

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
October 4, 2010
Merrimack High School–Cafeteria**

PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vaillancourt led the pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the Parent Involvement Survey District Summary had been removed from the agenda and would be added to a later agenda.

2. Introduction of Student Representative to the School Board

Chairman Vaillancourt introduced Student Representative Jacqueline McLavey to the Merrimack School Board.

Student Representative McLavey stated that she is a sophomore at Merrimack High School and hopes to go into the broadcasting field after she graduates.

3. Approval of September 20, 2010 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to approve the September 20, 2010 minutes.

Board Member Ortega requested the following corrections.

- Page 6 of 10, paragraph one, second sentence, change the word “has not been a lot of negative input” to “had been zero complaints”
- Page 10 of 10, paragraph two, first sentence, change the word “alternate” to “liaison”

Vice Chairman Thornton requested the following corrections.

- Page 10 of 10, paragraph six, third sentence, change the word “Plots” to “Ploss”

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following corrections.

- Page 6 of 10, paragraph nine, fifteenth bullet, change the word “over” to “under”
- Page 7 of 10, paragraph one, fourth bullet, change the word “Prioritize projects” to “Capital Improvement projects”
- Page 10 of 10, paragraph six, second sentence, remove the sentence and insert Board Member Barnes’ questions and answers given at the September 20th School Board Meeting.

The motion passed as amended 4-0-1 with Board Member Swonger abstaining.

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

- Saint-Gobain Ceramics to Thorntons Ferry Elementary for \$300.00
- Camp Invention to the Four Elementary Schools for \$250.00 each

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that a gift of \$380.00 was given to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School from Saint-Gobain Ceramics to purchase classroom bookcases, whiteboards, and supplies. He stated that a gift of \$250.00 was given to each elementary school in the Merrimack School District from Camp Invention to purchase student learning and growth materials.

Board Member Swonger asked for background information on the grant from Saint Gobain Ceramics.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that he did not have any background information, but could follow up at a later time.

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Public Participation

Barbara Publicover, 75 Amherst Road, spoke as the Facilitator of the Merrimack Special Education Parents Support Group. She informed the public of the following events:

- October 3 – 9 is Mental Illness Awareness Week with a variety of events being sponsored throughout New Hampshire.
- October 19 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. the Merrimack Middle School Library will be hosting a free workshop, open to the public, entitled “Learning the Signs, an Informational Session on Children’s Mental Health.”

Ms. Publicover stated that the workshop will help people learn early detection and warning signs of mental health illnesses.

Ms. Publicover stated that Governor Lynch has designated the month of October “Parent Involvement in Education Month.” She stated that, throughout the state, a variety of things are going on to show appreciation for parent involvement with mental health issues. She noted that Merrimack has had an increase in parent involvement.

6. Consent Agenda

- Approval of Survey to Define Boundaries for Merrimack Middle School Signage

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to approve the Consent Agenda.

The motion passed 4-0-1 with Board Member Swonger abstaining.

7. Update on Springboard for Success Program

Chairman Vaillancourt introduced Guidance Councilor Deb Manna and Teacher Ginny Crook.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that Ms. Manna was the Director for the Springboard to Success Program. He noted that the drop-out law in New Hampshire has changed the mission of the program to make sure that students graduate on time. He stated that Ms. Manna and Ms. Crook will be discussing the purposefulness of the program which encourages students to continue education beyond high school. The program is a helpful way to ease the students into a transition from middle school to high school.

Ms. Manna and Ms. Cook provided the School Board with a video presentation of the students enrolled in the 2009 summer Springboard to Success Program.

Ms. Manna and Ms. Cook provided the School Board with handouts indicating the progress of the Springboard to Success Program over-the-years. Ms. Crook indicated that the attendance growth had increased over-the-years. She noted that the invited guests were coming from the middle school. She stated that students are brought up to the Little Theatre for a field trip to talk with past Springboard attendees and watch the same video presentation to encourage students to sign up for the program. She noted that a cap was set in place for only 40 students to attend. She stated that four classrooms would be set-up with a ratio of one teacher to ten students. She noted that 38 students attended the 2010 program.

Ms. Crook indicated that 36 out of 38 students were passing the required academic portion of their curriculum. She stated that in order to acquire academic credit the student not only needs to participate in activities, but needs to account for attendance issues as well.

Ms. Crook indicated that 27 out of 32 students passing the academic portion were eligible to receive credit by fulfilling the community service piece of the program.

Ms. Manna indicated that an evaluation survey was provided to the students at the end of the summer. She noted that a majority of the students were glad that they attended the 2010 summer Springboard to Success Program. She stated that the students thought the teachers were helpful, thought the transition into the high school was easier and would recommend other students to the program.

Ms. Crook indicated that a review of the 2007 summer participants in the program showed that 75% of them were on track to graduate on time and 25% were not. She stated of the students that did not participate, 73% are on track to graduate on time and 26% are not.

Ms. Crook indicated that the program gave the students a positive outlook toward higher education and their career goals. She stated that Ms. Manna runs a week long career unit where Military Recruiters and Nashua Community College Recruiters are invited to talk with the students about the possibility of attending college. She stated that the majority of the students who attend the program have not had positive experiences with school and figure that college could not be an option for them.

Ms. Crook indicated that an exit survey is done for those prior attendees and non-attendees, who are about to graduate, to determine how many of them intend to move forward with postsecondary education. She indicated about 80% of the attendees and 48% of the non-attendees are going onto higher education while 20% of the attendees and 52% of the non-attendees are seeking immediate employment.

Board Member Swonger asked if more staff would be needed to lower the teacher to student ratio.

Ms. Crook indicated that one teacher to eight students would be better, but funding is very tight. She noted that one teacher to ten students is doable, but would take a little more preparation to make it work.

Board Member Swonger asked for more background on the amount of students who did not recommend the program to others. He asked if the survey had a place for written comments or were check-off boxes provided.

Ms. Manna indicated that a small percentage of students made written comments. She stated that the students who did write comments were more positive about the program. She noted that a couple students did indicate that they did not get anything out of the program.

Board Member Barnes asked how many students were not invited to the program due to the possibility of over enrollment.

Ms. Crook indicated that this is a first come, first serve program. She stated that all of the invitees receive an invitation with their third quarter grades. She noted that the invitation states that the program is limited to the first 40 students. She indicated that the first 40 students who are able to attend the entire summer program would be put on an attendance list and those students who are only able to attend some of the program would be put on a waiting list.

Board Member Barnes asked about the student evaluations. She wanted to know what the other students were looking to get out of the program and what they did not see imbedded in the program.

Ms. Crook indicated that some of the students have older siblings that attend high school so they felt they already knew the ropes. She indicated that those students would benefit from the learning styles and how to be successful academically.

Ms. Manna indicated that evaluations were done right at the end of the summer. She stated that the students had not been able to put all of the skills into play yet. She noted that another evaluation would be done at the end of the first semester.

Board Member Barnes asked if there were any reasons why those invited students would not partake in the program. She asked if it was due to vacation, jobs or transportation.

Ms. Crook indicated that the majority of those students have family vacation commitments. She noted that transportation is provided. She stated that the program only runs half a day for four weeks. She indicated that some of the parents were concerned about leaving their child home alone for the other half of the day until someone arrived home from work.

Ms. Manna indicated that at least 26 students would not be able to participate in the program if transportation was not provided.

Board Member Ortega asked if there were other metrics that could track the performance of the first year of high school, after the student had been impacted by the program. He asked what changes might be implemented in the program to keep the metrics higher and how to keep the students on track three years after entering in the program.

Ms. Crook indicated that after four weeks of the program the students are asked to write a contract about three things they would like to change from what was done at the middle school to what could be done to be successful in the high school. She stated that some of the students were not able to adhere to the contract after the first couple of weeks so a support counselor was provided to the students throughout their freshman year. She noted that a support counselor is available for the student's sophomore year if they feel that they need one.

Ms. Manna indicated that the students are informed that they are coming to the high school with a clean slate no matter what happened in the past.

8. Request to Terminate the Merrimack Public Access Center Agreement

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she received a letter dated September 16, 2010 from Town Manager Keith Hickey to terminate the Merrimack Public Access Center Agreement. She noted that the Public Access Center had been located at the high school since 2002 due to space restrictions at the Town Hall. She stated that after renovations to the Town Hall were complete the Town Council and the Town Manager aspired to expand the Public Access Center so community programming could be done from the Town Hall. She noted that the School Board was concerned about the students who were still interested in learning the art of media programming. She stated that the center would be expanded with one location at the high school for student use and the other location at the Town Hall for community use. She noted that the guidelines in the Agreement specify that the Town must supply written notification to the School District of their intentions to terminate one school year prior to the termination taking place.

9. 2010 New England Collaborative Assessment Project (NECAP) Science Results

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin provided a summary of the following NECAP results for grades 4, 8 and 11:

- Grade 4 had modest increases with no major shift in performance;
- Grade 8 had modest increases with slight decreases in the number of students moving into a higher category; and
- Grade 11 had increases and decreases in the right categories.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted that grades 4, 8 and 11 outperformed the state in every category. He stated that the School District's worst area of performance is in the domain of inquiry. He added that the domain of inquiry consists of problem solving in deduction and induction, testing of a hypothesis, and weighing possible distracters by finding the better of the two answers that are very

similar. He noted that the Science Curriculum Committee is able to take the results of the NECAP, taking into account the inquiry results, to analyze and implement any changes based on those results.

Board Member Ortega asked if there is a reason that changes are only presented from level to level and not list the actual percentages in each testing level. He asked why a snapshot of the School District's performance is not listed.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that he would provide that information to the Board.

Board Member Swonger asked if science would be added to the Adequate Yearly Progress designations in the future.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that nothing is eminent by the state to use the Adequate Yearly Progress in the next year or two.

Board Member Swonger asked how much the School District thinks the increase, especially in grade 11, is due to familiarity with the test.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that the teachers have been very careful in reviewing the test and increasing their familiarity with that test to incorporate information into their classroom instruction.

Board Member Swonger asked if the teachers are teaching to the test.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that there is an alignment and a measurement of the frameworks that the teachers are implementing in their classrooms. He noted that the definition of frameworks is part of the No Child Left Behind Act which indicates that states are required to develop a guideline of instructions in K-12 content areas. He noted that frameworks are locally and state developed. He stated that K-12 scope and sequence for the instruction of a particular content area are required and the teacher provides benchmarks for certain points in time that they would prepare the student developmentally to accomplish the framework guidelines. He stated that the framework guidelines are prepared by the educators that developed them.

10. Other

a) Correspondence

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she received a letter from Jennifer DeFelice, President of Broadway Bound, asking if marketing flyers could be distributed throughout the School District. She noted that she contacted Ms. DeFelice and informed her of the Merrimack School Board Policy.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she had acquired a variety of informative magazines to share with the Board Members.

b) *Comments*

Vice Chairman Thornton stated that Roy Ingerson, Crossing Guard at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, retired after 20 years of service. She thanked Mr. Ingerson for his years of service to the students and parents at the school.

11. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery stated that Right to Know Training is available for elected officials on the School Board, Planning and Building Committee and School District Budget Committee. She noted that training would take place on October 26th at 7:30 p.m. at Merrimack high school.

12. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes stated that the Fields Needs Committee met on September 30th to discuss the 2007 plan and documentation, long term benefits of astroturf to improve the high school fields, and develop a designated area of the Merrimack Middle School for additional fields in the future. She stated that the next meeting would be held on October 13th at 8:00p.m.

Board Member Barnes stated that the Grater Woods Committee created the Trails Subcommittee and the Access Point Subcommittee. She stated that the Committee met on October 2nd to discuss access points and appropriate usages for parking and wet lands. She noted that questions were raised about parking and access during school hours.

Board Member Ortega stated that the School District Budget Committee met on September 28th at the Masticola Elementary School to discuss the replacement of Committee Member Chip Underhill. He stated that Rick Barnes volunteered to conduct the interview process for the open position on October 5th. He noted that the Committee would no longer be sending an independent message to the Administration relating to the budget, but would use the Committee Liaison to attend School Board Budget meetings as a means of communicating questions and concerns.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the budget process is moving along and that the Budget Committee had nothing new to add in the beginning of the process now. She stated that the School Board expects to have the budget books in December. She stated that it would be beneficial for the Budget Committee to attend, view or get a copy of the School Board meetings to understand the Board's topics of discussion when the School Board budget process begins in December.

Board Member Swonger stated that the Planning and Building Committee is meeting on October 4th to discuss the completion of a final report and recommendation along with analysis and options of the School Administrative Unit and Special Education Offices.

Vice Chairman Thornton stated that the Merrimack Drug Advisory Coalition met on September 23rd to discuss the fact that the name had been changed to Merrimack Safeguard.

Vice Chairman Thornton stated that some correspondence has gone back and forth regarding access to the Merrill's Marauders Pedestrian Bridge which is now underneath the highway construction. She stated that discussions have been made about access trails to get on and off the bridge.

13. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments on agenda items.

14. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:03 p.m. Vice Chairman Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to enter a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a)(b)(c).

The motion passed 5-0-0 by a roll call vote.

At 9:56 p.m. Vice Chair Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.