

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Memorial Room
August 11, 2025**

Present: Ms. Laurie Rothhaus, Vice-Chair; Ms. Jenna Board Member Hardy, Board Member; Ms. Rachel Paepke, Board Member; and Ms. Naomi Halter, Board Member.

Not Present: Ms. Lori Chair Peters, Chair was excused from the meeting.

Also Present: Mr. Everett Olsen, Chief Educational Officer; Dr. Kathleen Scholand, One-year Interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum; and Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Vice-Chair Rothhaus called the regular meeting to order.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus 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, and adjust to civic, economic, social, and technological changes in the world. 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 were no public comments.

3. POLICY

- a. First Reading of Prohibition on Use of Student Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Communication Devices Policy

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to waive the first reading and go directly to discussion. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.

Discussion:

Vice-Chair Rothhaus explained that on June 26, 2025, through a press release, the New Hampshire School Districts, received information that Governor Kelly Ayotte had signed a law banning cell phones in all New Hampshire schools from bell to bell. She added that the school district had no discretion regarding the law and that the law was the strictest in the nation. She said it was clear that even though each school was giving the task of writing a policy, the policy had to align with state law.

Board Member Hardy said the state had not provided the schools with any leeway.

Discussion: Survey Results

Board Member Halter stated that approximately half of the respondents were in favor of the policy the way it was currently written, approximately one quarter of the respondents were opposed to any ban, and approximately one quarter of the respondents were in favor of banning devices during instructional time but wanted them to be allowed during passing periods and lunch.

Board Member Halter said any changes needed to be brought forward to the state legislature.

Board Member Paepke said the policy would be reviewed annually, and there would be opportunities in the future to tweak the policy.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that the administrators from each school would review how they would comply with the new law. She also said she felt the new policy should be included in the student handbook.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she felt it would be important to be in contact with the Student Council at the high school.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that the Bill received significant support in the legislature. He said they would revisit the law in six months. He commented that any and all emergencies would be addressed through the office and not via a student's cell phone.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the student handbook would contain the origin of the new law as well as the consequences if the law were not followed.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 6:30 p.m., Board Member Halter made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.