

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
May 17, 2010
Merrimack High School – Cafeteria**

PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Vaillancourt, Board members Barnes, Ortega, and Swonger. Also present were Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Business Administrator Shevenell.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vaillancourt led the pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Vaillancourt announced that Vice Chairman Thornton would not be in attendance and had been excused from the meeting, and Student Representative Ortega would arrive late.

2. Approval of May 3, 2010 Minutes

Board member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to approve the May 3, 2010 minutes.

Board member Barnes requested the following changes be made to the May 3, 2010 minutes.

- Page 3 of 10, item 6, 8th paragraph, 7th line, change "...students..." to read "...students'..."
- Page 4 of 10, item 6, 9th paragraph, 1st line, change "...standards based..." to read "...standards-based..."
- Page 5 of 10, item 6, 3rd paragraph, 3rd line, change "...imbedded..." to read "...embedded..."
- Page 9 of 10, item 8, 3rd paragraph, change "...prior to state funding decisions..." to read "...after finalization of state funding decisions..."
- Page 9 of 10, item 10, 3rd paragraph, change "...asked if the policy addressed an employee who was publicly intoxicated..." to read "...asked why the policy didn't address an employee who uses illegal drugs outside of school but is not under the influence while in class..."

Board member Swonger requested the following changes be made to the May 3, 2010 minutes.

- Page 3 of 10, item 6, 7th paragraph, add heading Literacy
- Page 4 of 10, item 6, 4th paragraph, 3rd line, add semicolon after the word issues
- Page 4 of 10, item 6, 4th paragraph, 4th line, add semicolon after the word activities
- Page 5 of 10, item 6, 11th paragraph, add heading Decision
- Page 6 of 10, item 6, 8th paragraph, 2nd line, change "...that..." to read "...those..."
- Page 10 of 10, item 13, 1st paragraph, 1st line, remove The

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following change be made to the May 3, 2010 minutes.

- Page 7 of 10, item 6, 5th paragraph, 10th line, change "...identify..." to read "...identity..."

The motion passed as amended 4-0-0.

3. Public Participation (15 Minutes)

State Representative Bob L'Heureux, Back River Road, informed the School Board of his retirement from politics.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that Representative L'Heureux served the community of Merrimack and the State of New Hampshire for the past 20 years.

4. Update on Informational Meeting Regarding Use of School Grounds for Midway on the 4th of July

Superintendent Chiafery reviewed some of the questions raised at the May 3, 2010 meeting. She asked if barricades would be used in the midway; if the barricades could be tended to by volunteers dressed in orange vests and equipped with walkie-talkies; if police officers needed to man the barricades; if the barricades were staffed by other parties, other than the police, in the past; and what the cost might be to man the barricades.

Police Chief Milligan stated that the size of this year's midway would be considerably less than last year because there would not be any bands performing during the festivities. The Chief would provide Mr. Lemos' volunteers with orange vests and short distance radios to contact the on-duty police officers. Volunteers would man the barricades on O'Gara Drive and McElwain Street to keep traffic moving away from the midway celebration area. If the crowd were to become unexpectedly large, Chief Milligan would ask Mr. Lemos to hire additional police officers. Based on experience Chief Milligan is confident that we can police the event and keep it safe with the proviso that we may need to add more officers if the crowd is exceptionally large.

Police Chief Milligan stated that he had cost out two police officers for 11 hours (one officer for 5 hours and one officer for 6 hours) at their detailed rate which totaled \$608. All the on-duty police officers would be working the event in other functions. As soon as their duty was complete, he would shift them to the midway. If there was no midway then barricades would not be needed and traffic could egress with fire posts. It was noted that there had been a midway for the past 30 years.

Board member Ortega wanted to know if Mr. Lemos would be committed to paying for additional police officers if the crowd became larger than expected.

Mr. Lemos stated that he had agreed with Chief Milligan's request to bring in more officers to man the event if the crowd became larger than expected.

Board member Barnes wanted to know what the turn around time would be if more police officers were needed at the barricades and if the bands not being at the festivities would make a difference from prior years.

Police Chief Milligan stated that he would have a couple of police officers on-call if it was warranted. He would assess the situation around 3:00 p.m. to establish if he needed to bring in any additional police officers. If additional police officers are needed for crowd and traffic control after the fireworks, the chief would have 3 to 3 ½ hours to call those officers. He also stated that no bands at the festivities would significantly make a difference.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that her concerns were with safety, acquiring more police officers if needed, and that Police Chief Milligan was comfortable with the arrangements.

Police Chief Milligan stated that he was confident that he and Mr. Lemos would have the staff in case something unexpected happened.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked for a formal vote from the Board so that Mr. Lemos could acquire the proper permits to provide the midway.

Board member Barnes moved (seconded by Board member Swonger) to approve the midway.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

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

- Target Take Charge of Education Program to Reeds Ferry Elementary School for \$292.69

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that parents participated in a program at Target for educational supplies.

Board member Swonger moved (seconded by Board member Ortega) to approve acceptance of the gift and grant under \$5,000.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

6. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher resignations and teacher nominations.

a) Teacher Resignations

- Florence Socci, Math Teacher at Merrimack High School
- Christine Dambach, Language Based Learning Disabilities Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Emily Chartier, First Grade Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Stephanie Botcher, Computer Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

b) Teacher Nominations

- Kandice Day, Math Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Crystalyn Gladstone, Special Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Courtney McDonald, Fifth Grade Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Christine Roberts, World Language Teacher, Merrimack High School

Board member Swonger moved (seconded by Board member Ortega) to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

7. Merrimack High School: A Year in Review

Principal Kenneth Johnson introduced the high school administrators Richard Zampieri, Senior Assistant Principal; Cheryl Smith, Assistant Principal; Peter Bergeron, Assistant Principal; and Mark Merrifield, Technology Coordinator.

The following high school students were in attendance and discussed their high school accomplishments and plans for the future: John Parrinello, Sarah Wetzel, Alex Cronin, Corrine Martin, Ethan McGarry, Logan Placey, Jim Varela, Sam Prive, Alyssa Grantham, Angela Scaccia, Rachael Carter, Emma Finlay, Kim Peters, Anna Steeves, Ross Johnson, Kyle Norway, Sam Maione, Dorian Beharic, Brent Whitney, Jennifer Bull, Mike Guillemette, Jennifer Wright, and Joella Stossel

Board member Swonger noted that the students' activities and contributions to the community were very impressive.

Board member Ortega noted that he was proud of how much the students referenced the respect and responsibility influence they learned from the administration, and how much the students acquired good experiences while attending Merrimack High School.

Board member Barnes noted that the students should try and keep in touch with the administration since high school was instrumental in helping build their future.

Principal Johnson stated that the leadership team had prepared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the high school's strengths and accomplishments during the 2009 – 2010 school year.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Successful Collaboration Days
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation visit
- English Department Initiatives (Running Start Program, NovaNet, NH Big Read, Book-it, website workshop)
- Math Department Initiatives (Math Lab, Afterschool Assistance for Algebra I, Literacy Component, increased use of digital projectors)
- Technology (Mechanical and Engineering Drawings, Cupcake CNC – BioDiesel Project, Computer Labs for Math, English and Health, Podcasts from China, Web-based Grade Book Pilot)
- New Hampshire Scholars Program
- China Exchange Program

Future topics for discussion included:

- NEASC Visiting Committee Final Report
- More from the China Exchange Program
- Success of the Science Olympiad Program

Student Representative Ortega noted from experience that the majority of the high school students were very active with the community, school curriculums, and school activities.

8. Eagle Scout Project: Nature Trail at Reeds Ferry Elementary School by Matthew Beck

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that Matthew Beck's Eagle Scout project had been reviewed and approved by the school administration, but needed the School Board's approval before the project could begin sometime this summer.

Matthew Beck explained that his Eagle Scout project was to create a nature trail at Reeds Ferry Elementary School. The nature trail would benefit the students by allowing them to go outside to witness and explore wildlife habitats. Currently, the students do not have accessibility to the area because the grass is overgrown. He submitted a proposal that outlined the details of the nature trail along with a list of supplies that would be needed in order to create the trail.

Board member Swonger stated his concerns with maintaining the project and accessibility for disabled students.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that once a year the trail would be maintained and kept in the proper condition for students to utilize. He then stated that the accessibility may not be ADA compliant, but that it would be consistent with the outdoor classroom at the middle school.

Board member Ortega asked what Mr. Beck's inspiration was for the project and if he had any idea what type of wildlife might be seen near the path.

Matthew Beck stated that he attended Reeds Ferry School. He explained that he came up with the idea of a nature trail after learning that the previous plans for a deck over the wetland and a path way near the wetland had been denied.

Mr. Beck reported that there had been sightings of a coyote, a beaver damn, different forms of plant life and rabbits near the path.

Matthew Beck announced a pancake breakfast fundraiser on June 19th at Applebee's in Nashua from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and that tickets would be \$5.00.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked if the Board were to waive the two week rule and approve the project this evening, would it afford more time to sell tickets for the fundraiser. She also asked if the Eagle Scouts had approved Matthew Beck's project.

Matthew Beck responded that the extra time would allow him more time to prepare for a successful fundraiser and that the Eagle Scouts had recently approved his project.

Board member Barnes moved to waive the two week rule (seconded by Board member Ortega) and to approve Matthew Beck's Eagle Scout Project.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

9. Formal Signing of Master Agreement

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that Carolyn Morgan, Chair of the Negotiations Team for MESSA; Barbara Garant, President of MESSA; and Carol Scopa, Secretary of MESSA were present to sign the Master Agreement between Merrimack Education Support Staff Association and the Merrimack School Board. This agreement had been approved by the voters of the Town of Merrimack in April.

Two originals of the Master Agreement were signed by Ms. Morgan, Ms. Garant, Ms. Scopa, Chairman Vaillancourt and Superintendent Chiafery.

10. Request for Additional First Grade Teaching Position at James Mastricola Elementary School

Superintendent Chiafery noted enrollment changes at the elementary school level. She reported that Thornton's Ferry Elementary School needed one less kindergarten teacher, due to the diminished number of students, and James Mastricola Elementary School needed one additional first grade teacher, due to the increased number of students. She proposed moving one teaching position from Thornton's Ferry Elementary School to the James Mastricola Elementary School.

Board member Swonger asked if the administration knew the reason for the increased number of first grade students at James Mastricola Elementary School.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that it was predominantly because of new residents and where they chose to reside. She stated that by waiving the two week rule, it would allow every elementary teacher to be taken off the recall list and given an opportunity to have a teaching position in the District.

Board member Barnes wanted to know if the increase in first grade enrollments would impact plans to move two preschool classrooms from Reeds Ferry Elementary School to James Mastricola Elementary School.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that Principal Fabrizio would still have the proper space for the two preschool classrooms.

Board member Ortega stated that it made perfect sense to transfer the teaching position from Thorntons Ferry Elementary School to James Mastricola Elementary School and that the Board needed to be adaptable to meet the needs of the District while maintaining the budget.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the transfer of the one teaching position was a budget neutral decision. Due to staffing reasons, she would support waving the two week rule unless any Board member had serious concerns. It is that time of year when people are interviewing and sending out resumes.

Board member Barnes moved (seconded by Board member Swonger) to waive the two week rule and to approve the additional first grade teacher position at James Mastricola Elementary School.

Board member Swonger wanted to know if the two week rule were waived, would the extra time make it easier to get everything in order (i.e. teacher's name put on report cards).

Superintendent Chiafery stated that by waiving the two week rule, it would allow every elementary teacher to be taken off the recall list and given an opportunity to have a position for next year in the District.

Board member Ortega wanted to know if the teachers knew that the two week rule was standard operating procedure and questioned if there would be a real pressing need to waive the two week rule.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that timing was important. Since the financing for the position was already in the budget, it was just a matter of defining where the position would be best suited; she understood and respected the importance of the two week rule.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she did not take waiving the two week rule lightly. This was an issue of timing.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

11. Second Reading of New Policy

Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free Schools

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the letter “f” in the word “Drug-Free” had been capitalized throughout the document. She contacted the New Hampshire School Board Association’s attorney as well as a private attorney to discuss Board member Barnes’ question about whether or not the policy covered the conduct of an employee outside of school who might be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Both attorneys stated that the policy covered the work place and would only cover an employee if they came to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Board member Barnes stated that she would be interested in continuing to build on what might be missing from the policy. She questioned if it would be best to develop a drug and alcohol policy both on and off school grounds. She would be comfortable with a work place policy, but would like to work on a code of conduct policy.

Superintendent Chiafery requested that the approval of the Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free Schools policy be placed on the consent agenda for the next meeting.

12. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Vaillancourt noted that the Board had been in receipt of an e-mail from a member of the public requesting that next year’s February vacation schedule not be the same week as Massachusetts.

Superintendent Chiafery reported that Commissioner Barry approved the request to waive one day of the 180 day requirement for the James Masticola Elementary School.

Board member Ortega stated that he was in receipt of an e-mail from a parent who questioned the policy of checking overnight bags for students going on overnight trips.

b) Comments

Chairman Vaillancourt confirmed that all Board members received an updated list of the 2010-2011 School Board Committee Assignments.

13. New Business

Round Two of Race to the Top Competition

Superintendent Chiafery informed the Board that she received a document from Commissioner Virginia Barry of the New Hampshire Department of Education regarding Round Two of the US Department of Education Race to the Top competition. This was a grant application which needed to be filled out, signed off by the President of the Teachers Union; Chairman Vaillancourt; and the Superintendent, and submitted to the state by June 1st. The application's scope of work spelled out exactly what the State would be expected to do and what the District would be expected to do. The application had several components and would require numerous man hours to complete in a short period of time.

Board member Swonger stated that the terms of the grant had strings attached. He stated that the grant application would be a large commitment and be very time consuming and require collecting data, responding to requests, and preparing reports. He questioned if the school administration was willing to take on the commitment.

Board member Swonger stated that the grant application listed a cost benefit analysis stating that the school would receive grant money. Only half of that grant money would go to the school district. He question what would happen to the other half of the grant money.

Board member Ortega stated that he thought it would be very difficult to complete the grant application by June 1st. He questioned the potential next steps if the District were to submit the application on June 1st.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that only 23 out of 80 school districts signed up for round one of this competition. The preparation time for round one was very time consuming. Some states spent over a year preparing and had special grant writing teams complete the application.

Board member Barnes stated that it might make sense to hold off on applying for the grant this year.

Superintendent Chiafery asked Commissioner Barry if there might be a round three. Commissioner Barry stated that when round two was complete there would be an opportunity to pause or regroup before proceeding to the next step. She stated that the entitlement grants that the school district has been able to acquire in the past may turn into competitive grants in the future.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the tremendous amount of man hours in completing the application was unrealistic. She asked if the Board would be in agreement with her accompanying Superintendent Chiafery to an informative meeting in Exeter to learn more about the requirements needed for round two of the grant application process.

Grater Woods Subcommittee

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the school district owned a portion of the Grater Woods property and has a conservation easement with the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission was going to oversee the conservation of the land and manage it for the School District.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that some Grater Woods subcommittee members were in possession of an architectural drawing for a large structure, where there hadn't been a formal vote, right next to the outdoor classroom at the middle school. The area is town property that abuts the middle school. Upon presenting her concerns for a formal discussion with the former Chair of the Town Council and the Town Manager regarding plans for the drawings, she was informed by the Chair of the Conservation Committee that it was town property and the School District had no say in whether the structure was built or not. At her request, they had a joint meeting of the Town Council and the Grater Woods Subcommittee to discuss access, parking, safety, etc.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that Vice Chairman Thornton was the former liaison and that she too became informed that the School District would have no say in what the subcommittee wanted to do with the town owned property that abuts the school district property where the middle school is housed. Even though she attended the meetings, participated in conversations and gave input, she felt that there was a great need for a formal plan. Some plans were moving forward without a master plan and some groups were advised that they couldn't do any work until the master plan had been completed.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she would like all work to stop; no more trails, no more classrooms or anything until there was a solid plan be it a stewardship plan or definitive plan. She would like to see a committee formed with all parties interested in the Grater Woods property.

Board member Barnes stated that the document did not hold water to the future and barely touched what it needed to cover – there was no plan. Her biggest concern was that the Master Plan was not a living document and couldn't stand on its own. A plan should not be put forth without the support of the School Board.

Board member Barnes reported that she asked the subcommittee how ATVs would get in and out of the property. She was informed that there were several entry points but that the ATVs would probably use the entrance at the middle school.

Board member Barnes stated that the School Board needed to consider the liabilities of the District's property not being managed.

Board member Barnes reported that when she asked the subcommittee about the large structure she was informed that it would be a great place for middle school students to learn.

Board member Barnes felt that use of the structure for student learning would directly identify the structure with the School District.

Board member Barnes reported that she asked the subcommittee how the educational structure would be monitored when school was not in session. The subcommittee replied that the middle school had cameras that could monitor the building.

Board member Barnes didn't think the School Board's representation on the subcommittee would be enough and that the Board needed to go further in defining its expectations of how the property and the facilities would be represented. She offered to serve on the subcommittee.

Board member Swonger would like to know the intended uses for the land, and how the town's people would be able to take advantage of the tremendous natural resource that it paid for and owned collectively. He stated that the Board had learned a lot about how certain areas might be preserved, but not how the property will be managed and used.

Board member Swonger stated that the statement that the school district does not have a say is troubling to him because the school board member is a voting member on the subcommittee.

Board member Ortega agreed that something needed to be done to get things back on track. As a citizen, his biggest concern was the conservation of the property. As a Board member it is protecting and representing the District's rights related to access point; that we are property owners, and that there is presumed uses of resources.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that he had been working with the Conservation Committee Chairman for the past seven years and understood that the School District did have a say in the past. He was in agreement to formalizing a document with a subcommittee.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked Superintendent Chiafery to communicate the Board's concerns in a letter to the Town Council.

Board member Barnes asked that the District request the Town Council and Conservation Committee to hold off on Grater Woods agenda items until their next meeting.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the draft document was going to go forward to the Town Council for their approval.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the draft was now in the hands of the Conservation Commission.

14. Committee Reports

Board member Ortega stated that he attended a Healthcare Cost Containment Committee Meeting on May 5th. The committee was preparing to apply for a grant from Local Government Center with regard to the School District's wellness program.

15. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments on agenda items.

16. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

There was no non-public session.

At 10:05 p.m. Board member Swonger moved (seconded by Board member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.