

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
July 19, 2010  
Merrimack High School – Cafeteria**

**PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chair Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman Thornton, Board members Barnes, and Swonger, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, and Business Administrator Shevenell

**1. Call To Order**

Chair Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**2. Approval of June 8, 2010 and June 21, 2010 Minutes**

Board member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chair Thornton) to approve the June 8, 2010 minutes.

Board member Swonger requested the following corrections.

- Page 11 of 17, last paragraph, the last sentence should read “Vice Chairman Thornton wanted to clarify that the reason the plan was moved forward was the belief that the trail work was being held up due to the lack of a master plan.”

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following corrections.

- Page 1 of 17, Public Hearing Section, replace “...started the meeting...” with “...opened the hearing...”
- Page 4 of 17, second paragraph, first sentence, replace “...high school students...” with “...eighth grade students...” and replace “...final exam...” with “...placement exam...”
- Page 4 of 17, second paragraph, second sentence, replace “...high school students...” with “...eighth grade students...”
- Page 8 of 17, section 6, the sentence should read “Chairman Vaillancourt stated that these items would be placed on the consent agenda for the next Board meeting unless a board member had a question or concern.”

The motion passed as amended 4-0-0.

Board member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to approve the June 21, 2010 minutes.

Board member Barnes requested the following corrections.

- Page 4 of 19, last paragraph, replace “...recreational...” with “...Parks and Recreation...”
- Page 5 of 19, first paragraph replace “...recreational...” with “...Parks and Recreation...”
- Page 5 of 19, second paragraph, second sentence, change “...interested...” to “...interest...”
- Page 8 of 19, eighth paragraph, last sentence, replace “...Conservation Committee...” with “...Grater Woods Subcommittee...”
- Page 8 of 19, last paragraph, change “...mentions...” to “...mentioned...”
- Page 10 of 19, sixth paragraph, first sentence, change “...Conservation Commission...” to “...Grater Woods Subcommittee...”

Board member Swonger requested the following corrections.

- Page 4 of 19, paragraph three, line six, replace “...field...” with “...afield...”

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following corrections.

- Page 1 of 19, the first sentence should read “Chairman Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the pledge of allegiance.”
- Page 9 of 19, paragraph twelve, replace “...was not logged...” with “...was logged...”
- Page 9 of 19, paragraph twelve, replace “...was...” with “...had...”
- Page 9 of 19, paragraph twelve, the last sentence should read, “She stated that logging trucks have not been on that trail in quite a long time.”
- Page 11 of 19, paragraph four, line twelve, change “...steak...” to “...stake...”
- Page 18 of 19, last paragraph, line six, replace “The Budget Committee...” with “The School Planning and Building Committee...”
- Page 18 of 19, last paragraph, line nine, replace “The School Planning and Building Committee...” with “The Budget Committee...”

Chairman Vaillancourt requested that the June 21, 2010 non-public minutes reflect “Vice Chairman Thornton” instead of “Board member Thornton” in two different places.

The motion passed as amended 4-0-0.

### **3. Public Participation**

Gage Perry of 15 Lisa Drive spoke as the president of Friends of Grater Woods. He explained that the Friends of Grater Woods had planned a work weekend at Grater Woods on Saturday, July 24, 2010. He asked the Board to clarify access to Grater Woods from the middle school property.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that Mr. Perry’s question would be addressed under agenda item #7, Grater Woods Trail Rehabilitation Project.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell announced that Reeds Ferry Elementary School had received a gift of \$15.91 from Ahold Financial Services (Stop N Shop). He explained that the funds would be used to purchase education supplies.

Board member Swonger moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to approve the acceptance of gifts and grants under \$5,000.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

### **5. Consent Agenda**

#### **a) Teacher Resignation**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher resignation.

- Aspasia Cote, World Language Teacher, Merrimack High School

#### **b) Teacher Nominations**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher nominations.

- Natalie Cate, Math Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Maryna Gurova, ESOL Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Kevin Moyer, Special Education Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

## **6. Consideration of Food Service Price Increase 2010-2011**

Chairman Vaillancourt introduced Food Service Director David Dziki.

Business Administrator stated that the food service program had a deficit of \$126,502.22 at the end of school year 2008-2009. He explained that after the price adjustment in January 2010 the food service program was approximately \$20,000 short from being self-funded for the year ending 2009-2010.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the District's goal for 2009-2010 was to have a small surplus that would allow the food service program to maintain the same pricing in 2010-2011. That was not the case; therefore, another price adjustment is required.

Director David Dziki and Business Administrator Shevenell proposed an increase of 25 cents per lunch for grades K-4, 7 and 8. Effective 2010-2011 lunches for students in kindergarten through grade six will cost \$2.25 and lunches for students in grades seven through twelve will cost \$2.50.

Director Dziki reported that the lunch participation at the high school and middle school decreased after the January 2010 price adjustment. Lunch participation at the three elementary schools remained level and lunch participation at the upper elementary decreased slightly.

Board member Barnes asked if the lunch participation decreased because of the January 2010 price adjustment and which levels lost money and which levels broke even.

Director Dziki responded that lunch participation at the high school decreased the most. He noted that the purchase of additional lunch items also decreased. The lunch participation decreased slightly at the elementary and middle school levels.

Director Dziki clarified that he had not planned for a decrease in lunch participation. He noted that most of the decrease occurred in January and February. He noted that the high school final exam schedule occurs during the month of January, which has always affected the January meal participation. He added that the lunch participation at the high school increased in May.

Board member Swonger asked what the projected results would be with the proposed increase.

Director Dziki responded that he estimated that the proposed increase would result in an increase of \$43,000 to \$45,000 in 2010-2011. Factored into his estimate was the removal of two food service positions from the 2010-2011 budget. Also factored into his estimate was the purchase of new equipment at the upper elementary school and a new van. Both were purchased during the 2009-2010 school budget and will not reoccur in the 2010-2011 budget.

Board member Swonger asked if Director Dziki had planned for a decrease in lunch participation, due to the proposed price increase.

Director Dziki responded that he did not plan for a decrease in lunch participation next year.

Board member Swonger estimated that the potential increase could be as much as \$40,000 even if there was a decrease in lunch participation as a result of the proposed price increase.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if there was a maximum amount of money that could be kept in the Food Service Capital Reserve Fund.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that the food service surplus account had as much as \$195,000 in the past. He reported that the District recently spent approximately \$130,000 of the surplus funds to purchase a new computer system for the food service department. He added that the auditors will recommend spending money for the food service program if the surplus balance were to reach \$180,000 or more.

Director Dziki clarified new equipment can be purchased with surplus funds or through the budget process. Director Dziki stated that he understood that the food service surplus could contain up to three months of expenditures for the food service program.

Director Dziki reported that recently the surplus funds purchased a freezer for the high school, replaced steamers at the high school and replaced stainless steel tables at the upper elementary. He stated that the food service equipment was in good working condition.

Vice Chairman Thornton stated that this was the second request for a price increase in the last seven months. She asked if Director Dziki anticipated price increases on an annual basis.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that this price increase was a reaction to how the January 2010 increase played out. He did not anticipate annual increases. Factors that could generate a price increase might include an increase in the cost of food or an increase in the support staff salaries.

Director Dziki stated that the new prices are consistent with lunch prices of surrounding towns. He stated that there are discussions at the federal government level regarding a possible increase in the free and reduced lunch reimbursement rates.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if there was an increase in the free and reduced lunch application.

Director Dziki responded that between September and May there had been a substantial increase in the number of students eligible to receive a free lunch. The number of students eligible to receive lunch at a reduced rate also increased. He noted that the participation rates he referenced earlier included students that pay for lunch. He was not able to determine if the decrease in lunch participation rate was associated with the increase in the number of students eligible to receive free lunches.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the School Board and administration does not take the necessity to raise lunch prices, again, lightly. She emphasized that the food service program is self sustaining. The other option would be to help support the food service program through the operating budget beginning in 2011-2012.

Board member Swonger moved (seconded by Board member Barnes) to approve the price increase for food service as proposed to \$2.25 per meal for kindergarten through grade six and \$2.50 per meal for grades seven through twelve.

Board member Swonger stated that he liked the fact that the lunch price increase would not affect students in grades five, six, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

## **7. Grater Woods Trail Rehabilitation Project (Request for Proposal and Walk-Through)**

Chairman Vaillancourt stated for the record a clarification and a correction regarding information that was presented to the School Board at the July 21, 2010 meeting. The statement that the Red Maple Trail bid process would need to go before the Town Council for approval and the statement that the Merrimack Conservation Commission would have to receive approval from the Town Council before any money was spent on the project were not accurate. She explained that the inaccurate statements were discovered

during a meeting with Town Manager Hickey, Town Council Chairman Koenig, Superintendent Chiafery and herself.

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that he walked through the Grater Woods Trail Rehabilitation project with the 12 bidding contractors. He stated that everyone met at the middle school parking lot and then drove to the Beebe Lane access point. He stated that the Beebe Lane access point would require work prior to the Red Maple Trail project. He stated that, at this point in time, the school administration would not authorize access through the middle school property for this project.

Board member Barnes tied in her Grater Woods subcommittee report because of its relevance to the agenda item. She reported that the Grater Woods subcommittee met on July 15<sup>th</sup>. She reported that the subcommittee questioned what the denied access for the walk through meant for the project.

Board member Barnes reported that the Grater Woods subcommittee members had plans to spear head trail marking efforts on Saturday, July 24, 2010. She explained that the Grater Woods subcommittee members and volunteers were planning to spray paint marking points on Friday, July 23<sup>rd</sup> in preparation for installing 24 pressure-treated lumber stakes with signs to mark trails. She stated that 12 of the 24 signs would be placed on school property. She asked the Board to allow the Grater Woods Subcommittee members and volunteers and trucks carrying supplies permission to access to the Grater Woods property from the middle school property. She also asked that the gates be opened.

Board member Barnes requested that permission be defined in writing for access to the Grater Woods property through the middle school property for maintenance type activities. She noted, for example, members of the Snow Buds, a Merrimack snowmobile club, have been grooming trails on the Grater Woods property with snowmobiles for many years. She noted that a snowmobile is a motorized vehicle and currently is not allowed on school district property.

Board member Swonger noted qualitative differences in the types of uses that people want of the land. He clarified that motorized vehicle access has been denied, not access by individuals. He stated that the conservation easement, which does not apply to the entire property, defines the District's goals for how the land is and is not used. He suggested that anything outside the use of land as defined in the conservation easement would need some level of approval.

Board member Swonger stated that unplanned motor vehicle access was not a good idea.

Vice Chair Thornton asked why the District needed to have the trails on the school property groomed.

Board member Barnes responded that the snow trail grooming provided a well defined path for individuals to enjoy recreation during winter months, similar to a dirt path during the summer months.

Vice Chair Thornton stated that she supported the Snow Bud's efforts, however, expressed concern that groomed trails on school property would invite motorized vehicle use on district property, which is prohibited.

Chair Vaillancourt suggested that a representative from the Snow Buds Snowmobile Club attend a future Board meeting to answer questions.

Chair Vaillancourt noted that during a previous School Board meeting, Town Council Chair Koenig stated that the District had the right to restrict access to the Grater Woods property if it had concerns with how the land was being used. Chair Vaillancourt expressed her support to exercise that right.

Vice Chair Thornton expressed her support to create a document that would define types of motorized vehicles that would or would not be allowed access.

Business Manager Shevenell suggested that a document be created between the School District and the Snow Buds, similar to the Memo of Understanding with the Merrimack Youth Association.

Board member Barnes requested signs be placed on the town/school district boundary that would identify school district property and note land use restrictions.

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that “no hunting” and “no ATVs” signs had been ordered.

Board member Barnes asked if there were parking restrictions at the middle school for someone who wanted to access the Grater Woods property during school hours.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that, in the past, informal notification or arrangements have been made between the individual wanting access to the property and the maintenance department.

Board member Barnes asked if there were rules in place that pertained to an individual who wanted to access the Grater Woods trails at the middle school access point for a hike during school hours.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that there were no formalized rules and that there was potential for a similar situation with track use at the high school.

Chair Vaillancourt noted that there was potential for unknown individuals to be on school property while school was in session and that was of concern to her.

Vice Chair Thornton asked for clarification on access to the Grater Woods property for the Department of Public Works.

Board member Barnes responded that Andy Powell had stated that the Department of Public Works vehicles fall under the emergency access. She questioned when access by the Department of Public Works vehicles would or would not be an emergency; however, wanted to make sure that the DPW vehicles had access to school property for the trail signage project on Saturday.

Chair Vaillancourt stated that during a recent meeting with Superintendent Chiafery and Town Manager Hickey and Town Council Chair Koenig, she asked if the Department of Public Works vehicles were considered emergency vehicles. Town Manager Hickey responded that the Department of Public Works vehicles were not considered emergency access vehicles, unless they were accompanying the police department or fire department in an emergency effort.

Chair Vaillancourt stated that she did not object to the trail marking project; however, the Department of Public Works needed to request permission, access needed to be granted and the gate needed to be open on Saturday.

Board member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chair Thornton) to allow Grater Woods Subcommittee access to the Grater Woods property through the middle school gate on Saturday, July 24, 2010 with the understanding that they will bring motorized vehicles onto the property through that gate to post trail signs for the safety of both the School District and the community at large. In addition, allow access for the Department of Public Works to put up trail head signs, also using motorized vehicles, and request that administration reach out to Rick Seymour to discuss specific access times and dates so that the District is aware when the Department of Public Works will be on the school district property with the motorized vehicles.

Board member Swonger stated that he supported the motion and thanked the friends of Grater Woods for all the work that they do to better the land owned by the Town and the School District.

The motioned passed 4-0-0.

Board member Barnes stated that Business Administrator Shevenell would receive a call from Dan Cyr regarding the clearing of oak seedlings from the trails.

## **8. Long-Term Strategy for Professional Development**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin updated the Board on the many professional development activities that have taken place since school ended in June. He noted the following connections between the professional development activities and the Logic Model.

- Developing a common language and instructional approaches
- Providing consistent and sustainable professional development to support district initiatives
- Assessment of students to determine if they are learning and adjust their instruction according to the results
- Providing teachers with training, scheduled time and support to analyze data that informs instruction

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin identified the following summer professional development activities:

- Jennifer Quinn provided training in Everyday Math to teachers of kindergarten through grade six
- Understanding by Design as a Curriculum Framework was introduced at the high school to department chairs and select teachers from those departments as a way to model the CAP initiative
- Teachers were engaged in the revision of formative assessments, facilitated by Kim Yarlott
- Introduction of the Benchmark Assessment System
- Work with consultants, administration, and middle school personnel on middle school standards

Board member Swonger appreciated the professional development report. He noted that there is a concerning effort within the District to get better with a continuous and prudent philosophy. It speaks well of the administration, curriculum work, and the professional development program.

Board member Swonger asked Assistant McLaughlin if there was anything else that the Board could do to help make the Logic Model focus more effective.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the Board had been very supportive of teacher professional development and he would like to see the Board maintain that effort.

Chairman Vaillancourt highlighted the Logic Model brochure that Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin referenced during his presentation. She stated that it was testament of the strength of the Logic Model, the administration, and the support of the School Board. She was pleased to hear that the standards-based work had reached the middle school level.

Chairman Vaillancourt extended appreciation to Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin for the amount of work and support he provided to all professional staff and their growth and development.

## **9. Possible Topics and Tentative Dates for a Joint Meeting of the Merrimack Town council and Merrimack School District**

Superintendent Chiafery reported that on Friday, June 16, 2010 Town Manager Hickey, Council Chairman Koenig, School Board Chairman Vaillancourt and she met to discuss a joint meeting early in the fall.

Possible agenda items include:

- Review the outcome of July 4<sup>th</sup>
- South fire station update
- Expansion of the Community TV Studio
- Review the Community Drug Safety Grant
- Approval process for the Grater Woods Master Plan

Board member Barnes suggested that the Town Council and the School Board consider discussion regarding sharing resources where appropriate. She was interested in the School District and the Town sharing services to get lower rates.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked if Board member Barnes would be willing to meet with Business Administrator Shevenell to review previous meeting discussions regarding sharing services with the Town. She suggested that Board member Barnes bring items of concern to either herself or Superintendent Chiafery for consideration of placement on the agenda.

Board member Barnes agreed.

Board member Swonger stated that it would not be a bad idea to repeat information regarding the sharing of services with the Town given that September is the beginning of budget season. The public always asks if the Town and School District are sharing resources. They are pleasantly surprised to find out about the joint fuel purchase.

Chair Vaillancourt expressed concern over the length of the joint meeting.

Superintendent Chiafery asked that the recommendation to discuss shared resources be taken under advisement because of the number of agenda items. She suggested that Business Administrator Shevenell and Town Finance Director Paul Micali put together a list of shared resources.

Business Administrator Shevenell would prefer to address the shared resources at a future School Board meeting rather than have a lengthy joint meeting.

Superintendent Chiafery announced the joint meeting would be held on Monday, September 13, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. at the upper elementary school in the all purpose room.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she neglected to announce at the beginning of the meeting that Board member Ortega had been excused from the meeting.

## **10. Other**

### **a) Correspondence**

Chair Vaillancourt announced that all six schools in the District received school approval designation from the New Hampshire Department of Education's Bureau of School Approval and Facility Management.

Superintendent Chiafery explained that both the middle school and high school were reviewed for school approval last year. She explained that the school approval process included minimum standards requirements, a review of particular policies, a health inspection, and a fire inspection. She stated that she was very pleased to have six schools in the district with full approval.

Board member Swonger asked if it was typical to receive full approval for all schools.



Superintendent Chiafery responded that, in the past, space issues resulted in conditional school approval.

Board member Swonger asked when the NEASC report would be received.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she anticipated the NEASC report in September.

## **b) Comments**

There were no comments.

## **11. New Business**

There was no new business.

## **12. Committee Reports**

Board member Barnes reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee did not meet in July. She reported that she had an informal conversation with the Parks and Recreation Vice Chair Chris Christensen regarding the inactive tennis courts on O’Gara Drive. She suggested that during the budget process the Board consider a partnership with the Town in an effort to address the maintenance of the O’Gara tennis courts. She reported that she would provide the Board with the Parks and Recreation Committee’s position regarding the tennis courts after the August Parks and Recreation committee meeting.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that she attended a Planning and Building Committee meeting on June 28 on behalf of Board member Swonger. She reported that there was discussion about the money in the budget for an architectural study for the consolidation of the Special Services and SAU offices. She noted that Business Administrator Shevenell and Planning and Building Committee Chair Rich Hendricks toured the upper elementary school with the architect to view existing space and how it might be utilized in the consolidation project.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the preliminary report arrived last week. The draft report identified underutilized space at the upper elementary school and detailed how the special services office might use that space. He anticipated a review of the plan with the Planning and Building Committee and the Board in the near future.

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that a representative from Marinas and Associates would attend the July 26 Planning and Building Committee for discussion about the report.

Chair Vaillancourt confirmed that Board member Swonger would be in attendance at the July 26, 2010 Planning and Building Committee meeting.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that Board members Ortega and Swonger were out of town on business and were not able to attend the July 15, 2010 Budget Committee meeting; therefore, she attended the July 15, 2010 Budget Committee meeting as a member of the audience. She stated that the Budget Committee wanted to do business different this year. She reported that the budget committee voted on a motion to create a School District budget before the School Board created its budget. The motion failed unanimously. She reported that the Budget Committee voted on a motion to create a budget message or statement of concerns to give to the superintendent. The motion passed with one opposition vote.

Chairman Vaillancourt noted that the Superintendent reports directly to the School Board. She stated that while the Budget Committee was welcome to share questions or concerns with the Superintendent, she did not feel the Superintendent was obligated to honor anything should the Budget Committee contradict what the School Board created as a message.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the next Budget Committee would meet in August. She noted that Business Administrator Shevenell would be asked to attend the meeting to explain the difference between contractual obligations and discretionary spending. The message or statement of concerns would be created in September.

**13. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments.

**14. Manifest**

The board signed the manifest.

At 9:05 p.m. Vice Chair Thornton moved (seconded by Board member Swonger) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion carried 5-0-0.