

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting  
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room  
March 2, 2015  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

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

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Ortega thanked Vice Chair Barnes for running the February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 meeting.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2015 meeting.

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 6 line 295 and 296, remove; but does not feel this is the year to place the Article on the Warrant.

Vice Chair Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 6 line 268, should be the average current hourly rate is \$15.88
- Page 4 line 165, add to end; and we as a board are opposed to it versus less supportive of it as with other options.
- Alternating Vice Chair and Vice Chairman, pick one for consistency.

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 line 103, change tense, the intersection was reviewed and accepted.
- Page 4 line 182, Phrase not phase
- Page 7 lines 321 and 322; the sentence should read “Business Administrator Shevenell responded the second year payment would be approximately \$250,000 for a \$1.7 million bond compared to \$206,000 for a \$1.5 million bond.”
- Page 7 line 333, change tense to read support as opposed to supported
- Page 7 line 335, change to read; to wait until the bonded debt is lower and he does not view leased space as a long term solution.
- Page 8 line 356, change the reason to say some of the reasons
- Page 8 line 372, change the word “The” to “He” explained.....

The motion passed 5-0-0.

**3. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

#### **4. Use of James Mastricola Upper Elementary School as the Polling Site for April 14, 2015**

Chairman Ortega introduced Principal Marsha McGill, Assistant Principal William Morris, Assistant Town Manager Paul Micali, and Director of Maintenance Tom Touseau.

Superintendent Chiafery explained at the September 29, 2014 joint meeting between the Town Council and the School Board there was discussion about changing the polling site from James Mastricola Upper Elementary (JMUES) to another site. If the upper elementary school were to remain the polling site, security would need to be reviewed.

Superintendent Chiafery reported that on October 17, 2014 she and others visited three locations within the Mastricola Complex (MES gym, Smith gym, and JMUES APR). It was determined that the James Mastricola Upper Elementary APR should be the polling site because it had the best accessibility.

Principal McGill explained the blue doors near the nurse's office closest to the main office would be closed at all times. A police officer will stand in the hallway to monitor the blue doors and the front entrance. The metal gate between James Mastricola Elementary School and the upper elementary school will be locked. Buses will drop students off at the Smith gym entrance. Fifth grade students will go to the Smith gym. Sixth grade students will proceed down the hall to the field through back doors. If weather is not permissible, the sixth grade students will go to the Smith gym. Parent drop off will be at the corner of the oval and Bishop Street. The before school program will be held at James Mastricola Elementary School. Bus pick up in the afternoon will be the same. Parent pick up will be different. Parents will park in the church parking lot then come to the oval to pick up their child(ren). Lunch will be served from room 121; students will eat in room 122 or room 128.

Assistant Town Manager Paul Micali assured the board that the entrance doors would be secured and that lunch would be delivered to the election workers. He suggested barricades be used to keep the flow of voters to the left of the main entrance and the late parent drop off to the right. An extra police officer would monitor the lobby and entrance doors.

Director Touseau said there would be two options for exiting and entering the APR at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for voting purposes. One would be to use the existing entrance/exit with police presence for security concerns, and the other would be the construction of a 40 foot long ramp that would make use of the existing set of double doors that are adjacent to School Street. Before this option could be designed, a decision would have to be made if this were to be a covered ramp or one that is open to the elements. In either case, the ramp would avoid using the main school entrance to the building which would be remained secure. A non-covered ramp that met ADA specifications would cost approximately \$45,000 dollars. A covered ramp to shelter voters from the elements would cost about \$115,000 to \$120,000. Another option would be to install a doorway through the storage closet, but that was dismissed as not feasible.

Superintendent Chiafery noted the desire to debrief after voting day on April 14.

Board Member Schneider asked for clarification regarding the flow of voters entering and exiting the building.

Principal McGill defined where police would be stationed.

Principal McGill clarified that the internal doors off the entrance would be locked.

Board Member Schneider questioned further about police coverage in the lobby and where they would be stationed to prevent the public from entering the hallways.

Principal McGill defined where police would be stationed.

Board Member Schneider stated and Principal McGill agreed that the nurse's office was the only exposed area. He also stated that parent pick up would be to the right of the voting entrance and parents would be buzzed into the office from that point.

Board Member Guagliumi asked about the communication protocols regarding the parent pick-up routine.

Principal McGill responded that a notice will be sent home to parents ahead of time. It will be posted on the website and announced several days prior to the event through an email message.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about late parent drop off and questioned why all pick up and drop offs could not occur at the old entrance near the Smith gym to keep the students segregated from the general population at the main entrance.

Principal McGill said that could be a consideration which could be communicated to parents.

Board Member Guagliumi stated that she was glad that more effort had been placed on security.

Chairman Ortega appreciated the efforts that have been made especially the additional police officer. He also expressed his concern about spending \$50,000 to \$100,000 on an APR entrance used possibly two days a year. He noted that the Board's main concern was ensuring the safety and security of its children. He stated that debriefing after the vote was imperative.

Board Member Powell appreciated the fact that the Town and the District came together to collaborate on this effort.

Board Member Guagliumi suggested that, if a new consolidated Superintendent/Special Services office was built, the proposed 2,000 square foot meeting space might be considered for a polling site, at least for non-presidential elections.

Chairman Ortega stated he liked the idea but the challenge would be the need for parking.

## **5. 2013-2014 New Hampshire Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education Part II**

Chairman Ortega introduced Special Services Director John Fabrizio, Barbara Publicover, Trisha Swonger and Michele Watson.

Special Services Director John Fabrizio disseminated copies of the actual survey that was distributed to parents. He explained the parent survey is part of the state performance plan, specifically Indicator 8, which is part of the parent support plan. The survey results are strong and favorable.

Trisha Swonger explained the method of scoring changed from percentages to a scale. She emphasized the questions remained the same. She reported there is a direct correlation between the two methods of scoring.

Barbara Publicover talked about the seven year history of the survey and that Merrimack's survey response rate has consistently increased.

Michele Watson explained that parents find it difficult to attend meetings; therefore, the Parent Information Group is beginning to communicate with parents through quarterly newsletters and emails.

Chairman Ortega thanked the group for all of its effort.

Vice Chair Barnes asked what can be done to improve areas where improvement is needed.

Director Fabrizio replied areas where there are gains the process remains the same. Use of social media is being considered for the future. Technology is being utilized to bring as much school based learning into the home environment when possible. Newsletters continue to provide parents with information.

Vice Chair Barnes asked what resources are needed to accomplish goals and are the resources currently accessible.

Director Fabrizio explained the resources are available and being used; however, there is room for improvement on creative ways to use the resources.

Michele Watson highlighted the paraeducator celebration events held last year sponsored by the Special Education Parent Support Group. In addition to acknowledging the paraeducators for their efforts during the year, it also raised awareness about the existence of the Special Education Parent Support Group.

Board Member Schneider applauded the work and effort of the Special Education Parent Support Group. He stated that the district needs to provide the Special Education Parent Support Group with appropriate support to move forward effectively and constructively with regards to its social networking goals.

Chairman Ortega commended Ms. Swonger for her efforts on comparing percentage scores to scaled scores. He asked what the Board could expect to see in terms of trends with the new scaled score model.

Ms. Swonger noted that she would be attending a future meeting to make that determination.

Chairman Ortega stated the amount of feedback that was received indicated to him that parents are involved.

## **6. Proposed School Calendar for 2015-2016**

Superintendent Chiafery presented the proposed school calendar for 2015-2016. She highlighted dates for holidays and school breaks. She noted the first day of school is later because Labor Day is September 7<sup>th</sup>. The proposed last day of school is June 17<sup>th</sup>. The proposed 2015-2016 calendar is similar to the current 2014-2015 school calendar.

Chairman Ortega stated that he would like the draft calendar to be shared with parents in order to get their feedback.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that a parent had suggested February vacation be used for make-up days. If there were no snow days then the fourth week of April could be used for vacation. She asked if there were options to avoid having school at the end of June.

Board Member Guagliumi was pleased that parents would have an opportunity to give feedback on the proposed calendar.

Board Member Schneider supported parental feedback because of the late first day of school. He anticipated that the topic of teachable hours would be suggested as an alternative and wondered what other districts were doing.

Superintendent Chiafery will ask the Commissioner of Education for a list of districts that have teachable hours. She noted that most districts count school days.

Board Member Schneider stated that during the ice storm some districts used teachable hours and continued with that practice.

Vice Chair Barnes stated that teachable hours should be a back-up plan and used only if the snow day trend continues.

Chairman Ortega mentioned the two collective bargaining units (MTA and MESSA) and the fact that the district begins the school year the week before Labor Day and ends no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>. He asked about the number of makeup days listed as compared to the number of days remaining in June.

Superintendent Chiafery answered that the expectation per the contract is that the staff could work until June 30<sup>th</sup> even though only six makeup days have been listed on the calendar.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about the Presidential Primary being listed as to be announced (TBA). She questioned if voting would occur at the high school or upper elementary school.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that it is unknown at this time.

Vice Chair Barnes wondered what the Presidential Primary had to do with the calendar if voting occurred at the upper elementary school.

Chairman Ortega stated that if the School District Moderator were to provide a history of the primary dates and if voter attendance for those years were high and if the Moderator wanted to make a case for using the high school as the polling site the Board would take that information under advisement.

Vice Chair Barnes explained the larger high schools that hold graduation at the Verizon Wireless Arena and reserve the venue in advance before the number of snow days is known. She asked if Merrimack had considered setting a graduation date a year in advance to assist families with out of town relatives coming to attend.

Superintendent Chiafery answered that Merrimack's graduation is held on site and has always been established at a Board meeting in March based on the number of snow days.

## **7. Winter Storm Related Maintenance Issues**

Business Administrator Shevenell described the process used to remove snow from school roofs. He also talked about a crack that was discovered in a wall at Reeds Ferry Elementary School. A structural engineer inspected the crack and determined that snow on the roof did not cause the crack. The crack was caused by the building expanding and contracting likely caused by extreme hot and cold temperatures. The crack will be a minor repair and the roofs are in good shape.

Board Member Schneider asked if the cost incurred to remove the snow from the roof was excessive.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded the cost to remove snow from roofs was between \$5,000 and \$6,000.

Board Member Schneider inquired about plowing costs for this winter.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the district has a fixed contract amount with a contractor.

Business Administrator Shevenell clarified that re-pointing the mortar joints meant filling in the joints with another coat of mortar.

Chairman Ortega commended staff for taking every precaution to ensure the buildings were safe.

## **8. Planning Board Outcome Relative to the Intersection of Madeline Bennett Lane and Old Blood Road**

Chairman Ortega explained that on February 4<sup>th</sup> the Board crafted a message to the Planning Board stating its preference on the various intersection design options. On February 17<sup>th</sup>, the Planning Board addressed the item and voted 6-1-0 to design the intersection with the “sweeping curve” layout with one stop sign exiting the middle school on Madeline Bennett Lane. The decision was disappointing because it was the sixth ranked option of six possibilities.

Board Member Schneider wished he had attended the meeting and hoped that the Planning Board does acknowledge that if the option doesn't work as they plan that it will be readdressed.

Chairman Ortega said there was a comment made that the Planning Board and Department of Public Works (DPW) could change it if traffic at the intersection becomes an issue.

Board Member Schneider suggested when the intersection is complete that the board propose a monitoring camera to monitor the traffic flow.

Board Member Guagliumi talked of her feeling from frustration to disappointment regarding the outcome, which was the School District's sixth choice. She had hoped for better collaboration. She stated that the School Board attempted to collaborate with the Town and acknowledged feedback regarding the roundabout option and further agreed to a traffic study; the traffic study results were disregarded.

Furthermore, she was disappointed that when the town engineer presented to the Planning Board, the school district's prior feedback and operational knowledge which was diminished and referred to as “perceptions”. She also felt the number of parents that pick up their children from school was diminished and the comparison of traffic with the elementary schools, specifically Reeds Ferry Elementary School, bothered her because they are each approximately 1/3 the size of the middle school and have fewer buses.

Board Member Guagliumi suggested that the School Board write a letter to the Planning Board with all safety concerns. The safety concerns are the changing of the traffic flow patterns, the lack of visibility with the sweeping curve, the back log of bus and parent traffic along with pedestrians and children walking, and the potential of traffic using Old Blood Road to access the middle school.

Chairman Ortega thanked Board Member Guagliumi for her comments.

## **9. Other**

### **a) Correspondence**

Chairman Ortega stated he received an email from a parent who lives out-of-state requesting Merrimack's graduation date.

Board Member Guagliumi reported she had parent feedback on a concern over competency based grades. She also received an email from a parent questioning if Challenge Day was limited to just the Seniors.

Student Representative Crowley explained, unlike previous years, Challenge Day would be offered to Seniors. The focus of Challenge Day will be the celebration of high school experience rather than high school challenges. She noted that it would be offered on March 11<sup>th</sup> and that each Senior could invite one person who influenced them.

### **b) Comments**

Board Member Powell stated he will not be present at the next meeting due to business travel.

Chairman Ortega reported that the Town Council petitioned the Federal Government for alternate use of the tennis courts on O'Gara Drive after the last joint meeting. The Town Council has not received a response from the Federal Government. The School Board will be notified when there is something to report. At this time, the Town Council has declined the School Board's invitation for a joint meeting.

Chairman Ortega highlighted an informational pipeline meeting for Merrimack residents on March 26, 2015 at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School in the All-Purpose Room.

Superintendent Chiafery pointed out that the deliberative session is Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>.

## **10. New Business**

There was no new business.

## **11. Committee Reports**

Student Representative Crowley reported that the winter pep rally was cancelled due to snow. Student Congress meetings have also been cancelled for the last two months but will reconvene on Thursday. Dylan Beaulieu won the title of 2015 Mr. MHS with Italian exchange student Ricardo Petrilli as the runner up. The Mr. MHS contest is sponsored by Students Against Destructive Decisions to raise money for an anti-drunk driving seminar held in the spring. Six students led by

Alex Dano will be competing at Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) nationals. The high school math team will be competing at Plymouth State on March 11<sup>th</sup>. The National Honor Society will be hosting a dodge ball tournament on March 17<sup>th</sup> at the high school in the gym.

Board Member Guagliumi said the Budget Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, immediately following the Deliberative Session.

Board Member Powell reported that the Town Center Committee met on February 27<sup>th</sup>. A sign will be placed at the Merrill Marauders footbridge below the Merrill Marauders highway bridge and the bog behind the fire station will be explored for an appropriate site for a bridge.

Board Member Powell also reported the national park service has money available for art related projects and or groups.

Vice Chair Barnes reported the Parks and Recreation Committee met on February 18<sup>th</sup>. An Art in the Park event was discussed and how it could include school art programs and the Merrimack Public Library. She reported the skate park attendant position was removed from the Town's 2015-2016 budget and those funds will be used to maintain the park and to purchase and install cameras at the skate park. Her concerns with the skate park were that the skate park would be open daily from dusk to dawn, the school district was not given the option to access the web-based camera and the opportunity for individuals over 18 years old to intermingle with school aged children without supervision on school property.

Vice Chair Barnes asked for conversation with the Town Council over the need to maintain O'Gara drive specifically the parking area and basketball courts. She requested open conversation with Matt Casparious and the Town Manager.

Vice Chair Barnes reported an Easter egg hunt would be held at Wasserman Park on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Vice Chair Barnes reported that the Grater Woods Committee met on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Discussions included spring projects, signage and trails. She reported evidence supports the rules are not being followed on the trails that are on school district property. She requested further dialog with key players.

## **12. Public Participation on Agenda Items**

There was no public participation on agenda items.

## **13. Manifest**

The board signed the manifest.

At 9:45 p.m., Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.