

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
January 19, 2010
Merrimack High School**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Vaillancourt, Vice Chair Thornton, Board members Swonger and Coburn, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell and Student Representative Ortega.

1. Call To Order

Chair Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of January 4, 2010 Minutes

Board member Coburn moved (seconded by Board member Swonger) to approve the January 4, 2010 minutes.

Board member Coburn requested the following changes to the January 4, 2010 minutes.

- Page 2 of 8, item 3, first paragraph, second sentence “conscious” should be changed to ‘cautious”
- Page 3 of 8, 2nd paragraph, last sentence “eliminating” should be changed to “eliminate”
- Page 3 of 8, item 6, second paragraph, 5th sentence should be changed to read “She reviewed the ratios at Reeds Ferry Elementary School (RFS) and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School (TFS) and concluded that the elementary schools were a mixed bag. She felt that if that was what we were using as our projections and we were talking about making drastic cuts at Merrimack Middle School (MMS), we will have to start thinking about adding teachers back as this bubble rises and the students move up.”
- Page 3 of 8, item 6, 2nd paragraph, 2nd to last sentence, “January” should be changed to “December”
- Page 4 of 8, first paragraph, first sentence “world history” should be changed to “social studies”
- Page 4 of 8, first paragraph 2nd sentence, “...feel that she...” should read “...feel that, as a teacher, she...”
- Page 4 of 8, 3rd paragraph, first sentence “...additions that...” should read “...additions to personnel that...”
- Page 4 of 8, 3rd paragraph, last sentence, replace commas with semicolons.
- Page 4 of 8, 5th paragraph, 2nd sentence should be changed to read “She pointed out that the budget at its highest, at \$883,939 below default, was rejected by the voters. She noted that this year we were asking for a budget that was \$1,286,053 below default.”

Vice Chair Thornton requested the following change to the January 4, 2010 minutes.

- Page 7 of 8, item 9, 2nd paragraph “...additional volunteer personnel...” should read “...additional personnel...”

Chair Vaillancourt requested the following changes to the January 4, 2010 minutes.

- Page 3 of 8, 8th paragraph, she requested a review of the tape for accuracy
- Page 7 of 8, item 9, 3rd paragraph “...no action...” should be changed to “...no Board action...”
- Page 7 of 8, item 11, 2nd sentence “February” should be changed to “January”

The motion passed as amended 4-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Consent Agenda

- Teacher Nomination
 - Carolyn Morin, Grade 1 teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary

Board member Swonger moved (seconded by Vice Chair Thornton) to approve the Consent Agenda.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. Update on January 18th Professional Development Day

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin discussed the Professional Development Day that was held on Monday, January 18th. He reported that the high school group worked on NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) Accreditation preparations; the middle school worked on a self assessment and identifying areas for improvement with Nancy Gerzon, Sr. Research Associate, and Nick Hardy, Sr. Program Associate, from WestEd; the elementary schools saw a presentation by Susan Blackburn, National Scholar, regarding student motivation and ways to enhance rigor. He announced that Ms. Blackburn requested permission to use the District's Position Statement, developed by PERC (Program Evaluation and Review Committee), in her next book.

Board member Coburn felt that it was invigorating to have a renowned author and scholar speak to our educators. She felt the day was an overall success and the teachers received good, hands-on, information. She noted that the middle school discussions surrounded an Executive Summary that was prepared by the National Association of Secondary School Principals: *Breaking ranks in the middle. Strategies for leading middle school reform*. She noted that the Summary recommended that each teacher be responsible for no more than 90 students. She added that with this year's budget cuts, the teachers were being asked to do much more than that and have over 100 students. She noted that she was not at the middle school workshop but the fact that teachers forwarded this information to her with points of contention was disarming.

It was noted that Mr. McLaughlin did not receive the same input from teachers that Board member Coburn received. Chairman Vaillancourt asked Board member Coburn to provide Mr. McLaughlin with that information so that that administration could have the same information that she received.

Board member Swonger asked if there was any role for the Board to play in the NEASC visit.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the visit commenced on March 14th and the presence of the Board members upon their arrival was encouraged.

Chair Vaillancourt noted that the work of all of the District committees was important as displayed tonight with the work of the PERC.

6. The Use of the Internal Blog to Further the District's Literacy Effort

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin recalled a previous conversation with the Board regarding increased and enhanced communication opportunities for teachers. He announced that a literacy blog had been developed and was currently being tested. He added that the goal would be to open it up to all teachers after the February break.

Nancy Rose, Director of Library Services, discussed the blog and how it was developed. She noted that WordPress, a free blogging site, was chosen for its ease of use. She added that the initial feedback had been positive.

Board member Swonger asked if there was a moderator or anyone in charge of raising topics for discussion.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that there was no moderator but the members selected their category of interest to generate discussion.

Ms. Rose added that she was the administrator and manager of the account. There was no moderation occurring at this point but there was a sense of security because membership was limited to the elementary teachers.

Board member Swonger asked how teachers joined the group.

Ms. Rose responded once a teacher created an account on Word Press, she invited them to join the group.

Chair Vaillancourt noted that she felt it was exciting to be using technology to enhance collaboration.

7. Update on H₁N₁ Clinic

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that the H₁N₁ Clinic survey had been sent home to parents and early responses showed that there was a lot of interest in the clinic. He has met with Fire Chief Currier, Assistant Fire Chief Parenti, Police Chief Milligan, and Deputy Police Chief Doyle regarding the logistics of the clinic. He noted that the tentative date was set for February 13th from 9:00 a.m. until Noon at Merrimack Middle School and as soon as the date was confirmed it would be published.

8. First Review of New policy

- Student Conduct Policy

Superintendent Chiafery noted a change to the policy as written. She noted that Principal Woelflein and Special Services Director St. Jean worked on editing this policy as well as Attorneys Christina and Eggert. She read the Student Conduct policy aloud.

Board member Swonger asked, regarding detention, where the verbiage “licensed employee disciplining the student” came from and if it was defined.

Superintendent Chiafery responded it referred to any educator because all educators were licensed.

Board member Swonger noted that he felt the last two sentences on page 2, second paragraph, regarding due process, should be its own paragraph.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she would make that change.

Chair Vaillancourt noted that she agreed with Board member Swonger’s suggestion. She asked how this policy would be tied into the student handbooks at the various schools.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the high school handbook was cross-referenced during the crafting of this policy.

Chair Vaillancourt asked if this policy would be referenced in the high school handbook.

Superintendent Chiafery responded yes.

9. Other

a) Correspondence

Chair Vaillancourt reported two correspondences from Merrimack residents that came before the Board.

- An email received from Tracy Bull voicing her concerns regarding the budget process and dissemination of information to the public.
- An email from Tyler Waisanen regarding the China teacher exchange program.

Chair Vaillancourt recalled an email that was discussed at the last board meeting from Pat McGrath, former Board member, and noted her response. The email was read into the record by Board member Coburn with Mr. McGrath's permission. (See attached)

Board member Coburn noted that a correspondence was received by Brad T. Stull, on January 7th. She read the email into the record with Mr. Stull's permission. (See attached)

Chair Vaillancourt noted her conversation with Mr. Stull.

Chair Vaillancourt asked for the Board's position on reading emails into the record.

Vice Chair Thornton did not feel meeting time should be used to read every email received by the Board because they were available to the public.

Board member Swonger noted that any email that was sent to the entire board became public record and if a resident wanted to be heard by the Board, they could come to a meeting. He added that if there was a request in a letter that it be read into the record, he would honor that request but he did not feel that the Board should pick and choose which ones should be read aloud.

Board member Coburn noted that she would not advocate reading a letter into the record if it was not received by the entire Board or if the author did not authorize the reading. She agreed that not all emails should be read into the record but felt that if a point was raised in an email that had not been discussed at the Board level, the Board should include that email into the record with the author's permission.

Chair Vaillancourt noted that she spoke with both writers and neither had asked for their emails to be read into the record. She requested that anyone who wanted their email read into the record to inform the entire Board of their request.

b) Comments

There were no comments.

10. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery noted that she distributed a correspondence from the New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) pertaining to legislation on retirements and the cost impact to employers.

Board member Swonger noted that the Board was in receipt of a legislative update from the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) that included many education related bills. He followed up with the NHSBA and asked that HB 1522 be added to that list because it pertained to the ability for a town council to be able to cap the budget of any school district that was wholly located within a town. He felt this crossed political boundaries in a bad way. He felt it would be valuable for the Board to receive an update from local legislators at the beginning of the legislative session.

11. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Thornton reported that the Grater Woods Subcommittee met on January 14th and discussed the trail sign posts and the Winter Carnival activities scheduled for February 20th.

Board member Swonger reported that the Planning and Building Committee met on January 11th. The Committee voted to name the Butterfly Garden at Reeds Ferry School after Barbara Devore. They also discussed the relocation of the Special Education offices and the use of existing space. He reported that the cost to ventilate the space at James Masticola Upper Elementary School would be \$326,000 and this did not include costs for air conditioning, or renovations.

Chair Vaillancourt asked when the Planning and Building Committee would have more information on the logistics of reconfiguring existing space.

Board member Swonger responded that in order to get anything more substantive, a general contractor or architect will have to put something together and that cost money. He added that there was a lot of complexity in using existing space and he did not think that it was possible to get architectural or engineering work done this year.

Chair Vaillancourt reported that she attended the Merrimack Drug Advisory Council meeting on January 7th. She reported that there was a great turnout from the community and there would be a great amount of work that would be going into this grant. She noted that she felt that Frank Hoell and Tom Prentice, Middle School Resource Officer, were doing a fantastic job.

Chair Vaillancourt reported that she attended Professional Development Committee meeting on January 14th. They discussed the IPDPs (Individual Performance Development Plan) and job descriptions for para educators.

Chair Vaillancourt reported that she attended the Watkins Spelling Bee on January 14th and Ian Herman, seventh grader, won the competition.

12. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments on agenda items.

13. Manifest

At 9:35 p.m. Board member Swonger moved (seconded by Vice Chair Thornton) to adjourn.

The motion passed 4-0-0.