

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
December 21, 2015
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

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

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Ortega noted that the meeting proceedings would follow RSA 91-A;2 which states that all parties must contemporaneously be able to hear and speak to each other, the meeting should be audible to the public, all persons present must be identified, and all votes must be taken by roll call vote.

Board Member Powell participated from Brandon, Florida at the home of his mother and was alone and not in the presence of other persons.

2. Approval of December 7, 2015 Minutes

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2015 meeting.

Board Member Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 8, line 359: Board Member Powell did not volunteer to attend in Chairman Ortega's place; rather he was making the point that he, as a liaison, would be attending the meeting.

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

- Page 8, line 358 change "...Town Council..." to "School District"

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2, line 80, change to say "Student Representative Marcus received a standing ovation."

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

Board Member Guagliumi voted In Favor.

Board Member Schneider voted In Favor.

Board Member Powell voted In Favor.

Vice Chair Barnes voted In Favor.

Chairman Ortega voted In Favor.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Formal Hearing on Food Service Budget for 2016-2017

Chairman Ortega invited Director of Food Services Mr. Dave Dziki to the table.

Director Dziki opened his remarks by speaking about the need for two storage unit shelves for the refrigeration cooler at the high school. The existing shelves are metal and have rusted and will be replaced by plastic shelves that come with a lifetime warranty against corrosion and rust.

The Merrimack School District is in its third year as a member of the state buying group, which consists of 48 school districts. Discounts on food purchases does not include bread, milk or fresh produce.

Director Dziki addressed specific questions that School Board Members had presented to him in preparation for this meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted “Recently we have upgraded a number of our warming servers to meet food safety guidelines. Please be prepared to share with us where all building equipment stands relative to these guidelines and what if any equipment is in the district that is not designed to meet these stringent guidelines. Please be prepared to talk about maintenance and whether it is routine or repair of aging equipment.”

Director Dziki responded that the addition of three serving tables in the elementary schools and the replacement of older equipment in the upper elementary brought everything up to code.

In regards to costs incurred, some is for preventative maintenance on items such as oven cleaning, boiler cleaning, steam units, knife and blade sharpening, and some for replacement of items such as motors and compressors due to aging.

Board Member Schneider asked if food safety guidelines are now met and retained when new purchases are made and was assured that yes; that is the practice.

Director Dziki noted that under vehicle repairs the budget proposed is lower due to the purchase of a new vehicle.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted “Regarding laundry service of towels, has having our own equipment been explored? Are there regulations on how laundering of food service towels happen and can you share if such regulations exist?”

Director Dziki responded that he has not explored this idea but that it would involve purchasing the equipment and hiring personnel to handle this venture. Currently an OSHA and joint commission compliant linen service is used to provide towels.

Vice Chair Barnes pointed to the \$5,000 annual cost of linens and asked if the district should explore the idea of moving this service in-house if it could be made cost-effective.

Board Member Schneider noted that at this time the district also rents the linens and a change would also incur the cost of purchasing linens.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted “Will the new lunch van operate more economically than the old one? Will potential savings on day to day costs be achieved?”

Director Dziki responded that he anticipates some cost savings on gasoline.

Director Dziki highlighted several additional items in the proposed budget.

The final item was a budget for conferences and educational seminars in regard to child nutrition. Director Dziki is the past president of the state association and now serves as the Public Policy and Legislation Chair.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the cost of the lunch would increase and was told no.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if Director Dziki had all of the supplies and equipment he needs as it relates to school allergies.

Director Dziki responded that he does not have all of the equipment required for a gluten free kitchen as it would be very expensive but that staff are trained in allergy awareness.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if he noted any trends he learned at conferences.

Director Dziki noted that challenge of trying to follow all of the new food guidelines and that they will be requesting more flexibility in adhering to them.

Chairman Ortega thanked Director Dziki for the information.

5. Formal Hearing on Maintenance Budget for 2016-2017

Chairman Ortega invited Director Touseau to the table.

Director Touseau opened his remarks by thanking the members of the School Board for the opportunity to discuss four major items scheduled for the 2016-2017 school year. They are the partial new roof at Merrimack Middle School, the Merrimack High School track, the HVAC on the cafeteria roof of the high school and the pavement around the high school.

Director Touseau then went through the budget in detail.

On page one the water and sewer costs were based on the highest amount expended for each of the last three years and averaged.

On page two the rubbish and disposal amounts are level funded.

On page three the maintenance list includes items such as roofs, carpet, tile, drapery, gym floors, furniture, and white boards.

Additionally, the update of the fire equipment such as pull stations being moved closer to entrances, and other changes to bring things up to code.

Board Member Schneider asked about the chairs and caddies and was told they needed to be replaced for safety reasons.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the pull stations were being moved or if new ones were being added and was told that the existing pull stations were being moved to comply with code changes.

Chairman Ortega asked if the district is grandfathered and was told that the district is encouraged to make updates when possible and that things are handled on an individual basis.

On page four under grounds repair it was noted that last year an additional \$15,000 was budgeted for track repairs and to date \$4,000 has already been spent.

On page five is the increase in the Honeywell contract which was anticipated.

On page six the vehicles will still require inspections, oil changes, and tires. The existing 2008 snow plow trucks use up a substantial portion of this budget allowance.

On page seven there is an increase in the budget request due to a contract. The repair budget includes the four large projects already approved under the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Board Member Schneider asked about the Merrimack Middle School roof and Director Touseau stated that the best solution is to take care of the roof now.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the new roof would be of better quality and was told yes.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted that the proposed roof will cost four times the amount of the original roof. When the school was built, the building cost was very high and the lesser quality roof was chosen as a cost saving feature.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the new roof's 35 year warranty is comprehensive and if there are tears how they will be handled.

Director Touseau responded that if there are tears they will be repaired and that the new roof would not be torn down and replaced.

More discussion ensued in regards to the roof.

Board Member Schneider asked about the track and if there had ever been a second opinion on repairing instead of replacing it.

Director Touseau responded that only one company has been approached for an opinion and that it is a highly reputable company.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if this project would go out to bid and was told yes but it would be a selective bid process.

Board Member Schneider asked what the advantages/disadvantages are to splitting up the paving project.

Director Touseau responded that in regards to the O'Gara Road section which will include sidewalks, the paving should be done at the same time.

The town has been patching holes and problem areas but that does not solve the problem and a new paving is necessary.

The HVAC unit on the cafeteria area roof of the high school has rusted out and begun to fall into the drain holes causing water back-ups. This unit is about forty years old.

On page eight the telephone and postage budget is a three year average and the printing and travel budget is level funded.

On page nine the office supplies and building supplies is level funded.

On page ten the maintenance and ground supply is level funded, as is the equipment budget.

On page eleven the energy costs for natural gas are based on square footage plus 5%. This budget takes into account the transition from propane and oil to gas.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted that transition to natural gas did not take place until November. All of the utility costs were taken into account resulting in a \$20,000 decrease in the budget request.

Board Member Schneider asked when there would be any cost savings from the conversion.

Director Touseau noted that the current price of oil is very low so the payback will be long term.

Business Administrator Shevenell added that a seven year payback is anticipated.

On page twelve the electrical was based on the highest two years and an additional five percent.

On page thirteen the oil highest three years was averaged.

Chairman Ortega asked if prices were locked in and was told that prices could not be locked in for the oil but can be locked in for electric and natural gas.

On page fourteen the gas was an average of the highest two years.

Board Member Powell asked if the school district still pools with the town for purchasing power and was told yes.

On page fifteen maintenance of equipment includes floor polishers, burnishers and super suckers as part of about 250 pieces of equipment. Some of the equipment runs on batteries that have a three year life.

Vice Chair Barnes noted the 1976 and 1979 tractors and asked about their life expectancy and if there was value in repairing them and was told that to replace one tractor would cost about \$55,000. Because they get minimal usage the decision is to repair them when necessary.

Director Touseau then spoke about the numerous cut list items.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the budget was online and was told yes.

Chairman Ortega thanked Director Touseau for the thorough budget overview.

6. Smarter Balanced Assessment Results: Establishing a Baseline and Context for Use

Chairman Ortega invited Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin to the table.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin began his presentation by stressing that the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) measures complex, real world skills like critical thinking, purposeful writing and problem-solving. NECAP was primarily an assessment of content knowledge in isolation.

The SBAC measures college and career ready content and practices/skills through a series of claims and targets.

In math when students understand and use mathematical procedures and communicate their reasoning they are deemed college and career ready.

In ELA when students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences and when they can engage in research to investigate topics and analyze information they are deemed college and career ready.

Smarter Balanced questions are designed to assess the following understandings, which are called claims.

1. Reading - Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.
2. Writing - Students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences.
3. Speaking and Listening - Students can employ effective listening and speaking skills for a range of purposes and audiences.
4. Research - Students can engage in research and inquiry to investigate topics, and to analyze, integrate and present information.

The four math claims are:

1. Concepts and Procedures - Students can explain and apply mathematical concepts and interpret and carry out mathematical procedures with precision and fluency.
2. Problem Solving - Students can solve a range of complex well-posed problems in pure and applied mathematics, making productive use of knowledge and problem solving strategies.
3. Communicating Reasoning - Students can clearly and precisely construct viable arguments to support their own reasoning and to critique the reasoning of others.
4. Modeling and Data Analysis - Students can analyze complex, real-world scenarios and can construct and use mathematical models to interpret and solve problems.

Within the claims are targets. Target results are provided to teachers to inform instruction and link to the subject standards.

There are four subject levels:

- Level 4 - Thorough understanding
- Level 3 - Adequate understanding
- Level 2 - Partial understanding
- Level 1 - Minimal understanding

Parents are provided levels and claims.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin summed up his presentation with the reminder that the Merrimack School District continues to assess and reflect on curriculum and instructional practices based on multiple data points.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin then shared the district results of the 2014-2015 Smarter Balanced testing. In almost all categories Merrimack students scored above the state average in ELA.

The math results consistently drop as students rise in grade level. This drop is across the state and also shows up in the NECAP results.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if there was data on optimal days and times that lead to better test results. There does not seem to be any data on this issue.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the Merrimack results can be compared to the South Central New Hampshire region and was told this feature is not available to the school districts.

Board Member Guagliumi thought it would be helpful to compare the Merrimack results to a similar demographic community.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin spoke about the frequency of testing and the educational value of these assessments.

Board Member Guagliumi asked what parent feedback has been to date.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that it has been minimal and most of the parent questions were answered at parent teacher conferences.

Board Member Schneider asked if there will be consequences for under-performing school districts and was told that Title I funds might be impacted.

Board Member Schneider asked if grade 11 Smarter Balanced testing will be replaced with SAT preparation and was told yes. It will be on the School Board agenda in January.

Student Representative Marcus shared that he took the test and had several comments and questions. Twelve hours of ELA instruction was lost due to the testing blocks and he thought this excessive.

Student Representative Marcus asked how the writing portion was graded. It was computer-based.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted that while it is not a perfect test, it does test more than previous tests.

Student Representative Marcus commented that the modeling of data analysis in the math portion needs to be more reflective of what is taught in the classroom.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that the SAT is scheduled statewide for March.

Chairman Ortega asked why the teachers receive the claims and targets and the parents do not receive the targets and was told there was no explanation provided.

Chairman Ortega thanked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin for his presentation and clear explanations.

He also thanked Student Representative Marcus for sharing his firsthand experience on taking the test.

7. Request to Construct a Bridge on Grater Woods

Vice Chair Barnes presented a plan to construct a bridge to provide students a safer drier path through the woods to the Merrimack Middle School. Additional benefits include a safer and more useable route for the cross country team, wetland protection from foot and ATV traffic, and an optional route for students when on the property for classwork.

Vice Chair Barnes requested \$1,000 from the “logs to lumber fund” which requires the School Board’s approval.

The bridge would be built by a committee to specifications that would control ATV and other four wheel vehicle usage. Additional natural abutments would also be included in the design area.

Chairman Ortega asked Business Administrator Shevenell if the fund balance was \$75,000 and was told it was about \$30,000.

Board Member Powell asked if this was an official request from the Grater Woods subcommittee and was told yes. He asked if the Conservation Committee needed to approve this and was told the request falls under the Grater Woods action plan.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted the requirements to expend the “logs to lumber fund” monies and was told that the request had to relate to sustainability.

Board Member Powell asked for copies of the warrant before proceeding.

Chairman Ortega noted the valid point in following the process and also saw the value to the district in proceeding.

Board Member Guagliumi found it a worthwhile project.

Board Member Schneider also noted his support.

Chairman Ortega stated the item would go on the January 4th consent agenda and that the warrant would be made available to Board Members prior to the meeting.

8. Third Review of New Policy

• Animals in School

Superintendent Chiafery read aloud the proposed revisions suggested by all the relevant parties. An additional section was added to point number five that required animals to have completed an animal certification program.

Board Member Schneider noted his approval of the changes.

Chairman Ortega noted that the item will be on the consent agenda at the next meeting.

9. Dissemination of Proposed New Hampshire School Board (NHSBA) Resolutions

Chairman Ortega referred to the materials that were in the packets mailed out to members prior to the meeting. The material relates to revisions/amendments to the existing “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) act that was replaced with the recently enacted “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA).

Vice Chair Barnes noted that included in the packet is a six page explanation of how ESSA compares to NCLB. This was provided for fellow members’ edification.

Chairman Ortega stated that the School Board will take a position at the next meeting.

10. Other

a) Correspondence

Vice Chair Barnes stated that a constituent had emailed her suggesting that something about noteworthy news be added to the meetings.

Vice Chair Barnes received an email from another constituent about a petition to use drug sniffing dogs in the high school.

Board Member Guagliumi also received an email about drug sniffing dogs. She shared having attended a meeting recently in a neighboring community on this issue of drugs in schools and asked if Merrimack is doing enough to combat drugs in schools.

Board Member Schneider shared that a heroin forum was held earlier in the year by Merrimack Safeguard.

Board Member Schneider segued to the topic of communication when high profile situations occur and Chairman Ortega reminded the Board that Board Member Guagliumi will be spearheading a committee on improving communication.

Superintendent Chiafery shared that after an extensive conversation with Police Chief Doyle it was decided to stay the course in regard to a situation that caused all of the Nashua Public Schools to close due to a bomb threat. She was in communication with Chief Doyle and the Nashua Superintendent throughout the day.

Superintendent Chiafery shared that Merrimack High School was one of three New Hampshire high schools to make the Advanced Placement District Honor Roll. This recognition has been garnered in three of the past four years. Merrimack offers sixteen Advanced Placement (AP) courses which is a contributing factor to getting on the honor roll.

Superintendent Chiafery commended the students at the Merrimack High School on their dedication to academic rigor.

Chairman Ortega shared that he had received an email from a resident in regards to the budget to which he did reply.

Chairman Ortega received an email from a parent which led to several email exchanges in regards to a situation the student is experiencing at the high school.

b) Comments

Student Representative Marcus noted the gratitude of the students for the variety of the AP courses and thanked the School Board and Administration for the offerings.

11. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery noted that the Technology/ Library Media and Special Education Departments will be presenting their budgets at the January 4th meeting. She would appreciate questions by December 29th.

On January 7th most of the other budgets will be presented. On January 12th the District Budget, Middle School Budget and possible warrant articles will be presented. On January 18th the budget will be finalized.

Student Representative Marcus asked where the January 7th meeting will take place and was told that it will be held at the James Masticola Elementary School's All Purpose Room.

12. Committee Reports

Board Member Schneider noted that Planning and Building Committee did not meet as scheduled on December 14th due to a lack of a quorum.

Board Member Guagliumi noted that the Parks and Recreation Committee did not schedule a December meeting.

Board Member Powell noted that the Budget Committee met on December 8th. Elections were held. Two changes were made and a resigned position was not filled and will be left vacant for now.

13. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

14. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 10:26 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) 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.

Board Member Guagliumi voted In Favor.

Board Member Schneider voted In Favor.

Board Member Powell voted In Favor.

Vice Chair Barnes voted In Favor.

Chairman Ortega voted In Favor.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

At 11:32 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.