

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
November 6, 2023**

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

- Staff Welfare

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

Not Present:

Board Member Jenna Hardy (Excused)

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

Chief Educational Officer Olsen congratulated those students who were accepted into the “Jazz All-State Festival”.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that they had a program review of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that there would be an early release day on the following Thursday. He thanked all of the Veterans for their service in honor of Veteran’s Day.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that they had an excellent first Strategic Plan Committee meeting and another meeting would be held on the following Wednesday evening from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the library at the Merrimack High School. He said the 2024-2025 budget listening sessions with the staff had been completed.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the district had been very active in school safety training and thanked Detective William Vandersyde from the Merrimack Police Department for coordinating the activities.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen also thanked the students from the Technical Education students at the Merrimack Middle School as they had completed their “dragster races.” He added that the Drama Club at the Merrimack Middle School would hold a production of “The Bugs” which would be performed on November 17th and 18th.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said there were approximately 100 attendees at the Title 1 open house at the James Mastricola Elementary School. He also said the Creative Cooking class at the high school would be cooking and donating 100 loaves of pumpkin bread to the Saint James Food Pantry for their Thanksgiving baskets.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the students at the middle school had also organized a card drive for students to thank Veterans and active service members. He said the cards would be sent to the “Thanks a Million” organization.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the James Mastricola Elementary School, as a whole, had participated in an exercise that aligned with the Responsive Classroom program where students and staff talked about expectations for appropriate behavior in support of each other.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said that the Quiz Bowl team from Merrimack High School had competed for a place in the statewide tournament, and the team won the tournament and would move on to the statewide tournament. He also said the Merrimack Middle School’s girls’ soccer team had won the Tri-County Association Championship. He said Zoe Coler, a 7th grade student won the New Hampshire Middle School Cross-Country Championship, noting that it was the first time that a female athlete had won the race from the Merrimack Middle School, and Melanie Bedard, a high school student, had qualified for the third year to compete in the New Hampshire Cross-Country Meet of Champions.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen read aloud a letter from Ms. Rebecca Lessard, a 3rd-grade teacher at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, as summarized below:

“I wanted to share how AMAZING the Mystery Science lessons have been for my students. I’ve had 100% engagement for each and every lesson completed, and our conversations have been so rich and thoughtful. Each lesson contains thoughtful talking points and allows for students to demonstrate their learning in different ways. At our team meetings, our whole team has shared similar experiences. This was an excellent purchase, and the commitment that our district made to help ensure consistency of teaching and learning across the elementary schools. It doesn’t get any better than that.”

b. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said they had an onsite visit from the Department of Education (DOE) earlier that day. She said they came to look through all of their federal title grants. She said they already had a report from the DOE, and they were looking forward to responding to the report.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle commented that the i-Ready webinar was a big success, with over 125 people registering for the webinar.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle congratulated Ms. Sara Parrotto, Director of Wellness, for successfully securing a second round of funding under the “Promising New

Futures” grant for the district, and she noted the funds would go mostly to the middle school to work on restorative practices.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said there would be an early release the following Thursday when staff would be completing a mix of mandatory and recommended training on a variety of health topics.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the proposed budgets from the individual schools were coming in following meetings and discussions.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the fire department would perform a walk-through at the high school for inspection purposes. He said they would also inspect the central office and special services. He added that he would share the results of the inspection with the Board when he received them. He thanked Fire Marshal John Manuele and wished him well in his retirement.

d. School Board Update

Chair Martin also acknowledged and thanked all the Veterans.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Evidente shared that the students recently won an event called “Battle of the Bowls”.

Student Representative Evidente said the new schedule at the high school rendered him having to have the last lunch, and it was quite horrendous.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Central Office Building Discussion

Mr. Rich Hendricks, Chair of the Planning & Building Committee, was present to participate in the discussion. He said other members of the committee included Shayne Albuquerque, Michael Alukonis, Tim Groff, Finlay Rothhaus, Vice-Chair Gage Perry and School Board Vice-Chair Laurie Rothhaus. He shared how the Planning & Building Committee would like to see how the Central Office Building might be proposed. He said the Planning & Building Committee had given the School Board a firm recommendation to pursue the new building at its September 25th meeting and to have it voted on in April of 2024.

Mr. Hendricks said the current building was not safe, appropriate security, the ability to have confidential conversations, and a lack of meeting space. He noted the new building would have meeting space and would be made available to the public. He said the safety of the employees could no longer be ignored. He also noted that the conversation regarding the new building had been going on since 2010.

Mr. Hendricks explained that the project was placed on the ballot in April of 2013, and because the project would require a bond, it required a 60% approval, and it only got 52%. He said it was never put on the ballot again. He added that the proposed project had remained on the capital improvement plan for many years and had always been put off.

Mr. Hendricks explained that the Planning & Building Committee would like to try to help the School Board present the proposed project to the voters. He said after the vote in 2013; it was the committee's feeling that too much was expected of the committee to give presentations to the public regarding why the new building was needed. He said they would like to start by creating some videos showing the voters the condition of the building.

Board Member Peters said she agreed that the onus should not be placed on the Planning & Building Committee, but both the committee and the School Board should be involved. She said the School Board was committed to the proposed project.

Mr. Hendricks stated that the building was not ADA compliant and there was a severe problem with mold in the student services building.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus noted that many, if not all, of the same issues discussed at this meeting were discussed ten years prior. She also said that the number one concern was safety; she noted there was only one egress from the basement. Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she felt it was beyond the time that the issue needed to be discussed with the public, and the School Board was 100% in favor of the project and more than willing to work with the Planning & Building Committee.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they wanted a safe, functional, and useful building. He added that one of the things that the taxpayer needed to remember was that they had debt service and debt retirement associated with the middle school that was expiring so they could fit the cost of the principal and interest associated with the proposed building within, and perhaps less, than the current appropriations so there would be no incremental increase beyond that.

Board Member Peters stated that: **“this will not raise your tax bill from what the taxpayers were already paying.”** Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied that was absolutely correct.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Two Memos of Understanding between the Merrimack School District and the Merrimack Teacher's Association
 - o Long-Term Substitute Positions with Certified Staff

Board Member Peters said prior to the contract negotiation for the MTA; they recognized that the shortage of substitute teachers due to COVID-19 needed to be addressed. She said they had teachers covering classes without extra pay, so they had decided to pay \$40.00 per class for those types of situations. She also stated that the concern was that when they had long-term substitutes, they had certified teachers who were taking on more than just covering a class for a day but were taking on the lesson prep, grading, etc. Board Member Peters said in this situation, it was decided that they deserved 1/5 of their daily rate of pay. She said the Memorandum of Understanding would include language that stated that if it was more than 15 consecutive school days, they would be issued a Notice of Special Agreement and would receive additional compensation.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to accept the Memorandum of Agreement for the Merrimack Teacher's Association regarding the substitute pay. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.

- Certain Retirement Incentives for Eligible Teachers

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said there would be a formal application process for teachers who were going to apply for the retirement incentive. She noted that they would have to do it by November 15th.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement for the Merrimack Teacher's Association regarding retirement incentives for eligible teachers. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.

- b. School Board 2024 – 2025 Budget Meeting Dates

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the School Board had the meeting dates included in their packets. He said the meetings would begin on December 4, 2023, and would end with the Deliberative Session in March.

- c. Security Action for Education (SAFE) Grant Application for 2023

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the above was an application for safety and security measures that the district could apply for provided by the Department of Education. He said the district had applied for \$388,000. He also said it would likely take a couple of months to find out if the award would be what they applied for.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said there were three job descriptions for the Board to review and noted that she would ask them to vote on them at a future meeting.

- d. Review of Principal Job Description

- e. Review of Assistant Principal Job Description

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that she did not feel a minimum of three years working as a certified teacher was enough experience. She further commented that she felt it could take up to ten years before one fully grew and understood the art and science of teaching.

Chair Martin agreed that the minimum number of years as a certified teacher for the Assistant Principal job description should be five years.

- f. Review of Principal Job Description (High School Only)

- g. Grade Level Reorganization Study

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said about 1 ½ years prior, he had presented the Board with a report on residential development. He said at the time, they were looking at the construction of approximately 70 housing units in the James Masticola district, 161 in the

Thorntons Ferry district, and 110 in the Reeds Ferry district. He further said that those developments would continue to have an impact on the enrollment number. Chief Educational Officer Olsen said at present, both Thorntons Ferry and Reeds Ferry were stressed in terms of the number of students in relation to the available space, so they would have to look at some alternatives to ensure that every student had the appropriate amount of space. He said he was not talking about redistricting, but he was looking at putting a study committee to look at the possibility of some grade-level reorganization. He also said it would allow students to stay in their current school districts but perhaps reconfigure what grades existed in the respective elementary and middle schools. He said they would present a report to the School Board by the end of the year but pointed out that any action would not be in effect until the 2025 – 2026 school year.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that she felt it was an excellent idea that was transparent, and research-based.

h. Update on the Strategic Plan

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they had recently held their first Strategic Plan Committee meeting, where they had a very lively conversation. He added that Mr. Mark Dolan of the New Hampshire School Board's Association had done an excellent job at facilitating the meeting.

i. Fiscal Impact of Residential Development

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he had been contacted a few weeks ago by a company that was based both in Portsmouth, NH and in New York. He said the company's name was Urbanomics, Inc. He added that the State of New Hampshire had contracted with Urbanomics, Inc. to do a study of the fiscal impact of various types of residential developments on school and municipal budgets. He said it would also help the district understand the impact on enrollments. Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he agreed to participate in the study along with 20 to 25 other communities in NH.

7. POLICIES

Chief Educational Officer Olsen explained that he had reviewed the below policies with Ms. Sarah Reinhardt, the Director of Student Services. He also said he felt they were all very important and necessary. He noted that all three policies would ensure that the district was in compliance with all IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and the New Hampshire Special Education Standards.

- a. First Reading of Evaluation Requirements for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities (IHBAA)
- b. First Reading of Special Education Evaluations (IHBAB)
- c. First Reading of Evaluation Requirements for Children with Developmental Delays (IHBDA)

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to waive the first reading of the above three stated policies. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. October 16, 2023, Public and Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve the public and non-public minutes of October 16, 2023, as presented. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 3 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Halter)

- b. October 23, 2023, Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to approve the October 23, 2023, non-public minutes, as presented. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.

9. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Educator Resignation

- Ms. Kimberly Morgan, 7th-grade Science Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

10. OTHER

- a. Committee Reports

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she had attended the Planning & Building Committee meeting where Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell provided them with a tour of the current SAU building. She said they also had a planning session on how to go about rolling out the new building. She also said the School Board had immense confidence in the Planning & Building Committee.

Board Member Halter commented that she attended a Budget Committee meeting on October 17th, where they discussed the budget schedule and process.

Board Member Halter also commented that she had attended a Parks & Recreation Committee meeting where they discussed their budget process, and the slides at Kid's Kove had been fixed. She also said the afterschool kids' program at Naticook for Thorntons Ferry Elementary students was being extended to the students at the James Masticola Elementary School.

Chair Martin commented that he attended the Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Committee meeting, where they discussed curriculum updates and what the needs were.

Chair Martin also commented that a Professional Development Committee meeting would be held the following Wednesday.

- b. Correspondence

Chair Martin said that he received emails from some people concerning teachers and students, and he sent them up the appropriate chain of command.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she had received two pieces of correspondence, which she forwarded to the Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell. She also said the other one was from Ed Garrity, who graduated from Merrimack High School in 1980, and he was

a national speaker and author. She said he had sent her a copy of his new book, which was about inspiration, leadership, and finding your way in the world. She said the book was titled "*Shine Your Light*."

c. Comments

Board Member Peters thanked all Veterans who had served and who were currently serving in the armed forces.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 7:30 p.m., Board Member Halter made a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.