

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
April 6, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

PRESENT: Chairman Ortega, Vice Chairman 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.

2. Approval of March 2, 2015 Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2015 meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 line 195, change February to April 11, 2015
- Page 5 line 236, the last sentence should read “She asked if Merrimack considered setting a graduation date a year in advance to assist families with out of town relatives coming to attend.”

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 line 109 should read “Board Member Guagliumi asked about the communication protocols regarding the parent pick-up routine.”
- Page 3 line 130 should read “...meeting space might be considered for a polling site, at least for non-presidential elections.”
- Page 6 line 282 through 293 should be replaced with the following two paragraphs.

“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.”

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 6 line 270 should read “... with one stop sign exiting the middle school on Madeline Bennett Lane.”
- Page 6 line 271 should read “... sixth ranked option of six possibilities.”

- Page 6 line 277 should read "... Works (DPW) could change it if traffic at the intersection becomes an issue."
- Page 7 line 317 add the following sentence to the end of the paragraph. "At this time, the Town Council has declined the School Board's invitation for a joint meeting."

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following teacher retirements

- David DeLisle, Social Studies teacher at Merrimack High School
- Linda Garces, Language Arts teacher at Merrimack Middle School
- John Snell, Science teacher at Merrimack High School

Vice Chair Barnes (seconded by Board Member Schneider) moved to accept the consent agenda as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Focus on Merrimack Middle School

Principal Woelflein and Assistant Principal Caragher introduced several students from Merrimack Middle School. The students shared various subject areas they studies and described what incoming seventh grade students could expect. The following students spoke:

Team 7-1, Megan Senecal, Health
Team 7-2, Zoe Modlinsky, Art
Team 7-3, Heather Rohr, Spanish
Team 7-4, Harrison Faust, Language Arts
Team 8-2, Brody Clark and Colby Benoit, Science
Team 8-3, Savilla Flores-Moore, Social Studies
Team 8-4, Nicholas Pittman, Math

Science Teacher Jeff Caron introduced some members of the cast of the *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcast*; a short performance followed.

Board Member Schneider asked Heather a question about Spanish and if learning things that are different will help her remember them better.

Heather replied yes.

Board Member Powell explained that his favorite time of year is when staff and students come before the School Board to present school highlights.

Vice Chair Barnes asked Harrison what he is most comfortable with utilizing technology with Language Arts.

Harrison replied he was most comfortable with the use of the dictionary.

Vice Chair Barnes asked Megan and Zoe if they are currently taking the classes they presented or if it was a class that stuck with them.

Megan replied middle school students have two quarters of health class and two quarters of gym class.

Zoe responded middle school students complete many art projects in one quarter of art class. She would like two quarters of art class.

Vice Chair Barnes extended kudos to Nicholas for finding subject matter outside of the classroom. She asked him what he would like to do with math.

Nicholas shared that his goal is to become a NASA engineer or astronaut.

Student Representative Crowley invited Nicholas to join the Math team at MHS when he enters as a freshman.

Chairman Ortega thanked everyone for a wonderful presentation. He noted that the students were very articulate and well spoken.

6. Concerns Regarding Skate Park

Vice Chair Barnes expressed her concerns that the skate park is open daily dawn to dusk without a skate park attendant. She explained that she learned from her role on the Parks and Recreation Committee that the skate park attendant position had been removed from the Town's budget and that cameras would be installed. She believes the skate park should be closed while school is in session.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board member Schneider) to request that the Town Council add the School Board to a future Town Council meeting agenda for the purpose of requesting that the skate park be closed during school hours.

Vice Chair Barnes felt responsibility and student safety were important reasons to close the skate park during school hours. She felt cameras without a skate park attendant would not be appropriate supervision. She wished the Town Council would have informed the School Board about the removal of the skate park attendant position.

Board Member Schneider stated that he sees the value in having a skate park attendant. Based on his review of Town Council meeting minutes, the decision to remove the skate park attendant was not clear to him if the decision not to have a skate park attendant was based on other towns not having an attendant or if it was the right decision for Merrimack. He noted that the School District granted the easement to the Town; therefore, the Town has the right to make the decision. He compared it to the Department of Public Works (DPW) right to decide where to place a stop sign on Madeline Bennett Lane.

Board Member Schneider questioned if the School Board needs to take any action based on the use of basketball courts and tennis courts. Board Member Schneider does not personally agree with the Town's decision to eliminate the skate park attendant but is not sure the School Board should dictate to the Town when the skate park is open.

Vice Chair Barnes stressed that Merrimack's skate park is on school district property. She questioned if that was the case in other communities. She felt the basketball courts are not used as much because they are not well maintained.

Board Member Guagliumi asked to be reminded of the current skate park hours.

Vice Chair Barnes responded the skate park is closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays. It was previously open Monday, Thursday and Friday from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. and open dawn to dusk on Saturday and Sunday.

Board Member Guagliumi stated that she was not in favor of having the school district property open to the public during school hours and felt Vice Chair Barnes' safety concerns were valid.

Board Member Powell noted the school district is under a hold harmless agreement with the Town relative to the easement. He felt the School Board did consider the district's best interest when it included a hold harmless clause in the easement agreement. He does not feel it is appropriate for the School Board to determine if there is or is not a skate park attendant. He noted that a skate park attendant was not discussed during school district budget sessions and he did not think the request for a skate park attendant was requested by the School Board.

Vice Chair Barnes clarified that her motion is a request to go before the Town Council to request that the skate park be open outside of school hours; it does not have anything to with an attendant.

Board Member Schneider stated that he would be apt to support the motion if the hours for the skate park, basketball court and the tennis courts were treated as one unit.

Vice Chair Barnes clarified the tennis courts are inaccessible to the public with a lock and chains.

Chairman Ortega asked what types of activity might take place at the skate park that would not happen at any other park in town and what the risk would be to students that are self-contained in schools.

Vice Chair Barnes responded at one time there was cigarette butt can at the skate park; smoking is not allowed on school district property. She felt there were areas at the skate park where individuals could hide out of sight from police patrol. She noted the proximity of two school playgrounds to the skate park.

Board Member Guagliumi noted the track at the high school is not open during school hours. She felt it would be prudent of the School Board to advocate for consistency of high school track hours and skate park hours.

Board Member Powell thought that the public could use the track during school hours.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that people avoid using the high school track during school hours; however, there is no posted signage.

Board Member Guagliumi changed her position after Superintendent Chiafery clarified the high school track usage. She felt usage of the high school track and skate park should be consistent.

Board Member Powell recalled a heated discussion years ago regarding track usage and the possible scenario of undesirable elements being close to elementary schools. He pointed out other schools and the close proximity to various properties.

Vice Chair Barnes noted the difference is that the school district owns the skate park property. It is the district's responsibility to patrol district owned properties.

Board Member Schneider questioned what the skate park hours were prior to having an attendant. He felt it was likely dawn to dusk. When the decision was made by the Town to have a skate park attendant, the park hours became 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. He noted every other park in town is open dawn to dusk.

Board Member Schneider explained that Town Council discussions indicated if there is a problem with the dusk to dawn hours at the skate park they will revisit the topic.

Board Member Schneider stated that he understands Vice Chair Barnes' concern, but he is hesitant, without examples, to second guess the Town's decision to have the skate park open dusk to dawn.

Board Member Guagliumi clarified that Vice Chair Barnes' motion addressed the hours.

Board Member Schneider stated the skate park hours were 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. with an attendant. The attendant is now gone. Video monitoring is in place. The skate park hours will be the same as all the other parks in town. He asked the reason the school board is requesting the Town Council to restrict the skate park to be open outside school hours.

Vice Chair Barnes said she is not against Board Member Schneider's position of having after school hours be for all pieces of the O'Gara recreation area. We have been very consistent that we do not want the general public and our students mingling during school hours. We are taking extra precautions during elections, closing schools, adding police at polling sites if school is open. Her motion was a request for open dialogue between the Town Council and the School Board.

Board Member Schneider asked what the position of the Board would be at a Town Council meeting if the skate park hours were added to the Town Council agenda.

Chairman Ortega responded the position of the Board would be to restrict the hours of the skate park to 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. as opposed to being open from dawn to dusk, per the motion.

Board Member Powell called the question.

Chairman Ortega acknowledged the request to call the question. He wanted an opportunity to provide his comments.

Chairman Ortega stated it was unfortunate that the decision to extend the skate park hours was made without the opinion of the easement grantor. It comes down to the agreement put in place that provides the Town the easement to maintain and manage the property. Staffing falls under

management of property. He explained the reason he asked about what sort of threats the Board saw existing on the property is to understand what it is that might exist there that would put students at risk. The activities mentioned were not different than what could happen in any other public park within town during those hours of operation. The risk is that they would come onto the property in an intoxicated state which is a crime regardless of how they enter school property.

Chairman Ortega regretted that the Town Council did not ask for dialogue with the School Board, but technically they did not have to.

Chairman Ortega reported that the status of the O’Gara Drive tennis courts is on the agenda for Thursday’s Town Council meeting. He felt that indicates there is more information about the property to follow. He stated that the intent of the motion was sincere; however, he would not support the motion.

Chairman Ortega clarified the motion was to request an agenda item for the Town Council to request to restrict the hours for the skate park from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m.

The motion failed 1-4-0 with Board Members Guagliumi, Schneider, Powell and Chairman Ortega in opposition.

Board Member Schneider suggested the Board reconvene in two weeks to talk about the Town Council meeting outcome and invite the Parks and Recreation Director to come to a future meeting to clarify the reasons for his recommendation and to provide history of the easement.

Board Member Powell stated that he felt the Town Manager should be invited to attend a future School Board meeting rather than the Parks and Recreation Director.

Board Member Schneider agreed with Board Member Powell but hoped the Parks and Recreation Director would attend as well since the decision was based on his recommendation.

7. Guaranteed Health Insurance Rate for 2015-2016

Business Administrator Shevenell reported the average health insurance rate increase would be 4.4%. He explained the Guaranteed Maximum Rate of 4.4% did not change.

8. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega reported he received correspondence from a parent of an upper elementary school student with a question regarding the Smarter Balanced test. He also received correspondence from a parent of a high school student regarding discipline.

Vice Chair Barnes stated a parent with children at the middle school and high school inquired about drug use in the school.

b) Comments

Chairman Ortega explained the reason the 2015-2016 calendar was removed from the public meeting agenda and moved to the non-public meeting agenda was due to a potential contractual constraint.

9. New Business

There was no new business.

10. Committee Reports

Student Representative Crowley announced the week of April 6 was spirit week at the high school. Spirit week participation was the highest in history. There was 89.67% participation rate by the freshman class. There is also a fundraiser called “Penny Wars” with proceeds going to Easter Seals.

Board Member Schneider said Merrimack Safeguard met last Wednesday to create the subgroup structure. The next meeting will be the beginning part of May.

Vice Chair Barnes said the Easter egg hunt will be held on Saturday, April 18th at 10:00 a.m. at Wasserman Park.

11. Public Participation on Agenda Items

There was no public participation on agenda items.

12. Manifest

The board signed the manifest.

At 9:00 p.m. Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to enter non-public session.

The motion passed 5-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 9:35 p.m. Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the public meeting.