

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room  
May 19, 2025**

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**5:00 p.m. – 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. 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:** Board Member Hardy, Student Representative Haddad, and 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**

There was no public participation.

**3. RECOGNITIONS**

- a. NH Seal of Biliteracy Awards

The Board recognized twenty-one high school students who earned the NH Seal of Biliteracy Award for their proficiency in two languages.

b. Robotics Team

The Board recognized the Robotics Team for winning the National FIRST Competition held in Houston, Texas. First-time accomplishments for the Robotics Team in its 31-year existence consisted of attending 5 events in one season, they were on the winning alliance on the fields in Houston, they won 7 awards (six of which were unique), and they won 5 metals. The Robotics Team thanked the school board and the community for supporting the team.

**4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES**

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen highlighted the following announcements:

- The Granite State Challenge Team won an unprecedented fifth championship. Senator Tim McGough will honor the team in Concord on May 22.
- Holy Levine received the Outstanding Band Director of the Year Award from the NH Board of Band Directors Association.
- Ten middle school students participated in the NH Music Educators Association South Central District Honor Band in Windham on May 10.
- Approximately 36 high school students and chaperones returned from week-long trip to Italy. Student behavior while on the trip was exceptional.
- Middle school students leave for a 4-day trip to Washington D.C. early Tuesday morning and return late Friday night.
- 130 high school seniors participated in senior citizens service day.
- The high school student council officers reinstated the senior citizens dinner followed by choral and musical performances for approximately 60 senior citizens.
- A lacrosse game with Spaulding will be played this Friday in honor of Morgan's Message. Morgan's Message is an initiative to deal with mental health issues associated with student athletes.
- The NH Interscholastic Athletic Association recognized ten Merrimack High School students as 3 Sport Athletes.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

There was no report.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reported the preliminary audit occurred this week. The auditors will return in August for the final audit. The Planning and Building Committee met and reviewed a very preliminary draft of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). A roof project may be postponed to address O'Gara Drive.

d. School Board Update

Chair Peters reported Advanced Placement (AP) testing occurred over the past two weeks. It is a testament to the District to have many students participating in AP testing.

Thorntons Ferry Elementary School arts night will be held on May 20 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. There will be a 4<sup>th</sup> grade chorus concert at 6:00 p.m. This is a perfect opportunity to view the hydroponic garden.

e. Student Representative Update

There was no report.

**5. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business to discuss.

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

a. Girl Scout Gold Award Project

Chair Peters introduced Student Amelia G. and Reeds Ferry Elementary School Assistant Principal Gentile.

Amelia G., a Girl Scout Ambassador of the Green and White Mountains presented plans for her Gold Award, the highest award in Girl Scouting. She explained her Gold Award will focus on current environmental issues, the amount that people carry around them, and the ways in which people have positive impacts on the environment. Her Gold Award has three parts consisting of a website, the butterfly garden and QR (Quick Response) code signs.

The location of the butterfly garden is at Reeds Ferry Elementary School. Currently the garden is overgrown and is not very usable. Her goals for the garden are to create a relaxing environment and to attract pollinators. The previous garden beds contain good plants that are very overgrown. She plans to refresh the garden, add a few more pollinator plants and add QR code signs to link to her website that will have fun quizzes and information about the plants and pollinators.

Discussion:

- She expects to complete the garden work by the end of Memorial Day weekend.
- Plants that attract pollinators are milk weeds and native plants.
- She will add cover plants to help with soil health.
- Expenses for this project are minimal. She is planning to sell crochet flowers as a fundraiser.
- Reeds Ferry School expects to maintain the garden, add additional garden beds, and enjoy the garden space.
- The QR codes will be housed on Amelia's website. She is willing to link her public website to the Reeds Ferry Elementary School webpage. It is her intent to keep the website available for public access.

**MOTION:** Vice Chair Rothhaus made a motion to support Amelia's Girl Scout Gold Award project for the butterfly garden. Seconded by Board Member Paepke.

**THE MOTION CARRIED 4-0-0.**

b. Strategic Plan Progress Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen explained the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan was being used as a planning document to implement goals and strategic initiatives that are embedded in the document.

The following members of the Leadership Team provided details about each initiative: Principal DeLuca, Principal Romein, Principal Painchaud, Principal Rheault, Principal Boezeman, Principal Claire and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan can be found on the district's website ([www.sau26.org](http://www.sau26.org)). The following is a summary of the progress as of May 19, 2025.

Focus Area #1: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Seven strategic initiatives are “in progress”, one is “complete”.

Focus Area #2: Facilities

Eleven strategic initiatives are “in progress”, two are “complete” and four “not yet started”

Focus Area #3: Culture of Wellness

Eight strategic initiatives are “in progress”, one “not yet started”

Focus Area #4: Student Outcomes

Four strategic initiatives are “in progress”, one is “not yet started”

Focus Area #5: Family and Community Engagement

Four strategic initiatives are “in progress”, three “not yet started”

Focus Area #6: Vision of a Learner and Graduate

Three strategic initiatives are “in progress”, nine “not yet started”

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted the Strategic Plan will continually be updated.

Principal Rheault added the document will never be complete.

Chair Peters suggested replacing the category “complete” with something that represents sustainability.

## **7. POLICIES**

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

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

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

## **8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. April 21, 2025 Public Minutes

**MOTION:** Board Member Paepke made a motion to approve the April 21, 2025 public minutes. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

- b. May 5, 2025 Public Minutes

**MOTION:** Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the May 5, 2025 public minutes. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

## **9. CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Educator Resignation

Chief Educational Officer Olsen announced the resignation of Jocelyn O'Connor from Merrimack Middle School.

- b. Educator Nominations

Chief Educational Officer Olsen presented the following educator nominations.

Peter Lawry, Physical Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School  
Marcie James, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School  
Sara Parrotto, School Counselor, Merrimack Middle School  
Sarah Paone, School Counselor, Reeds Ferry Elementary School  
Patrick Keefe, Language Arts Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

**MOTION:** Vice Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

**MOTION CARRIED: 4-0-0.**

## **10. OTHER**

### **a. Committee Reports**

Vice Chair Rothhaus reported Tim Groff is the new chair for the Planning and Building Committee. The committee discussed the facilities naming policy and the need to update it. The Committee reviewed the preliminary Capital Improvement Plan, discussed the voting rights of the school board liaison. Traffic changes made to the morning drop off routine at the upper elementary school have a good impact. Other refinements are being considered.

Chair Peters reported the Wellness Committee met. The committee is dividing into teams to examine USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) wellness policy and guidelines as well as the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and looking at the NH LEA (Local Educational Agency) requirements for local wellness. The committee is also reviewing the wellness policy and embedded policies. The committee will meet on the second Monday of every month.

Chair Peters reported the Budget Committee is meeting on Tuesday, May 27. Chair Peters will present the 2025-2026 budget reductions.

Board Member Paepke did not have a report on the Professional Development Committee because the meeting was canceled.

Board Member Paepke asked for points of contact for all the parent groups from each school. Chair Peters advised Board Member Paepke to contact the building principal for that information. She also suggested that Board Member Hardy and Paepke work together.

### **b. Correspondence**

Board Member Rothhaus received correspondence expressing appreciation for the senior citizen's dinner.

Chair Peters received correspondence regarding parent concerns; she redirected them to the appropriate administrator. She directed correspondence regarding clarification of parent events to the appropriate school. She also received correspondence from Student Representative Haddad with his thoughts on the strategic plan.

### **c. Comments**

Vice Chair Rothhaus highlighted her personal positive experience utilizing the Senior Service Day.

Board Member Paepke reported that the middle school parent group worked with Laura's World Fund and the student council on a student council driven project to purchase and install a refillable water bottle station. She thanked the student council for defining a need and Laura's World Fund for the purchase and installation of the refillable water bottle station.

Board Member Paepke Rachel wished the students well on their trip to Washington DC.

Chair Peters encouraged individuals to attend as many school events as your schedule will allow.

Chair Peters stated Memorial Day is a day to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

**11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no public comments on agenda items.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** At approximately 8:30 p.m. Board Member Paepke made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

**MOTION CARRIED: 4-0-0.**