

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
April 7, 2014
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Call To Order

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of the March 17, 2014 Minutes

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2014 meeting.

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 11, line 155, last sentence should read, “He remarked that they showed all the characteristics of life-long learners.”
- Page 5 of 11, line 205, remove the second “that” in the sentence.
- Page 5 of 11, line 217, change “de-identifiable” to “de-identified”
- Page 8 of 11, line 319, should read, “Chairman Ortega stated he would entertain a motion...”
- Page 8 of 11, line 320, add at the end of the sentence, “if a board member were so inclined.”
- Page 8 of 11, line 322, should read, “Vice Chairman Powell raised a Point of Order”.
- Page 9 of 11, line 362, sentence should read, “Chief Doyle stated...”
- Page 10 of 11, line 417, insert “at the Planning Board” after “concerns”

The motion to accept the minutes of the March 17, 2014 meeting as amended passed 4-0-0.

3. Public Participation

Tim Tenhave, 72 Amherst Road, stated that he was disappointed with the Voters’ Information Guide provided by the School District. He stated that there is no explanation of or information on Petitioned Warrant Article 4, which he was partially responsible for putting on the ballot. All the other Warrant Articles contained explanations.

4. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following items for approval:

- Teacher Resignations
 - Glenda Aquino, Music Educator at Thorntons Ferry School
 - Marc Cascadden, Social Studies Educator at Merrimack Middle School
 - Jane Hoover, Guidance Counselor at Mastricola Elementary School
 - Linda Freeman, Nurse at Mastricola Elementary School

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. Merrimack Safeguard: A Look Back- A Look Forward

Principal Woelflein of Merrimack Middle School introduced Betsy Houde, Merrimack Safeguard Project Director. Ms. Houde is also the Executive Director of the Nashua Youth Council. Principal Woelflein stated that Ms. Houde was responsible for the Federal grant that was submitted for the next five years of funding. If the grant is accepted, it will mean another one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$125,000) per year for another five years.

Principal Woelflein shared a look back through a few key accomplishments of Merrimack Safeguard. Highlights include:

- In 1988 the Merrimack Drug Advisory Council was established.
- In 1988 Project Safeguard was conceived and offered to 6th and 8th grade parents and their children.
- In 2009, Merrimack was awarded a Federal Safe and Drug Free Grant which has provided the community with a total of six hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$625,000) over the last five years. For that type of grant, they must, each and every year, demonstrate that the community puts forward at least the equivalent of that grant towards reducing under-age drinking and substance abuse.
- The Drug Advisory Council gradually evolved into a true community coalition, with all twelve required sectors represented. Now the group is known as Merrimack Safeguard.
- One of the areas in which Merrimack Safeguard has really made a difference is in reducing access to substances that can cause problems.
- A teen-specific training was provided by Merrimack Safeguard for four Merrimack youth. They attended a legislative hearing and testified about the negative impact on teens of grocery stores potentially selling hard liquor.
- An environmental scan was carried out of the thirty-four liquor licensees in Merrimack. The thirty-four liquor licenses in Merrimack were visited and physically looked at to see how the establishments placed signs and beverages. Thirty-three of the thirty-four establishments had no sales to minors and eighty-one percent of the establishments separated liquor from sodas and juices in coolers for public display.
- The most active sector is the law enforcement sector. The Merrimack Police Department hosted several drug take-back events. Merrimack Safeguard provided notices announcing this program.
- The Merrimack Police Department has collected one thousand one hundred fifty-six pounds (1,156) of unneeded medication since 2010. Merrimack Safeguard has worked with the Merrimack Police Department to provide a 24-hour, 7 days week drug drop-off box installed at the police station. Approximately 8.6 pounds of unneeded medication has been collected weekly.
- In January, through the Community Health Institute, Merrimack Safeguard conducted a parent survey to gauge middle school parents' perception of underage drinking and drug use, as well as the impact of having Detective Prentice at the middle school. 95.6% of parents felt that their children are safe at school. 67% indicated that Detective Prentice provides their child, their family and/or their child's friends with support that result in positive decisions.

- Merrimack Safeguard is proud of its parents, students, middle school faculty, staff and all the community partners for helping the children make safe and healthy choices related to alcohol and drug use.

Ms. Houde spoke about the future of Merrimack Safeguard. Highlights of her presentation included:

- She spent four days in Washington DC with Julie DeLuca, Thorntons Ferry Assistant Principal, at the CADA National Forum. They attended workshops and learned about initiatives happening all over the country, and identified those for consideration in Merrimack. The main focus was concerns about the high rates of suicidal thoughts.
- The focus of the last five years has been about the “externalized kids” who are the students who are acting out a little more, are a bit more noticed, and/or come to the attention of school administrators or the police. They may feel disconnected or may be struggling with mental health issues that may lead to suicidal thoughts or other kinds of self-destructive behavior.
- Merrimack Safeguard wants to help the community define what it actually means to be responsible. They are excited about adopting a whole array of different strategies as they launch *Be Responsible Merrimack!* The first strategy will be to host a focus group to identify what it means to be responsible.
- Sector Partners represent the Merrimack community. They include people representing youth, parents, businesses, the media, schools, youth-service organizations, law enforcement, religious/fraternal groups, civic/volunteer groups, healthcare workers, state and local governments and any other organizations involved in reducing substance abuse.

Board Member Schneider has been the liaison to Merrimack Safeguard during the last year. He feels that Safeguard is one of the things that make Merrimack better. He encouraged people to learn more about Merrimack Safeguard by looking at their website

Board Member Markwell asked about disposing of the prescription drugs they have collected so that the environment is protected and to ensure that the medications do not get into the wrong hands.

Ms. Houde responded that the collected drugs are incinerated at an extremely high temperature. There is a company the police department works with to legally dispose of the drugs collected.

Chairman Ortega applauded Principal Woelflein and Ms. Houde for submitting the impending grant. He also thanked them for pointing out the importance of the program in the Merrimack community. He asked about the timeline for the grant and what would happen if they do not receive the grant.

Principal Woelflein responded that they may not hear about the grant until September 1st 2014. She added that many of the pieces in the action plan will happen whether or not they receive the grant.

6. Actual Health Insurance Rate for 2014-2015

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that when the budget was built in September, October and November, a Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR) increase was given for budgeting purposes. Most times the GMR holds true but some years it does not. It never exceeds the estimate, but sometimes things change to decrease it. The 2014-15 budget was built with a GMR of 11.4%. The actual rate will be an increase of 3.1 %. That difference is going to flow into a surplus for next year to reduce the tax rate.

This is based upon some actuarial analysis of the coverage lines and trends. The HealthTrust is not only looking at the past, but also trying to look into the future. Part of that is the growth of the Wellness Organization in the schools. Merrimack has started that with Superintendent Chiafery as the head of that committee. Merrimack has been one of the ground-breakers in the state.

Vice Chairman Powell asked for the difference in actual dollars with the 8.3% difference.

Business Administrator stated that it could be around six hundred to seven hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000 to \$700,000).

Vice Chairman Powell asked if the HealthTrust has given any thought to changing their calendar so the district would receive the correct GMR prior to the budget negotiations.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that a GMR cannot be provided at that point in time. The HealthTrust needs an extra four or five months of data before they predict their rates. He added that there have been years when the GMR is given and then it is higher than anticipated.

Vice Chairman Powell suggested that a coalition could come together to suggest a change in the calendar.

Chairman Ortega added that perhaps the other challenge may be that some school districts have their elections in March and that would result in an even earlier change to the calendar.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that now that things are changing with the HealthTrust and the Local Government Center perhaps there will be more accurate calculations in the GMRs to follow.

Chairman Ortega added that it is good news that money will eventually be returned but it would have been better if we did not have to take it in the first place.

7. Educator Performance and Evaluation Committee (EPEC)

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that the information he would be presenting to the board was information and that it has been shared with the evaluators, administrators and staff at each of the six schools, and the Merrimack Teachers Association. Susan Villani, from Learning Inovations-WestEd, is the facilitator. Highlights of his presentation include:

- The committee was given the charge to identify a contemporary process and tool for educator evaluation that is consistent with state accountability goals and best research practices.
- The purpose was to develop a tool, consisting of multiple measures, and a process to evaluate the performance of educators in the Merrimack School District.
- The acronym TPEC (Teacher Performance and Evaluation Committee) evolved into EPEC (Educator Performance and Evaluation Committee) because all educators, not necessarily classroom teachers, are being evaluated.
- Throughout the process the committee operated by consensus. Each decision relative to the development of a tool or the process was subject to group consensus. All members agreed to support the work produced by the committee and to work collaboratively to resolve outstanding questions or concerns.

- The proposed Merrimack School District Teacher Evaluation Model is rubric based. The rubric consists of five domains: Planning and Preparation, Educational Environment, Instruction, Monitoring Assessment and Follow-Up and Professional Responsibilities.
- There are four levels of performance: Highly Effective, Effective, Basic and Does Not Meet Standard.

Vice Chairman Powell added that the level of Basic is the baseline. It is not where we want the educators to be, but shows where there is room for improvement.

- A different process was developed. For the Probationary Teachers, first to fifth year teachers, multiple, shorter, and primarily unannounced observations will be held. One guaranteed observation will be done each year for each Continuing Contract (CC) teacher (tenured teachers).
- For the Continuing Contract Educators:
 - At least one observation per school year, scheduled within an announced 2-week period.
 - Professional dialogue between educator and evaluator for twenty minutes will occur within 5 school days after the observation.
 - Written records will be signed-off by educator and evaluator within 5 school days of dialogue.
 - If more observations are needed, educators will be advised there will be follow-up observations regarding specific issues.
 - A summative write-up will be completed in March.
 - Between March and June, the educator will select two Domain Focus Areas (DFAs), which indicate where the educator wants to focus in the future. Throughout the school year, conversations will include discussion of the two DFAs.
 - The pool of evaluators has been increased. They are Principals, Assistant Principals, the Director of Special Services and the Director of Library Media/Technology Services, High School Department Heads, Elementary and Middle School Language Arts Coordinators, Pre-school Coordinator, Middle School Math Coordinator and Elementary and Middle School Special Education Coordinators. Thirty-six evaluators are able to help the district achieve its goal of more and more frequent observations.

Vice Chairman Powell added that this group of evaluators has come together by using the resources they already have, instead of coming to the board and asking for more full-time employees.

- Time Line
 - February, 2014 - Introduce process and protocol to Merrimack Educators
 - March – April 2014 – Training for all evaluators; Training will be ongoing
 - May 1 – June 6, 2014 – Conduct Pilot
 - Summer 2014 - Evaluate Pilot – Reconvene EPEC as necessary to adjust
 - Fall of 2014 is the goal for district rollout
- All questions concerning the tool and the process should be sent to TPEC@Merrimack.k12.nh.us. All questions will be answered as a team.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that this tool is 80% of the evaluation process. The other 20% is what the State has suggested for student evaluation. That is yet to be determined and will not be handled by the committee, but will be handled by the Administration.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin talked about Evaluator Training.

- This has been a fantastic opportunity to bring unlikely combinations of educators together on a similar exercise.
- The two days of training will allow the individuals to get to know each other so they can call on each other for support.
- The more intensive work, the rubrics, will begin on April 8, 2014. The focus will be on evidence to support a conclusion, generating data in support of that evidence, minimizing bias, establishing and supporting interrater reliability, engaging in meaningful dialogue focused on educator growth for the benefit of students, and preparing for the upcoming pilot.
- The training is designed to help the evaluator learn how to use the tool to generate evidence.
- Interrater reliability: Developing such consistency in and among the evaluators so that any person could look at any educator, regardless of content or grade level, using the rubric and come to a similar conclusion.
- There are three cohorts going through Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday for group one of training and then Thursday and Friday and next Monday for group two of training. A mixed group of about twelve is in each cohort, representing cross grades, cross disciplines, and cross buildings. When that training concludes, the pilot will be introduced in May.

To generate participation in the pilot, a letter of invitation was sent to the staff. It was sent to the Continuing Contract III group of educators, who are tenured and have most recently been recertified. If there is a concern about impact on employment, this is a very safe group.

Superintendent Chiafery spoke about the invitation sent to the staff. It was sent on April 3, 2014, and responses are due back by April 14, 2014. As of this date, fourteen educators have come forward. The ultimate goal is seventy-two educators so that each evaluator would be able to go through two evaluations with two different people. If they do not receive the seventy-two responses, a Plan B would be put into place.

Board Member Schneider asked if there is a place for a Q & A for frequently asked questions.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that there would be space on the intranet, as well as sending an email “blast” to all staff.

Board Member Markwell asked if the email contact would remain as TPEC or changed to EPEC.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that since the email address has already been sent out, it will remain as TPEC.

Board Member Markwell asked that if a teacher does not meet the criteria, what the next step is. He asked if a teacher would be removed from the district if they do not meet the criteria. He also asked if a performance plan would be given with an end date for that teacher, with goals to reach by certain dates.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that context matters. Educators are given specific action plans. There is flexibility, depending on if the teacher is new or probationary or continuing contract.

Vice Chairman Powell suggested that the email should remain with the TEPC and add EPEC as a dual channel.

Chairman Ortega asked if there were questions that came out of the process that surprised the group.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that there were not any big surprises. One of the consistent questions that were raised has to do with the perception that the entirety of the rubric is going to be automatically observed in every session. They have taken pains to say that on any given day, in any twenty minute period, there will be certain things that will not be observable.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that this is still a work in progress and changes were made after the pilot session and will continue to be made if necessary.

Chairman Ortega asked how many people in the cohort were invited to participate in the pilot.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that are ninety-three educators in the system, and they are looking for seventy-two to participate.

Vice Chairman Powell added that the educators who are part of the committee have been urged to take part in the pilot so they can see if it is working the way the committee thinks it should.

Chairman Ortega stated that as School Board Chair, he hopes that people who have been invited, avail themselves of this great opportunity. It would be helpful to the district and to them.

Board Member Schneider asked what the mix should be for the multiple reviews. Specifically he asked if it should be done by a different person each time. He also asked how the evaluators are determined for each educator.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that they are trying to diminish the variety of viewpoints. That is the reason for the rubrics. He added that the process will begin with the Principals to determine the evaluators for each educator.

Board Member Schneider explained that sometimes personalities come into play, so he was asking about the rotation of the evaluators.

8. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega stated that he received one email regarding the school calendar.

b) Comments

Vice Chairman Powell asked, in reference to Mr. Tenhave's comments, whose responsibility is it to come up with the verbiage to go into the Voters' Guide. He wanted to know what the policy has been in the past for Petitioned Articles.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she takes the responsibility. She added that Business Administrator Shevenell is the initiator and she edits with him. On the Petitioned Warrant Article by Mr. Tenhave, she was the one to keep it as it was because the board had not initiated

it. It would be published by its title but no response would be given. She added that she made the final decision.

Vice Chairman Powell agreed that it was not the board's place to comment on the Petitioned Article. He wanted to know past practice on this.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that they conferred about it. She added that they have not had too much experience with Petitioned Articles, but when they do, they normally come from the outside. If the board starts writing about them, there could be bias about them. She stated that they could have asked Mr. Tenhave to write something about his Petitioned Warrant, but they did not. They will take his offer to write something the next time under advisement.

Business Administrator Shevenell added that during the past twelve or thirteen years he has put together the Voters' Guide. This article was looked at carefully and he had written a few paragraphs on it but he really struggled with it. When the article is read, it is pretty straight forward as to what it means. He and Superintendent Chiafery agreed that by reading the article it was easy to understand and saying nothing on it was the best way to go.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he thought the right decision was made regarding the Petitioned Article.

Board Member Markwell reminded the public to vote on Tuesday so that all their voices could be heard.

Board Member Schneider asked about a sample ballot in the Voters' Guide.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that they never put a sample ballot in the Voters' Guide.

Board Member Schneider suggested that the Petitioned Warrant Articles be reproduced in their entirety in the Guide.

Chairman Ortega reminded the public that the polls are open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. and voting will take place at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School.

9. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery stated that administrative reviews need to be conducted at a non-public session of the board. She proposed a date of April 23, 2014 and asked the board members if they would prefer 6:30 p.m. or 7:00 p.m.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he preferred 6:30 p.m. Other board members agreed.

Superintendent Chiafery will let the board members know where the meeting will be held on April 23rd at 6:30 p.m.

10. Committee Reports

Student Representative Crowley stated that the National History Day State Competition is this weekend at Plymouth State College.

Board Member Schneider asked about the Science Olympiad.

Student Representative Crowley responded that the Science Olympiad State Competition was held and the Merrimack team will be attending the National competition. She added that Quiz Bowl came in third place.

Board Member Schneider attended the Merrimack Safeguard meeting on April 3rd. The Regional Division of Public Health and Community Services are doing multiple health assessments in different areas of southern New Hampshire and the one for Merrimack was done last Thursday. Twenty-five to thirty people were in attendance, including health providers, people in government, and business people.

Chairman Ortega reported that he attended Challenge Day at the high school. He stated that it was an invaluable experience.

11. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no Public Comments on Agenda Items.

12. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:15 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to recess to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3,II (a), (b), (c).

The motion passed 4-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 9:28 p.m. Vice Chairman Powell moved (seconded by Chairman Ortega) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.