



PLANNING & BUILDING COMMITTEE

Merrimack School District

<https://www.sau26.org/domain/23>

Minutes

May 14, 2025

Present: T. Groff, A. Santoriello, F. Rothhaus, D. LaRue, K. Bernier and School Board Liaison L. Rothhaus

Excused: G. Groff

Also Present: Assistant Superintendent for Business M. Shevenell and School District Clerk P. Heinrich

School District Clerk P. Heinrich called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. She explained that since both the Committee Chair and Vice Chair had not run for re-election, the precedent in the District was that the School District Clerk oversaw the election of a new Chair and Vice Chair at the first Committee meeting after the election.

Reorganization

Chair

P. Heinrich called for nominations for Chair.

F. Rothhaus NOMINATED T. Groff for Chair.

There were no additional nominations.

T. Groff was elected Chair. 4 – 0 – 1 (A. Santoriello abstained.)

Vice Chair

P. Heinrich said the Committee By-laws refer to the position of Vice Chair as Assistant Chair, which might be something the Committee might consider changing and called for nominations for Vice Chair.

T. Groff NOMINATED F. Rothhaus for Vice Chair.

There were no additional nominations.

F. Rothhaus was elected Vice Chair. 4 – 0 – 1. (F. Rothhaus abstained.)

P. Heinrich welcomed D. LaRue to the Committee and told the members that there was a list of member information in the meeting packet. She asked members to let her know if anyone had any corrections.

P. Heinrich turned the meeting over to T. Groff.

Approval of Prior Minutes

T. Groff asked if there were any corrections to the proposed minutes of March 19, 2025.

There were none.

F. Rothhaus made a MOTION to approve the minutes of March 19, 2025 as written. Second: K. Bernier.

MOTION PASSED: 3 – 0 – 2. (D. LaRue and A. Santoriello abstained.)

Old Business

Facilities Naming Request

L. Rothhaus reported that Gage Perry and the group led by Pat McGrath, presented the Committee's Track Naming Request to the School Board. She said the School Board took the recommendation under advisement so that Lori Peters could contact the people who wrote the letters of reference. L. Rothhaus also said that at her suggestion, the School Board included Pat McGrath in the naming request.

M. Shevenell said he is working with Pat McGrath and his group on the location, design and funding of signage at the track.

L. Rothhaus said that she also asked the School Board to review and revise the naming policy to define the one year waiting policy and the "event" that prompted the request as well as clarify the Committee's responsibilities to review each an application and then make a recommendation to the School Board.

D. Larue asked for clarification about who makes the final decision about naming facilities.

L. Rothhaus explained that the School Board wrote the naming policy years ago and it states that the Planning and Building Committee reviews requests and makes a recommendation to the School Board who makes the final decision. She also said she would be sure that the School Board shares potential changes to the policy with the Committee before finalizing them.

JMUES Traffic

M. Shevenell told the Committee that since the last meeting, he, Rich Desmond and Student Transportation of America representatives (STA) met with the JMUES administrators to discuss changing the morning drop-off procedure to increase the number of buses lined up to drop off students. He said a number of trial runs were held and the change seems to have significantly reduced the traffic congestion in the parking lot and on the Baboosic Lake Road, McElwain

Street and even on D.W. Highway. He also said this change is as good as it's going to get because the District cannot implement other options without taking a field. He reminded everyone that the Church owns the parking lot and the MOU with the church has some parking and traffic restrictions in it. He said that the District had sent out a survey about offering early drop-off times at a small fee but received very few responses.

K. Bernier reminded everyone that, at the last PBC meeting, she had suggested the possibility of changing the parent traffic pattern on band drop-off day (Thursday) at the beginning of the next school year. She said parents get backed up trying to exit from Bishop Street onto McElwain. She asked if over the summer the Committee could review and suggest alternative parent traffic patterns which could be implemented in the fall.

T. Groff suggested double queuing cars at the McElwain end of the parking lot for drop-off might decrease the congestion on McElwain making exiting Bishop Street easier.

L. Rothhaus brought up a liability concerns regarding increased numbers of students and cars moving in the parking lot.

M. Shevenell said he could ask JMUES administrators, R. Desmond and STA representatives to come to a meeting during the summer to discuss this concern, using maps of the entire area projected on the screen.

Upcoming Projects

Capital Improvement Plan (C.I.P.)

M. Shevenell said the draft 2024-25 C.I.P (in the meeting packet) had not been presented to the School Board and he had a new rough sketch of the 2025-26 plan which should be presented to the School Board in late fall. He reminded everyone that a C.I.P is a five year plan of possible capital projects. He said items in the plan cost at least \$100,000 but being listed in the plan does not mean a project is already approved or funded and stated that projects may be added, moved, or removed as needed,

M. Shevenell said he has moved doing a roof next year because the District needs to focus on O'Gara Drive, which is owned by the School District, next year. He thanked the Town Department of Public Works for patching several potholes in the road this past year, but O'Gara Drive needs to be repaved and work on the sidewalk, curbing and guard rails as well as additional lighting is needed.

M. Shevenell said other projects in the C.I.P. will be annual Technology costs, furnace replacement, various school parking lots and the high school gym floor. He indicated that there will still be a few roof replacement projects in the outlying years, after which he hoped that the District will start making regular deposits into the Roof and Paving Capital Reserve Funds. He also said that athletic fields, while not a current priority, will need attention and should be put in the outlying years of the C.I.P.

A. Santoriello asked why Technology is an on-going item in the C.I.P. He said he thought the five year Technology plan was just about complete.

M. Shevenell said going forward, it is likely that Technology will be listed in the C.I.P every year. He told the Committee that something current will need to be replaced or upgraded or new wireless, safety and security concerns will need to be addressed. In addition, he said every year each Freshman gets a new one-to-one device. He said that the C.I.P includes recurring costs as well as new costs.

T. Groff asked that M. Shevenell provide the Committee with a break-out of five years' worth of actual Technology expenses as well as an average age of each District device.

Further discussion included:

- Should parents to surveyed to see if they are in favor of the one-to-one devices program.
- For safety and security reasons, the District only wants District computers hooked up to the School network.
- A lot of funding for Technology comes from grants.
- What cost items are warrant articles as opposed to in the operating budget?
- Should Technology costs be in a warrant article rather than the operating budget?
- The Committee might benefit from having the Technology Department Head explain the various capital technology projects.
- What is the life expectancy of a computer? Does the District have a replacement cycle?
- Cameras were in prior C.I.P.s but are not in next year's C.I.P. because camera replacement cost is expected to be less than \$100,000.

Next Meeting Date(s)

T. Groff asked members if they wanted to continue to meet on Wednesdays or return to Mondays.

D. Larue asked if the Committee met twice monthly.

L. Rothhaus said the Committee meets as needed and will need to meet in the fall to review and make a recommendation on the C.I.P.

P. Heinrich said the Committee used to schedule a "regular" once a month meeting date and an "as needed" meeting date. She said the Committee used to meet at least once a month to review projects including student population projections, school capacity and space usage and the C.I.P.

After a brief discussion, T. Groff he suggested it looked like the Committee preferred second and fourth Wednesdays and asked that P. Heinrich send a survey of dates to determine the next meeting date and a proposed meeting for the upcoming year.

By-Law Review

P. Heinrich had several historical documents about the Committee By-laws which she will collate and send to the members for discussion at the next meeting. She said the Committee was established by a warrant article at an Annual School District meeting and the Committee By-laws were approved by the Committee and ratified by Annual School District Meeting.

L. Rothhaus said she wants to School Board and legal to

New Business

L. Rothhaus told the Committee that she has contacted Fidelity to see if it offered any grants, donations or other funding mechanism which might help paying for a new SAU office. They do not at this time, but L. Rothhaus said she would continue to research and talk to other local businesses.

P. Heinrich asked if anyone wanted to have an SAU email. No one did.

T. Groff said he planned to have P. Heinrich send all email from him to the Committee. He reminded members that they should never reply all and that they should blind copy members when sending emails to the entire Committee.

Meeting Recap

T. Groff gave a recap of the meeting's business.

- Minutes of 3-19-24 were approved.
- Facility naming request has been approved by the School Board, no further Committee action needed.
- The Committee requested a discussion over the summer about possible parent traffic pattern changes at JMUES in the fall.
- The Committee has requested a five year breakdown of actual technology costs and information about the ages of all District devices.
- The Committee will be surveyed about 2nd and 4th Wednesday availability in order to develop a 2025-2026 meeting schedule
- By-law information will be distributed for discussion at the next meeting.

K. Bernier made a MOTION to adjourn. Second; D. LaRue.

MOTION PASSED unanimously.

T. Groff adjourned the meeting at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted.

Pat Heinrich