrs. Whistler, that the Board of Education move into closed session for the purpose of discussing a student reinstatement and discipline. Upon a roll call vote, all Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.**

The Board moved into closed session at 8:15 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 8:40 p.m.

**Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mr. Posthumus, that the Board of Education deny a student reinstatement. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Polderman, supported by Mrs. Whistler, that the Board of Education expel a student from the District. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion offered by Mrs. Whistler, supported by Mr. Posthumus, that the Board of Education move into closed session for the purpose of discussing negotiations. Upon a roll call vote, all Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.**

The Board moved into closed session at 8:42 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 8:45 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edna Kent  
Recording Secretary