

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
October 19, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of October 5, 2015 Minutes

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2015 meeting.

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 6, line 237, delete the words "...and how it will continue." and in its place say "...initial and ongoing."
- Page 6, line 243, after insights change to say "...or lessons learned that could be shared."
- Page 13, line 566, change to say "Board Member Guagliumi asked Business Administrator Shevenell to remind the Board what the prior year surplus was..."
- Page 13, line 583, change "...made the comment that she hoped a thank you letter would be sent" to say "...requested that a thank you letter be sent..."

Board Member Schneider requested the following change be made to the minutes:

- Page 13, line 553 correct to say "One million dollars in the area..."

Board Member Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 5, line 185, capitalize Survey Monkey
- Page 5, line 189, insert the word "employee" between "reduction in absences..."
- Page 5, line 204, at end of sentence add "...after school for students' access."
- Page 10, line 455, change to say seconded by Board Member Guagliumi..."

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Follow-Up to the September 29 Health Trust Summit

Chairman Ortega invited Merrimack HealthTrust representative Debie Clayton and Human Resources Director Linda Hastings to the table.

Ms. Clayton opened her remarks by noting that the Summit was a successful first attempt with four members from Merrimack in attendance where over 250 people attended. The feedback was mostly favorable with the noted exception that one of the sessions did not pertain to New Hampshire public sector. The consensus is that this Summit will become an annual event.

Ms. Clayton referred to a brochure and information packet she had distributed the Merrimack School Board that identified the changes to employee benefits. A committee of HealthTrust employees analyzed the gamut of options being offered and realized that there were 68 different combinations of medical plans and that this was unsustainable in regards to complying with the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Ms. Clayton went through the four page brochure that outlined the changes and explained how they will affect the Merrimack School District. All of the employee medical plans and benefits are Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield and are provided by HealthTrust, the non-profit public sector risk pool solely providing benefits to New Hampshire public sector employees.

The first change on July 1st of 2016 will be to the Matthew Thornton Blue (MTB) the current HMO plan. It will become Access Blue New England (AB) which means a broader network. No in-network referrals will be needed. Employees will be able to access a network of providers from the six New England states (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT).

The second change will also begin on July 1st of 2016. The number of HealthTrust plans available will be streamlined. As part of this change, HealthTrust has discontinued plans that had low or no enrollment such as indemnity (JY, JW, and Comp) and Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plans. Early retirees on these plans will be contacted directly by HealthTrust to assist in planning and make plan changes before July 1, 2016.

The third change applies to out of pocket responsibilities and deductibles. Beginning on July 1st of 2017 the plans will change from a calendar year to a July 1st start date. During the transition employees' deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses incurred from January 1, 2017 through June 30, 2017 will be credited toward their out-of-pocket costs for July 2017 through June 2018 Plan Year.

The fourth change applies to prescription drugs and will begin on July 1st of 2018. Merrimack is not affected by this change because all district employees are all on preferred prescription drug plan. Plans being discontinued include M\$1 and M\$3/7 (mail order) plans. The RX10/20/30 plan will be transitioned to RX10/20/35 plan.

Chairman Ortega asked about the current three plan options, HMO, POS, and JY and asked what will be the suggested plan options when the JY is discontinued.

Ms. Clayton recommended that the easiest transition would be to move to a Blue Choice point of service (POS) that is a low cost plan that does not require referrals.

Ms. Hastings noted that right now there are no early retirees on the JY plan, however there are active employees on it.

Ms. Clayton noted that it is a common practice during open enrollment to provide individual assistance and guidance to those needing to transition from the indemnity plans.

Ms. Clayton then spoke to the questions that the Board had provided to her prior to the meeting. She referred to the benefit comparison sheet and explained the details in the options. Under Blue Choice only one type of offering per plan type is available. Under Matthew Thornton there is a second option now available to non-union employees in order to comply with the Affordable Care Act requirements. This is a tiered plan with different copays and deductibles that apply also to labs and outpatient services.

Merrimack could choose to add the tiered plan option to the Blue Choice and Matthew Thornton options to increase the plan offerings to three.

The Cadillac Tax is a 40% excise tax on the difference between the cost of a medical plan and what the Affordable Care Act deems to be a reasonable threshold for the value of a plan. This excise tax is to be used to help pay for the Affordable Care Act.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the excise tax applied only to employees participating in the health care plans and was told yes.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the tiered option is currently open to union members and was told yes, but that no one had opted into that plan during open enrollment.

A stand-alone vision plan would not be included in the Cadillac Tax computation.

As to who pays the Cadillac Tax, it is the employer's responsibility to calculate the tax. The liability to pay the tax is on the coverage provider, HealthTrust.

The cost of the plan, flexible spending account contributions (employee contributions), any and all Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) contributions (employer contributions), and salary reduction or Health Savings Account (SHA) contributions, are included in the calculation for the Cadillac Tax.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted that the health care provider would be responsible for paying the Cadillac tax and asked if the employer would have to raise rates to cover this cost.

Ms. Clayton noted that this is not an option at this time. The Cadillac Tax is based on the prior year's rates. Rates are set in the future and the reporting of who is on the Cadillac plan would be done after the fact. This would be separate from the monthly rates and at this time it is unknown who would absorb this tax. This issue is in ongoing discussions at HealthTrust. The concern when setting future rates is to eliminate the tax exposure to the customer.

Business Administrator Shevenell voiced concerns over the challenge of unknowns during the budgeting process.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the rates would continue to rise 6.5% after 2018 and Board Member Schneider responded that at the Health Care Summit it was stated that the rates would be adjusted on a rate higher than inflation and that they would most likely not work in our favor.

Vice Chair Barnes asked how close Merrimack was to the threshold and if prescription drug plans are where the future savings will be found.

Ms. Clayton noted that the Matthew Thornton plan excise tax is minimal and that the Blue Choice plan is higher because it is a more costly plan. Adjusting the prescription plan in the Matthew Thornton Blue avoids the tax.

Board Member Powell thanked the HealthTrust and Ms. Clayton for the Health and Safety Incentive of approximately \$1,200 that was returned to Merrimack. He asked Ms. Clayton to explain how this money was earned.

Ms. Clayton explained that there is a financial reward based on the increase in the number of employees who complete the health assessment every year, sending a wellness coordinator to the HealthTrust Wellness Academy, and other categories based on district behavior, performance and activity.

Board Member Powell noted that the Wellness Committee is having a huge impact on what is happening in the district. He appreciated that Merrimack had been highlighted at the Health Care Summit.

Ms. Clayton closed by sharing that Merrimack is held up as the group to mirror with anyone asking them for advice on benefits or wellness.

Chairman Ortega stated that this will be a continuing conversation as more clarity comes about as it relates to the Affordable Care Act. He thanked Ms. Hastings and Ms. Clayton for attending and providing the vast amount of information.

5. Comparison of Two Merrimack Middle School Extended Learning Opportunities (Camp Mi-Te-Na and Camp Sargent)

Chairman Ortega invited Middle School Principal Adam Caragher and new to the district Middle School Assistant Principal Shawna D'Amour.

Principal Caragher began by reminding the Board that two and a half years earlier he and Debbie Woelflein had approached the Board to explore the possibility of shifting from Camp Mi Te Na to an experience closer to home at Camp Sargent. The reasons were the financial cost which has increased from \$80 to \$120 since 2009, the difficulty getting chaperones for the overnights, and liability issues that increase on extended overnight activities.

Principal Caragher reminded the Board of what is involved in the experience at Camp Mi Te Na. Activities tie in with the science curriculum and are an important part of the social component of helping students to become team members and to value these characteristics. Overall, for the students this was a great residential experience.

Assistant Principal D'Amour then spoke about her day at Camp Sargent. On the day she attended it rained most of the day and this impacted the students' experience. A positive aspect of the program was the team building exercises that begin in the Fall and are expected to culminate in the Spring.

Parent feedback from last year resulted in the culminating activity being held earlier. She noted that most of the parents were able to attend and have dinner or dessert.

Recommendations based on observations this year include planning a rain date; planning more shorter, and varied activities; keeping it affordable and planning dates later in the Spring to avoid muddy and cold weather.

Principal Caragher noted that the attendance at Camp Sargent was around 95% and was a very positive, hands-on experience. The various components of team building, problem solving and encouraging each other align with the Middle School Mission Statement of REACH.

- R is for responsible and respectful citizens
- E is for effective communicators
- A is for academic achievers
- C is for critical thinkers and problem solvers
- H is for happy and healthy students

Vice Chair Barnes stated that she understood the reasoning to make the switch from Camp Mi Te Na to Camp Sargent. She attended Camp Sargent last year and this year and noted that the parent experience this year was almost non-existent. There was no skit this year, and the 'smore making was not set up to effectively accommodate the students or parents. She saw this as an expectations and delivery problem.

Vice Chair Barnes also noted that Grater Woods was not utilized either year. This was supposed to be part of the supplemental programming as a piece of the overall experience. She also noted the importance of a rain date to provide the enriching experience promised to the students.

Board Member Guagliumi thanked Principal Caragher for putting this together and expressed some concern about the cost to the families of the trip. She asked if this was a line item in the budget and was told that only the bus is paid for. She noted that her son attended on the day it did not rain and agreed that a rain date should be in the planning.

Board Member Schneider agreed on the need for a rain date. He asked what the 5% of non-attending students were doing back at school. He also recommended holding Camp Sargent immediately after school begins in September and right before school ends in May.

Board Member Guagliumi asked for feedback on how the Camp Sargent experience impacted students who would have previously been unable to participate in activities at Camp Mi Te Na.

Chairman Ortega asked how feedback was collected and was told it was almost totally anecdotal and informal. Chairman Ortega suggested a more formal plan to collect feedback to quantify the experience. This could also be used as a guide for future planning modifications.

Chairman Ortega thanked both Principal Caragher and Assistant Principal D'Amour for attending and welcomed Assistant Principal D'Amour to the district.

6. Planning for Future Funding of the Student Resource Officer (SRO) Position at Merrimack Middle School

Superintendent Chiafery opened her remarks by noting that because the budget process is just beginning that this would be an appropriate time to begin a conversation about the student resource officer (SRO). Part of a Merrimack Safeguard grant has funded the position of the SRO at the middle school. The question of who will provide the funds to pay for this position once the grant runs out needs to be addressed. The conversation should take into account the value a school resource officer brings to the school.

Superintendent Chiafery has already met with the Town Manager and the Chief of Police about the position. She asked to have Principal Caragher and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin weigh in on the conversation.

Principal Caragher noted the incredible value the SRO brings to the school culture in several areas. He complimented Detective Prentice and noted the high regard in which he is held. Interactions with students in a school environment rather than from a squad car provides students opportunities to build relationships of trust with the police. The calming force provided in the hallways and lunchroom creates an atmosphere of safety, as does having a trained uniformed officer around in a situation where a student is a potential danger to himself or others. The broad role is challenging to define.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin spoke about the specifics of the grant which was written seven years ago by former Principal Woelflein. Her goal was to put in place an environmental change in the culture of the middle school in an attempt to reduce substance abuse. The grant was to provide seed money to initiate a change with the stipulation that a sustainability plan be built so that when the grant money goes away the change remains.

The grant was a five year grant that Merrimack was fortunate to have renewed for an additional five years. Another factor of the grant specifically states that a sustainability plan must be in place by year seven and the cost of the SRO needs to begin to be assumed in year seven and completed by year ten. Other entities in the community would be expected to assume the financial responsibility for the change. At any time during years seven through ten, if the plan cannot be demonstrated, the seed money could be withdrawn.

The government project officer will visit Merrimack in the Fall to look for evidence that Merrimack has begun a plan to assume total financial responsibility for the change that the seed money is provided for.

Superintendent Chiafery spoke of her conversations with Police Chief Doyle and Assistant Town Manager Cabanel and Business Administrator Shevenell about a the idea of cost sharing arrangement of 51%/49% for this position, with the police department overseeing the position at 51%. She asked the finance director to put forth all of the costs associated with the position in 2015-2016 to assist with next year's budgeting.

Board Member Powell asked if there was a sustainability plan in place in year three and was told yes. That plan had to do with community outreach and the maintaining of relationships with the Youth Counsel. The sustainability plan is defined differently in years three (sustain the momentum) and seven (define the environmental change).

Board Member Powell asked if we would have to reimburse the seed money if we were unable to continue to fund the SRO. Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that upon officially receiving the second award last year, it had to be proven at that time that the expectations of the grant were being met.

Board Member Schneider asked Business Administrator Shevenell to share how the SRO at the high school is funded.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the Police Department pays the salary and benefits and that the school district covers the cost of the cell phone and some conferences.

Board Member Guagliumi made the point that the management oversight from the police department will continue and that the funding for both should be from the same source. She suggested that the first step would be to approach the Town Council to wholly fund the position.

Vice Chair Barnes agreed and noted that the school district only has access, not management over the SRO. Therefore the funds should not come from the school district's budget. This is a worthy position but the funding should come from the Town. She also noted that the 49% funding amount is very generous since the school year is only about half of a calendar year.

Board Member Schneider commented that there is no difference in the role of the SRO at the middle school and high school and they should be treated the same.

Student Representative Marcus asked if we would still be eligible for the grant if the SRO was funded by the Town Council rather than the school district.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin answered that the grant does not make distinctions between one pot of money or another. The expectation in the second grant is that there would be a partnering with another community entity. He noted that the distinction between the two SROs is the grant requirement of an environmental change that supports prevention. Prevention is more appropriately addressed in the middle school.

Chairman Ortega made some clarifying points. When the district receives an invoice from the Town for the middle school SRO, the funding comes from the grant. In the proposed construct the Town would invoice the district and \$11,000 would come out of the operating budget and the remainder of the cost would come from the grant leaving a surplus of \$11,000 in the grant for Merrimack Safeguard to utilize.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted that there are additional costs to factor in such as increases in salary, promotions, collective bargaining, and health insurance that would come out of the surplus \$11,000.

Chairman Ortega asked if in order to show progress, the Town took up the funding of the SRO, would they invoice the district for slightly less than the current invoice, leaving additional funds for Project Safeguard to use to promote prevention.

Business Administrator Shevenell answered yes.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the \$11,000 difference would come out of the operating budget and Superintendent Chiafery answered yes and that the remainder would be paid from the grant. She observed that there seems to be a need to go before the Town Council on the continued funding of the middle school SRO.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the School Board, police chief, and administration are committed to the SRO at the middle school. We were fortunate to have this paid for by a grant for the last ten years and we are now trying to have this partnership with the police department continue and assuming a new 51%/49% partnership would be viable. The premise behind that additional \$10,000 in the 2016-2017 operating budget with continued incremental increases, is that it would bring us to the 49%, (\$50,000) needed by year five when the grant goes away.

Chairman Ortega thought that the sustainability should not come from the School Board but from the Town. He acknowledged that the School Board is in favor of continuing to have an SRO at the middle school. He spoke to the strong partnership that exists between the School District and the police department.

Detective Prentice was highly praised by Chairman Ortega, Principal Caragher and others throughout the discussion.

Chairman Ortega commended the administration for taking the initiative in looking at the grant and ensuring that a sustainability plan was in place. He noted that the district was quite fortunate in getting the second grant that covered years six through ten.

Chairman Ortega noted that Detective Prentice while he works at the middle school, he is a police officer first.

Chairman Ortega recommended that the appropriate action might be an agenda item at a Town Council meeting relating to Merrimack Safeguard and the need for a sustainability plan expressing the School Board's position. At the minimum would be a joint meeting between the School Board, Town Council and Police Department.

Board Member Schneider asked if the amount of grant money we receive now covers the cost of the SRO and if the intent behind the grant is that excess funds are to go into Merrimack Safeguard for other uses.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded yes, that written into the new grant are enhancing community outreach such as when Lynn Lyons comes to the community to speak on anxiety and that the project coordinator's role needs to be expanded to make connections with other coalitions.

Board Member Schneider stated that at the last Merrimack Safeguard meeting there was a discussion on where to get funds for advertising and publicity. He thought that tonight's discussion needed to be brought up at the next Merrimack Safeguard meeting.

Student Representative Marcus went on record as disagreeing on the funding source of the SRO. He recommended keeping as much influence as possible over the SRO position because of the profound and direct effect on education and educational facilities. He thought that the influence should be held with the School Board where education is the prime priority.

Chairman Ortega thanked Student Representative Marcus for his valued opinion.

Chairman Ortega returned to Board Member Schneider's question on the funding for Merrimack Safeguard, which now comes entirely from the grant. When looking at a partnership, the funding of the SRO is one component and the funding of outreach and promotion is another component that the Board might want to entertain supporting as a cost sharing endeavor as it relates to the program but not the funding of the position.

Board Member Guagliumi added that some of the other training costs we have incurred might be included in this support.

Chairman Ortega will formally request a joint meeting with the Town Council to discuss Merrimack Safeguard and other common interests.

7. Educators' Responses to August Academy Queries

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin was invited to provide feedback from the educator participants. Feedback was framed to mirror the August Academy focus on inquiry. Teachers were asked to reflect on what was on their minds, what was going well, their concerns, and their wish lists. The metric used was open-ended responses and sorting was by aggregate and personal responses.

Aggregate responses needed to exceed 50% of the participants to be shared at this meeting.

What is going well

- teachers have overwhelmingly agreed again this year that it is collaboration
- the PreK-12 experience this year was highly valued
- data driven instruction in the primary grades
- clear standards in which instruction is framed and parameters are defined
- purposeful use of technology that supports the work

Concerns

- time/time management
- depth over breadth to allow students to more deeply understand a principal or concept
- differentiated instruction

Wish List

- time/efficiency
- more expectations around inquiry
- sustained conversation around inquiry
- more technology
- more collaboration with other teachers (generated the most feedback)

Teachers were also asked to complete a technology survey that was shaped to ask pointed questions with defined answers.

On the question of which technology would be the best source of new information the overwhelming response was video.

On the question relative to educational videos and what to most likely watch, most responded they would watch educators reflecting on their practices.

On the question of what mode of video technology would you prefer to engage in the response was live action video/live time/teacher with student.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin concluded his summation of the educator feedback open responses and technology survey.

Chairman Ortega thanked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin for the extremely informative and interesting information. He noted that our strength is also our weakness in the area of collaboration.

8. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega received phone call relating to the middle school boys soccer team and additional phone calls relating to the high school boys cross country team.

The School Board received a letter from Dan Bantham of State Farm Insurance in regards to the “Celebrate my Drive” program. Mr. Bantham is instrumental in putting on the yearly Mock DUI. This program’s slogan is 2N2 (two eyes on the road, two hands on the wheel). The program is being promoted by awarding \$100,000 grants to 22 schools around the country. A portion of the money is expected to be used to promote good decision making programs. One school will be awarded a free concert by the band Echosmith. Schools must submit an application in order to be eligible. On October 23rd at the football game, “Celebrate my Drive” stadium cushions will be handed out to the first 125 people in attendance.

b) Comments

There were no comments.

9. New Business

Board Member Guagliumi requested an agenda item for the next meeting to discuss having the School Board apply for intervener status in regards to the Kinder Morgan route. She would like to draft a letter and present it to the Board in advance so that it could be voted on at the November 2nd meeting. Intervener status must be applied for shortly after Kinder Morgan submits the application.

Intervener status means that any time during the process, Kinder Morgan would need to address any potential concerns that the School Board might raise. The letter would allow the School Board to reserve its right collectively to make an inquiry or comment.

Chairman Ortega wondered if the intervener status applied only to public governing bodies and not the public at large. This remained unclear.

Board Member Guagliumi requested another agenda item to discuss putting a policy in place in regards to Kinder Morgan surveys.

Chairman Ortega stated that these will be added to the next agenda. He added that he agreed that the School Board should have something in place on this matter.

Student Representative Marcus asked for clarification on what type of survey was being discussed and was told it was land surveys.

10. Committee Reports

Board Member Powell attended the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee meeting that was held on October 14th. He noted that the percentage of participation in the health assessment has dropped to 53.9% from 54% and attributed this to new hires who are not yet in the system and able to participate in the assessment. There are over 100 new employees to reach out to and it is expected that the participation rate will reach the 66% goal before the calendar year ends.

On November 18, November 23 and December 7 there will be HealthTrust presentations at the middle school and Reeds Ferry Elementary School staff meetings. The purpose is to explain the Smart Shopper tool to staff and encourage them to use it because it affects the bottom line under claims paid. The next meeting will be held on November 4th.

Student Representative Marcus spoke about some of the things happening at the high school.

A delegation from a foreign language school in South Korea visited. These students were majoring in English, Japanese or Mandarin and are studying to become future global business leaders. These students were majoring in English. The visit included addresses from both principals and student representatives, a South Korean cultural musical performance, a marching band halftime show and small class presentations including the playing of an ancient New Year's game. Merrimack High School is the only school this delegation visits in the United States.

Student Representative Marcus spoke about the six service groups at the high school.

- National Honor Society under President Melissa Lezama. Their first project will be leaf raking for elderly residents in Merrimack.
- Random Acts of Kindness under President Rachel Easley. Recently they held a “Caps for Cancer” fundraiser in which a donation of one dollar allowed a student to wear a hat in school on a specified day. The proceeds of almost \$300 dollars was donated to families in the community who are struggling with cancer.
- Interact Club under President Sarah Jones. The recently cleaned up the Speedway.
- Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) under President Emily Duval. They are currently focusing on the 2N2 campaign and later on in the year they will hold the Mock DUI and Junior Impact Assembly which is held before the prom.
- Young Politicians of America under President Jake Marcus. In addition to raising political awareness is involved in the community with monthly themes. Next week they will be cleaning up Wasserman Park.
- Merrimack Cares headed by retired Science Department Head Mr. Snell. This was begun last year by the Class of 2015 and consists of a cross collection of students. The goal is to coordinate and plan larger scale community service projects across the individual schools, the district, and the community at large.

Chairman Ortega appreciated the update and noted the importance of everyone hearing about the fantastic high school students who are willing to give back.

11. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

12. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:40 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to enter non-public session per RSA A 91-A: 3, II, (a), (b), (c).

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 5-0-0.

At 10:45 p.m. Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting

The motion passed 5-0-0.