

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
March 19, 2012**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman Ortega, Board Members Barnes, Markwell and Thornton, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell. Student Representative Yates was not in attendance.

1. Call To Order

Chairman Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Vaillancourt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of March 5, 2012 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2012 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 1 of 7, bullet 2, Representatives Stroud should be Kathy
- Page 2 of 7, section 4, first bullet, ½ a percent should be changed to 0.5%
- Page 4 of 7, correct the spelling of Superintendent
- Page 4 of 7, last paragraph should be school resource officers' roles

Vice Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2 of 7, section 4, add Representative Ken Hawkins, from District 8 in Bedford, NH
- Page 3 of 7, paragraphs 3 and 4, add "guaranteed" before rate of return
- Page 4 of 7, second paragraph from the bottom, change the word insure to ensure
- Page 6 of 7, remove the sentence "However, there is no ... specific" and replace it with "The policy is, in fact, more specific than the statute."

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 7, paragraph 9, after \$45,000, add "from the 3.5 million dollar distribution to the districts from the State."
- Page 4 of 7, paragraph 4, remove the second sentence and replace with "She felt that the notification to parents should take place sooner than 24 hours."

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the School Board Action, Decision, Ethics Policy for approval.

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Planning and Building Committee Update Regarding Merrimack High School Track and Athletic Fields and the Consolidation of Superintendent's Office and Special Services Office

Chairman Rich Hendricks introduced committee members Davis Powell and Finlay Rothhaus.

Chairman Hendricks explained the charge given to the Planning and Building Committee to “work in conjunction with the Superintendent, Business Administrator, Director of Maintenance and the High School Administration to recommend the kind of surface that should be used for the athletic field at Merrimack High School.”

Points made by Chairman Hendricks:

- The current grass field behind the high school is in “pretty good shape”. Its use is restricted to football and lacrosse games plus occasional soccer and field hockey tournaments. It is not used for practices. The cost for annual field maintenance is approximately \$30,000 per year, which includes maintenance products, water and 632 man-hours for inspection, repair, over-seeding, dethatching, mowing, initial line painting and game-day repairing.
- The track requires \$2,000 to \$3,000 in repairs per year. A track has about a 15-year life expectancy. An estimate of the cost for replacement would be about \$165,000.
- Types of athletic field surfaces
 - Natural Grass: Life expectancy is about one year. Grass fields need to be maintained with watering (\$1,900-\$2,500 cost per year), mowing and spot repair. If natural grass is not well maintained, injury potential increases.
 - Synthetic (a.k.a. Artificial) Turf: Life expectancy is about 12-15 years, depending on actual usage. The cost to install a synthetic field is about \$850,000. Synthetic fields are maintained using a blower or rake and are installed with permanent lines. Synthetic fields can be used year round. Maintenance costs are less, but the initial capital costs are higher.
 - Astro-turf: This is basically a single layer of carpet over cement. There is concern about increased possibility of injuries. This was immediately ruled out by the committee.
- Members of the committee contacted athletic directors and/or visited other athletic fields in the state.
- The equipment needed to install any type of new field could damage or impact the track.

- The lights at the field were “re-worked” last year and are expected to last 10 years before replacement is needed.
- A synthetic field could potentially generate revenue, such as summer youth sports camps.
- Synthetic turf has environmental advantages, which include the use of recycled tires in the manufacturing of the turf, less water use and no need for pesticides or fertilizers.
- Synthetic turf would allow for non-sport usage during the school year.
- The Planning and Building Committee recommends a medium-height synthetic turf field be installed at the athletic field at the high school. In addition, the committee recommends that this installation be done concurrently with, or in close succession to, renovation or replacement of the track.
- One of the drawbacks to the synthetic field is that it will get very hot in the summer and needs water to cool it down. It could reach up to 120 degrees. This would impact the athletic program as well as the high school graduation.

Board Member Markwell, liaison to the Planning and Building Committee, stated that Mr. Hendricks gave a very good explanation. He added that this is not a cost saving plan and that the greatest benefit will be that the field could be used more often.

Board Member Barnes asked if there would be a cost savings by using the synthetic turf because of a lower maintenance cost as well as not having to open and maintain the other fields in the community.

Mr. Hendricks agreed that using the high school’s new field would free up other fields such as the Reeds Ferry field.

Athletic Director Andy Krahling spoke about using the synthetic field. He agreed that there would be constant use of the field by the athletic teams for games as well as practice. He added that the field could be used every day and by using it would save wear and tear on the other fields.

Board Member Barnes asked about the color of the field.

Mr. Hendricks replied that the field would be green and that the striping would be different colors depending on the sports that would be using the field.

Board Member Barnes asked if there would be a decrease in significant injuries with the new field.

Mr. Hendricks replied that natural grass could cause more problems if the grass is not maintained properly.

Board Member Thornton asked if the committee was reporting on the field or the track and field.

Mr. Hendricks replied that the resurfacing of the field is the main concern. However, it is possible that the track will be compromised because it will be used to cross over into the field.

Board Member Thornton asked if other means of fund raising could be considered, such as corporate sponsors or asking the Merrimack Youth Association (MYA) for funding for the project.

Davis Powell reported that Stellos Stadium in Nashua received a grant from the National Football League for their field. He felt that alternative funding should be looked into.

Board Member Thornton asked if there would there be a “cost avoidance”.

Business Administrator Shevenell replied that having the synthetic field would allow our current maintenance manpower to be utilized properly.

Board Member Thornton suggested that the administration get feedback from the teams that would be using the field.

Athletic Director Krahling stated that everyone wants to play on a turf field. He added that the physical education classes would use the field during the school day.

Vice Chairman Ortega stated that he would like a breakdown of the costs for this project, which would include the maintenance. He asked about the cost of the machine as well as other additional costs.

Mr. Hendricks replied that the presentation was a preliminary report. He added that it was brought before the board to find if the project is doable.

Board Member Markwell asked what would happen if the field does not last the estimated 15 years. He also stated that the cost of fixing/maintaining the track should be looked at, feeling that it should be combined with the field project. He agreed that fine-tuning has to be done on the plan.

Vice Chairman Ortega stated that a full estimated cost is needed in order to consider the plan. He also questioned the external use of the field and how much income could be generated from this use, such as summer camps.

Finley Rothhaus replied that, in speaking with the people in Exeter, the cost of renting the field by external organizations is \$250/hour. It is not a tremendous amount, but helps defray the cost of the maintenance.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked about the location of the track if the project is approved.

Mr. Hendricks replied that the track has to remain around the field.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that no matter how the plan proceeds, the track needs to be replaced. She stated that any corporate sponsorship of the field would require a board policy on sponsorship. She added that more specifics are needed regarding equipment for maintenance.

Athletic Director Krahling reported that the grant from the National Football League for Stellos in Nashua was \$200,000.

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that, looking at the current interest rates and longevity of the field and the maintenance associated with a grass field, this could become a bond issue for 15-20 years.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that further information is needed before the board moves to the next step.

Mr. Hendricks noted that the amount for maintenance did not include the per hour man-costs of doing the work.

Board Member Markwell suggested that sponsors geared to athletic equipment should be approached for possible funding.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated serious discussion needs to take place so the board can take a position.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the scoreboard on the field was donated by Pepsi. The district did not have to pay Pepsi any money for the use of their logo but did commit to offer Pepsi products in the district for twelve years.

Chairman Vaillancourt had concern over the Pepsi products, based on the new “Wellness Policy”.

Board Member Barnes stated that this was a great starting point. She asked how the other districts paid for their field projects. She also asked if other grants are available from other sports leagues.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that there was a consensus from the board that more information is needed. Then the Planning and Building Committee would come back to the board with this new information.

Consolidated Central Office:

Mr. Hendricks reported that the committee received a new estimate on relocating the central office. The original estimate was for 1.8 million dollars, whereas the new estimate is for 1.5 million dollars. Now the nine-page estimate needs to be looked at to see if everything is included in the estimate.

Mr. Hendricks spoke about the new building being a “green building”. The only place to save money is through rebates on the HVAC system. This particular firm with the new estimate had experience in this area and felt there would be a reduction in operating costs. He stated that the Planning and Building Committee had produced a comprehensive plan to evaluate use of the existing space, leasing, buying and building and the former proved not to be cost effective.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that as it stands now, the building is in the Capital Improvement Plan for next year.

6. Presentation by the Athletic Director

Athletic Director Andy Krahling and Assistant Principal Peter Bergeron presented information on the athletic program. Points of interest included:

- Coach’s Handbook
- Academic Policies/Waivers
- Team Accomplishments thus far for 2011-2012
- Teams per season
- Participation Numbers per sport for 2010-2011, including budget expenditures and costs per student.
- Notes on the Athletic Department Budget

Assistant Principal Bergeron reported that all the coaches and assistant coaches have been evaluated.

Chairman Vaillancourt noted that though overall enrollment is down, athletic participation is up.

Board Member Thornton asked about feedback from the coaches regarding the coach's handbook.

Athletic Director Krahling reported that the feedback on the handbook has been very good. He added that the basis of the handbook is the same as the original. The evaluation forms have been updated.

Athletic Director Krahling reported that for the first time he is working with the middle school coaches.

Board Member Barnes asked about funding by the Booster Clubs.

Athletic Director Krahling explained that different booster clubs raise funds for different sports. He added that he does not have the amounts that each booster club has raised. That information would have to be given by the various booster clubs.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that some of the booster clubs provide items such as clothing and some provide needed equipment. She added that perhaps some of the booster clubs would come before the board to explain their fund raising efforts. She also mentioned that if students were charged fees for their participation in the various sports, the booster clubs would suffer in its fundraising efforts.

Board Member Markwell commented that he was surprised at the high cost per students on the baseball teams.

Athletic Director Krahling responded that in baseball there are high equipment costs as well as many other little things. New equipment is needed more frequently because the standards for equipment changes all the time.

Vice Chairman Ortega commended athletic program as a whole, especially in the area of teaching life skills. He asked how many of the 978 students involved in the athletic program played in more than one sport.

Athletic Director Krahling responded that over 500 students are involved in more than one team sport.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked how the money raised from admission to basketball and football games is used.

Athletic Director Krahling responded that the money raised from admission to football and basketball games is used to purchase uniforms for the teams. He explained that the admission fees are the only source of funding he receives for this purpose.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked how much money is taken in from the cost of admission.

Athletic Director Krahling responded that between \$15,000 and \$18,000 is raised per year. He added that if the team is not doing well, admission to the game is not charged.

Chairman Vaillancourt thanked Athletic Director Krahling and Vice Principal Bergeron and Principal Ken Johnson for examining the waiver policy. She added that it was great to see the continuity in working with the coaches at the middle school.

7. Guaranteed Maximum Insurance

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the budget figures come from the Local Government Center telling the district what the guaranteed maximum insurance rate would be. This year, the rate was about 6%. The new rates for 2012-2013 came in at 2.3%. The information regarding this was explained:

- Option 1 has a greater benefit than Option 2. An assumption was made that for Option 1 the plan would increase at a higher rate than Option 2. That assumption was correct.

- For next year:

<u>Option 1</u>		<u>Option 2</u>	
JY	9.9%	JY	9.5%
POS	3.8%	POS	3.3%
HMO	1%	HMO	0%

Business Administrator Shevenell continued to report that at the 2.3% rate with the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association (MESSA) warrant article passing and with the current structure for the teachers and administrator, under Option 2 there would be a \$500,000 savings (\$188,000 from MESSA and the rest from the renewal rate).

Vice Chairman Ortega commented that the collective bargaining units should be thanked, noting that it is good to see that that district’s portion of the contribution remains flat.

Chairman Vaillancourt commented that it was wonderful news. She added that the rate has not been this low in years.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that part of the savings was helped by the 5.6 million dollar distribution by the Local Government Center and the increased assets.

8. Pavilion at Watson Park

Chairman Vaillancourt gave an introduction to the discussion on Watson Park. She related that Board Member Barnes was approached by a member of the Watson Park Committee to see if the school district had any interest in utilizing the pavilion at Watson Park. Board Member Barnes spoke with Chairman Vaillancourt as well as Superintendent Chiafery.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that at the Town Council Meeting on March 15th, the chairman of the Town Center Committee made a presentation during which it was stated that there was going to be an outdoor education center to be used by the school district. She stated that she had no knowledge of this project even though it was presented to the Town Council. Because it was brought up to the public, it seemed reasonable for Board Member Barnes and Superintendent Chiafery to present the information to the board.

Board Member Barnes stated that she spoke with Phil Straight, the sub committee chair of the Watson Park pavilion project. He stated that there was funding involved and that the Rotary was heavily involved. She told him that she would speak with Superintendent Chiafery, and he stated that he would also make himself available to speak to Superintendent Chiafery about the school district’s interest.

Superintendent Chiafery reported that her initial communication was to gather more information. Her first conversation was with Peter Flood on the Town Center Committee. She stated that the Rotary would have some interest in it, perhaps with grant money. She acknowledged that the pavilion could be used for special events and/or some classes. She also reported that she met with the leadership team to see how principals and vice principals felt about using the pavilion. The structure would probably be used by the James Masticola Elementary School, the James Masticola Upper Elementary School and the high school.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported at the Town Council meeting the Heritage Trail was also discussed. She felt that in speaking about the school district's use of the trail and/or pavilion was premature at this time, since the structure is not constructed and the trail is not completed. She added that Board Member Barnes would be the conduit, taking back any information from the board.

Board Member Thornton asked which schools would use the facility. She added that as a member of the Parks and Recreation Committee, it was not announced that there would be an outdoor educational center.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she wanted to make sure it is publicly known that this is not a school district project.

Board Member Markwell wanted to know how the school district would benefit from the pavilion/path.

Vice Chairman Ortega stated that he was not quite sure how it went from a genuine gesture that the school district could benefit from it to a project that was publicly announced would be school district driven.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that Board Member Barnes would be our conduit and would take back any information from the board. She added that touting this as an education center is inappropriate.

Board Member Barnes stated that she was told that the committee would like to break ground in June. She added that perhaps what the committee was looking for was grant money and funding by the school district.

9. Second Review of New/Revised Policies and Policies to be Eliminated

• Use of Physical Restraint

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she had a response to this from the attorney of the School Board Association who specifically asked for the board to go through the Physical Restraint Policy as it was issued and to look at the RSA's and to come up legal references, if any. She reported the following changes to the legal references:

- 1) RSA 126-U Limiting the Use of Child Restraint practices in schools and treatment centers.
- 2) RSA 541 Administrative Procedure Act.

• Wellness Policy (current)

Superintendent Chiafery stated that there are no changes since it will be eliminated.

- **Wellness Policy (proposed)**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that Board Member Markwell had stated at the last meeting that the last sentence of the Physical Activity had language that committed the district to something that may be difficult to fulfill.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that in the proposed Wellness Policy, the first paragraph under Physical Activity would be changed to “as a way to support long term wellness efforts”.

10. Other

a. Correspondence

- The New England Association of Schools and Colleges regarding accreditation of the Merrimack Schools.
- Representatives Ken Hawkins and Dick Barry regarding their presentation at the New Hampshire Retirement System.
- Vice Chairman Ortega reported that he received correspondence from a parent of a student at the high school. The issue is being handled by Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin.

b. Comments

Board Member Barnes reported that she had attended the Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet, which is also a fundraiser for the high school scholarships. People who received awards were Chief Mark Doyle as “Businessman of the Year”, Rod Buckley as “Business of the Year” and Bill Cummings as the winner of the “President’s Award”. Mr. Cummings is the Vice Chairman of the Budget Committee.

Vice Chairman Ortega reported that he attended the Celebration of Song Concert at the high school on March 13, 2012. This concert is a collection of chorus groups from the 4th grade to the 12th grade. He also attended the “Noodles for Noggins Night” at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School.

Chairman Vaillancourt announced the upcoming Cavalcade of Bands concert on March 28th at the high school. This is a collection of bands from all grade levels.

Chairman Vaillancourt announced the “Empty Bowls” fundraiser at the high school on April 4th.

11. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery announced that the board meeting on April 7th would begin at 7:15 p.m. for a special public meeting.

12. Committee Reports

Board Member Markwell reiterated the Planning and Building Committee recent report on the high school field and track.

Board Member Markwell stated that he attended the March 15th Professional Development Committee meeting with Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the Professional Development Committee meeting focused on 1) an update to the larger committee from the sub-committee regarding the master plan. 2) the Leadership team and the Professional Development Committee are having greater correspondence between them.

13. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Barbara Publicover, 75 Amherst Road announced that on April 4th from 7:00-8:30pm at the middle school, the school district and the Special Education support group will hold a “Meet and Greet” regarding the new transportation company. The notice is also posted on the district website.

14. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:38 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to recess to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a), (b), (c).

The motion passed 5-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 10:00 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.