

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack High School Cafeteria
January 7, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Call To Order

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Budget Presentations

James Mastricola Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

Principal Kim Yarlott and Assistant Principal Nick Coler from Reeds Ferry Elementary School; Principal Emilie Carter and Assistant Principal Michelle Romein from James Mastricola Elementary School; and Principal Bridey Bellemare and Assistant Principal Julie DeLuca from Thorntons Ferry Elementary School presented the proposed 2015-2016 budgets for the three elementary schools.

Principal Yarlott reported the classroom supply account for the three elementary school budgets consisted of a slight increase to per pupil cost due to higher prices for classroom supplies which includes paper. The elementary school budgets contain the first of a new five year furniture replacement plan.

Principals Yarlott, Carter and Bellemare responded to pre-submitted questions by school board members.

Principal Yarlott responded the police detail at Reeds Ferry Elementary School is needed to manage the parking needs for the annual art show/ice cream social.

Principal Carter responded the police detail at James Mastricola Elementary School is needed to manage traffic flow during field day in June.

Principal Bellemare responded that police detail at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is needed during parent information night in September, the winter concert and the spring concert.

Principal Bellemare explained the increase in the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Currier Art Museum field trip budget was due to the fact that the parent group had partially funded the field trip in the past. The proposed budget contains the entire cost of the field trip which parallels the other elementary school budgets.

Principal Carter explained the reason for the increase in the James Mastricola Elementary School field trip budget was a formatting error within a spreadsheet; two buses were not included.

Principal Carter confirmed the decrease in the James Mastricola Elementary School supply account was due to declining enrollments.

Principal Carter justified the need for a new portable digital piano at James Mastricola Elementary School by explaining the current large piano is moved throughout the school often. The ramp incline makes moving the piano difficult and moving the piano increases the risk of pull on the piano strings resulting in the need for additional tunings.

Principal Carter explained the furniture replacement budget was similar to the past two years because the replacement needs are similar.

Principal Yarlott noted the furniture replacement needs at each elementary school are similar. They are classroom chairs, desks, coat closets, book cases, art tables and conference tables.

Principal Yarlott explained that the Reeds Ferry Elementary School kiln is approximately 37 years old, very inefficient and may not be used next year.

Merrimack Middle School

Principal Woelflein and Assistant Principal Caragher presented the proposed 2015-2016 budget for the Merrimack Middle School.

Assistant Principal Caragher reported that the proposed 2015-2016 budget for the middle school included updated software and instructional materials for the Family and Consumer Science modules, eighth grade Earth Science texts and the first of a new five year furniture replacement plan.

Assistant Principal Caragher responded to pre-submitted questions by school board members.

Assistant Principal Caragher stated that the module update for Family and Consumer Science would provide students with an up-to-date curriculum; the current modules are ten years old. He explained the module upgrades needed to be purchased at the same time. If not, it would be similar to replacing half of a set of classroom textbooks.

Principal Woelflein explained the text replacement budget includes the purchase of worn out hardcover text books (the same edition currently in use) for English/Language Arts, Math and Social Studies and new textbooks for the eighth grade Earth Science class. The science text account contains a few hundred dollars to purchase additional text in case the population fluctuated or to accommodate education plans of students who might need a text for use at home.

Principal Woelflein explained the reason for the increase in the testing and scoring account is for diagnostic tools to help adjust and structure and to meet the personalized needs of each student and to monitor progress, per the minimum standards adopted last spring.

Board Member Schneider asked for additional clarification on the Family and Consumer Science module update.

Assistant Principal Caragher explained the module updates would consist of a combination of different materials (books, software, and software literature) in order for the modules to function.

Principal Woelflein clarified that middle school Family and Consumer Science covers topics like garbology, recycling, interior design and math behind your meals. It prepares students to become educated consumers and provides life skills. It is not limited to cooking and sewing.

Focus on Merrimack High School Track Replacement

Chairman Ortega introduced Athletic Director Eric Sabean and Educator and Track Coach John Snell and Principal Ken Johnson.

Chairman Ortega summarized the track replacement project is on the Capital Improvement Plan for the 2016-2017 budget year. The Board was made aware of the deteriorating condition of the track and it became concerned. The Board asked the Administration to provide track replacement options. At a previous budget hearing there was discussion over a six lane track or an eight lane track and options for patching the track for one more year.

Chairman Ortega explained that Mr. Sabean and Mr. Snell were asked to come before the Board to answer questions about the track options.

Board Member Powell stated that for safety reasons he supports replacing the track in 2015-2016. He asked Mr. Sabean and Mr. Snell to explain the advantages of having an eight lane track over a six lane track.

Athletic Director Sabean explained that the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA) does not differentiate between an eight lane and a six lane track when considering host sites for meets. The priority to the NHIAA is that the track surface is of high quality. Other considerations are lights, parking and location.

Athletic Director Sabean and Coach Snell expressed their concern that a six lane track would become obsolete in the future.

Coach Snell recited the numerous groups within the community of Merrimack that use the track. An eight lane track would provide more practice space.

Board Member Powell asked how long Division 1 of the NCAA has been using an eight lane track and asked if it has filtered down to Divisions 2 and 3.

Coach Snell cited an example in 2003 where a Division 3 competition was not allowed to occur on a six lane track.

Board Member Schneider asked if the track would be safe enough for competition if the track was repaired in 2015-2016 with hopes that it would be replaced in 2016-2017.

Athletic Director Sabean felt the repairs would allow competition to occur for one more year.

Board Member Schneider asked which would be preferred a six lane track in the 2015-2016 budget or an eight lane track in the 2016-2017 budget.

Athletic Director Sabean and Coach Snell responded they would prefer to wait one more year for an eight lane track.

Chairman Ortega asked for the impact if a six lane track was constructed and the NHIAA would not allow Merrimack to host a meet.

Mr. Snell responded that the students get excited and take pride in hosting a competition.

Athletic Director Sabean stated that an eight lane track is a programming opportunity for the school and the community.

Vice Chair Barnes stated that it would not be fair to the track team not to be able to host a home game. She asked if a six lane track could be converted into an eight lane track in the future.

Athletic Director Sabean had concerns that the six lanes would need to be removed to reconfigure eight lanes which would not be good use of money.

Vice Chair Barnes stated that an eight lane track would provide an infrastructure that is sustainable.

Athletic Director Sabean clarified the lighting, parking and location are already in place.

Vice Chair Barnes asked what type of field surface was best.

Athletic Director Sabean responded a synthetic turf field would enhance the student athlete experience, enhance the physical education program greatly and enhance the entire community involvement. He noted that a turf field was safer than a poorly maintained grass field. He acknowledged a turf field would be very expensive and that the district's priority is academics. If the project could be funded properly in the future it should be considered.

Board Member Schneider asked for additional information regarding a few expensive replacement items for the athletic department such as the goal posts and batting cage.

Athletic Director Sabean reported when the goals posts were painted in 2012 the painter informed him the goal posts were rusting.

Board Member Schneider asked Mr. Sabean for a list of replacement items in the athletic department budget in priority order and price.

Board Member Powell asked for additional information about the wireless headset costing \$6,500.

Athletic Director Sabean explained that the wireless headset is used by the football coach to communicate with the three coaches on the sideline and two or three coaches in the press box. The current headsets are obsolete; therefore, upgrades are not available.

Vice Chair Barnes asked for the cost of the portable end zone camera for football and the required padding for the high vault pit.

Merrimack High School

Chairman Ortega introduced Principal Johnson, Assistant Principal Zampieri and Assistant Principal Bergeron.

Principal Johnson reported the proposed high school budget reflects a balance between maintaining and reducing some budget lines in favor increasing other budget lines to support the purchase of new texts and additional equipment in several departments. Athletic equipment needs to be replaced to ensure safety and compliance for practice and competition.

Principal Johnson, Assistant Principal Zampieri and Assistant Principal Bergeron responded to pre-submitted questions by school board members.

Principal Johnson addressed the need for additional text at the high school. He explained the large increase in the reading texts is due to the reallocation of resources from general supplies to instructional material used in remedial reading classes. Also some items have been misplaced previously and are now in the reading supply account.

Principal Johnson explained the guidance department was in need of laptop computers to deliver specific topics to each grade in the school.

Principal Johnson noted the high school furniture replacement plan consisted of cafeteria tables, student chairs, combination chair and desk and science lab stools.

Principal Johnson noted the increase in the computer repair account was to accommodate repairs to the 432 computers that are no longer under warranty.

Principal Johnson explained that the technology education department's dust collection system needs comprehensive service by certified personnel.

Principal Johnson addressed the needs of the various supply accounts. The art department added a new course, the physical education department needs to purchase consumable workbooks and the music department supply account includes sheet music, which is expensive due to copyright laws.

Principal Johnson justified the physical education department's request for iPads. He provided examples of how the iPads could compliment the fitness program.

Principal Johnson stated that high school administrators are required to attend numerous co-curricular and athletic events. The NHIAA has now requires schools to send at least one administrator to away games.

Principal Johnson stated that the co-curricular transportation budget was 75% of the total transportation cost. The budgeted amount represented a three year average.

Principal Johnson explained the reduction of one English teaching position and one Math teaching position was based upon an anticipated drop in student enrollment of 63 students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Principal Johnson explained that boys and girls freshman soccer will return in 2015-2016. He noted the costs for officials, transportation and the game rate for staff has not increased. He noted the elimination of the police detail at the girls' home basketball games and home wrestling meets. Additional savings were realized in fuel costs and by reducing the number of months for the rental van.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the administrators ride the bus with students to the away games.

Principal Johnson responded that at least one administrator drives their car for safety reasons or in the event there is a medical emergency.

Board Member Schneider asked for the additional amount needed to fund 100% of the co-curricular transportation.

Principal Johnson responded \$11,000.

Board Member Schneider suggested that transportation costs for athletics and co-curricular activities be better defined prior to the 2016-2017 budget.

Board Member Powell asked if the laptop computers for the guidance department would be used by staff or student use.

Assistant Principal Zampieri explained that laptops would provide greater mobility and replace existing desktop computers that would be repurposed.

Board Member Schneider asked if the reduction of math teaching positions two years ago had an impact on the quality and class size.

Principal Johnson responded the reduction Mr. Schneider referenced from a previous budget cycle did not have an adverse effect on instruction or students. He stated there will be an increase in class sizes as a result of the staff reductions in the 2015-2016 budget. The impact may result in an elective not being offered or a reduction in one class offering. He did not expect that the staff reduction would have an adverse effect on instruction.

Board Member Guagliumi requested an itemized list for the Family Consumer Science account.

Assistant Principal Bergeron replied the estimated cost for the Family Consumer Science account is: groceries (\$10,000), classroom supplies (\$1,000), kitchen supplies (\$2,000), videos (\$1,000) and We Care Baby (\$3,000).

Board Member Powell expressed his concern over the elimination of an elective in English.

Principal Johnson felt confident that course offerings would be reflective of what the students want to sign up for. He highlighted new curricula with interdisciplinary courses and that it will be interesting to see how aggressively the students pursue those initiatives.

Vice Chair Barnes asked what the class size increase would be.

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that it would depend on many factors. He reported 52 sections of college prep English currently averaging 21 students per class could increase to an average of 23 students per class.

Vice Chair Barnes expressed her concern with flexibility. She questioned how the core and skill balance would be affected.

Principal Johnson responded this year and in previous years 96% of the students' initial requests were met. This demonstrates how we work to customize those schedules to meet students' needs.

Assistant Principal Zampieri emphasized that it is difficult to know what the impact will be until after the students sign up for courses.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if advanced placement courses or college courses had ever been eliminated because of a reduction in staff.

Principal Johnson responded if an advanced placement course or college course were eliminated, it was due to lack of enrollment, not a reduction in staff.

Chairman Ortega asked at what point is the decision made not to run a class.

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded it would depend on the availability and demand.

Board Member Powell clarified that the school has never made staff reductions for budgetary reasons only. The School Board works with information that is provided by the Administration. The board makes sure that the ratio of student to teachers is appropriate and responsible each year.

Board Member Schneider asked if the high school would have the flexibility to be able to offer the electives and adequately provide the instruction with the proposed reduction in staff.

Principal Johnson responded yes.

Board Member Schneider asked if the high school administration had the resources in place to provide what the board expects to be delivered in terms of scope and quality.

Principal Johnson felt confident, similar to previous years, 96% of the students' course requests would be met.

Board Member Schneider asked if it was harder to manage with a reduced staff in English than in Math.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that he would not support a reduction in force of a teaching position in a program that would cause an adverse effect to students. The staff reduction has been reviewed carefully and he is confident that there will not be a loss of integrity to the rigorous programming.

District

Chairman Ortega stated the District has two collective bargaining units; they are the Merrimack Educational Support Staff (MESSA) and the Merrimack Teachers Association (MTA).

Chairman Ortega explained that the Advise and Confer Agreement includes principals, assistant principals, director of special services and director of technology and library media services. The Advise and Confer Agreement does not include the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Business Administrator and Director of Human Resources; however, they abide by the terms of the Advise and Confer Agreement.

Chairman Ortega summarized the Advise and Confer Agreement process, expenses and savings. Chairman Ortega reported the school board approved the Advise and Confer Agreement with a vote of 5-0-0.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the items in the district portion of the budget are required by law or contract.

Board Member Guagliumi asked for summary of the current manual process of inputting student contact information cards.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that currently parents complete information cards for each child. Administrative assistants in each school office inputs one card for each student. The registration software would allow parents to enter information for their children one time avoiding the need to input duplicate information.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the \$21,000 for the registration software would be an annual expense.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded the annual expense would be approximately \$13,000.

Vice Chair Barnes asked for clarification regarding the \$9,000 for Cop Sync 911.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained the \$9,000 was an estimate for the initial purchase of Cop Sync 911. There would be a cost for ongoing management after the first year.

5. Budget Discussion

Superintendent Chiafery explained that Business Administrator Shevenell added percentage amounts to each tier of the Administration's budget cut list.

Board Member Schneider noted that he had questions about the timing of the paving project and roof project listed on the Capital Improvement Plan. He asked if Maintenance Director Tom Touseau could attend the next meeting to answer questions.

Superintendent Chiafery asked that questions for Mr. Touseau be presented to him prior to the meeting.

6. Public Participation on Agenda Items

There was no public participation on agenda items.

At 10:17 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.