

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
September 8, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

Present: Chairman Ortega, Vice Chair Barnes, Board Members Schneider and Powell, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell, Student Representative Jacob (Jake) Marcus.

Chairman Ortega noted that Board Member Guagliumi was excused from the meeting.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

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

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Introduction of Student Representative

Chairman Ortega welcomed Jake Marcus to the Board and invited him to speak about himself.

Student Representative Marcus shared that he is a senior at Merrimack High School in the class of 2016. He is president of the school band, is starting a club called Young Politicians of America which focuses on political and civil outreach, and would like to attend Georgetown University.

3. Approval of August 17, 2015 Minutes

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2015 meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 5 of 9, line 195, change Board Member to Vice Chair
- Page 7 of 9, line 296, change incineration zone to pipeline route

Board Member Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 7 of 9, line 299, change State Senator to United States Senator

Board Member Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2 of 9, line 45, change to say "...a gift from the Target Corporation for Teacher Appreciation."
- Change from "...thank on to thank for" throughout document.
- Page 6 of 9, line 273 change tract to track.
- Page 6 of 9, line 276 change weather to whether.
- Page 9 of 9, line 389 change from heroin form to heroin forum.

The motion passed as amended 4-0-0.

4. Public Participation

Chairman Ortega recognized Barbara Publicover.

Mrs. Publicover of 75 Amherst Road shared that on September 29th the District Special Education Parent Support Group will be hosting Lynn Lyons in the Little Theater at the high school. She will speak on “Seven Ways to Stop the Worry Cycle.” It is a free workshop open to all.

5. Consent Agenda

a) Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following teacher resignations:

- Mark Walczak Guidance Counselor Merrimack High School
- Michael Shupe Special Education Teacher James Mastricola Upper Elementary School

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

6. Highlights from the Special Services Department

Chairman Ortega welcomed John Fabrizio, Director of Special Services and Special Education Parent Support Group members Barbara Publicover, Trisha Swonger and Michele Watson.

Director Fabrizio began by thanking the Parent Support Group for joining him for this presentation.

Director Fabrizio then spoke on the Special Education District Report, a copy of which was included in the packets mailed to each School Board member prior to the meeting. This Annual Performance Report (APR) is the annual report on the performance of each local education agency (LEA) or district on 14 of 20 indicators.

Director Fabrizio listed the following 14 district indicators:

- 1) Graduation rate
- 2) Dropout rate
- 3) Participation and performance of students with disabilities on statewide assessments
- 4) Rates of suspension/expulsion 2012-2013
- 5) School age placement-percentage of children with Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) aged 6 through 21, October 1, 2013
- 6) Percent of children aged 3 through 5 with IEP's attending a regular/special education/separate school
- 7) Preschool performance
- 8) Parent involvement 2013-2014
- 9) Disproportionate representation due to inappropriate identification

- 10) Disproportionate representation due to inappropriate identification: specific disability categories 2012-2013
- 11) Evaluation timeliness 2013-2014
- 12) Early intervention to preschool special education transition 2013-2014
- 13) Secondary planning
- 14) Post school outcomes

Parent Trisha Swonger then spoke to Indicator 8, parent involvement. Merrimack exceeds the state guidelines every year on the Parent Survey response rate.

Parent Barbara Publicover stated the results are from a combination of factors; the Special Services department's sharing of information, social media, district website, regular meetings between the Parent Group, the Special Services department and Superintendent Chiafery.

Parent Michele Watson spoke highly about the Pre-School Teams and the parent newsletter. The upcoming Open House will provide another avenue to reach out. The special services website includes information on events happening outside of the community and in other school districts that might be of interest to parents, including the "Around the World in Special Ed" workshop.

Director Fabrizio pointed out several indicators and provided additional information and/or explanations for some of the indicators.

Some of the areas being worked on are 1) Increasing Parent Involvement-getting parents to understand the purpose of the survey in order to motivate them to fill out the survey. 2) Survey results from the prior year are to be shared in an information letter that accompanies the survey along with the actions that will be taken.

Chairman Ortega thanked the members for their continued dedication to the Parent Support Group, noting that they no longer have children in Special Education. He noted that their commitment is much appreciated by the School Board as well as the community at large.

b) Focused Monitoring Report 2014-2015

Director Fabrizio referred to the report that had been included in the packet mailed to the School Board members prior to the meeting. He then recognized Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin as a valuable contributing partner to the report.

Director Fabrizio gave a PowerPoint presentation and began by noting two important findings. The Merrimack School District has an achievement gap in comparison to similar size districts and the June 2015 compliance review showed the district at 100% compliance.

Director Fabrizio noted the large number of people across the district who make up the Leadership Team and the Achievement Team and the challenge in creating a cohesive group across the district. Fifteen meetings were held throughout the year.

Because the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements found the Merrimack School District to have an achievement gap, the district was invited to take part in the Focused Monitoring Group.

The group began by acknowledging the strategies already in place that are working. They include Response to Intervention (RTI) (K-6), Strategies for Collaboration and Learning Essential Standards (SCALES), competency work, standards, re-teach and enrich, RIGOR, Collaborative Assessment Project (CAP), curriculum work, math labs, AIMS WEB, progress monitoring, interventions, performance plus, and theology integration.

A seven step performance measurement plan was designed to address the achievement gap issues. An Action Plan was the culmination of this process which included strategies and activities.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin complimented on the specifics that were provided were very informative. He noted that the achievement gap is not confined to Special Education, but was a district wide issue requiring a district wide effort. The District is well ahead of others in addressing the issues.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin asked Director Fabrizio to explain his visual model on servicing students.

Director Fabrizio explained the “diamond” model of putting a diamond on its side and how the sides push out differently for each student based on their individual needs. It is a leveled strategy of continued assistance.

Vice Chair Barnes asked how RTI is handled in the middle school and high school when a student has many more teachers.

Director Fabrizio responded that systems are created and put in place utilizing technology to pull up longitudinal data on individual students to inform teaching.

Chairman Ortega noted that if both regular and IEP student scores rose five percent across the board next year, while this is to be commended the achievement gap remains the same.

Director Fabrizio noted that the achievement gap doesn’t tell the whole story. The Merrimack system reaches all students. Each student is working towards their individual best performance.

Chairman Ortega asked when we will have enough data to know that the Pilot has been successful now that the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) assessments are no longer and the new measuring systems are just beginning.

Director Fabrizio recommended multiple measures throughout the year to mark progress.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin spoke about the Performance Plus data warehouses and data points. NECAP, Smarter Balance and other assessments are triangulated to create a picture of a student’s performance.

Chairman Ortega thanked Director Fabrizio for a comprehensive report. He also thanked the Special Education Parent Support Group.

7. Technology Plan Update

Chairman Ortega recognized Ms. Nancy Rose, Director of Technology and Library and Media Services.

Ms. Rose provided an overview of how the Technology and Capitol Improvement Funds were utilized in 2014-2015 and the plans for the 2015-2016 funds.

In 2014-2015 two mobile carts containing 25 laptops each were put into the three Pre-K through Grade 4 elementary schools. They are in high demand and always in use. Next year two carts each will go into the Social Studies and English departments at the high school. This will assist in the interdisciplinary classes and adds needed capacity. Staff computers have also been replaced in both school years.

Thorntons Ferry moved the Macintosh computer lab next to the library, updated the library and renovated room 8 creating a technology suite.

More LCD projectors have been installed. This project should be 100% complete this year.

The VOIP project has been completed. The entire district can now 4-digit dial. More in-district control and management is the goal.

Wi-Fi demand continues to increase. Access points are added as more carts are added.

The district is now all fiber optic. The district is now trying to increase bandwidth.

The district is still a long way from meeting the State Education Technology Directors Association goals for 2017-2018.

Prevention, maintenance and infrastructure updates are ongoing.

The district is looking forward and beginning to evaluate the value to and readiness of the district in regards to learning management systems. These are tools teacher, students, and parents can leverage for tracking assignment, homework, showcasing materials and portfolios and communication.

Middle school labs, more high school laptops and computer programming classes, the James Masticola Upper Elementary School computers, and infrastructure and network updates will be evaluated for inclusion as future capital improvement projects.

Superintendent Chiafery asked Ms. Rose to speak about the utilization of personnel and the addition of a technician to the staff.

Ms. Rose responded that the hiring of a second technician to focus on the K-6 schools frees up the other technician to focus on the middle and high schools.

Board Member Schneider asked about bandwidth rates, service providers and pricing.

Ms. Rose responded that the national State Technology Education Directors Association is involved with a new taskforce on the education superhighway. This is a national nonprofit that works with states to improve bandwidth for schools by combining the e-rate program, legislation around the e-rate program and a state's uniqueness to help determine what agencies might be available to be part of the process. The result is the creation of a consulting agency to help a state assess the vendors who might come into the state to provide competitive service, bandwidth and pricing.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the Wi-Fi uses hot spots and was told yes.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about the parental involvement piece of a learning management system. She referenced the parent survey results and stressed the parent and student benefit to putting in place a learning management system and asked that the Board be kept up to date on this issue.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted the commitment of the School Board in providing the funding technology. He also noted the work, vision and support of Ms. Rose, Mr. Touseau, Mark Bowman, the computer technicians, and teachers.

Chairman Ortega noted how funding has increased during his tenure on the Board and the cautious progress of Ms. Rose in spending the money wisely. He asked if we are now at a tipping point where we need to spend more money.

Ms. Rose responded yes, adding that besides needing money for upgrades, increased bandwidth, and additional equipment, that teacher training funds would be very desirable.

Chairman Ortega thanked Ms. Rose for her great update.

8. Update on Summer Maintenance Projects

Chairman Ortega invited Business Administrator Shevenell and Director of Maintenance Tom Touseau to speak.

Director Touseau gave a brief summary of the three main summer projects. The roof project has been completed as well as some repairs at the middle school. The Thorntons Ferry Library was completed and the whiteboards are 90% installed.

Board Member Schneider asked about the repairs to the track and was told those had been done before school ended and will be checked again this fall. Track evaluation will be ongoing.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the budgeted amount of \$30,000 for 2015-2016 was used or still available and was told it is still available.

Chairman Ortega asked if the track is used by the Cross Country team. Student Representative Marcus responded that yes it is used for warm-ups and some practice.

9. Presentation of the Capital Improvement Plan for 2016-2022

Business Manager Shevenell and Director of Maintenance Touseau remained in place and showed a PowerPoint presentation and referred to the hand out that had been provided in the packets mailed to the Board members.

Business Manager Shevenell noted the changes that were made in the timeframe and/or pricing for upcoming improvements. These include an increase of \$15,000 for the HVAC system at the high school due to inflation, splitting the roof replacement at the middle school into two projects in two separate fiscal years, (the possibility of roof failure at the middle school will impact the roof repairs and replacements at all of the elementary schools), a reduction in cost in asbestos removal at affected schools, adding James Masticola Elementary School and James Masticola Upper Elementary School to the paving projects already planned for Merrimack High School and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, consolidation of Special Services and SAU offices, James Masticola Upper Elementary School drainage, Merrimack High School track and field upgrades and technology infrastructure upgrades.

Overviews of all of the roof conditions and materials used on them were provided to give context to the order and cost of repairs and replacement. The membrane and pea stone roofs will be replaced with mineral surface roofs. They will be warrantied for 30 years. Other roofs include rubber and stone materials.

Board Member Schneider noted that the new Capital Improvement Plan is a six year plan compared to the five year plan presented last year. He also noted that once the roofs are finished their will be a decade or longer in which to look at creating a capital reserve fund.

The asbestos removal cost has been decreased significantly. This is due to the fact that some of the prior asbestos removal monies went further than anticipated. At the completion of this project, the district will have dealt with all asbestos that is known to be in the district schools.

Significant time was given to discussing the paving projects. Concerns about liability designate the Merrimack High School bus loop and the front of the school a priority repair project.

Chairman Ortega asked if the estimates for O’Gara Drive included sidewalks and was told no.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that the sidewalks would cost about \$80,000 which was under the CIP minimum of \$100,000.

Board Member Powell asked about an area by the baseball fields and the parking lots. Discussion ensued as to reconfiguring the lots and getting everything done at the same time. Questions about responsibility and land ownership were raised.

Vice Chair Barnes brought up the issue of the tennis courts and agreed that the conversation should look at the whole area.

Business Manager Shevenell added that the consolidation of the Special Services and SAU offices should be included in that conversation. He noted that the design of the bus loop will not change and should not be a factor in putting off the project.

The substantial increase in the cost of the Special Services/SAU Offices will include razing the old building and the new parking lot. These costs were not included in last year's figures.

The new track will be an eight lane track to make it more competitive at the collegiate level as well as allowing for a better retaining wall.

While the bleachers by the high school track are functional, they are not in compliance with current ADA standards. They have no back supports on the top rows or aisles to walk up and down.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that she had witnessed the safety risks of these current bleachers.

Board Member Powell asked if replacing the bleachers at the same time as the track upgrade is a case of want or need and was told need.

Replacing the field with artificial materials is not cost saving. Rather it allows for higher use especially in wet weather and has an estimated life of 15 years.

The windows at the high school are over 40 years old and many do not secure properly. Payback on this project is not projected to be in energy savings based on a previous energy audit.

The technology plans spoken of earlier by Nancy Rose were referred to and re-emphasized. Superintendent Chiafery noted the urgency of repairing the middle school roof and then the track replacement.

Student Representative Marcus asked if the stage extensions in the cafeteria would be under the CIP and was told that would be in the operating budget.

Chairman Ortega speaking on behalf of the Board noted the value of all of the information that had been shared and that it would be very helpful when deliberating.

10. Second Review of the 2015-2020 Merrimack School District Logic Model

Chairman Ortega recognized Superintendent Chiafery.

Superintendent Chiafery noted input from Vice Chair Barnes at the August 17th meeting in regards to enhanced communication between educators and parents. The updated Logic Model will include parent surveys under Inputs. Consistent communication is a goal to be accomplished by educators using a myriad of tools more frequently to keep parents informed about the teaching/learning process.

Vice Chair Barnes reiterated her desire to see the technology used by educators be more standardized in order to more efficiently reach parents.

Chairman Ortega commented that he looked at the Logic Model as more strategic than tactical.

Superintendent Chiafery referred to the Learning Management System software brought up by Nancy Rose and noted the Board's positive interest. Ongoing conversations between the Superintendent and Nancy Rose should result in a system in place within five years. Superintendent Chiafery asked that the Logic Model stay global and that the Board hold her accountable for it.

Board Member Schneider recommended that part of an Input be consistency and methodology within a school.

Vice Chair Barnes requested that the aesthetics be considered to make it more publishable.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that once the content was approved that the presentation would then be approved.

Board Member Powell suggested that it is not under the purview of the Board to approve the aesthetics.

The content of the District Logic Model will be on the next consent agenda.

11. Board Decision regarding starting time for future School Board Meetings

The Board discussed the reasons for the 7:30 p.m. start time for School Board meetings as well as the Non-Public portion of the meeting.

Board Member Schneider asked that the Public and Non-Public sessions be in the same building.

Chairman Ortega noted the Boards agreement that the time be changed from 7:30 to 7:00p.m. for public and that the non-public be split and held at 6:30 p.m. and if need be, at the completion of the public meeting.

12. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega shared a letter from Martha Rives of the New Hampshire Art Educators' Association. She wrote to inform Superintendent Chiafery that Mary Beth Donovan-Olson of Reeds Ferry Elementary School was selected as Art Educator of the Year 2015-2016. Ms. Donovan-Olson will be representing the state at both the National Art Education Association conference in March 2016 and the New Hampshire Excellence in Education Awards in June 2016.

Chairman Ortega on behalf of the Board and the District, congratulated Ms. Donovan-Olson on this award and thanked her for her excellence in her job.

Chairman Ortega shared that he had been informed by the Merrimack Teachers Association President and chief negotiator of their desire to bargain a master contract for 2016-2017. This will be discussed in Non-Public session at the next meeting.

Business Manager Shevenell and Chairman Ortega received an email from a constituent advising the district to use YouTube to update constituents on the value of district projects.

A constituent asked Chairman Ortega a question on the Logic Model.

Chairman Ortega received a thank you from a parent for the school calendar and the fact that school was beginning after Labor Day.

Chairman Ortega received a note from former student representative Kiera Crowley thanking the Board for all the opportunities over the past three years. He noted before reading the note that it was a nice way to close out with one student representative and welcome a new one.

Vice Chair Barnes received three emails from parents thanking her in regards to the Logic Model and her concerns about the parent involvement and communications piece.

b) Comments

There were no comments.

13. New Business

Chairman Ortega advised Board Members to bring to the next meeting, individually prepared statements in regards to the budget that would give direction to the Superintendent. Chairman Ortega will then draft a Board's direction from these statements.

Student Representative Marcus asked if this applied to him and was told no. Past practice had allowed the Student Representative to make comments after the statements are presented and voted on. If desired this practice could be revived.

Chairman Ortega shared that he had received the New Hampshire School Board's Association call for resolutions. They are due in mid-October.

Board Member Schneider asked if there would be meetings to discuss teachable hours before contract negotiations begin.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she is in talks with the Amherst superintendent in regards to a meeting to be scheduled for September 21st or October 15th.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that resolutions are due by October 23rd.

14. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Barnes recently attended the New Hampshire School Board Association meeting the afternoon of September 8th and heard a presentation from HealthTrust on how school districts fail to control health costs, Merrimack being an exception.

Vice Chair Barnes shared that the New Hampshire School Board Association training schedule is on their website and that one of the trainings is on negotiations. The state budget was also discussed. Updates to the policy database were made with social media policies and recording in the classroom being highlighted.

Board Member Schneider had a last minute conflict and was therefore unable to attend the Merrimack Safeguard Meeting.

Board Member Schneider noted that he had attended the Planning and Building Committee meeting.

15. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

16. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 11:04 p.m. Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.