

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
January 5, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Call To Order

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Member Powell and Student Representative Crowley were excused from the meeting.

2. Approval of the December 15, 2014 minutes

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2014 meeting.

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3, line 102 should read “Board Member Schneider...”
- Page 5, line 218 should read “Attorney Greg Michael...”
- Page 9, line 448, “January 5” should read “January 20”

Vice Chair Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3, line 117, add an “s” to the word Developer.
- Page 4, line 180 should read “...that the multiple representatives from...”

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2, line 69 should read “...Dr. Paul LeBlanc, president for SNHU, for his...”
- Page 3, line 125, add the words “as a round-a-bout” to the end of the sentence.
- Page 3, line 146, add an “s” to the word “meet”
- Page 4, line 198, add “for the safety concerns for the citizens and children.” To the end of the sentence.
- Page 7, line 322, add the following two sentences to the end of the paragraph, “He stated it is hard to know if the project will cost a little more in a later year. He reiterated that they are unrelated projects.”

Chair Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 1 line 45, add the word “Merrimack” before the word “Educators”
- Page 2, line 63, insert the word “the” between the words “of entire”
- Page 4, line 197, change the word “acknowledge” to “acknowledged”
- Page 5, line 222, add “To that end Attorney Greg Michael committed to having a traffic study done in the next two weeks.”
- Page 6, line 298, the word “axel” should read “axle”.

The motion to accept the minutes of the December 15, 2014 meeting as amended passed 4-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell presented the following gifts and grants under \$5,000 to the Board.

- Rotary Club of Merrimack to Merrimack High School for \$1,118.97
- HealthTrust, Inc. to Merrimack School District for \$100
- Shaw's Supermarket to James Masticola Elementary School for \$400
- Barnes and Noble to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for \$300.53
- Wentworth Association to Merrimack School District for \$159

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to approve acceptance of the gifts and grants under \$5,000 with gratitude.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. 2013-2014 New Hampshire Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education

Special Services Director John Fabrizio introduced the leaders of the Merrimack Special Education Parent Support Group Barbara Publicover, Trisha Swonger. He noted that Michele Watson was not able to attend the meeting.

Director Fabrizio explained that the Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education is distributed annually by the New Hampshire Department of Education to the parents of children with disabilities.

Trisha Swonger reported the survey response rate for the Merrimack School District is 36.5% compared to the state response rate of 19%.

Barbara Publicover explained that the New Hampshire Department of Education recently contracted with a new vendor from Texas. She noted that the survey questions are weighted now rather than percentages. Having weighted survey questions allows the Districts to determine where to place effort.

John Fabrizio provided examples of low, medium and high level questions.

Barbara Publicover highlighted many successful efforts by the Merrimack Special Education Parent Support Group that were a result of the survey. A few examples were the presentation on applied behavior analysis, a resource fair consisting of a variety of community representatives, six paraeducator appreciation events and a regular newsletter for parents.

Vice Chair Barnes asked how student identity and confidentiality was handled.

John Fabrizio explained that requests for contacts and referrals are facilitated by the leaders of the Special Education Parent Support Group.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the Merrimack Special Education Parent Support Group had long term succession planning.

Barbara Publicover replied one long term goal is for parents of younger children to become more involved in leadership roles. She noted that the Merrimack Special Education Parent Support Group is the oldest in the State.

Trisha Swonger highlighted the quick and favorable responses from parents to requests through mail messages.

Trisha Swonger explained that the survey has been in existence for seven years. Merrimack's participation rate has been consistently higher than the State average. She noted that the Special Education Parent Support Group plays an active role in promoting the importance of the survey to the parents. A large volume of responses will provide more accurate information. The survey drives what the Special Education Parent Support Group does to help students in district.

Barbara Publicover stated that Lynn Lyons who presented the Childhood Anxiety Workshop and allowed the district to broadcast her workshop on the education cable channel for three months following her workshop.

Trisha Swonger clarified that there are ongoing collaboration efforts by other Special Education Parent Support Groups within the state.

Trisha Swonger noted that the survey questions and the survey design have remained the same for seven years.

Chair Ortega thanked the Special Education Parent Support Group.

6. Formal Hearing on James Mastricola Upper Elementary School's Budget for 2015-2016

Chair Ortega reviewed the January budget hearing schedule:

January 5 at Town Hall at 7:30 p.m.

January 7 at Town Hall at 7:30 p.m.

January 12 at Merrimack High School at 7:30 p.m.

January 13 at Merrimack High School in the Cafeteria at 7:00 p.m. (Budget Committee Hearing)

January 27 at Merrimack High School in the Cafeteria at 7:00 p.m. (Budget Committee Hearing)

Chair Ortega introduced Principal Marsha McGill and Assistant Principal William Morris.

Principal McGill reported the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School budget provides students and staff with resources needed for reading, writing and math instruction.

Principal McGill's responses to pre-submitted questions by school board members follows.

Principal McGill clarified that the police detail and traffic line item is intended for school activities that take place in the evening such as the arts festival. A change in the drop off and pick up process at the school has resulted in an emphasis on police detail to make it safe for students to enter and exit school safely.

Principal McGill explained that science equipment repair is performed on an alternating basis. The microscopes have not been repaired in two years and will be more expensive to repair; therefore, she budgeted \$500.

Principal McGill clarified that the increase in the field trip account was due to increases in travel costs.

Principal McGill reported a need to replace five tables for small group instruction and additional bookcases to support the classroom libraries.

Board Member Schneider requested that the police detail on Election Day be recognized by the Town of Merrimack as an Election Day expense.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the cost of the police detail on Election Day was included in the budget. It may only be a place hold until the District and Town of Merrimack can collaboratively discuss the Election Day expenses. She stated that the various entities involved with the Election Day were scheduled to speak at the last Board meeting. That did not occur because of a more critical need to address the middle school intersection. The topic will be covered in February.

Board Member Schneider acknowledged two new microscopes bringing the total up to 46 microscopes. He asked for clarification on the two replacement microscopes.

Principal McGill explained the desire to have 54 microscopes to accommodate the two science labs with 26 microscopes each. She reported new microscopes are being purchased at the same time others are being replaced in order to have the power needed.

Board Member Schneider asked if there was a methodology for replacing the cafeteria tables.

Principal McGill explained that the goal is to replace two cafeteria tables each year over multiple years.

7. Formal Hearing on the Special Services Budget for 2015-2016

Chair Ortega introduced Director of Special Services John Fabrizio. John Fabrizio explained that the Special Services budget is driven by regulations. He cited Free and Appropriate Education (FAE) and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as examples.

Director Fabrizio reported the special education budget reflects a 2.2% increase. He highlighted a 3% increase in contractual transportation costs and the need to add a Charter School account to meet compliance with Public law 194-B.

Director Fabrizio reported this year the special services budget separated the costs associated with Merrimack students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) that attend a Charter School in Merrimack. Examples of such costs were services support and bus transportation.

Director Fabrizio's responses to pre-submitted questions by school board members follows.

Director Fabrizio clarified the reason many of the paraeducator line items were level funded is due to the fact the Merrimack Educational Support Group is still in the process of negotiating a contract.

Director Fabrizio explained that the membership account covers his membership fees to specific special education professional organizations, per his administrative contract.

Director Fabrizio spoke to his request for split system air conditioners to replace the window units currently being used for students who have medical needs that require climate control.

Director Fabrizio addressed the cost associated with out-of-district placement. The 1.54% increase in the out-of-district placement account is due to the identified placements and the increase in the State regulated rate for the programs. He explained that the movement of students from the elementary level to the middle school then the high school is the reason for the fluctuation in the various accounts. Mr. Fabrizio explained that it is not always more costly to outplace students. When a team decides to bring multiple outside specialists to the District to work with a student it can be expensive.

Director Fabrizio explained that the increased in the software and licensing account was due to an upgrade to the automated assessment system used by school psychologists.

Director Fabrizio reviewed the history of the Merrimack Early Education Program. He reviewed the New Hampshire Rules for Education of Children with Disabilities for Preschool. Currently there are two preschool teacher positions at Reeds Ferry Elementary School and two and a half preschool teacher positions at James Masticola Elementary School. He presented his plan to expand the preschool program to Thornton's Ferry Elementary School in the 2015-2016 budget. The preschool tuition for non-special education students is between \$1,300 and \$1,700 per year based on days utilized. Tuition is deposited into the general fund by the Business Administrator.

Director Fabrizio reported the cost for a preschool student identified with a disability is \$13,656. Of the \$8.5 million State Adequacy Funds, \$1.2 million are due to Special Education Costs. If a student exceeded three times the state average cost the District may apply for Catastrophic Aid.

District administration has worked with the Merrimack Special Education Parent Support Group over the past two years to improve communication and information to current and incoming parents.

Director Fabrizio noted the reason for expanding the preschool program to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is to provide services for preschool age students at their neighborhood school to help prepare them for the demands of a full school day in grades K through 4.

Director Fabrizio reported that a preschool program at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School would accommodate an enrollment of 120 students compared to the current enrollment of 105. A separate playground area would provide age appropriate equipment for size, safety, abilities and disabilities for preschool age children. The size and durability of preschool furniture is different than other elementary furniture.

Director Fabrizio explained if the preschool program was not implemented at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, it may be necessary to increase the current half-time preschool teacher position at James Masticola Elementary School to full-time for compliance reasons.

Director Fabrizio clarified that the law states a preschool program must have more typical students than disabled students. For example a classroom of ten students must consist of six typical students.

Board Member Guagliumi noted the importance of early intervention and that it saves money in the long run. She asked how the tuition cost is determined.

Director Fabrizio responded that the tuition cost is an average of tuition charged in the community by other preschools.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if there would be a cost to prepare the classroom for preschool students.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the playground development and equipment would be the only cost associated with the addition of a preschool program at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

Board Member Schneider stated that many surrounding districts have an integrated preschool program. He questions if this is the right year to expand the preschool program.

Board Member Barnes asked if the Charter School account was an increase or a reallocation of funds.

Director Fabrizio replied the Charter School account reflected an increase of \$50,000. A paraeducator would need to follow the student to the Charter School rather than be shared between a few students in district.

8. Formal Hearing on the Technology and Library Media Services Budget for 2015-2016

Chair Ortega introduced Director of Technology and Library Media Services Nancy Rose.

Director Rose presented the Technology and Library Media Services budget for 2015-2016.

Director Rose's responses to pre-submitted questions by school board members follows.

Director Rose explained that the reason the 2015-2016 budget is level funded when the 2013-2014 budget was 60% under budget is to ensure that the implementation of the VoIP phone system moves forward in the best way possible.

Director Rose explained the library supply account will provide additional projectors and purchase a large volume of additional RAM.

Director Rose stated that the software and licensing account has been transferred from a central office budget to the Technology and Library Media Services budget. The software and licensing account

will accommodate a software licensing increase and consolidation as well as the software component of the high school English program.

Director Rose explained that the additional equipment account will support additional projectors, computer replacements and servers.

Board Member Schneider asked if there was adequate infrastructure for standardized testing this year.

Director Rose replied the testing window will occur over a twelve week period rather than test all at the same time. The twelve week schedule and the number of students tested at one time will be important factors. This first year will be a year of learning. Director Rose's primary concern around testing is not the number of computers but the bandwidth.

Chair Ortega compared the time when the concern was not having enough workstations to the current concern of not having enough bandwidth.

Director Rose stated that the oldest server in the district is approximately eight or nine years old. Vice Chair Barnes asked the age of the oldest server in the district.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if CopSync 911 expenditures were included in the Technology and Library Media Services Budget for 2015-2016.

Business Administrator Shevenell clarified that expenses related to CopSync 911 are in the District budget.

9. Response from Planning Board Regarding School District's Capital Improvement Plan 2015 to 2020

Business Administrator Shevenell reported there was a meeting with the Planning Board on December 16 to present the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as proposed by the School Board. The Planning Board made two changes to the Capital Improvement Plan. The Planning Board moved the Merrimack High School track upgrade out one year to 2017-2018 and it also changed the artificial turf from necessary to deferrable.

Board Member Schneider asked if the Planning Board had a preference of a six or eight lane track.

Superintendent Chiafery responded the Planning Board's discussion was focused on combining the track and the field projects into one rather than two separate projects.

Vice Chair Barnes suggested that when Athletic Director Eric Sabeau and Merrimack High School Principal Ken Johnson come before the Board that they also speak about turf versus grass on the field.

Chairman Ortega asked if the Planning Board was aware of the reasons why the track was being considered in the fiscal year 2015-2016 despite being on the Capital Improvement Plan when the Planning Board moved it to 2017-2018.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the track was presented to the Planning Board as a need not a want.

10. Proposed Cuts to the 2015-2016 School District Budget

Superintendent Chiafery presented her proposed cuts to the 2015-2016 budget.

Reductions in tier one totaled \$761,623. Reductions were from the Maintenance, Special Services and District budgets.

Reductions in tier two totaled \$105,493. Reductions were from the Maintenance, Special Services, and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Budgets.

Reductions in tier three totaled \$73,022. Reductions consisted of all furniture replacements from all schools and enhancement items.

Reductions in tier four totaled \$66,801. Reductions came from a variety of accounts.

The reductions in Tier one through four totaled \$1,006,939.

Additional items in tier five totaled \$134,683. Reductions included a new computer technician position, texts, and Family and Consumer Science modules.

Reductions in tiers one through five totaled \$1,141,622.

Superintendent Chiafery informed the Board that the remaining \$358,378 in reductions would result in the elimination of several positions. She asked the board members if they wanted her to proceed.

Chairman Ortega stated that he appreciated the effort and logic behind the reductions.

Board Member Schneider stated that last year there was a significant return of surplus because of various factors. He questioned if it is possible to anticipate various items such as the health and dental holiday from the HealthTrust that might result in an estimated surplus.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that the funds received from the HealthTrust were received after the tax rate was set. There was no knowledge that it was coming during the budget process.

Chairman Ortega clarified that unlike the Town of Merrimack the School District cannot hold a reserve, per the law.

Chairman Ortega asked Business Administrator Shevenell to calculate the percentage of each tier of the proposed reductions.

Business Administrator Shevenell agreed to provide that information to the board members before the January 7, 2015 budget hearing.

Vice Chair Barnes took ownership of her request for the Superintendent to reduce the budget by \$1.5 million dollars. She accepted the proposed reductions as presented and did not want the Superintendent to proceed with additional reductions that would include positions.

11. Board Members' Response to the New Hampshire School Board Resolutions

Chairman Ortega announced that Vice Chair Barnes will attend the NH School Board Association's Delegate Assembly on January 10, 2015.

There were no requests from board member for exceptions to the proposed resolutions.

12. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega reported that Budget Committee Chair Stan Heinrich received a note from a resident requesting that the District's web site post a list of all budget hearing dates. He responded that a list would be posted as soon as possible.

Chairman Ortega reported that he received a letter from Trustee of the Trust Fund Chris Christensen on December 22, 2015.

b) Comments

Superintendent Chiafery asked the board members to bring the colored copies of the track handout to the January 7, 2015 meeting.

12. New Business

There was no new business.

13. Committee Reports

Board Member Schneider reported that Planning and Building Committee met on December 22, 2014. The committee will present a report to the board on the consolidation of the SAU and Special Services Offices at the January 20, 2015 meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes reported that Program Evaluation and Review Committee (PERC) reviewed course proposals for science integration, technology with graphic design, and technology and yoga.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

No public comments on agenda items.

15. Manifest

The Board signed the Manifest.

At 10:40 p.m., Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.