

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
July 13, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Ortega welcomed Rose DeNucci as the new School Board recorder of the minutes.

2. Approval of June 15, 2015 Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2015 meeting.

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 1, line 6, add Board Member Andy Schneider to those in attendance at the meeting.
- Page 7, line 332, change to say "...that the Board reduce the Capital Reserve Fund by the amount of revenue from the tuition received ..."

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3, line 104, change acknowledge to acknowledged
- Page 6, line 256, change teacher to teach

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell presented a gift from the Wentworth Place Association to the Merrimack School District Homeless Program for \$185.00. This gift is to be used for students in need within the Town of Merrimack, and at the discretion of the Homeless Liaison.

Business Administrator Shevenell commended the citizens for collecting the funds.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the donation from the Wentworth Place Association.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

a) Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following teacher nominations:

- Danya Chow Special Education Teacher Merrimack High School
- Kristine Colburn Special Education Teacher James Mastricola Elementary School
- James Costas Language Arts Teacher Merrimack Middle School
- Catherine Cyr Special Education Teacher Merrimack Middle School
- Stephanie Davenport Nurse Merrimack Middle School
- Alice Donahoe Grade 5 Teacher James Mastricola Upper Elementary
- Candice French Grade 1 Teacher Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Deborah Gerber Special Education Coordinator Merrimack High School
- Joshua Hill Science Teacher Merrimack Middle School
- Diane King Science Teacher Merrimack Middle School
- Lea Rossi Math Teacher Merrimack Middle School
- John Sheppela, Jr. Social Studies Teacher Merrimack Middle School
- Bryce Williams World Language Teacher Merrimack High School

b) Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following administration nominations:

- Shawna D’Amour Assistant Principal Merrimack Middle School

c) Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following teacher resignations:

- Kevin Moyer Special Education Teacher James Mastricola Upper Elementary
- Catherine Traut Kindergarten James Mastricola Elementary School

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

Board Member Powell expressed appreciation and noted that teacher nominee Lea Rossi is a Merrimack High School alumni.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

6. Update on District Wellness Efforts – Rick Greenier

Chairman Ortega welcomed Rick Greenier, District Wellness Committee Representative.

Mr. Greenier provided a two page handout to each board member to reference while he spoke. He provided an overall update of the past school year programs and what the Committee hopes to accomplish next year.

In 2014-2015 Bill Byron of HealthTrust presented a district-wide program called “Fitness by the Book,” free of charge. Schools were grouped for efficiency. Attendance was good.

Reeds Ferry Elementary School held a Family Fun Night and a Winter Wellness Week.

James Mastricola Elementary School held a Walking Wednesday and Jump Rope Club.

Thorntons Ferry Elementary School held a Family Fitness Challenge and new this year Drums Alive. Drums Alive is a fun K-adult aerobic workout involving the use of drum sticks, foam noodles and stability balls. About 40 staff members attended on two different days. It was and will continue to be presented by certified instructor and staff member Mrs. Parthum.

James Mastricola Upper Elementary School held Harvest 3K, and for the second year, Relay for Life. Relay for Life is an American Cancer Society program consisting of six events for students during the school year and culminates in Nashua on a Saturday. It raised money and provided more opportunities for children to exercise. It lasts about 12 hours and this past year about 30 staff members and hundreds of children walked and represented Merrimack. Mr. Greenier expects this to continue into next year.

Merrimack Middle School held Hoops for Heart and Intramural Sports.

Merrimack High School held Yoga classes and an end of year Smoothies for Stress, both for staff. Several wellness products including sunscreen were given to staff members.

These are examples of how the money from HealthTrust was spent this year.

The Wellness Committee is hoping to once again partner with Bill Byron of HealthTrust in a district-wide seminar titled Know your Numbers. Numbers include heart rate and blood pressure.

Highlights from the 2015-2016 calendar include:

Reeds Ferry Elementary School will hold a Fall Festival and the traditional Family Fun Night.

James Mastricola Elementary School will create a Staff Wellness Room and a Jump Rope Club for students.

Thorntons Ferry Elementary School will hold a Drums Alive (students, staff and community) and a Color Run/Walk (students and staff).

James Mastricola Upper Elementary School will hold a Harvest 3K (expanded to district-wide using high school students as timekeepers) and a Staff Wellness Room.

Merrimack Middle School will hold a Hoops for Heart and Intramural Sports.

Merrimack High School will have Yoga for teachers and a new walking club for staff.

Mr. Greenier noted that they are looking for Merrimack students to join the District Wellness Committee to replace those who recently graduated.

This year each school determined how to spend their allotted money from the HealthTrust dollars and it was well received. Plans are to continue this practice for next year.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that a new track was being created and asked if in the future any activities would take place on the track. Mr. Greenier responded that he was not sure if it fell under his jurisdiction.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about the Safe Routes to School. Mr. Greenier replied that implementation was in process and deferred to Superintendent Chiafery. He noted that the Wellness Committee had completed its portion two years ago and it included better sidewalks.

Chairman Ortega noted that the Safe Routes to School Committee was previously headed up by Tracy Bull and that they had created a report which addressed obstacles to walking and biking to school, and prioritized a list of projects and programs. Some recommendations included expanding sidewalks over Route 3 and some projects were within School District control others under the town or the state, for example the O’Gara sidewalks is a project that the school could oversee and will be scoped as part of the O’Gara repaving.

Chairman Ortega thanked Mr. Greenier for the update and extended the Board’s appreciation and asked that the School Board be invited to the next Drums Alive. Chairman Ortega also asked that there be more involvement between the high school students and younger students.

7. Need for Social Studies Teaching Position at Merrimack High School in lieu of a Science Teaching Position Based on Student Requests – Rick Zampieri, Rob Huckins

Chairman Ortega welcomed Assistant Principal Rich Zampieri and Social Studies Department Head Dr. Rob Huckins.

Assistant Principal Zampieri began by thanking Rick Greenier and the Wellness Committee, and stated that the staff loved the smoothies, sunscreen, bug spray, and raffle items.

Assistant Principal Zampieri then spoke on the impact of transferring a science/TechEd position to a social studies position. Student requests and class size were taken into account. The recent retirement of one high school science teacher was noted as well.

Currently the Science teacher teaches 3/5 Science and 2/5 Tech Ed. The transfer of one science position to the Social Studies Department would not impact the science offerings. No students would be turned away in science. Students would be absorbed into the remaining sections.

Assistant Principal Zampieri provided a handout that showed the current and newly proposed teacher to student ratio in science and noted that the class size would still be within acceptable limits.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the class size cap of 24 extended to the labs also and was told yes.

Board Member Powell asked about Advanced Placement classes and was told there would be no impact.

Board Member Schneider asked about teacher skill sets and if this change would leave adequate knowledge in the Science Department and how this change would be implemented. He noted that Science and Social Studies are different skill sets.

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that the specific science certifications would still be within the department and that classes would be assigned at the discretion of the Science Department Head.

Chairman Ortega noted that this change did not require any action from the School Board. He was appreciative of the information and the presentation to the Board.

Social Studies Department Head Huckins then opened by thanking the Board for this opportunity to present the new goals for Social Studies. He referred to a handout and began by stating that relevance, rigor, and opportunity would summarize his reasons for the proposed changes in this three year plan.

Dr. Huckins outlined the three main objectives: 1) realign the courses, 2) increase the number of course offerings, and 3) increase the academic rigor. Realigning the courses would bring them more in line with Common Core and better match student skill development. Increasing the number of courses would bring more relevance to the student experience. Increasing academic rigor would add Honors and Advanced Placement classes.

Dr. Huckins referred to the handout which outlined the Social Studies course offerings for 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17.

The new offerings would move Economics and Civics classes into Grade 10.

A new unifying course, World Studies, would be a required course and the only offering available to Grade 9 students. This would blend world history and world geography into a year-long course.

A new offering, Foundations in World Literature would be offered in Grade 10. The Inter-disciplinary class would be a double period/double credit course taught by Grade 10 English and Social Studies teachers. The initial sign-ups were very good.

Grade 10 Global Studies would be re-branded and titled Contemporary Issues 1. The reason is that most of the State resources that relate to this course are often found under Contemporary Issues.

A new offering in Grade 11, The American Experience, is an inter-disciplinary course to be taught by Grade 11 English and History teachers. It is also a double period/double credit course. Almost fifty students have signed up for it already.

New offerings for Grades 11 and 12 include Advanced Placement Economics which has two Sections full, Advanced Placement US Government & Politics with 1 Section full, and the re-introduction of Sociology with 5 Sections full.

Grade 12 will increase Advanced Placement Psychology from one to two Sections and add Culture Shock, a new inter-disciplinary course that will combine English, Psychology, and Sociology in a double period/double credit taught by a team of teachers.

The changes above will add seven new courses: three inter-disciplinary, two Advanced Placement and two Electives.

In 2016-2017 the changes will culminate. This type of schedule will allow for more flexibility for future new offerings.

Board Member Powell thanked Dr. Huckins for putting the presentation into layman's terms and asked how the changes would align with Common Core.

Dr. Huckins responded that the Common Core Standards were already being met. The changes would level the classes by adding Honors courses. Middle School Social Studies teachers were involved in the process and the changes will mean that the Common Core will be better met.

Civics and Economics were moved from Grade 9 to Grade 10; based on research-based evidence and Dr. Huckins' personal teaching experience; both of which have shown students to be more developmentally prepared for them in Grade 10.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if all of the inter-disciplinary courses will be double periods and was told yes.

Vice Chair Barnes then asked why Advanced Placement Psychology is not available in Grade 11. Dr. Huckins responded that the offering in Grade 11 was seen as opening the door and introducing the course in Grade 11 and paving the way for Advanced Placement in Grade 12. Students would not need to take Psychology in Grade 11 in order to take Advanced Placement Psychology in Grade 12. Dr. Huckins also noted that students may take Advanced Placement exams regardless of whether or not they took the courses although it is not recommended and data shows lower test scores.

Dr. Huckins noted that Advanced Placement course attendance is rising nationally partly because students can receive college credit and save on college tuition. He also noted that academic rigor for these courses is going up.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if transfer students would be able to take courses without any pre-requisites and was told yes. Dr. Huckins noted that students must take Economics and Civics classes in order to graduate.

Board Member Schneider asked if the intent was to reduce the Science teacher by one and increase the Social Studies teacher by one.

Assistant Principal Zampieri noted that one Science teacher had retired.

Board Member Schneider asked if this might be a trend that would reverse in a few years.

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that if that were to happen he would return to the School Board for their guidance.

Chairman Ortega thanked Assistant Principal Zampieri and Dr. Huckins for their extremely well thought out and well explained presentation and their great work. He noted that he was pleased to see the addition of more Advanced Placement courses.

8. Third Reading of Restraint /Seclusion Policy

Chairman Ortega recognized Superintendent Chiafery.

Superintendent Chiafery reminded the Board that at the June 15, 2015 meeting there was one section that the School Board wanted to be reworked.

The section under Training will now read: "the Superintendent, Director of Special Services, and Principals of the Merrimack School District will confer on an annual basis to designate specific personnel to be trained in the use of physical restraint procedures and seclusion. Staff will be trained in the non-violent crisis intervention program CPI, and or its equivalent as determined by the Superintendent of Schools or his or her designee."

This would create a "train the trainer model" which would put people in place to best meet the needs of the staff and would best meet the needs for training.

Chairman Ortega commented that this change would satisfy all of his concerns as it related to that section.

Vice Chair Barnes asked why the program is referred to as CPI instead of CIP.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that this is the formal title and nothing she has control over.

Chairman Ortega stated that the updated change to the policy would appear on the Consent Agenda for the August 17, 2015 meeting.

9. Curriculum Overview

Chairman Ortega recognized Assistant Superintendent Dr. Mark McLaughlin.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin gave a PowerPoint demonstration on "*Curriculum Development and Implementation in the Merrimack School District*" acknowledging the hard work of the committee to create curriculum that went into students understanding the difference between "knowing" and "applying" as it relates to a real world situation, based on the college and career ready standards.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following information.

Cyclical review (in Merrimack it is every ten years), and response to exterior influence such as changes in Standards are why a curriculum review is done. It is usually done to address a challenge, question, or problem.

The multiple steps involved in the process are: 1) The formation of a curriculum committee comprised of principals, assistant principals and teachers who are specialists in the field. 2) Development of a mission and goal statement. 3) Development of a draft timeline. In Merrimack meetings are held during the day. 4) Considerable time is spent reviewing current curriculum documents. 5) Research is conducted of best practices, brain research, and content innovations in the field. There would be no context if stages 4 and 5 are skipped.

The Understanding by Design (UbD) protocol is used in the Merrimack School District. The protocol allows teachers to work together to determine what things a student must know and understand to have an "enduring understanding." Students will also need to know content, facts, and details because they are "important to know." Lastly, there are some things that students are taught because they are "worth being familiar with."

UbD is organized around three stages of backward design. 1) Identify the desired results. What is the thing we want to achieve? 2) Determine the acceptable evidence. 3) Plan learning experiences and instruction to achieve the outcome.

The curriculum writing development process is collaborative, deliberate (don't rush), recursive (feedback from classroom teachers) and progressive (moves forward).

Curriculum initiatives completed in 2012 were Art and Music.

Current curriculum initiatives are K-12 Science, K-12 Physical Education and Health, and K-12 Technology, Library, Media.

Future curriculum initiatives will be K-12 Social Studies (2016-2017) and Grades 6-12 World Languages (2016-2017).

Ongoing curriculum initiatives are Math and Literacy. These are foundational areas and tested areas.

In 2015-2016 the Math Committee comprised of K-12 principals, assistant principals, department heads and math facilitators will continue to work on refining teaching practices in order to provide teachers a greater understanding of college and career ready standards. This will be assisted by targeted professional development.

In 2016-2017 the above work will continue and will then be used to review and recommend resources and tools to support math instruction.

In 2016-17 the Literacy Committee will continue to refine the formative assessments to guide instruction and implement a progress monitoring tool to assess growth that applies to literacy and math called STAR360. It was piloted this past year with Title I teachers and students. A new word study component will be implemented as well as a foundational literacy standard.

Three options were presented as to the role of the School Board in the curriculum development process. They are 1) Participation limited to oversight/review/approval of final product, 2) Complete immersion in the curriculum development process, and 3) Informed consent throughout the process with updates provided by curriculum committees to designated board liaisons.

Informed consent is how the process is currently handled by the Merrimack School Board and was suggested as to being the best option.

The Program Evaluation and Review Committee (PERC) is a broadly based standing committee of the school district conducting regular meetings, or as needed, and engaging in projects that are designed to promote the academic goals of the Merrimack School District.

PERC has two roles. 1) To direct the review, evaluation, introduction, renewal or reaffirmation of various instructional programs within the school district. 2) To serve as the final stop on the way to school board review of a new or proposed curriculum.

The district rigor statement is a product of PERC.

The primary purpose of PERC is to act as a staging for the School Board. PERC could be re-ignited so that it can be supportive of the curriculum development process, new course development and how it might be used as a “think tank” to support initiatives throughout the district.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about the purpose of having designated Board Liaisons and was concerned about the watering down of efforts to present items to the School Board by having layman instead of educators presenting information. Curriculum should be presented by educators. In the past there has been a disconnect between Board Members and their designated

sub-committee assignments. PERC would be preferred because we need more well-rounded presentations.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about the frequency of teacher meetings as it relates to the impact on students.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that curriculum meetings are never more than one full day a month. The Science Committee meets every other month.

Board Member Schneider noted that he has several liaison assignments and they vary in consistency of information sharing. Participation allows Board Members to act as sounding boards. Members should make themselves available to their assigned sub-committees.

Board Member Guagliumi thanked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin for explaining the process to the School Board and to the public. Since liaison assignment attendance at an all-day meeting can be difficult, would Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin consider providing more frequent updates such as he gave at this meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes suggested that it would be better for the entire School Board to get updates such as this one instead of liaison assignments where only one Board Member gets the detailed information.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin agreed that communication could be improved and asked the question, "What constitutes meaningful communication?"

Board Member Powell thanked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin for the presentation. He spoke of the role of the liaison to act as a filter and that the current process should be kept but agreed that more consistency is needed.

Vice Chair Barnes commented that Sub-Committee assignments are varied and should be more fairly spread out. She noted that Merrimack is one of the only communities in New Hampshire without a Policy Committee.

Board Member Schneider suggested that assignments be spread out more fairly and that they be treated as one of the roles of a School Board member. He would like to see a way to have School Board members more involved in curriculum committees.

Chairman Ortega recommended that this be listed as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Chairman Ortega asked if the Curriculum Development model could have been purchased instead of being created through committees referencing the "build it or buy it" decision.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that educators evaluated existing models and found them not to be customizable and that there was a need to create instead of purchase. He noted that there is added value to teachers participating in the process of developing new curriculum.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that a purchased curriculum with no teacher input was less valuable. There is a teacher buy-in when creating curriculum that builds a rich community over the years. The unintended consequences of the K-12 teacher involvement contributes to a greater understanding and appreciation for the foundation for which the elementary teachers set and then the middle and high school teachers build upon.

Chairman Ortega thanked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin for an informative and thought provoking presentation.

10. Board's Position on Proposed Gas Pipeline

Chairman Ortega recognized Vice Chair Barnes.

Vice Chair Barnes spoke of the impact on the Merrimack School District from the gas pipeline being proposed by Kinder Morgan. The latest route change puts the route within 500 feet of Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. She noted that the upcoming Scoping meetings will be held before the next School Board Meeting and was concerned that the route might change again.

Vice Chair Barnes asked that the School Board discuss and then take a position regarding the pipeline and its impact on the Merrimack School District.

Chairman Ortega noted that the Scoping meetings are to be held on Wednesday, July 29th at 6:30 p.m. at the Nashua Radisson Hotel and Thursday, July 30th at 6:30 p.m. at the Milford Town Hall.

Chairman Ortega noted that he did not personally support the pipeline as he saw no need for it and the risks to the community are too high.

Chairman Ortega noted that a recent Amherst meeting brought out new details and suggested that since the Merrimack Town Council has retained legal counsel that the School Board needed to work more closely with them as it relates to this issue.

Board Member Guagliumi was concerned about bus stops, busses, and water in the schools being impacted by incineration zones. She would take a stand against the pipeline.

Board Member Powell did not have enough information to make an informed decision at this time.

Board Member Schneider commented that the School Board has never talked about this issue before and agreed that it needed to be looked at.

Chairman Ortega noted the conundrum because there is no clear line of sight at this time. He referenced the Kinder Morgan meeting that was held in Amherst on June 30th and asked if the School Board should take a conditional position on opposing a proposed pipeline on Continental Boulevard near Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

Vice Chair Barnes recommended a pro-active position stating what the School Board does not want to have happen in regards to any pipeline facilities.

Discussion ensued among the Board members.

Chairman Ortega moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) that the School Board authorize the Chairman to meet with the Town Council Chairman to discuss a combined position on the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Vice Chair Barnes moved to write a letter to regulatory bodies and political representatives informing them of the Merrimack School Board's position of opposing any pipeline projects impacting the schools and water supplies to schools.

A lengthy discussion ensued among the Board members.

Chairman Ortega noted that the motion on the table made by Vice Chair Barnes did not have unanimous support and stated that there was another potential motion opposing any proposed route that came within 1,000 feet of any school that seemed to have unanimous support. He asked if Vice Chair Barnes would like to withdraw her motion.

More discussion ensued among Board Members.

Vice Chair Barnes amended her motion (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) that the School Board send a letter to FERC and governing bodies taking a position to oppose any natural gas pipeline project that would put any Merrimack School within 1,000 feet of the incineration zone.

The motion carried 5-0-0.

11. Other

a) Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

b) Comments

Superintendent Chiafery gave a note of appreciation to the Police, the Fire, the Emergency Responders, and the Medical Responders who participated in the Active Shooter Drill which was held at Merrimack High School on Friday, June 26, 2015. It was very successful.

12. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery made the Board aware that she was contacted by phone by Town Manager Cabanel requesting space for Kinder Morgan to hold an Open House in September. Dates and locations were requested for Kinder Morgan to set up booths for the community to come out and view. Site dates and times are still under review.

Vice Chair Barnes suggested that the meeting be held at the Merrimack High School for parking reasons.

13. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Debra Huffman of 60 Amherst Road thanked the Board for discussing Kinder Morgan and offered assistance to the Board if they needed any information on understanding the issues.

15. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

Chairman Ortega noted that there will not be a Non-Public Session following this meeting, as it is not needed.

At 9:47 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.