

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room  
January 6, 2014  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Ortega, Vice Chairman Powell, Board Members Barnes, Markwell and Schneider, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell. Student Representative Crowley was excused from the meeting.

**1. Call To Order**

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Approval of the December 16, 2013 Minutes**

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2013 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 11 of 12, section 9, Comments section, correct the spelling of Finlay.
- Page 12 of 12, paragraph 2, following the sentence “A second bridge is being.....contractors,” add “leaving access to the Merrimack Middle School following the guidelines of the Memo of Understanding”.

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 5 of 12, section 6, paragraph 2, add Shevenell after Business Administrator.
- Pages 8 through 11, starting with paragraph 2 in section 7, change all “Capital Reserve Fund” to “Trust Fund”.
- Page 9 of 12, first paragraph, fourth sentence should be “Legislature”.
- Page 11 of 12, paragraph 2, add “at a future meeting” at the end of the sentence.

The motion to accept the minutes of the December 16, 2013 meeting as amended passed 5-0-0.

**3. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**4. Acceptance of Gifts/Grants under \$5,000**

Business Administrator Shevenell presented a gift from Raytheon to FIRST Robotics Team at Merrimack High School for \$1,500 to defray expenses.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to accept the generous gift from Raytheon for \$1,500 for the FIRST Robotics Team.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## 5. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following names for approval:

a) Teacher Nominations

- Caitlin Johnston, Grade 3 Teacher at Mastricola Elementary School

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## 6. Formal Hearing on Library/Media/Technology Budget for 2014-2015

Nancy Rose, Director of Technology and Library Media Services, gave a brief overview of the Library/Media/Technology budget which is in the second year of the Capital Improvement Plan for Technology. She noted that there is not a lot of change. She explained that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for technology infrastructure will continue to provide ongoing improvements across the spectrum of technology service including software consolidation, network access, phone system upgrades, classroom presentation systems and ongoing replacement of computing devices that serve or are used by staff and students.

Board Member Barnes asked about the budget for Additional Equipment/Library, especially regarding SMART Boards.

Ms. Rose clarified that they do not actually use SMART technology, which is a brand name. They do use Mimeos, which is also a brand name. She added that about 30% of the district has access to the equipment for all the students in the district. There is additional funding in addition to the budgeted amount from parent groups and Professional Development special projects funding.

Board Member Barnes asked if there are benefits to standardization.

Ms. Rose responded that they take advantage of specials. Huge volume discounts are not available.

Chairman Ortega asked if there will be full coverage for the district at the end of the five-year plan.

Ms. Rose responded that technology changes so fast, it is hard to determine what technology will be in five years. The goal is to keep up with the changes in technology.

Board Member Barnes asked about the Property/Library line.

Ms. Rose explained each of the items in this line item.

- Network cabling is largely focused on supporting the expanded wireless coverage and the VoIP phones project.
- Network switches are required to support the VoIP phones.
- Per-server costs are lower than anticipated.
- Expanded WiFi coverage is integral to increasing the use of mobile technology. Every building is moving forward.

- The budgeted amount for expanding/updating computers is based on a projection for leasing computers with an end of lease dollar (\$1) buyout.
- The 2014-15 budget year will be the third year of the plan to replace televisions in instructional space with data projectors.
- Continued implementation of VoIP phone service will ensure continuously moving towards a unified phone system.
- Network/Cable contracting is due to the fact that the district has limited capacity for technology implementations.

Board Member Schneider asked about the budget for Binding of Books.

Ms. Rose responded that this \$1,500 is to provide rebinding books when the binding has worn out, especially when a title is used but no longer in print. The money is also used to identify and bind highest-use materials that are difficult or prohibitive to replace. She added that they do not rebind something if it can be replaced at a good price.

Board Member Schneider asked about Books and Periodicals. He noted that it seems the amounts decrease with the implementation of technology.

Ms. Rose responded that they have been looking at what is high use, what is not available online and what is high interest reading, which is sometimes the only reading that some students do. It is not a tremendous amount of investment.

Board Member Schneider spoke about “the cloud”. He felt that, as a district, there are concerns about privacy and he has a grave concern about data being stored outside the district.

Chairman Ortega presented the question from Budget Committee Vice Chairman Gary Krupp. He asked about the Instructional Equipment Repairs/AV/Library items that were not included in the budget book.

Ms. Rose responded that this line item had inadvertently been left out of the budget book. She added that these funds are used to pay for repairs of audio visual equipment such as data projectors and overhead projectors and DVD/VHS players and to cover the service contracts for laminators.

Chairman Ortega presented the question from Budget Committee member Rick Barnes. He asked how many iPads or other mobile devices are in use in the district. He also asked if the staff is encouraged to bring their own devices and if so, what the liability is.

Ms. Rose responded that the WiFi expansion budgeted amount is a little less this year than last year. She added that there are about one hundred fifty iPads in use now, twenty-eight laptops in the middle school, and ACER tablets in the upper elementary school. There are a total of about two hundred of those kinds of devices. She added that the staff is not encouraged to bring their own devices, but if they do, there is no liability coverage.

Chairman Ortega asked in terms of the CIP plan, and contracted technology, \$3,000 does not buy a lot of contracted services. He asked if that line item is adequate.

Ms. Rose responded that ideally it would be more, but she was trying to do what is doable without going overboard and to present a level-funded budget.

Chairman Ortega stated that it has taken a lot of time to get where we are with technology. One of the changes is that there is a consolidated budget for technology instead of each school having a separate technology budget.

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that he and Ms. Rose spent time with the Student Congress at the high school to discuss the use of technology in the school. It was very invigorating for him to hear exactly what the students are saying.

## **7. Formal Hearing on Special Services Budget for 2014-2015**

John Fabrizio, Director of Special Services, explained that the accounts in his budget are essentially child specific and contain costs for existing students in their current placement with related services and special transportation as determined by federal law and state rules and regulations. He added that the budget reflects an increase of approximately 2.9 percent, which is due to a slight increase in the out-of-district placement costs due to higher tuition rates and a 4 percent increase in contractual transportation costs. He added that an increase in the additional equipment line includes the purchase of a split system air conditioning unit to maintain climate control for medically impacted student with respiratory issues. Last year there were six hundred eighty-five students in the program and this year there are six hundred eighty students.

Board Member Schneider asked where the split system air conditioning unit will be installed.

Director Fabrizio responded that presently the plan is for the pre-school program at the James Masticola Elementary School to receive this unit. There will probably be the need for similar units in other schools in the future.

Board Member Schneider asked about “The Merrimack Special Education Collaboration”.

Director Fabrizio responded that Merrimack Special Education Collaboration is the name of the place the children are sent when they are placed out-of-district. The name has changed over the years.

Board Member Schneider asked if the number of students placed out-of-district is similar to the number in past years. He also asked if students return to the district once they have been placed outside the district.

Director Fabrizio responded that for the most part the numbers are the same. He added that some students have half-time placement and come back to the district for other schooling. They are trying to do more of the half-time placement. He explained that the goal is to keep the students local. This year there are fewer students placed out-of-district.

Board Member Barnes questioned the salaries for testing over the summer.

Director Fabrizio responded that the funds are used for special education testing to be administered during the summer to elementary and upper elementary students, middle school students and high school students. Testing is conducted by educational, speech/language and occupational therapy specialist. They also assist in finishing the placement process within the required timelines under the New Hampshire Standards for the Education of Students with Disabilities.

Chairman Ortega referred to the questions asked by Budget Committee Vice Chairman Gary Krupp which focus on salary related accounts that are not listed in the departmental summary totaling 4.1 million dollars.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that the salary information is shown in summary in the budget. Details are in the personnel sheets. He added that this is how it has been done for the last thirty-one years. They are not broken out separately because it is too cumbersome.

## **8. Attorney's Response to Board Request Regarding Tennis Court Easement**

At the December 16, 2013 meeting, Board Member Barnes requested that the current agreement between the district and the town concerning the O'Gara Drive tennis courts be reviewed in terms of responsibility for the upkeep of the property.

Chairman Ortega highlighted portions of the Options for Recreational Facilities Easement to the Town of Merrimack sent to the Superintendent from the district's legal counsel.

Vice Chairman Powell asked for clarification. The agreement with the Town was formalized in 1973 for the long-term recreational easement on O'Gara Drive. He suggested that the Land and Water Conservation Commission (LWCC) be contacted and bring it to their attention that the town violated the agreement by not maintaining the property. This will force the town to have the tennis courts replaced. It would save transportation costs for the tennis team as well as satisfying safety concerns to keep them on site.

Board Member Barnes stated that this subject has been discussed many times with the Town Council. It has constantly been brought up by the Parks and Recreation Committee. She added that it is not an option to turn the area into a parking lot and it is not an option to get out of the agreement, which expires in 2018. She added that the town has flexibility in their budget and responsibility in their agreement. She thinks the town should be made aware that we have received a legal opinion.

Board Member Schneider stated that he was unaware that the town received funds to maintain the tennis courts by terms of the agreement in 2001. He agreed that the attorney's rendering should be shared with the Town Council.

Chairman Ortega agreed with the approach to share the legal opinion with the Town Council. Whatever is done, the district has to work with the Town. This is an opportunity for the two parties to come together on this issue. He will share this information with Finlay Rothhaus, Town Council Chair.

Board Member Markwell stated that there is no doubt the property is to be maintained by the town. He felt bad that money had to be spent to get an opinion from counsel to learn what was already known.

## **9. Dissemination of NESDEC's Proposal for a School Facilities Best Use Study for the Merrimack School District**

Superintendent Chiafery spoke about the background of NESDEC (New England School Development Council) performing a School Facilities Best Use Study relative to the consolidation of the SPED/SAU offices. She spoke with Dr. Art Bettencourt, Executive Director of NESDEC. She added that the Planning and Building Committee has done a stupendous job in the past years relative to this effort.

NESDEC works with school districts in the six New England states and does this kind of work as part of its purpose. She told Dr. Bettencourt the school may be interested in doing a spacialization study for the purpose of doing consolidated offices by looking at future demographic trends to try and determine if this entity could be made a part of any of the existing school buildings or be free-standing. On Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup> the board will be hearing the Central Office's budget and there is a line item for this expenditure. She wanted the board to look at the proposal prior to that meeting. She noted that a Budget Committee member has asked some questions about this line item. These questions will be addressed at the January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

She added that there is definitely a difference in what is normally done with demographic projections. It is really two things: a definition of space - what does the district currently own and what are demographic trends for the future. Perhaps they would see something that hasn't been seen before. The following data is given to NESDEC annually.

- The October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollments for Pre-K through grade 12
- The home schooling numbers for grades K-12
- The numbers of students in charter/magnet schools
- The number of special education out-placed students
- The number of "choiced-in" students, who are those students who come from another town and is paying tuition to come to Merrimack

The proposed study would be more extensive, trying to get a sense of the area. The cost of \$15,228.00 is predicated on them coming here, looking at the buildings, doing interviews and reviews of documents which are much more extensive than the questions that are asked on an annual basis.

Tonight was to share the initial proposal with the board and to hear their responses.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that it seems very beneficial to us and the Planning and Building Committee to have a neutral group objectively look at the facilities and whether or not the consolidation would work.

Superintendent Chiafery added that the persons who would be doing the study are educators, so they are not entirely neutral. The NESDEC has been doing these projects for over 40 years in six states. Their goal is to give answers to the questions that are posed.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that what he meant by neutral was people who were outside of Merrimack and outside the district.

Superintendent Chiafery went to NESDEC because the district because of the affiliation and because they service six states.

Board Member Markwell stated that one of the questions asked by the Planning and Building Committee was about the actual space being used. He added that it is not acceptable to put the SAU/SPED offices into existing school buildings nor is it acceptable to put money into the existing blue and green buildings. Also, he would like to see if there is a competing entity that does this work that could submit a proposal.

Board Member Barnes stated that she is pleased that educators will be conducting the survey. She asked what scope of retrofitting would be required if they repurpose any space, and if so, would there be architectural support as part of the study.

Board Member Schneider stated that we may not want to use their specific recommendations, but the data would be very valuable. We need the data behind their recommendations.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she hoped there would be discussion with NESDEC where the board could ask them specifically what they are going to do. She added that if the board does not want the study done this way, it does not have to be done. She will do more investigation. The School Board Association and the New Hampshire School Administrators Association also do studies which are New Hampshire based alone. She was going with NESDEC because it has a larger scope. Beyond those three entities, she does not know who else does these studies.

Chairman Ortega stated that all the points being made were all consistent with points he had considered. He suggests that he, the Planning and Building liaison, and the chair of Planning and Building Committee meet to discuss the proposal and some of the board's feedback.

Board Member Markwell asked if we have a building-by-building "map" of the rooms and the number of students in each room.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that there is a "map" for each school which shows the square footage of the rooms and how many students are in the rooms during specific times and periods. It is more difficult to make these maps in the upper elementary school and the high school. The maps that are available have not been updated for a couple of years.

Board Member Markwell stated that the Planning and Building Committee had several questions, including: the size of the rooms, the number of children in each room and the number of rooms in each school. He would like to see those numbers updated. Perhaps another company would look at things differently and give us different information and perhaps it would even cost less.

## **10. Response to Proposed New Hampshire Board Association (NHBA) Resolutions**

Board Member Barnes will attend the NHSBA Delegate Assembly on Saturday, January 11, 2014.

Chairman Ortega asked if anyone on the board took exception to any of the resolutions put forward as recommendations of the NHSBA.

Vice Chairman Powell asked about Labor Relations, Evergreen Clause. After discussion it was determined that there is a change in language, not in the clause itself.

Vice Chairman Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) for Board Member Barnes to vote in favor of the proposed resolutions as presented by the NHSBA.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## **11. School Board Budget Hearing Schedule**

Chairman Ortega reviewed that the board has been through two sets of budget hearings: Food Services and Maintenance on December 16<sup>th</sup> and Special Services and Technology and Library Media Services on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

On January 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. the meeting at the high school cafeteria will discuss the upper elementary school, the middle school and the high school. There is also a place holder for any follow-up discussions on budgets previously presented. At this time there is no need for follow-up.

On January 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. the meeting at the high school cafeteria will discuss Reeds Ferry Elementary, Masticola Elementary, and Thorntons Ferry Elementary Schools and the Central Office. Time will be allotted for extra follow-up.

On January 21st, at the regularly scheduled board meeting at the Town Hall Meeting room, the budget will come before the board for approval. The warrant articles will also be discussed. Then the budget will be turned over to the Budget Committee. They do not need the warrant articles until February 3, 2014.

Board Member Schneider stated that he would like to discuss the Trust Fund issue at the January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Chairman Ortega stated that by the end of the January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, more than half of the departments would have gone over their budgets. At that point he would like to get a sense of the board if there is any direction back to the administration.

## **12. Other**

### a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega noted that an email was received from a budget committee member with questions regarding Special Services and Technology and Library Services.

### b) Comments

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin spoke about the Unified Sports Course (USC). He thanked the students who attended the December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting for expressing their views. He explained that the USC was offered in the 2013-14 school year. However, the department chair chose not to run the course. It is part of the program of studies this year and it will, again, be up to the department chair whether or not to run the course. Since 2005-06 the course has been offered and run on alternate years. It is a viable course and will continue to be offered in the future.

Vice Chairman Powell asked that if there were sixteen students who requested to take the course, why it was not run.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that perhaps there were more students who opted for a different course and so it was not run.

Board Member Barnes stated that perhaps this could be offered as independent study.

Board Member Schneider asked if the course could be run if there was additional staff to run it.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that he did not know.

Chairman Ortega publically recognized that the two police officers, Officer Mike Murray and Officer Tom Prentice, who work in the school buildings, were both promoted to Detectives. He congratulated them on behalf of the district.



### **13. New Business**

There was no new business.

### **14. Committee Reports**

Board Member Barnes reported on the Grater Woods Sub-Committee. A second bridge was created by a contractor and put in place by volunteers. The key to the success of this project was access to the middle school facilities during winter vacation.

Vice Chairman Powell reported that the Teacher Evaluation Committee meeting on December 17<sup>th</sup> was cancelled due to inclement weather. It will be held on January 9, 2014.

Chairman Ortega reported that the Town Center Committee did not have a December meeting. They will meet on January 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **15. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments.

### **16. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:45 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.