

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room  
December 1, 2014  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

PRESENT: Chairman Ortega, Vice Chair Barnes, Board Members Powell, Guagliumi and Schneider, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell and Student Representative Crowley.

**1. Call To Order**

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Approval of the November 17, 2014 minutes**

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2014 meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2 of 11, lines 85 and 86, correct the spelling of Coffy.
- Page 5 of 11, line 231 replace with, “There will be a realistic time line to see improvements in the scores based on the new testing platform starting this year and other data plans that will not be viable in establishing a trend line for growth”.

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 11, line 178, sentence should read, “She asked about the status of them at the Middle School.

The motion to accept the minutes of the November 17, 2014 meeting as amended passed 5-0-0.

**3. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell presented a gift from Gyk Antler, 121 Riverfront Drive, Manchester, NH in the amount of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) to Merrimack High School. This gift was received because Mr. Jon VanDeCar, Merrimack High School, was awarded the All Star Educator of the Year. These funds are to be used for the Vocational Education program.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to accept the generous gift from Gyk Antler in the amount of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) to Merrimack High School.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

**5. Consent Agenda**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the Student Use of Information Technology Policy for approval.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the Student Use of Information Technology Policy.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## **6. Award Recognition for Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)**

Amy Larkin-Perez, Physical Education Department Head at Merrimack High School and advisor to SADD (Students Against Destructive Decision), stated that the SADD members were not only present to discuss the award they received, but also to share some of the things they do throughout the year for the students at the high school as well as groups within the community.

Members of Students Against Destructive Decision in attendance were President Renee Murray, Vice President Jennifer Mulligan, Treasurer Megan Murphy, Secretary Emily Duval and Co Publicists Ariel Weigand and Alison Poudrette.

Each member spoke about the accomplishments this past year:

- Red Ribbon Week
- Muffin Baskets
- Mr. MHS
- Junior Impact
- Mock DUI

Renee Murray, President of MHS SADD, stated that all the events lead to Merrimack SADD receiving the 2014 Action Award. This award is given to a person or group that demonstrates a strong push in the community to make good decisions. MHS SADD was recognized for their strong impact on students and their message to make smart decisions.

Ms. Murray also announced that two past members of SADD were instrumental in the State Senate not passing legislation that would allow alcohol to be promoted on billboards.

Chairman Ortega asked if there are many male students involved in SADD.

Ms. Murray responded that there are currently more male members of SADD than there have been in the past.

Board Member Powell congratulated the group on their award. He noted that the Mock DUI is a very powerful event. He also stated that he was excited that they are sponsoring an event for Juniors before the prom. He stated that if the board can do anything to assist them in any events they should not hesitate to ask.

Ms. Murray added that it is mandatory that all Juniors listen to the speakers at Junior Impact or they would not be allowed to attend the prom.

Vice Chair Barnes stated that SADD is a nice extension from Merrimack Safeguard. She added that SADD puts out a good and positive message and take it as a year-round responsibility.

## **7. Update on the Status of the Trust Funds**

Chairman Ortega stated that it has been a common occurrence on a regular basis for the Trustees of the Trust Funds to come before the board and provide an update. He added that a number of the Trust Funds are related to the school district specifically. Most recently the Trustees have

helped to renovate the libraries at Reeds Ferry Elementary and James Mastricola Elementary Schools.

Acting Trustee Chairman Chris Christensen explained that the three trustees have three year rotating terms so there is one person up for election at the annual town meeting in the spring. Their function is to manage town funds, both those that are expendable and those that are non-expendable.

- The expendable funds are Capital Reserve Funds and a long term savings account. There is about ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in Capital Reserve Funds between the school and the town.
- In market value they have about 5.4 million dollars (\$5,400,000) in funding.
  - A lot of those monies are for perpetual care for cemeteries.
  - Some of the monies have been left to the town to benefit the library, fire department, schools and some scholarship funds.
  - The Watkins Forest Fund is a unique fund.

Bill Wilkes gave an overall view of the investments:

- We are primarily invested in U.S. based companies.
- They look for companies that will pay reasonably safe dividends.
- They do have some non-U.S. based companies, such as Royal Dutch Petroleum and TD Bank because they have strong performance records.
- In June 2008, the balance of these funds was 3.5 million dollars (\$3,500,000) and as of October 31, 2014 the balance was almost 5.5 million dollars (\$5,500,000).

Vice Chair Barnes asked if any of the dividends over the past few years have been reinvested in the principal or have they all been disbursed for projects.

Mr. Christensen responded that stock dividends get reinvested in the principal. Cash dividends become listed as income, as is required by the rules of the Trusts. He added that all the monies have not been spent on projects.

Board Member Powell asked about the Mastricola Fund, which was not mentioned in the report.

Mr. Christensen responded that it was just not highlighted on the report.

Jack Balcom stated that they are encouraged to keep the monies invested and to let them grow. There have been a couple of projects that requested funding, such as the Mandarin program at the high school and the upgrading of two of the elementary school libraries.

Chairman Ortega asked about the Fund D, the Watkins Prize Speaker and Watkins Prize Spelling, but the Watkins Forest is not listed.

Mr. Balcom spoke about the Watkins Fund.

- Before Mr. Watkins died in 1965, he left some funds for a speech and spelling contest. Those funds generate about one hundred forty dollars (\$140) each a year.
  - The spelling contest has been maintained at the Middle School.
  - The speech contest has lapsed. They are hoping to start that up again. There is six thousand dollars (\$6,000) in built up income in that fund.
  - They have drawn up a draft of the rules for the speech contest. It is being worked on and hopefully it will integrate into the National Speech contest.

- When Mr. Watkin died at the age of ninety-two, he left two plots of land. They were between Mitchell Road and Bean Road and another on Lawrence Road. These are unique Trust Funds because they generate income. The current balance in the Watkins Forest Fund, to benefit the school district, has about ninety-six thousand dollars (\$96,000) on the income side.

Mr. Christensen added that there is about forty-one thousand dollars (\$41,000) in the Mastricola Fund which is accumulated income. He added that the income side of these funds carries mostly cash, where the principal is almost entirely invested in equities.

Mr. Christensen noted that most of the funds were established prior to 1965 and specifically mention elementary schools, grade one through grade eight. At that time that was all the schools in Merrimack. They try and be flexible with the restrictions in these funds to include all grades, K-12.

Board Member Schneider asked about the process for determining which projects are to be done.

Mr. Christensen responded that the administration comes to them with specific projects.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that one of the conversations the administration has had with the Trustees is about planting seed money for a project. Also, they spoke about what projects would benefit the greatest number of students and staff. She added that Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is the next library to be updated and that the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School would like to be considered for the next library update.

Mr. Balcom added that the wills for these trusts are specific to the use of their funds. He stated that James Mastricola came to Merrimack as an Italian immigrant and owned most of the land where the Budweiser Brewery is located. When he died he didn't want to leave his family members any of his money, and he left it to the school district, providing the name of any new school would be Mastricola.

Board Member Guagliumi asked about some of the other projects that have been funded by the Trust Funds over the last few years.

Mr. Balcom responded that there has been a massive technology upgrade at the high school, the Butterfly Garden at Reeds Ferry was established, and the gym at the middle school was redone.

Chairman Ortega thanked the Trustees for their diligence in managing the funds and for keeping the board informed as to what monies may be available for future projects.

Mr. Christensen added that they have had a meeting with a forester about the Watkins Forest. Because the areas are tree farms, they have to update their paperwork every ten years in order to keep the funds active. Although there is no cutting of the forest in the immediate future, when a cut is done it has to be approved by the Town Council after a public hearing. The will specifies that a member of the school board be a member of the cutting committee to oversee the cut.

## **8. Focus on Family and Consumer Science Programs at Merrimack Middle School and Merrimack High School**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin introduced the members of the Family and Consumer Science Programs in Merrimack. They were Ann Bergeron from Merrimack Middle School, Sue Retelle from Merrimack Middle school and Nicole Rollend from Merrimack High School.

Sue Retelle, Merrimack Middle School, spoke about the program there:

- The New Hampshire Family and Consumer Science Association is working with the Department of Education to develop new curriculum standards that show that FACS (Family and Consumer Science) can be a part of the Common Core. The State has decided not to cut the program.
- Self-directed computer modules are used. These include modules about career exploration, families, life skills, early childhood development, interior design, breakfast microwave and snack nutrition, baking and measurement and sewing and design.
- When a module is chosen, students are paired with another student to complete the work on that module.
- Due to time limits, students are only able to complete five or six modules by the time they leave eighth grade.
- They have shortened the orientation program so that the students have more time to work on the individual modules.
- The software and hardware for the program are outdated.
- The cooking modules are the most exciting for the children.
- The sewing module is another favorite module because it is so rewarding to make something yourself that can be taken home when completed.
- Cooperation and collaboration are stressed because students have to work as a partner or a team.
- SCALES work has been integrated into the program. This has been a challenge because modules already have individually set goals, assessments and evaluations. It is also difficult to set learning targets for the entire class when each pair is working on a different subject area.

Ms. Retelle thanked the board for allowing them to come to the meeting. She added that it was the first time they remembered being asked to present their program to the school board.

Nicole Rollend, Merrimack High School, spoke about the FAC program at the high school.

- Family and Consumer Science education provides the opportunity for students to plan for possible careers, develop practical skills for employment, understand the importance of nutrition and learn about appropriate childcare practices, financial literacy resource management, parenting and the art of communication.
- The classes allow students to develop teamwork, leadership and technology skills that enable them to become high-level critical thinkers in order to meet personal, family, career and community challenges they will face in their adult life.
- At the moment there are three classes available at the high school level. They are Foods and Nutrition, Independent Living and Childhood Development.
- Community Service projects that the students have done over the past year:
  - Empty Bowls: Students made soup that was donated to the Empty Bowl fundraiser
  - King Arthur Flour Learn, Bake Share Program: Students made rolls for the St. James food pantry.
  - Open House: Students made breads for open house at the high school.
  - Parent/Teacher Conferences: Students made an array of desserts as parents were welcome to conferences.

- Student volunteering at the elementary school: Students volunteered in different classrooms at Masticola Elementary School.
- Cakes: Students created sixteen different cakes that were donated to the annual Merrimack High School craft fair.
- Books: Students created children's books that were donated to a local school.
- Muffins: Muffins were donated to the school nurse for students when they needed to take food with medicine or were sick.

Ms. Rollend stated that she is hoping to have all her classes do some sort of community service project next year. She added that she asks the students for ideas for community service projects.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the ten week Family and Consumer Science program at the middle school is one quarter over the two years or is it one quarter each year.

Ms. Retelle responded that it was one quarter each year. Each module takes seven to ten days.

Board Member Schneider stated that he thought it would be helpful if the color-blindness of the male students was taken into consideration when they are working on the sewing module.

Board Member Guagliumi stated that teaching life skills is very important, as well as the community service and volunteering being done. The kids are learning to make a difference in the community.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that next year in the 2015-2016 operating budget there are significant funds to update the equipment in the Family and Consumer Science labs.

## **9. Overview of Proposed 2015-2016 School District Budget**

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the budget books will be available at the end of the meeting. She spoke about the planning that went into this budget.

- Back in September the Administrative team met.
- Tools used were the District Logic Model that focuses on literacy, technology integration and positive school learning environments, the district's technology plan, enrollment projections, the Capital Improvement Plan, furniture replacement plans for every building, and the board's budget message to the Superintendent.
- Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Business Administrator Shevenell visited various sites to see items or issues that are going to be part of the budget.

Superintendent Chiafery added that it is important to look at the future between now and mid-January because there are things that have to be addressed. Collective Bargaining is going on for the Merrimack Education Support Staff Association which could result in a Warrant Article. The board is currently deliberating with the Planning and Building regarding the consolidation of the Special Services and Administrative Office but no determination has been made.

Items that were the result of her Administrative meetings:

- The track: There will be two options provided with costs and the listing of the things being addressed by that cost. There is always the option to wait.

- They are looking for the board to eliminate a Capital Reserve Fund that has been set aside for asbestos abatement. They are requesting that one warrant be for the elimination of the fund and a new warrant be developed to raise and appropriate the same amount of money to go towards school district emergency repairs. It is repurposing the fund for something that needs to be done.
- There are several maintenance items raised by Tom Touseau.
- Enrollment Projections: Merrimack has three thousand nine hundred and forty-five (3,945) students. This number is taken from the attendance the Monday after Labor Day. They are projecting that the number will be three thousand eight hundred and seventy (3,870) students for the year 2015-2016. Overall that is a minus of seventy-five students.
  - Grades K-4 minus one student
  - Grades 5, 6 minus twenty-three students
  - Grades 7, 8 minus seven students
  - Grades 9-12 minus sixty-five students
  - Preschool and out-of district placement, but mostly preschool, is a plus seventeen.
- Staffing:
  - One of the major goals is to have preschool in all three of the elementary schools. They are proposing a preschool be established at Thorntons Ferry next year. They are able to transfer one full-time preschool teacher from Masticola Elementary to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. A 0.5 time preschool teaching position needs to be added to make this happen and to have equity across the board.
  - Because of the declining numbers in enrollment at the high school, there needs to be a reduction in force. They recommend minus one English teaching position, and minus one Math teaching position.
  - They have projected into next year's class sizes. The freshman class will number about two hundred eighty-three (283) students. This is the beginning of having a cohort that is less than three hundred.
  - We would be able to transfer two full-time para-educator positions to Thortons Ferry from Masticola. For the half-time teaching position, we need to add to that two 0.5 para-educators. The result of this is a whole teaching position with two para-educators and a half teaching position with two half-time para-educators.
  - District-wide they are recommending we add one computer technician with a focus specifically at the elementary level. Right now there is one computer technician servicing the entire district.
- Salaries
  - The board has a negotiated agreement with the Merrimack Teachers Association for the third year of a three year agreement.
- Health Coverage: The Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR) is 4.4% more than the cost in 2014-2015, which translates into two hundred twenty-three thousand two hundred seventy-seven dollars (\$223,277).
- New Hampshire Retirement costs for both professional staff and classified staff continues to increase year after year. The professional staff is up 10% or four hundred thirty-seven thousand three hundred forty-seven dollars (\$437,347).
- Classroom Instruction: Every building has a plan for furniture replacement that will be referenced in the budget.

- This year there is a focus on FAC (Family and Consumer Science) and the modules that are ten years old.
- There is an outlay for texts.
  - At the middle school there are texts being purchased for Earth Science which go along with the curriculum development.
  - There are going to be two new classes offered at the high school next year. They are AP American Government and Politics and Sociology. Each of those courses need texts.
- The Technology Plan
  - Director Nancy Rose will speak to the board about having student access to computers at the high school as well as replacing the oldest computers for students and staff in other parts of the district.
  - There will be a significant increase in software and licensing.
- Special Services
  - Director John Fabrizio and Bridey Bellemere, Principal at Thorntons Ferry, have worked closely together on planning for preschool classrooms. In the Thorntons Ferry Budget there is a room for preschool furniture and playground equipment for the preschool.
- Charter Schools
  - If there is a student with an IEP, whose parents elect to have him/her attend a charter school, there are costs associated which are the responsibility of the district.
  - The monies for transportation cannot be taken from the regular transportation budget. There is therefore a specific line item for it.
  - The district must provide for any child attending a charter school.
- Maintenance
  - Included in the Operating Budget is the roof replacement at the high school and the air ventilation system at the high school.
  - There is a request for the replacement of a truck with a plow.
- There is a line item for carpet for the library at Thorntons Ferry because the hope is the Trust Fund trustees will provide funds for the rest of the renovation of the library once the carpet is laid.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that the “big ticket items” for the budget would be the high school roof, the high school ventilation system, the Health Care costs and the Retirement costs.

Superintendent Chiafery provided the following figures:

- 2015-2016 proposed Administrative Budget is seventy-one million two hundred fifty-two thousand five hundred forty five dollars (\$71,252,545).
- That is two million three hundred eighty two thousand six hundred sixty-five dollars (\$2,382,665) over this year’s approved Operating Budget.
- This translates into a budget that is 3.46% higher than the approved budget for 2014-2015.
- The default budget is seventy-one million five thousand eight hundred twenty-two dollars (\$71,005,822). The proposed Administrative Budget is two hundred forty six thousand seven hundred twenty three dollars (\$246,723) more than the default budget.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the board will begin talking about the particular department budgets on December 15, 2014, specifically Food Services and Maintenance.



Chairman Ortega stated that the board appreciates the work the administration has gone through to prepare this budget. He added that the budget books will be available for budget committee members tomorrow as well as being available on line.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the budget was put on line at 7:35 p.m. that evening.

Chairman Ortega invited, as has been done in the past, the budget committee members to use the opportunity to funnel questions through the budget committee chair, Mr. Heinrich, to the administration so that those questions could be raised early in the process.

## **10. Other**

### **a) Correspondence**

Chairman Ortega stated that a letter was received from a parent who was disappointed with the board's response to the Science NECAP scores presented at the last board meeting on November 17, 2014.

Student Representative Crowley stated that she, as part of student council, received a letter from the bleacher company stating that the wrong color bleachers had been delivered and installed.

### **b) Comments**

Chairman Ortega stated that he, Vice Chair Barnes, Business Administrator Shevenell and Maintenance Director Tom Touseau attended the Student Congress meeting at the High School. He stated that it was a great meeting and the group was very engaged.

## **11. New Business**

There was no new business

## **12. Committee Reports**

Student Representative Crowley thanked the members of the board who attended the Student Congress meeting. She also announced that the Sophomore Semi will be held this Friday.

Board Member Schneider stated that the Planning and Building Committee met on November 24, 2014. They went over a schedule of how to approach their next presentation to the school board in January including putting a video together and gathering data. He added that they have a series of working meetings set up through December and early January. They are planning to appear before the board in mid-January with their preliminary plan.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin spoke about the PERC (Program Evaluation and Review Committee) meeting he and Vice Chair Barnes attended. The theme for the past meeting and the upcoming meeting is embracing the notion of interdisciplinary courses. They had proposals for course-matching such as the Math department and the Science department, English Language Arts and Social Studies, Physical Education and Special Education. They also received a proposal for Advanced Placement Government and Sociology courses at the high school.

Vice Chair Barnes attended the meeting of the Grater Woods committee on November 18, 2014. The guest speaker was Business Administrator Shevenell. There is a lot going on with the replacement of Camp MiTeNa. She added that the town has trails that run between both the school and town property and that the town is working to make sure these trails are properly marked. They discussed other trails that are being used. They also discussed maintenance issues.

Vice Chair Barnes stated that this Saturday, December 6, 2014, will be the Christmas Parade at 3:00 p.m. followed by the Christmas tree lighting at 3:45 p.m. that is put on by the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that on November 18, 2014 students from China came to the high school for a few days to visit our students as part of our annual exchange program.

### **13. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments on Agenda Items.

### **14. Manifest**

At 9:25 p.m. Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.