

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
May 5, 2025**

5:00 – Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a)(b)(c), Merrimack TV Training Classroom

- **Staff Welfare**

Present: Ms. Lori Peters, Chair; Ms. Laurie Rothhaus, Vice-Chair; Ms. Jenna Hardy, Board Member; Ms. Naomi Halter, Board Member; Ms. Rachel Paepke, Board Member; and Mr. Finnegan Haddad, Student Representative.

Also, Present: Mr. Everett Olsen, Chief Educational Officer and Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

Excused: Ms. Amy Doyle, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Chair Peters called the regular meeting to order.

Chair Peters read aloud the Merrimack School District’s mission statement into the record as follows:

The Merrimack School District will provide a high-quality, future-driven education to all students in the community. Students will engage in learning opportunities that reflect both rigor and relevance and meet their cognitive, social and emotional needs. The district will prepare students to understand, adapt to and adjust to the changing world, including civic, economic, social and technological developments. Our overall goal is to inspire, create, and encourage students to be curious, connected, prepared, resilient, and dedicated individuals who are lifelong expert learners. Merrimack graduates exercise judgment: they are innovative and will become responsible contributors to society. We hope the discussions we have tonight will always align with that mission.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Students Olivia G., Isaac B., Jack K., and Maddie C. all spoke in support of keeping the Gifted and Talented program.

Ms. Tracy Cassell of 9 Grapevine Road spoke in favor of keeping the Gifted and Talented program.

Kristine Kinsley of 46 Jessica Drive spoke in favor of keeping the Gifted and Talented.

Kaitlyn Bernier, 2 Birch Street announced Tuesday, May 7 was the last public hearing for the Senate Finance Committee and the last chance to submit online testimony for the state budget which is HB2. She also spoke in favor of keeping the Gifted and Talented program.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were no recognitions.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen highlighted the following announcements:

- The Granite State Challenge Team Semifinal matchup between Merrimack High School and Bedford High School will be broadcast on NH Public Broadcast Station on Thursday, May 8 at 8:30 p.m.
- Student filmmakers, Jacob Puzzo and Elysia Pizano made the official selection cut for this year's NH High School Short Film Festival that will be held on Sunday, May 18 at Chunky's Cinema Pub in Manchester from noon to 2:00 p.m.
- 21 high school seniors earned the NH Seal of Biliteracy Award this school year.
- High school graduation will be held on Saturday, June 14 at 10:00 a.m.
- The last day of school for students is June 18.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

There was no report.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reported that he and Maintenance Director Touseau were reviewing the Capital Improvement Plan. He acknowledged the poor condition of pavement on O'Gara Drive and thanked the Department of Public Works for helping to patch the many deep potholes. He and Maintenance Director Touseau are exploring the possibility of delaying a roof project to make improvements O'Gara Drive.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell plans to attend the Planning and Building Committee on May 14 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Memorial Room.

d. School Board Update

Chair Peters noted this week is teacher appreciation week. She expressed her appreciation to all educators. She reminded students and families to read newsletters and social media during the months of May and June for important end of year announcements and activities.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Haddad reported the Granite State Challenge competition between Merrimack High School and Bedford High School would air on Public Broadcast Service on May 8. He noted that spring sports and advanced placement testing were happening at the high school.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Board's Response to Proposed FY26 Budget Reductions

Chief Educational Officer Olsen presented the school board with his proposed budget reductions for the school year 2025-2026 at the April 21, 2025 meeting. He explained his proposed budget reductions were \$343,820 below the default budget. This would allow the school board with some flexibility during its budget reduction deliberations.

The Board thoroughly reviewed and discussed the proposed budget reduction list in detail.

Student Representative Haddad arrived at this time.

MOTION: Chair Peters moved to retain \$120,000 for a 1.0 FTE position for Gifted and Talented (G & T), \$40,000 for a part-time math interventionist position, \$100,000 for a 1.0 FTE for an additional English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) position, \$2,000 for the middle school soccer B team, \$4,300 for G&T supplies, \$33,473 for social studies civics text, \$10,000 for a proposed stipend to a school counselor for K-8 duties, and \$40,000 for a District Registrar. Board member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED 5-0-0.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell thanked all board members for the thought they put into creating the 2025-2026 over the last eight months.

Vice Chair Rothhaus explained that she wanted to reverse her vote regarding the educator nominations for the school year 2025-2026 that was taken at the April 21, 2025 meeting. She explained a procedural issue prevented her from being able to review the nomination list prior to the vote. She has since been able to review the list and she wants to support the educator nominations for the 2025-2026 school year.

MOTION: Vice Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the educator nominations for the 2025-2026 school year. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

THE MOTION CARRIED 5-0-0.

Chair Peters requested Athletic Director French be invited to a future meeting to explain the sports uniform rotation schedule and funding.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Strategic Plan Update (initial)

Chair Peters asked the Board to review the Strategic Plan Update in preparation for a presentation at the May 19th meeting.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen explained that he expected a few minor changes to the Strategic Plan Update. He will provide the Board with a copy of the final Strategic Plan Update inclusive of a glossary containing the acronyms used in document.

b. 2025-2026 School Board Assignments

The Board collectively discussed and assigned representatives and alternates to applicable school-related committees.

c. Request to Hire at Will

Chief Educational Officer Olsen requested that the School Board grant administration the authority to offer conditional contracts to candidates for professional staff openings for the 2025-2026 school year.

MOTION: Vice Chair Rothhaus moved to honor the request to hire at will all professional staff, excluding directors and principals, following the May 21 meeting. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED 5-0-0.

d. Other

Vice Chair Rothhaus announced that the high school senior class will be doing community service projects for Merrimack senior citizens during the month of May.

7. POLICIES

a. Approval of Revised Title I Parent Involvement in Education Policy (KB)

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the Revised Title I Parent Involvement in Education Policy (KB) as amended. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. April 21, 2025 Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to approve the April 21, 2025 non-public minutes. Board Member Naomi seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

9. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS AND GRANTS UNDER \$20,000

a. HealthTrust to Merrimack School District for \$1,500

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reported the \$1,500 gift from the HealthTrust would be used for worksite health and safety activities to benefit district employees.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept the \$1,500 from the HealthTrust. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- b. Anonymous Donation to Merrimack School District for \$2,000

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reported the \$2,000 would be used to replenish the homeless relief fund.

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to accept the \$2,000 from an anonymous donor. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

10. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Resignation

Chief Educational Officer Olsen announced the resignation of Angela Maslanka, from Merrimack High School.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept Angela Maslanka's resignation with regret. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0-0.

- b. Nominations

Chief Educational Officer Olsen presented the following educator nominations.

Jeffrey Frenkiewich, Social Studies Teacher, Merrimack High School
Allison McInnes, Elementary Classroom Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
Julia Perry, Special Education Teacher, James Mastriola Upper Elementary School

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept the nominations as presented. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0-0.

- c. Administrator Nominations for 2025-2026 School Year

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept the Administrator Nominations for the 2025-2026 School Year as presented. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0-0.

11. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Chair Peters reported the Search Committee for an Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum interviewed a number of candidates. She announced the search for an Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum is open and ongoing.

b. Correspondence

Board Member Hardy reported that she spoke with two parents and two staff members regarding budget reductions.

Vice Chair Rothhaus reported she received correspondence from a couple of parents regarding the budget reductions. She also redirected a parent with a concern to the correct place.

Board Member Halter received correspondence pertaining to the budget reductions. She redirected a parent with a disciplinary concern to the appropriate person.

Board Member Paepke received one correspondence regarding the budget reductions.

Chair Peters received correspondence about the budget reductions. She also received correspondence regarding a parent concern that she directed to the appropriate person. She also had a request asking for the date of graduation.

c. Comments

There were no comments to report.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were no public comments.

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 8:20 p.m. Board Member Hardy made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0-0.