

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
September 20, 2010
Merrimack High School – Library
PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES**

PRESENT: Chairman Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman Thornton, Board Members Barnes and Ortega. Also present were Superintendent Chiafery, and Business Administrator Shevenell.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vaillancourt led the pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Chairman Vaillancourt announced that Vice Chairman Thornton would be arriving late this evening. Board Member Swonger and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin would not be in attendance and had been excused from the meeting.

Vice Chairman Thornton arrived at 7:34 p.m.

2. Approval of September 7, 2010 Minutes

Board Member Ortega moved (seconded by Barnes) to approve the September 7, 2010 minutes.

Board Member Ortega requested the following corrections.

Page 3 of 9, paragraph five, second sentence, remove the word “a”

Page 3 of 9, paragraph seven, first sentence, change the word “pod casts” to “podcasts”

Page 3 of 9, paragraph seven, second sentence, change the word “pod casts” to “podcasts”

Page 4 of 9, paragraph eight, first sentence, change the word “antidotol” to “anecdotal”

Page 4 of 9, paragraph nine, first sentence, change the word “teachers” to “teachers,”

Page 5 of 9, paragraph two, first sentence, remove the word “with”

Page 5 of 9, paragraph two, first sentence, change the word “that” to “with whom”

Page 8 of 9, paragraph two, second sentence, change the word “to very” to “to be very”

Page 8 of 9, paragraph four, first sentence, change the word “Paradise” to “Paradis”

Page 8 of 9, paragraph four, second sentence, change the word “Paradise” to “Paradis”

Board Member Barnes requested the following corrections.

Page 3 of 9, paragraph six, first sentence, change the word “conversation” to “conversational”

Page 3 of 9, paragraph ten, first sentence, change the word “videos” to “video”

Page 3 of 9, paragraph thirteen, first sentence, change the word “eight week” to “eight-week”

Page 3 of 9, paragraph seventeen, second sentence, change the word “level what” to “level about what”

Page 4 of 9, paragraph one, first sentence, change the word “classroom;” to “classroom while”

Page 4 of 9, paragraph one, second sentence, change the word “hands on” to “hands-on”

Page 6 of 9, paragraph six, third sentence, change the word “regards” to “regard”

Page 6 of 9, paragraph six, fourth sentence, change the word “She asked what” to “She used the example of calculating”

Page 6 of 9, paragraph six, sixth sentence, change the word “need” to “needs”

Page 7 of 9, paragraph seven, first sentence, change the word “NEASC” to “New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)”

Vice Chairman Thornton requested the following corrections.

Page 3 of 9, paragraph four, first sentence, change the word “teaching” to “teacher exchange”

Page 3 of 9, paragraph five, first sentence, change the word “an exchange” to “a student exchange”

Page 3 of 9, paragraph twelve, first sentence, change the word “their days” to “their work days”

Page 4 of 9, paragraph two, first sentence, change the word “students were” to “students within the School District were”

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following corrections.

Page 7 of 9, paragraph four, second sentence, change the word “that Superintendent” to “the School Board, Superintendent”

The motion passed as amended 4-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

- Target Take Charge of Education Program to Reeds Ferry Elementary School for \$476.67

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

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to approve the acceptance of gifts/grants under \$5,000.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

Superintendent Chiafery announced the following teacher nomination.

- a) Teacher Nomination
 - David Olivares, Part-Time World Language Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

Vice Chairman Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

6. Update on Summer Reading Program

Chairman Vaillancourt introduced Joanne Green, Director of the Reading Program.

Joanne Green stated that this was the third successful year of the Summer Reading Program. She stated that the program grew from 110 students last year to 115 students this year. She noted that one teacher and one paraeducator were added to the program due to the high enrollment in kindergarten

and first grade. She noted that a total of 9 teachers and 9 paraeducators were teaching the program this year.

Joanne Green stated the following areas of reading were covered: 1) phonemic awareness; 2) decoding; 3) vocabulary; 4) comprehension; and 5) fluency. She stated the goal of the program was to maintain reading skills for students and avoid summer reading loss that is often seen in students at a younger age. She noted the program helps schools gather data over the course of the summer to take a closer at students that might need to be evaluated in the fall.

Joanne Green noted the Data Statements showed the number of students in attendance at the program this year, what learning percentages the students maintained and what suggestions were given on the evaluation forms.

Joanne Green stated the students were encouraged to use the materials that were sent home with them over the summer. She noted that some of the parents and students would have like to have seen the program extended because the students enjoyed the program and made new friends. She stated the program has very dedicated and professional teachers that love to see the program working so well with the students.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if there was a difference in the September to June curriculum that the teachers used from last year to this year. She asked if the curriculum made the entry level in the higher grades slightly less then those for kindergarten and first grade students.

Joanne Green stated the parents at the younger levels are encouraged to send their children to the program as a developmental and early intervention tool.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if attendance was a problem because of the summer and the fact that no buses were available.

Joanne Green stated that parents are informed that it is better for the student to attend half the time than not come at all. She noted that the program gets better results with students that attend every day.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if the attendance would be greater if the parents invested in the program more.

Joanne Green stated that the program had good parent support; however, a four-week summer curriculum was hard to plan without interruptions due to vacations. She noted that bus service was provided the first year. Attendance was not good because the parent investment was not as great. Vice Chairman Thornton asked if the teachers gave any feedback about the program once the students went back to school in the fall.

Joanne Green stated the Language Arts Coordinators send in assessments throughout the year.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if the assessments could be looked at before and after the program started to see if there is any difference in the scores of those children.

Joanne Green stated that a majority of the students attending the program have been in Title I. She noted that only half of the number of students attending the program needed Title I again that year.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if the Title I assessments were done and if there was any current data for this year.

Joanne Green stated the Title I assessments were done and no current data was available for this year.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if Joanne Green could provide the Board with a copy of the assessment scores for this year.

Board member Ortega asked for an explanation of A-Z Nonsense Word Fluency.

Joanne Green stated the A-Z Nonsense Word Fluency is a decoding assessment of how many nonsense words a student can read in one minute. She noted that nonsense words are not real words and must be sounded out to see how automatic the student's decoding skills work.

Board member Barnes asked how many students were recommended for the program, but could not participate because of transportation and scheduling issues.

Joanne Green stated that 50% to 60% of students were recommended for the program, but could not attend due to transportation issues. She noted that carpooling was also an option.

Board member Barnes asked if Joanne Green could provide the year, number of recommended students, and reason for non-participation so adjustments could be made in the future to obtain a better level of participation.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked of the small percentage of parents and students that did not give the highest rating of 8 or above, was any constructive feedback given on ways the program could be improved, how the program is offered, or changes the program might consider making in the future.

Joanne Green stated that she did not receive a lot of information about those concerns, but does ask for suggestions and how the program can be improved. She stated that most of the feedback received from parents was for more reading lists and work to do with their child.

7. Merrimack Middle School Reconfiguration Report

Chairman Vaillancourt introduced Principal Deborah Woelflein and Vice Principal Adam Caragher from the Merrimack Middle School (MMS).

Principal Woelflein stated that a part-time certified Spanish teacher was hired for the 2010-2011 school year. She stated that with the reconfiguration, each seventh grade classroom would have between 25 to 26 students. She stated that the following was taken into consideration during the scheduling and building configuration process that was discussed with the parents/guardians of the middle school students on September 7th and September 8th:

- Reviewed all the resources available such as human, facility, experts and/or other resources
- Considered the Merrimack Middle School Mission Statement
- Considered and met objectives and requirements of the School District Logic Model and Master Agreements
- Followed state mandates and school approval standards for curriculum, use of facilities, and class size

- Gathered and implemented input from building leadership team, scheduling committee, and staff
- Reviewed and employed sample schedules from other Districts and Middle Schools
- Consulted with state expert, Rose Colby, on middle school scheduling
- Considered data from student and staff surveys during the year
- Employed PowerSchool and scheduling expertise of veteran staff

Principal Woelflein stated that My Voice Survey Data was used to see how the students were feeling about their experience at the middle school. She noted that 90% of middle school students aspire and believe that they will attend college.

Vice Principal Caragher discussed the following positive outcomes from the 2010-2011 reconfiguration:

- All seventh grade teams will have a true team area and the support of a special educator with at least one paraeducator.
- All seventh grade teams will have an additional homeroom as well as the use of an additional classroom for instruction, tutoring, enrichment, and small group projects.
- All seventh grade teams are heterogeneously grouped, while meeting the individual needs of students for math placement, reading level, world language, band, support with behavioral issues, special education and 504 plans, and Title I support.
- Eighth grade students and staff will not be greatly impacted by the reduction in teaching staff.
- Additional certified staff will be available for supervision in the cafeteria for lunches.
- The Gateway (Gifted and Talented Program) teacher, a certified science educator, will team-teach with the seventh grade science educators for lab instruction.
- An additional science lab will be available to students.
- Additional instructional time within the school day has been provided for all students.
- The teaching schedule allows all teams the flexibility to incorporate interdisciplinary units where appropriate.
- The teaching schedule and use of facilities allow all educators to regroup students according to content, unit, and student needs from small groups to whole team activities.
- The teaching schedule allows all educators to collaborate more regularly with their colleagues while lessening the impact on student learning.

Board member Ortega asked if Principal Woelflein could provide more details about things that she might have noticed in the first couple of weeks that were not ideal, had to adapt to, made adjustments to, and what the outcomes were in making those decisions.

Principal Woelflein stated the cafeteria is more crowded.

Vice Principal Caragher stated there are approximately 214 to 215 students having lunch on any given day.

Principal Woelflein stated that a couple of classroom sizes have 28 and 30 students. She noted that enough desks were provided for those students in the larger classrooms.

Board member Ortega asked if there were any data points or anecdotal experiences either positive or negative that came back from the students, parents and teachers.

Principal Woelflein stated that most of the experiences have been anecdotal up to this point. She noted that there had been zero complaints up to this point. She stated that when the progress reports go out more communication would come back with issues and concerns.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if the Gateway teacher was able to teach the program and help out in the science lab.

Principal Woelflein stated the Gateway teacher is still doing his work with the gifted and talented program while he assists the science teachers with their key labs.

Vice Principal Caragher stated the Gateway teacher is still very involved with the students in the program.

Board member Barnes asked if Principal Woelflein could come back to the Board with modified data points, and impact reports listing what was impacted and what specific strategies were used to build teams.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked for the average size of a seventh grade homeroom class.

Vice Principal Caragher stated approximately 21 to 22 students.

8. Board's Input Reading 2010-2011 Budget Preparation

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that Board member Swonger was not able to attend the September 7th meeting and provided the following written recommendation:

- Continue the trend of being prudent in expenditures without slashing to an austerity level
- Make investments where they will help in the long term
- Maintain a modern physical plant
- Equip the classrooms well
- Be aware and consider the side affects of those residence either out of work or suffering the affects of the down turn
- Be aware that the retirement system burden might increase
- Continue to support the needs of the students and staff
- Committed to the technology and furniture replacement plans that should be funded this year
- Curriculum efforts may need the Board's support in the way of materials or personnel
- Continue to monitor enrollment trends with an eye toward the long term
- Start the asbestos abatement work that has been put off over the past two years
- Look at the roofing projects that might be ahead of us in the coming years
- Does not make sense to build a capital reserve fund when a major capital project is needed yearly
- Continue to absorb the changes made over the past few years
- Continue to come in under the default budget, but invest in areas that support the logic model and District goals

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the Merrimack School Board Budget Message for 2011 – 2012 is as follows:

- Remain committed to the School District logic model
- Continue to make data driven decisions
- Maintain appropriate staffing levels
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Forward thinking with support of curriculum and technology
- Support a well thought-out furniture replacement plan
- Remain prudent with expenditures without sacrificing the quality of the students' education

She stated that the School District Administration would present the budget to the School Board in December. She noted that each department will present its budget. She stated that after a budget hearing, the budget would be forwarded to the Budget Committee. She noted the Budget Committee would write and present a budget recommendation to the School District Administration before the end of September.

9. Request for Survey to Define Boundaries for Merrimack Middle School Signage

Business Administrator Shevenell asked if the Board would expend funds to do survey work on the Merrimack Middle School property as it pertains to Grater Woods, trails, and posting signage on school property. He noted that the signage would state, "NO ATV PER ORDER OF THE MERRIMACK SCHOOL DISTRICT and NO HUNTING PER ORDER OF THE MERRIMACK SCHOOL DISTRICT." He stated the reason for the survey is to determine the back boundary that has not been well delineated. He noted that the intent of the survey would be to document the trail system and create a map that could be input into the Town GIS system. He estimated the cost of the survey to be around \$5,000 to \$7,000. He noted that the money would come from the School District Environmental Education and Forest Management Fund that was established in April 2008. He noted the fund has approximately \$33,935.18.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked if a formal motion and vote were necessary at this evening's meeting.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that a motion and vote in two weeks would be fine.

Board member Ortega asked if the signage would be placed on the property or the trails.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the signage would go around the perimeter of the school property.

Board member Ortega asked if the Board did not approve this request that Business Administrator Shevenell would not be able to post the signs on school property without confidence of the boundaries.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the back part of the Merrimack Middle School property is a concern due to the boundary lines.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if the Grater Woods Subcommittee could help verify the boundary lines.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the Grater Woods Subcommittee purchased software from Garmin and one of the Subcommittee members was going to GPS the trails. He stated that a surveyor would be best to pick-up the boundary lines of the school property.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if the Grater Woods Subcommittee understood where the town owned property lines end and the school property lines begin.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the property boundaries are on the GIS system and the trail system is on a map, but it is just a representation of what the Grater Woods Subcommittee has. He stated that the trail system map is not as accurate as it should be.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if there was an easement that covered the boundary lines and if there was an easement wouldn't it be considered one piece of property.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated the Conservation Easement is School District property, but is delineated separately.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated the Conservation Easement does not apply to the entire piece of School District property.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated it is like having three separate parcels: 1) Grater Woods; 2) School District property; and 3) easement area that are a subset of the school property.

Board member Barnes stated because there is an easement in a partnership that does not mean the School District absolves liability by giving the partner total ownership and stewardship of the activities that go on School District property.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated the easement was given to the Town and signed by the Chairman of the Town Council. He stated that the Town Council voted to have management done by the Conservation Commission. He stated the Conservation Commission manages the property for the School District and notifies the School District of any violations. He noted that any needed repairs are the responsibility of the School District.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated the Town has asked the School District to put the signage up. She noted that she was in support of spending the money for this project.

Superintendent Chiafery asked that the project be put on the October 4th consent agenda.

10. Request for Board Representation on the Athletic Fields Needs Committee and the South Fire Station Committee

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she received communication from Tim Tenhave and confirmation from Town Council Chairman Thomas Koenig that the Athletic Fields Needs Committee will reconvene. She stated that Board member Barnes has volunteered to sit on the Committee and prepare a final report. She noted that the Committee meets at the end of September.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked if Superintendent Chiafery would prepare a letter to Tim Tenhave regarding the Athletics Fields Needs Committee stating that Board member Barnes will serve on the Committee. She asked that a copy of the letter be sent to Town Council Chairman Thomas Koenig and Town Manager Keith Hickey.

Board member Barnes stated that the first meeting is on September 30th.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that an invitation to participate on the South Fire Station Committee was extended to the Board at the Joint Town Council School Board Meeting. She stated that the School Board's needs were discussed with Vice Chairman Thornton, Superintendent Chiafery, and Business Administrator Shevenell.

Vice Chairman Thornton stated that a Committee was formed for the South Fire Station. She stated that the town voted in favor of the School District gifting the land to the Town for the purpose of a fire station. She noted that representation on the Committee was not necessary.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that per the agreement the School Board will approve the South Fire Station site plan before it goes to the Planning Board to assure access to the District's remaining portion of the 14 acres.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked if Superintendent Chiafery would prepare a letter to Town Council Chairman Thomas Koenig declining the invitation to participate on the South Fire Station Committee and informing him to move forward per the agreement. She asked if a copy of the letter could be forwarded to Town Manager Keith Hickey.

11. Request to Bargain a Successor Agreement for the Merrimack Teachers Association

Chairman Vaillancourt noted that she was in receipt of a letter dated September 3, 2010 from Debra McLaughlin, President of the Merrimack Teachers' Association, requesting to bargain a successor agreement to the existing Master Agreement. She noted that the members of the Negotiation Team would be Chairman Vaillancourt; Board Member Swonger; Business Administrator Shevenell; and Human Resource Director Linda Hastings. She stated that Business Administrator Shevenell contacted the Merrimack Teachers Association negotiations chair John Snell and scheduled a meeting for September 27, 2010.

12. Request for New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) Resolutions

Chairman Vaillancourt noted that she was in receipt of a letter dated September 10, 2010 from Theodore Comstock, Executive Director of the NHSBA, requesting that any resolutions be submitted by October 22, 2010. She added that the meeting of the Delegate Assembly would be held on January 15, 2011. She noted that Board member Barnes would be attending the meeting with Board member Ortega serving as the alternate.

13. Other

a) Correspondence

Board member Barnes noted that she was in receipt of correspondence from a constituent thanking her for requesting that all acronyms be spelled out.

b) Comments

There were no comments to report.

14. New Business

There was no new business.

15. Committee Reports

Board member Ortega reported that he attended the Budget Committee on September 9th as the liaison and discussed the budget process; the creation of a budget message to the Administration; and the acceptance of Committee member Chip Underhill's resignation along with the process for filling that vacancy.

Vice Chairman Thornton reported that the Merrimack Drug Advisory Coalition met on September 9th and discussed what it means to be a coalition; a presentation from the Police Department on issues that face our youth today such as unsupervised underage drinking and how to overcome the perception of what is and is not okay; and the Prescription Medication Take Back Program that the Police Department is organizing on September 25th to dispose of outdated or unwanted medication properly.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she received correspondence from the Chief of Police informing her that the Prescription Medication Take Back Program will be on the Town/Police website with further information.

Board member Barnes reported that the Grater Woods Subcommittee met on September 9th and discussed signs and boundaries, trail development maintenance project for brickyard, and the addition of the Access Point Subcommittee and Trails Subcommittee. She stated that the Subcommittees will be looking at access points both approved and non-approved to develop a plan for signage in the areas where communication is necessary.

Board member Barnes reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee met on September 15th and discussed the tennis courts and parking on O'Gara Drive. The Parks and Recreation Committee assumed that the Merrimack tennis teams were being transported to the Wasserman Park courts at the School District's expense. The Committee asked what the School Board could do from the budget to help with transportation. She also reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee noted that the parking lot that serves the tennis courts, the skate park and three-on-three basketball court is in rough shape. The high school parents use the parking lot when watching their children play field hockey, baseball, etc. The Committee asked what the School District could do to improve the conditions. The School District wants to make sure that the easement understanding is clear. She stated that the newly elected High School Representative Drew Ploss attended his first Committee meeting.

16. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments on agenda items.

17. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:28 p.m. Vice Chairman Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to enter a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a)(b)(c).

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

At 10:07 p.m. Vice Chairman Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.