

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
October 2, 2023**

Present: Chair Ken Martin, Vice-Chair Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member Naomi Halter, and Board Member Jenna Hardy. Also present were Chief Educational Officer Olsen, Assistant Superintendent for Business Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle, and Student Representative Shaun Evidente.

Board Member Lori Peters participated via telephone. As such, all votes would be taken by a roll call vote.

*Board Member Peters stated that she was calling from her home, and she was alone.

5:30 p.m. – Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack TV Training Room

- Staff Welfare

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Martin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were no recognitions to share.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

- a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that there would be a professional development day the following Friday. He added that the three-year strategic planning process would begin soon. He said there were 25 members of the Strategic Planning Committee, and he expected that the process would take six or seven months to complete. He also said it was an important component for the school district to complete.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they were looking at some priority focus areas that they had identified as a leadership team at their summer retreat, and they would look at various categories in terms of how they relate and how they worked to develop the priorities in the areas of teaching and learning, school finance and resources, technology, technology infrastructure, facilities and operators, human resources and culture, student and staff wellness, school security, capital improvements, and community relations and communication, along with the continuation of a focus on a positive cultural, and several other goals. He added they would meet every week to every other week, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and the facilitator would be Mr. Mark Dolan from the New Hampshire School Board's Association.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they had a very positive meeting with the Planning & Building Committee the prior week and always appreciated their support.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that the Leadership Team would be held the following Wednesday, and they would have important training regarding two-way radios and what their capabilities were, as well as those capabilities they may not have.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that the leadership team would be meeting with the schools to discuss and schedule the budget. He said they would also engage with the staff for their input.

b. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said the professional development day on the following Friday would include iReady training for elementary schools as well as the middle school. She said they would also spend some time looking at the family reports so they could figure out which reports needed to go home to families. Additionally, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said they would engage in facilitation in what was called a "Family Data Chat."

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle shared that New Hampshire Learning Initiative (NHLI) would be return to meet with staff at the high school and middle school. She said the middle school would be doing more Professional Learning Community (PLC) driven work. The high school would be doing Professional Learning Community (PLC) work and also work on establishing competencies.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said the Social & Emotion Learning Specialist and Guidance Counselors would be doing a Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training refresher as it pertained to the Seclusion and Restraint Policy.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said that they were beginning to work on the budget for the 2024 – 2025 school year. He said they had already met with the Planning & Building Committee, where he gave them an update on the Capital Improvement Plan. He explained that the plan would include items like roofing, window replacements, and technology infrastructure, among others, for discussion. He added that they would also be looking at the locker rooms at the high school and upgrading the security system, including new locks and cameras.

d. School Board Update

Chair Martin commented that the Delegate Assembly was coming up and he would provide an update at the next meeting.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Evidente relayed a request from Finn, who wished to push the vote regarding Student Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy (JICM) to the next meeting. Chair Martin replied that the Student Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy was being reviewed at this meeting and not being voted on, so Finn was welcome to submit any comments he had to the School Board.

Student Representative Evidente said his personal opinion was that he liked the new schedule; however, Advisory did not feel like there was a very high level of engagement, but more like a study hall. He said the previous week, there was a pep rally which was well attended, as well as Spirit Week. He added he felt the Homecoming was successful.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Directory Information

Chief Educational Officer Olsen explained that under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and in compliance with New Hampshire RSA-189:1(e), the district was responsible for informing parents every year that there are certain types of student information, called Directory Information that was articulated in the FERPA and the New Hampshire RSA that they were able to disclose to third parties, whether it be tutoring educational companies, a company that sells class rings, or merchandise, college recruiters, military recruiters, and from attorneys. He added requests for information regarding students were quite minimal, i.e., once or twice a year.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said if parents wished not to have any of their students' information (not student I.D. numbers or social security numbers), they would have to let them know annually that they did not wish their students information disclosed.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he had sent out a communication that included an email address that parents could use to opt out of disclosing their student's information.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Planning and Building Committee Meeting Update

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said the Chair of the Planning & Building Committee, Mr. Rich Hendricks, was very appreciative of the School Board moving forward with the proposed new Merrimack School District SAU office on-campus on the Brentwood site. She said they discussed parking lots and whether there would be enough parking and the size of the conference room.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus stated that they collectively had some safety concerns regarding the current SAU building. She said it was not ADA-compliant and entirely too small, but they agreed with the proposed plan.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell pointed out that there were several violations in the SAU building, including not having a second egress in the basement. He said the proposed design was approximately 11,000 square feet and he was getting bids from four companies.

Board Member Halter mentioned that there was a lack of conference space in the current SAU building.

Chair Martin pointed out that the project should have been done many years ago, and because the middle school was paid off, they would be able to bond the project, which would not affect the tax rate.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus noted that the Planning & Building Committee voted 5 – 0 – 0 in favor of proceeding with the project.

7. POLICIES

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said that he felt the School Board should not hold up voting on any policies based on one student's wish to share their thoughts. He said he felt the student should first address their opinions with Mr. Claire, Principal of Merrimack High School (or any other principal of any other school), and if that principal felt it should rise to the level of the School Board, then they could further discuss it.

- a. Student Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy (JICM) - (2nd Reading/Adoption)

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the Student Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy (JICM), as presented. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Board Member Halter, Board Member Hardy, 5
Vice-Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Peters, and Chair Martin

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that the Student Dress Code Policy (JICA) and the Student Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy (JICM) had been vetted by legal counsel.

- b. Student Dress Code Policy (JICA) - (2nd Reading/Adoption)

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the Student Dress Code Policy (JICA), as presented. Chair Martin seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that she felt it was very important that the policy was written very clearly. She made some suggested edits.

Board Member Hardy mentioned that legal counsel had vetted the language and was comfortable with the verbiage.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen suggested that they hold off on approving the policy so that he could review the suggested modifications with the leadership team.

Board Member Hardy said that she did not feel it was possible to write a School Board policy as the dress code would be very different for each age group.

Board Member Halter asked where the language in the policy came from. Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied that the language in the policy came from a committee that Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle convened that consisted of administrators who looked at a number of policies from around the country.

Board Member Peters stated that they had a district policy, but what was written in the handbook was legally binding, and it needed to be specific. She said if a situation occurred that rose to the level of going to court, it would be both the policy and the school's handbook.

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to table policy (JICA) Student Dress Code to a future meeting. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Board Member Halter, Board Member Hardy, 5
Vice-Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Peters, and Chair Martin

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

c. Suicide Prevention and Response Policy (JLDBB) - (2nd Reading/Adoption)

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve Suicide Prevention and Response Policy (JLDBB). Board Member Hardy seconded the motion as presented.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Board Member Halter, Board Member Hardy, 5
Vice-Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Peters, and Chair Martin

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

d. Use of Physical Restraint/Seclusion Policy (JKAA) - (2nd Reading)

After some discussion and suggested edits by members of the Board, the following motion was made.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that once the revisions were incorporated into the policy, he would have legal counsel review it again to ensure that nothing that was subsequently inserted made any material change to the policy such that it might be out of compliance with any statute.

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to table Use of Physical Restraint/Seclusion Policy (JKAA) to a future meeting. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Board Member Halter, Board Member Hardy, 5
Vice-Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Peters, and Chair Martin

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. September 11, 2023, Public and Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to approve the September 11, 2023, public and non-public minutes, as amended. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

Edits:

Line 182: "Town Counsel" was changed to "Legal Counsel" – Board Member Halter.

Line 227: "Fits" was changed to "Gifts" – Board Member Halter.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Board Member Halter, Board Member Hardy, 5
Vice-Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Peters, and Chair Martin

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- a. September 18, 2023, Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to approve the September 18, 2023, public minutes, as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Board Member Halter, Board Member Hardy, 5
Vice-Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Peters, and Chair Martin

Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

9. CONSENT AGENDA

There were no educator resignations or educator nominations for the Board to consider.

10. OTHER

- a. Committee Reports

Board Member Halter said she attended the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting on September 20th and noted the following:

- Childcare would be available on Monday, October 9, 2023, all day long at Wasserman Park.
- 22 kids from the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School were enrolled in the afterschool program at the function room at Wasserman Park. They were hoping to expand the program to other schools.

- Maintenance and landscaping help were needed.
- The Naticook Challenge 5K will be held on October 14th.
- The Halloween party will be held on Saturday, October 28th.

Board Member Peters commented that the Joint Loss Management Committee had met on September 19th, and they were in the formation stage of getting the draft policies for safety inspections of each building. She added that they already had 27 claims since the beginning of the school year, which was a lot.

Board Member Peters shared that she and Vice-Chair Rothhaus had met with the management team, met with the representatives of the MESSA contract, and had set dates for future meetings.

b. Correspondence

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that she received correspondence regarding the scoreboard at the high school and one about Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) and the laws regarding seclusion.

Board Member Peters shared that a parent had contacted her about concerns regarding emergency vehicles at a school, as there was a held incident at one of the schools, and they misunderstood the policies surrounding it, and she communicated the correct policies to the parent.

c. Comments

There were none.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Justin Slez, 5 Colonial Drive, addressed the Board and said he felt for legal purposes, Board Member Peters needed to state where she was calling from and if there was anyone else in the room with her. (**Board Member Peters stated that she was calling from her home, and she was alone.)

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 7:12 p.m., Board Member Hardy made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0