

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
December 7, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

Present: Chairman Ortega, Vice Chair Barnes, Board Members Guagliumi, Schneider and Powell, Superintendent Chiafery, Business Administrator Shevenell and Student Representative Marcus. Board Member Powell was not present for the public hearing.

Absent: Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin

Public Hearing to Accept/Expend Gifts/Grants over \$5,000

Chairman Ortega opened the session by welcoming Assistant Principal Peter Bergeron and Advisors Marge and Chris Petrovic to the table to speak about the \$10,000 gift from the Best Buy Foundation to the Merrimack High School First Robotics Team-Chop Shop 166. Mr. Petrovic stated that the grant funds would be spent on equipment such as machine tools and other hardware for the long-term uses of the Robotics Team. A small amount might be set aside for assisting in team travel expenses for a trip to St. Louis to compete in a robotics competition. The majority of the travel expenses will be raised through outside fundraising.

Board Member Schneider asked about the grant application process. Mr. and Mrs. Petrovic's son previously worked at Best Buy and had informed his parents of the grant. This is the second year the Merrimack High School Robotics Team has won the grant. Last year the grant amount was \$9,000.

Chairman Ortega asked if there were any requirements or contingencies to the grant. Mrs. Petrovic responded that last year she was required to submit a report which she will do again this year.

Chairman Ortega thanked Mr. and Mrs. Petrovic for everything they do and for their following through on reporting back to Best Buy.

Chairman Ortega welcomed James Masticola Elementary School Principal Emilie Carter and Parents and Teachers Together (PATT) President Tracy Beauregard to the table to speak about a \$10,000 gift from PATT for the purchase of classroom iPads. Ms. Beauregard gave some examples of fundraisers that PATT puts on throughout the year.

Board Member Schneider asked if there was a particular focus for the use of the iPads. Principal Carter noted the versatility of the iPads and stated that they will first be used in small groups and usage will expand based on teachers' lessons.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if there were any particular applications or software needs that would arise with the purchase of these iPads.

Principal Carter shared that there are already applications that are being used and that Technology Director Nancy Rose assists is additional purchases.

Student Representative Marcus observed that the money would be spent on the iPads and not on cases.

Vice Chair Barnes noted the important value that parent groups bring to the schools and commended them on their hard work.

Chairman Ortega agreed with Vice Chair Barnes and appreciated the generosity of the parents.

Chairman Ortega asked both presenting groups to stay in attendance until agenda item number five has been addressed.

Chairman Ortega closed the public hearing at 7:03 p.m.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Ortega thanked Vice Chair Barnes for chairing the December 2, 2015 meeting in his absence.

Chairman Ortega announced that Student Representative Jacob Marcus has been selected to represent the State of New Hampshire in the annual United States Senate Youth Program scheduled to be held in Washington, D.C., from March 5-12, 2016. He will be one of two students from New Hampshire participating in this week-long event that focuses on youth interested in careers in public service. Student delegates will hear major policy addresses from Senators, Cabinet Members, officials from the Departments of State and Defense, the directors of other federal agencies, and participate in a meeting with a Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court. A \$5,000 scholarship accompanies this recognition.

Student Representative Marcus received a standing ovation.

2. Approval of November 16, 2015 Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2015 meeting as submitted.

The motion passed as amended 4-0-1. Chairman Ortega abstained.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell brought for consideration notice of a \$400 gift from the Shaw's Supermarkets program "We Love Our Schools" and suggested that the funds might be used to purchase iPad covers.

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the \$400 gift from Shaw's Supermarket.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

5. Board's Response to Acceptance and Expenditure of Gifts/Grants over \$5,000

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) to accept the \$10,000 gift from the Best Buy Foundation. She lauded Best Buy for their continued support and Mr. and Mrs. Petrovic for their work and for winning the grant two years in a row.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to accept the \$10,000 gift from the PATT group to the James Masticola Elementary School.

Board Member Schneider commended the combined fundraising efforts among the schools.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

6. Board's Response to Speak Up Survey on Technology in Schools

Chairman Ortega invited Ms. Nancy Rose, Director of Technology, Library and Media Services to provide an overview on the survey.

Director Rose stated that the survey is administered annually by a non-profit, Project Tomorrow. This is a collective of companies that are interested in technology. The information is shared with the participating schools and technology stakeholders. Survey participants include students, teachers, staff, parents, and the community in order to achieve a broader set of results.

This year the themes are:

1. Teaching and learning with technology
2. Math and STEM
3. Professional Development for teachers
4. Administrative challenge of more technology in schools
5. Parent concerns
6. Funding
7. On-line assessments
8. Emerging technologies
9. Preparing students for the 21st century

Director Rose noted that the survey is open now and ends on December 18th. If approved, she would like to move forward immediately to promote it.

Board Member Guagliumi asked how the feedback has been used in other districts.

Director Rose responded that the feedback she has received is that is very helpful to get a voice from all the local stakeholders and that this helps in decision making.

Board Member Schneider asked how the results would be shared with community stakeholders.

Director Rose responded that the results would be posted on the school website.

Vice Chair Barnes commented that this would be a valuable first step in establishing stronger communication lines between the local stakeholders.

Student Representative Marcus asked if the week and a half window is enough time to get an accurate picture of the district and when the next survey would be held.

Director Rose responded that using School Messenger with the different modalities should be helpful in reaching a large pool of stakeholders. She asked if this would need annual approval from the School Board and was told yes because the survey changes every year.

Superintendent Chiafery recommended that when Director Rose presents the findings to the School Board over the summer that the new approval be given. This would give her the advance time to prepare for the next survey.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if Director Rose had a goal for this year and Director Rose responded that it was to get the survey established this year.

Vice Chair Barnes asked Superintendent Chiafery about the annual middle school survey and why it did not need annual School Board approval.

Superintendent Chiafery responded the range of questions did not change each year on the middle school survey.

Board Member Powell asked who funded the survey and was told that the agencies behind the survey fund the survey.

Board Member Guagliumi asked when the results will be made available.

Director Rose shared that results are expected in February.

Board Member Guagliumi expressed her interest in seeing the results as soon as they are available so that they may be taken into consideration before and during budget deliberations.

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to grant permission to publicize the project (Speak Up survey) tomorrow (December 8, 2015) and waive the two week rule so that the survey may be put out to the public immediately.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

7. Board's Response to Draft Letter to Kinder Morgan Regarding Land Surveys

Chairman Ortega opened by referring to the draft letter presented at the last meeting that outlined the conditions under which surveys of school district lands could be conducted. The letter was re-drafted by administration and is to be presented tonight. In the interim a letter was received from the Tennessee Gas Pipeline, representatives of Kinder Morgan, seeking permission to survey.

Chairman Ortega noted that what was to be a pro-active letter will now be a responsive letter to their formal request to survey the school lands.

Board Member Schneider asked if the revised draft had been presented to legal counsel or if the revision was to make the process clean and was told it was to make the process clean.

Board Member Powell referred to paragraph four in the letter from the Tennessee Gas Pipeline and noted that it appeared that there is already a process in place.

Chairman Ortega noted that the request is for what to survey and the School Board's letter is about the local procedures that are to be followed.

It was noted that the letter from Tennessee Gas Pipeline is dated October 13, 2015 and was received in Merrimack on November 20, 2015 and that the receipt date be noted in the revised School Board response letter.

Vice Chair Barnes speculated that the application to survey was filed on November 20, 2015 and that the letter was written in anticipation of approval and must not have been revised.

Student Representative Marcus and Board Member Schneider questioned whether the fourth bullet point of the revised draft that concerns audio and video recording might be in conflict with possible proprietary methodology used in surveying.

Chairman Ortega stated that he would rather submit the letter with that bullet point and let the surveyors notify the School Board if this is a problem.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) that the letter with the amended language be sent at the earliest convenience; in response to the letter received on November 20th from the Kinder Morgan representatives.

Chairman Ortega noted that the letter will be sent to both Mr. John Proulx, representative of the Tennessee Gas Pipeline and Mr. Allen Fore, representative of Kinder Morgan.

Board Member Schneider asked for a language change in the first sentence: change "...might be..." to "...is...".

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

8. Second Review of New Policy: Animals in School

Superintendent Chiafery referred to a copy of the revised policy that was provided to the School Board Members prior to the meeting. She read and explained the requested changes and noted which Board Member requested the change.

The Leadership Team also reviewed the policy.

Vice Chair Barnes asked that point number ten the word "should" be changed to "shall."

Student Representative Marcus asked if under point number five, "Parents will be contacted..." could be adapted in regards to its application to high school students and classes.

Superintendent Chiafery will provide the board with a revised policy that will include input from the Leadership Team and the School Board.

Board Member Schneider noted that he had requested this change and that his goal was to be proactive in notifying parents or students as appropriate.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about the desired timeline for approval.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that issue was raised by Principal Yarlott in regards to a desired partnership with the Merrimack Public Library planned for February.

Superintendent Chiafery would like to return with the Leadership Team and present a final version of the policy at the December 21st School Board meeting in hopes that the Board will approve the policy at the January 4th meeting.

9. Preparation for a Joint meeting of the Merrimack School Board and Merrimack Town Council including Date/Time/Location/Topics

Chairman Ortega referred to a packet at each Board Members chair that contained the materials pertaining to the joint meeting with the Town Council scheduled for 7:00 p.m., Thursday, December 10, 2015 in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Chairman Ortega spoke of the agreed upon seating arrangements where the two bodies sit together at the table with staff and the Student Representative at the tables in the front.

The meeting topics will be:

- Tim Thompson of the Community Development Office will share plans that are to be presented to the Planning Board in regards to housing starts and potential impacts on the schools
- Merrimack Safeguard and the sustainability funding of the School Resource Officer at the middle school
- O’Gara Drive property as it relates to the tennis courts and the easement agreement that houses the basketball, skate park and rink

Board Member Powell informed Chairman Ortega of a previously scheduled business meeting he has that will preclude him from attending the December 10th joint meeting.

10. Overview of Proposed 2016-2017 School District Budget

Superintendent Chiafery and the Leadership Team have been working on the 2016-2017 budget since September of this year. They are guided by the School Board’s budget message, the District Logic Model, the District Technology Plan, Enrollment Projection Reports, the Capital Improvement Plan, Furniture Replacement Plans, and multiple conversations. The items yet to be determined are the collective bargaining agreement with the Merrimack Teachers Association, and a possible warrant article to increase the Capital Reserve account which is now at about \$75,000.

Superintendent Chiafery referred to the budget binders to be handed out at the end of the meeting by Business Administrator Shevenell. Included in the binders is a cut list representing some of the bigger items such as cafeteria tables for James Masticola Elementary School, air conditioning at the middle school, and window replacement at the high school.

Superintendent Chiafery then highlighted many of the items and issues to be discussed in the proposed 2016-2017 school budget. They include:

- Decline in enrollment K-12
- Increase in enrollment Pre-K
- Increase in out of district placements
- Elimination of one staff position at Reeds Ferry Elementary School, one position at the middle school in grade six, and one position at the high school in the art department
- Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association agreement
- Administration agreement
- Health coverage increase
- New Hampshire retirement rate
- School Furniture Replacement Plans
- Textbooks for recently approved new courses at the high school
- New educational software and site licenses
- Special Education staffing
- Special Education playground
- Capital Improvement Plan approvals of four projects that make up the bulk of the budget increase

The proposed administrative budget for 2016-2017 is \$72,752,396; an increase of 2.9%.

The default budget also prepared by Business Administrator Shevenell is \$71,466,384 and a proposed administrative budget of \$1,286,012.

Chairman Ortega thanked Superintendent Chiafery for an excellent summary.

11. Tentative School Board Budget Hearing Dates

Superintendent Chiafery shared the room availability dates of the Matthew Thornton Room for December and January.

It is expected that budget deliberations will be on the December 21st and January 4th School Board agendas. She recommended holding budget hearings on Thursday, January 7th and Tuesday, January 12th with the intention of finalizing the budget at the January 18th School Board meeting.

Board Member Schneider noted the conflict with the Merrimack Safeguard meeting and will ask if that meeting can be changed.

Superintendent Chiafery shared that Food Service Director Dziki and Director of Maintenance Touseau will be available to attend the December 21st meeting. She would appreciate questions in advance by December 14th. The questions will be forwarded to Directors Dziki and Touseau so they may prepare more informed responses.

Chairman Ortega noted he will be unable to attend the School District Budget Committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday, December 8th. Board Member Powell noted that he would be attending the as a liaison.

Board Member Powell asked if questions from the budget committee should be filtered through the Budget Chair and was told yes and with the same due date of December 14th.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that past practice has been to make liaison assignments after the budget meeting, not before.

12. Other

a) Correspondence

Vice Chair Barnes received a call from a constituent regarding negative comments made on Facebook in regards to grades the district had received. She suggested a proactive stance when information is released that communicates the successes in the district.

b) Comments

Board Member Schneider agreed with Vice Chair Barnes on the social media debates that focus more on the less positive issues. He also recommended actively promoting good news such as the distinguished recognition recently awarded to Student Representative Marcus.

Board Member Guagliumi suggested that this is an opportune time to create a Communications Committee. She has proactively investigated what might be involved in creating a communications committee and will follow up on her work with Superintendent Chiafery.

13. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery shared that the Planning Board meeting is scheduled for December 15th and that Business Administrator Shevenell will be presenting the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). There are two urgent items on the CIP and attendance by School Board representation is recommended.

Chairman Ortega plans to attend and speak about the state of the high school track and the difficulties in finding a vendor who will support the existing track.

14. Committee Reports

Board Member Schneider attended the December 3rd monthly Merrimack Safeguard meeting. Discussion at that meeting centered around the following topics:

- How to show evidence of grant compliance and the future funding of the School Resource Officer
- Ways to utilize funds freed up by the grant
- Results of interviews conducted with parents, educators, health care providers, business owners, faith-based personnel, and police
- The creation of A-OK judgment-free zones for students and adults. (A-OK stands for “Ask” for help, “Offer” help, “Keep” it going. It is a concept for a campaign that would offer judgment-free environment for asking and answering questions.)

Board Member Powell attended the December 4th meeting of the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee where the HealthTrust representatives provided the same presentation that was given to the School Board in regards to the 12.5% guaranteed maximum rate and the Cadillac Tax.

15. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

16. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 8:20 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to enter no-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 9:45 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the public meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.