

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
February 16, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chairman Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
Vice Chairman Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Minutes

Vice Chairman Barnes tabled agenda item 2 until the March 2, 2015 meeting.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell presented a Grant in the amount of \$1,000 from HealthTrust, Inc. received by the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee, Merrimack School District to be used for work site health initiatives. The only requirement being that Christine Soucy, teacher at Thorntons Ferry and member of the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee attend a full day training workshop.

Board member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the \$1,000 grant from HealthTrust, Inc.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. Board's Response to Acceptance and Expenditure of Gifts/Grants over \$5,000

Vice Chairman Barnes invited Peter Bergeron to speak and presented a grant proposed by Best Buy in the amount of \$9,000 to Merrimack High School to go toward their Chop Shop team, which is the First Robotics Group.

Board Member Schneider questioned the planning of long term use of a grant rather than consumables.

Peter Bergeron responded the money would be used to get more students involved and purchase items such as computer software and hardware to get the robot ready for competition.

Board Member Schneider asked if it would be used this year or for training to get ready for future teams.

Peter Bergeron responded it would be used for this year.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to accept the \$9,000 grant from Best Buy to Merrimack High School First Robotics Team.

The motion passed 3-0-1, Board Member Powell abstained.

6. Discussion of Legislative Issues

Present were Representative Jack Balcom (vice chair of education committee), Representative Chris Christensen and Representative Josh Moore.

Representative Balcom presented House Bill 116: Relative to the renomination of teachers. He explained HB 116 reduces the number of consecutive years of teaching required for a teacher to be entitled to notification and a hearing where the teacher is not reappointed from five years to three years.

Board Member Powell stated he hopes it remains at five years. Merrimack has worked on an educator evaluator model that is well received.

Business Administrator Shevenell said the district has been lobbying to be five years as it gives district the window to observe and modify and allow for growth and seems more reasonable than a three year period. A decision to return to three years would be a step back.

Vice Chairman Barnes asked about the state lifting the moratorium on school building fund.

Representative Balcom responded the school building fund statewide was to help communities afford to rehab buildings that were very old and also to help communities establish new construction. This is not giving communities the money, it's a small portion of the building fund, and it's a matter of lending the money, backing the credit ratings to borrow the money. It brings money back into the system. At \$50 million set as the minimum bar, it's been on hold.

Vice Chairman Barnes said it is a hot button item. The middle school was built about ten years ago and we have a need for a new consolidated SAU and Special Services building.

Business Administrator Shevenell clarified that everything we have constructed before the moratorium on building aid is being honored by the state, so the 30% from the principal payments that the District is paying on current bonds are still getting paid for by the state. He stated that there would be no money for central offices.

Vice Chairman Barnes said the Special Services offices are used for testing, evaluations, etc. It is definitely a hot button item to be kept abreast of.

Representative Balcom presented House Bill 276: Providing that school districts shall not be required to adopt the common core standards. If HB 276 passes every school district can tailor embracing common core or work to meet or exceed standards.

Board Member Schneider commented that this addresses common core standards, not about assessment. He noted two parts to the HB 276, the common core which helps to adjust curriculum and the assessment which relies upon the aspects of common core.

Representative Balcom felt that students are assessed too much. House Bill 276 leaves it up to the local school district to decide when to assess.

Board Member Schneider stated that the common core has been used in creating curriculum that is currently being used. The District has used common core for level of consistency across what other districts and what other states are doing. It does not change anything for the District but the assessment does not get addressed at all for Merrimack.

Representative Balcom explained HB 276 addresses districts that have not embraced common core.

Representative Balcom presented HB 471: Relative to the powers of the state board of education and the duties of school boards.

Representative Balcom explained HB 472 gives school boards the power of assessment and responsibility for teacher employment guidelines. He noted many bills have mirror images in the Senate. When they come together there will be a committee to come up with a solution on whatever the outcome is. There are not many changes to HB 472.

Board Member Schneider noted his concerned that almost too much control goes to the school board. The school board could give the district the ability to choose whatever they want and not follow any testing.

Representative Balcom noted that this certainly opens the door and shows the importance of school board voting.

Representative Balcom presented House Bill 581: Requiring schools to continue the education of a child during the child's suspension or expulsion.

Representative Balcom explained HB 581 had the most discussion of any other bill. Where do you educate and what is the funding of where to educate.

Superintendent Chiafery explained currently expelled students do not have an opportunity to go to another school for a full year. Local districts handle suspensions.

Representative Balcom presented House Bill 610: Relative to a school board vote on the reassignment of a pupil.

Representative Christensen explained currently the superintendents have the right to decide crossover to other districts. House Bill 610 would ensure the school board and superintendent work together.

Representative Balcom highlighted that the representatives read every emails related to House Bills.

Vice Chairman Barnes expressed the Board's appreciation for reviewing the current House Bills specific to education.

7. Technology in the Classroom: Coding

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin introduced Director of Library Media Services Nancy Rose and Educators Jacqueline Moore, Sharon Silva and Adam Goodman.

Sharon Silva reported that the program “An Hour of Code” began in 2013. She played a short video clip that explained the importance of knowing how to code.

Sharon Silva stated that she and a team of teachers attended a coding training session sponsored by code.com.

Mr. Goodman explained that coding was introduced to students at the upper elementary school last year and that it was a huge success. The web site “Scratch” which was developed by Massachusetts Institute of Technology was chosen to introduce the upper elementary students to computer science.

Ms. Moore explained that she introduced coding to students in grades one through four. First grade students used a website call “Tinker” to introduce them to coding. Second grade through fourth grade students used the code.org website.

Students from James Masticola Elementary School and James Masticola Upper Elementary School (Grace, Ryan, Jamie and Jenson) explained what coding is and demonstrated projects they created with code.

Director Rose highlighted the high level of interest, commitment and engagement by both the students and staff while learning how to code.

Board Member Guagliumi praised the students for the way they embraced coding.

Educators and students were welcomed to share their first coding project per Board Member Guagliumi’s request.

Board Member Powell expressed his appreciation to the students and educators for embracing the new coding initiative.

Vice Chairman Barnes thanked the students for sharing their code projects.

8. Warrant Presentations for Deliberative Session on March 4, 2015

- Article 2, Gifts and Property will be moved by Board Member Guagliumi and seconded by Board Member Powell.
- Article 3, MESSA Contract will be moved by Vice Chairman Barnes and seconded by Board Member Schneider.
- Article 4, MESSA Contract Trailer will be moved by Board Member Schneider and seconded by Vice Chairman Barnes.
- Article 5, Asbestos Removal Fund will be moved by Board Member Powell and seconded by Board Member Guagliumi.
- Article 6, School District Repair Capital Reserve Fund will be moved by Chairman Ortega and seconded by Vice Chairman Barnes.
- Article 7, School District Operating Budget will be presented by the School Budget Committee.

9. Other

a) Correspondence

Board Member Guagliumi reported that she received a call from a parent expressing concern over communication protocols.

Board Member Schneider reported that he received an email regarding budget conversations.

Board Member Barnes reported the Board received the following emails.

- A parent emailed the Board requesting that the District cancel February vacation so as not to extend school year.
- A parent emailed the Board with concerns regarding the school lunch program and the need to make accommodations for students with food allergies, specifically gluten.
- The six members of the Planning and Building Committee emailed a letter to the Board expressing their disappointment that an Article for the Special Services and Central Office Consolidated Building was not on this year's Warrant.

b) Comments

Vice Chairman Barnes stated that she was remiss at the beginning of the meeting by failing to mention that Chairman Ortega was excused from the meeting due to shoulder surgery. Student Representative Crowley was also excused from the meeting.

10. New Business

Vice Chairman Barnes asked for the date of the last day of school in June 2015. She questioned if the District should ask the Board of Education to consider instruction hours rather than school days.

Superintendent Chiafery responded the last day of school is Monday, June 22, 2015. She explained that the District can ask to have one day excused (the state of emergency day) making Friday, June 19, 2015 the last day of school. She stated that it was too soon to request a one day waiver.

Vice Chairman Barnes asked to review the last day of school on March 2, 2015.

Superintendent Chiafery will present the Board with her recommendations for the 2015-2016 school calendar on March 2nd.

11. Committee Reports

Board Member Guagliumi reported that the Budget Committee met last week prior to the public Budget Hearing. The Budget Committee moved the budget as presented to the deliberative session.

Board Member Schneider reported that on February 5th Merrimack Safeguard reviewed various action items. The District Wellness Committee received information from a speaker about Lyme disease.

There was discussion about the standardization, process, guidelines and rules for outside recess. It was suggested that the HealthTrust money could purchase thermometers for the playgrounds

Vice Chairman Barnes report that the Parks and Recreation winter carnival will take place on February 28th with many new activities including cardboard sleds.

12. Public Participation on Agenda Items

There was no public participation on agenda items.

13. Manifest

The board signed the manifest.

At 9:15 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed.