

**Merrimack Special School Board Meeting
December 9, 2010
James Mastricola Elementary School – All Purpose Room**

PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman Thornton, Board members Barnes, Ortega, Swonger, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell. Budget Committee members in attendance were Andy Schneider, Jennifer Burk, Matthew Publicover, Bill Boyd and Bill Cummings.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Budget Discussions

Superintendent Chiafery explained that edits had been made to pages 12 and 17 of the budget book. She distributed the updated pages to the school board and budget committee members.

• **Food Service**

Food Service David Dziki presented the 2011-2012 food service budget which is 6% less than the 2010-2011 food service budget. He reported the elimination of one food service position at James Mastricola Elementary School. He explained that the proposed food and milk budget is lower because of the decrease in student enrollment and lower participation. He noted that the technology budget increased slightly in order to accommodate the proposed online prepayment plan.

Board member Swonger asked if the previously owned van that was purchased last year was in need of any repairs.

Mr. Dziki responded that the van was serving the department well and that it did not need any repairs last year except for routine maintenance. At this time, the van is not in need of repairs other than routine maintenance.

Board member Swonger questioned why the budget for bottled gas was lower than actual expenditures two years ago.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that the bottled gas also provides hot water to the upper elementary school, a result of the energy retrofit. He noted that, in the future, the appropriate buildings will contribute to the cost of bottled gas.

Board member Swonger asked for clarification with regards to the difference between the proposed and expended amount of the food service improvement and development account.

Mr. Dziki explained that he opted not to attend the annual conference last year in an effort to contain costs. However, he would like to have the funds available in the event it would be beneficial for him to attend a conference in 2011-2012.

Board member Barnes asked if the reduction in food service staff would affect the efficiency during lunch.

Mr. Dziki responded that elimination of the one food service position would not affect the serving lines during lunch.

Chair Vaillancourt asked Business Administrator Shevenell to explain how the food service budget was self funding and how that worked.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the food service program is supported by the revenues it generates. Surplus funds can be carried over from year to year.

- **Special Services**

David St. Jean, Director of Special Education presented the proposed 2011-2012 budget for special services. He explained that the special education budget is child specific and is regulated by federal law and state rules and regulations.

Mr. St. Jean reported that the proposed special education budget for 2011-2012 reflects an increase of approximately 2.6%. He noted a decrease in the out-of-district placements, an increase in the paraeducator salaries per contract negotiations, an increase in required student services and an increase in the transportation costs per contract.

Board member Ortega asked Mr. St. Jean to explain the catastrophic aid process.

Mr. St. Jean explained that catastrophic aid was designed to help school districts pay for expensive student services. He explained that last year the catastrophic aid reimbursement rate was 85% of the actual cost.

Business Administrator Shevenell added that the Department of Revenue provides districts with a percentage range for catastrophic aid reimbursement. The district uses the low percentage rate when creating the budget. He reported that preliminary estimates indicate that the percentage of catastrophic aid reimbursement could be less than the minimum range amount.

Board member Swonger asked for clarification relative to the tutoring account.

Mr. St. Jean explained that students with disabilities are eligible to receive up to 10 hours of tutoring service per week; typical students who are unable to attend school for ten or more days are eligible to receive up to five hours of tutoring service per week. The account is level funded due to the inability to track the account from year to year.

- **Library Services:**

Library Services Director Nancy Rose reported that her budget contains an increase in software due to increases in annual subscription costs, new resources and the need to pay for resources previously provided by the New Hampshire State Library. She stated that the books account would remain level funded. She reported a need to update the existing presentation systems and interactive projection equipment. She stated that the library program budget is a reflection of the push to focus on skills for the 21st century learner.

Vice Chair Thornton asked for examples of how data projection equipment would be utilized at the elementary school level.

Mrs. Rose responded that the data projection equipment would be used to display maps and web sites.

Board member Swonger asked if Mrs. Rose had a replacement plan for the library equipment.

Mrs. Rose responded that it would be difficult to create an equipment replacement plan for the library because the quality of the new equipment continues to improve. She notes that many pieces of equipment are repairable and have a life span of seven to eight years.

Board member Ortega asked Mrs. Rose to explain the difference between a data projector, a smart board and an interactive data projector.

Mrs. Rose responded that a standard data projector projects an image only. An interactive projection system, such as a smart board, allows for interaction with an image or web site.

Board member Ortega stated that he supports having interactive capabilities in the classroom rather than purchasing equipment for labs that will become outdated quickly.

Board member Barnes asked why there was a reduction in the technology repair account.

Mrs. Rose responded that the reason for a reduction in the technology repair account is due to the decision not to repair older VHS equipment at the high school. She noted that the quality of the overhead projectors have improved and do not require as much repair.

Chair Vaillancourt noted that each of the presentations so far have had a reference to a reduction in state funding.

Chair Vaillancourt expressed her support for interactive technology.

- **Merrimack Middle School**

Principal Debbie Woelflein and Assistant Principal Adam Caragher presented the proposed 2011-2012 budget for the Merrimack Middle School. Mrs. Woelflein reported a decrease in the middle school budget due to a decrease in student enrollment.

Principal Woelflein reported that the middle school's proposed budget reflects a commitment to the District Logic Model. She noted that the maintenance of critical efforts, a smooth transition for students and a consistent experience is reflected in the individual line items and in the area of personnel.

Board member Swonger asked why the telephone line was higher compared to other schools.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that phone utilization is higher at the middle school than the elementary schools, the fire alarm utilizes phone lines, plus some upper elementary school phone lines are being charged to the middle school bill.

Board member Swonger asked for additional detail relative to the science textbook account.

Principal Woelflein explained that the middle school planned to purchase science pamphlets, not textbooks, from the science textbook account.

Board member Swonger asked how many new radios were for expanding coverage versus replacement radios.

Assistant Principal Caragher responded that the intended use of the six new radios would allow for expanded coverage.

Board member Swonger asked how the portable keyboards were utilized.

Assistant Principal Caragher responded that the keyboards were part of the general music curriculum.

Board member Barnes questioned the bookcase cost of \$600 each.

Assistant Principal Caragher and Business Administrator Shevenell responded that the bookcases are industrial strength bookshelves and will match the interior of the middle school.

Principal Woelflein acknowledged a decline in student enrollments and the desire to maintain the four eighth grade teaching teams next year. She highlighted maintenance of critical efforts, positive behavior intervention model, the restructure at the middle school last year, and a smooth transition for students.

Board member Swonger asked if other alternatives had been considered and what affect they could have if implemented.

Principal Woelflein responded that various combinations of hybrid teams had been considered. Each hybrid combination had draw backs and challenges.

The Board members expressed that it was difficult for them to support maintaining the four eighth grade teams next year given the decline in enrollments; it would not represent fiscal responsibility.

The Board suggested a review of other teachings models appropriate for the middle school level.

- **Maintenance**

Maintenance Director Tom Touseau presented the proposed 2011-2012 budget for maintenance.

Mr. Touseau reported that the major initiatives in the 2011-2012 budget are the abatement of asbestos floor tiles at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, the replacement of the library carpet at James Mastricola Elementary School, the paving of Lyons Road at Reeds Ferry Elementary School and the renovation to the entrances at James Mastricola Upper Elementary, Reeds Ferry Elementary School and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. He noted an increase in the upkeep of the building repair account and the contractual obligations account which was related to the energy efficiency contract.

Board member Ortega asked why there was a reduction in electricity costs at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

Mr. Touseau explained that the decrease was reflective of the savings from the energy retrofit.

Mr. Touseau affirmed that the Reeds Ferry Elementary School and the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School cafeteria tables have been repaired on a regular basis. The replacement of one set of tables would provide spare parts for future repairs. He stated that the tables were safe.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that wall unit tables get the tables up and out of the way when not in use. He added that regular table units could be purchased for approximately \$10,000 less.

Chair Vaillancourt stated that she was pleased to see lower levels of water and electric usage.

The majority of the School Board members agreed that the cost of the construction for the new entrance to the upper elementary school, Thorntons Ferry and Reeds Ferry should come from the operating budget rather than a warrant article.

Vice Chair Thornton expressed concern that choice would be removed from the voters if the construction of the new entrances were to be included in the operating budget.

Chair Vaillancourt announced that the high school NEASC report had been received and that the cleanliness of the high school had been noted in the report. She thanked Mr. Touseau and the maintenance department.

The Board acknowledged and thanked the five budget committee members for attending the meeting.

Chair Vaillancourt stated that the budget deliberation process has been handled a number of different ways over the years. She explained that this year the board would take a position on the proposed budget at the end of the December 14, 2010 budget workshop. The Superintendent will present the board with adjustments to the proposed budget on December 20, 2010 or January 3, 2011, if needed.

Chair Vaillancourt announced that Board member Swonger would not be in attendance on December 14th. She noted that Board member Swonger will document his comments and questions for consideration during the December 14th budget workshop.

4. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Andy Schneider, 34 Woodward Road, spoke as a parent about his fear of dysfunction at the middle school next year if an eighth grade team were eliminated given that a seventh grade team was eliminated last year. He asked the board to consider keeping the staffing levels the same with a commitment to change to another model next year. He asked if the board decided to reduce the number of teams, to be mindful and put something in place to allow flexibility to support ongoing efforts at the school.

At 9:10 p.m., Board member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chair Thornton) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.