

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
April 30, 2012**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Board Members Ortega, Barnes, Markwell, Powell and Schneider, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell and Student Representative Yates.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Board Member Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Board Member Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. School Board Reorganization

Board Member Ortega welcomed new school board members Davis Powell and Andy Schneider.

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to nominate Board Member Ortega for the position of School Board Chair.

Board Member Powell felt that Board Member Ortega's vice chair status would provide continuity and carry the Board's leadership path forward.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to nominate Board Member Powell for the position of School Board Vice Chair.

Board Member Barnes noted that Board Member Powell was a returning member of the school board and felt he would be capable of running an effective meeting in the chair's absence.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Approval of April 2, 2012 and April 9, 2012 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chair Powell) to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2012 meeting.

Student Representative Yates requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2 of 8, section 3, second paragraph, second sentence, change the word "wonder" to "wonderful".

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 8, last paragraph, first line, change the word "assistant" to "assistance".
- Page 4 of 8, the first sentence should read, "Ms. Hanley explained that the program deals with "homeless children and youth" who lack a fixed regular and nighttime residence.
- Page 2 of 8, section 3, fourth line, change the word "on-line" to read "online".

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 1 of 8, second paragraph, first line, the word “Grant” should read “grant”.
- Page 3 of 8, second bullet, the word “Quatar” should read “Qatar”.
- Page 5 of 8, section eight, the last paragraph, change the word “verify” to “ensure”.
- Page 6 of 8, second paragraph, second sentence, change the words “the numbers” to “the fiscal numbers”.
- Page 6 of 8, section ten, the first bullet under the comments section should read “Four teams of the sixteen that attended the Science Olympiad were from Merrimack”.
- Page 7 of 8, second paragraph after the three bullets should read “... and Board Member Thornton provided over the past six years.”

The motion passed 3-0-2 with Vice Chair Powell and Schneider abstaining.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2012 meeting.

The motion passed 3-0-2 with Vice Chair Powell and Schneider abstaining.

4. Public Participation

Gary Krupp of 4 Ministerial Drive welcomed Vice Chair Powell and Schneider. He asked the Board to consider creating a list of specific goals that could be reviewed at the end of the year, consider school consolidation, revamp the teacher evaluation to support reduction in force and make better use of technology to get information to parents.

Barbara Publicover of 75 Amherst Road highlighted the May 4th deadline for the completion of the parent involvement survey from the NH Department of Education. She also noted that the meet and greet for the new special education transportation company would be held on May 16th at the middle school in the library.

5. Commitment to Board Code of Ethics

Board members took turns reading allowed the Code of Ethics document.

Board members voluntarily signed the Code of Ethics document for the 2012-2013 school year.

6. Consent Agenda

a) Teacher Resignations/Retirements

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following resignations/retirements.

- Wendy Toribio, Math Coordinator, Merrimack Middle School
- Jean Mazzarella, Physical Education Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Karen Freed, Fifth Grade Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Jessica Chase, Second Grade Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Andrew Shaw, Fourth Grade Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Eric Howard, Art Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

b) Teacher Nominations

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher nominations.

- Richard Bartlett, Fourth Grade Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Bryan Dine, Language Arts Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Meghan Jenkins, Part-time Kindergarten Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Caitlin Johnston, Part-time Kindergarten Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Melissa Lloyd, First Grade Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Kathleen McCall-Ortega, Fourth Grade Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Cheryl Smith, Math Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to approve the consent agenda.

Chair Ortega announced his intent to abstain from vote because Kathleen McCall-Ortega is his wife.

The motion passed 4-0-1 with Chair Ortega recorded as an abstention.

7. Challenge Day Presentation

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin introduced high school teachers Deborah Belanger, Judy Brown and Linda Mandra. Amy Larkin-Perez was not in attendance. Mrs. Brown explained that Challenge Day provides students and staff with experiential workshops to celebrate diversity through truth and full expression which can include eye opening opportunities and experiences.

Mrs. Brown thanked the board for funding one day of Challenge Day in the 2012-2013 budget.

Deborah Belanger explained that Challenge Day promotes a positive school climate, increases self-acceptance and validation, improves understanding and acceptance of others, and breaks down stereotypes and cliques. The cost of Challenge Day is \$25 per student. This year 425 students were able to participate in the event compared to 330 students last year.

Linda Mandra reported that Challenge Day sustainability is the major goal for this year. This year a week long activity entitled “Be The Change Week” followed the Challenge Day experience. The week-long activities were designed to engage as many staff and students as possible. Future goals will include parent involvement.

Linda Mandra reported that local businesses in the community have supported the program through generous donations. The Class of 2011 donated their class gift of \$5,000 to Challenge Day.

Linda Mandra reported that the Challenge Days for next year will be November 14 and 15. The third Challenge Day will be shared with the Bedford School District.

The presentation was followed by Challenge Day testimonials by the staff and students.

Vice Chair Powell thanked the teachers for their presentation. He explained that while teaching his religious education class, the high school students who participated in Challenge Day the week before were still talking about their Challenge Day experiences.

Board Member Barnes asked if the program accommodated all students who wanted to participate.

Linda Mandra responded that extra students were able to participate in the program this year. There was a wait list.

Board Member Barnes asked if the students who were unable to participate in Challenge Day had provided feedback.

Judy Brown explained that parental permission is required in order to participation in Challenge Day. The effectiveness of the program would be diminished if the student to facilitator ratio was too high.

Board Member Barnes asked if sharing one of the three Challenge Days with the Bedford School District next year would affect the participation level for Merrimack High School students.

Linda Mandra explained that there will be the same number of facilitators next year as this year. A participation level of 250 Merrimack students will result in approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the high school students having participated in Challenge Day over a three year period. Students can only participate in one Challenge Day experience, unless they participate as a team leader.

Board Member Schneider stated that ultimate goal is to have all freshmen go through the program. He added that we are in a “catch up mode”. The number of students wanting to participate will diminish in time because the number of students having participated will increase in time.

Student Representative Yates stated that Challenge Day experience inspired the theatre department to write a show on the subject of bullying and how it affects the student population. The show was performed at the Theatre Festival. Students from other high schools were affected by the message in the show.

Chair Ortega noted his children had positive personal experiences with the Challenge Day and he hopes to participate in the future. He also expressed his appreciation for the data provided to the Board prior to the meeting.

8. Merrimack High School Students’ Participation in For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST)

High school students Hannah Brunelle, Isabella Beauregard and Ben Rogers represented the Merrimack High School U.S. FIRST Team, Chop Shop 166. The high school team received positive feedback from the Granite State Regional Competition judges in March for their presentation and the construction of their bridge. The students announced that their team won a 1989 bomb defusing robot during the competition. The students noted the challenge of working with a robot built by another group in 1989. They plan to demonstrate the older model robot at public events to promote interest in the FIRST team.

Hannah Brunelle reported that the FIRST team traveled to a competition in North Carolina in April. The high school team reached the quarter finals before being eliminated from the competition.

The students enthusiastically shared their learning experiences and demonstrated the robot.

Hannah Brunelle highlighted the upcoming Lego summer camp and the Mayhem in Merrimack Competition that will be held on June 2nd.

Board Member Barnes thanked the students for their presentation and robot demonstration. She applauded them for being such great ambassadors for the community.

Chair Ortega acknowledged the pride of the students in the creation of the robot. He stated that to receive the chairman's award two years in a row was a major accomplishment. He asked how much money it cost to send the team to the South Carolina competition.

Hannah Brunelle explained that expenses for the competition include travel expenses for 45 students, mentors and parents plus the cost to ship the robot. She thanked the school district for including academic competition funding in this year's budget.

Chair Ortega stated that the school board has been working to promote funding for post season events.

9. Outcome from Arbitration Regarding Reduction in Force

Superintendent Chiafery explained that a new law, effective July 1, 2012 addressed reduction in force differently than the Merrimack Teachers Association Master Agreement. The law stipulated that a reduction in force could not be based on seniority alone. The Master Agreement highlighted seniority as being the sole determinant. The Board identified academic preparation as the second criteria for the reduction in force at its February 6, 2012 meeting. The Merrimack Teachers Association filed a grievance. The grievance with stipulated facts from both parties went to a well known arbitrator.

Superintendent Chiafery reported that the arbitrator rendered a decision on April 12. The Master Agreement policy was in violation of the law. The association had chosen not to work with the school board to come up with criteria even though there is a section of the Master Agreement, then the law takes precedence.

Superintendent Chiafery reported that many of the teachers affected by the reduction in force will be contracted to teach next year due to attrition. She expects that the affected individuals will be nominated before the end of the school year.

Vice Chair Powell asked if the arbitration was binding.

Superintendent Chiafery explained that the district attorney explained to her that there is limited appeal ability because both parties agreed to the arbitration process. There would need to be an error in how the arbitrator applied the law in order to appeal.

Vice Chair Powell asked if Superintendent Chiafery had heard from the Teachers Associations and if so, what was their next step.

Superintendent Chiafery reported that she had not heard from Teachers Association. She noted that she informed the president of the Merrimack Teachers Association that she personally spoke with each of the educators who could be affected by the reduction in force.

10. Summary of Professional Development Activities: April 10 Workshop Day

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the elementary level teachers participated in "Teach for Success", a data driven set of protocols to identify strength and areas needing improvement.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the middle school teachers participated in Strategies for Collaboration and Learning Essential Standards (SCALES), a teacher led initiative.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the high school teachers continue to work on a competency based grading system at the high school.

He explained that it district personnel are able to facilitate many initiatives with limited support from consultants.

11. School Board Committee Assignments for 2012-1013

Chair Ortega requested that the Board members review the list of committees and send him their requests for assignments by the end of the week.

12. Other

a) Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

b) Comments

Student Representative Yates announced a pancake breakfast fundraiser for the Science Olympiad at the Applebee in Nashua off exit 8 on May 5th from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. The tickets are \$5.00 a person and will be sold at the door.

Student Representative Yates announced the high school world language department's International Festival Night would be held on May 3rd from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Admission is free.

Board Member Barnes added that ethnic food will be sold for \$2.00 a plate.

Board Member Barnes congratulated Chair Ortega on his chairmanship and welcomed Board Members Schneider and Powell.

13. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery informed the board of an evacuation drill for the James Masticola Complex tentatively scheduled for May 22nd with a back update date of May 24th. She explained that students in grades kindergarten through six have participated in the preparations. Only fifth and sixth grade students will participate in the actual evacuation to the high school.

Board Member Markwell stated that in a conversation with the Town Council Vice Chair Finlay Rothhaus he was questioned why the school district was not using the police department's dog to locate drugs in the high school. Board Member Markwell requested this be a future agenda item.

Superintendent Chiafery added that she would like to invite Police Chief Doyle to the meeting for discussion when the agenda item is addressed.

14. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes reported that she attended a Program and Evaluation and Review Committee on April 18th. Representatives from the Professional Development Committee reviewed recent updates to the Professional Development Master Plan. The committee also reviewed the arts curriculum.

Board Member Barnes reported that she attended a Safeguard meeting on April 19th. She highlighted that the committee is a community committee, not a school district committee. She announced that the 4th annual drug take back program was successful. One hundred and twenty nine pounds of unwanted prescription drugs were collected. The committee hopes to have a discussion with local medical professionals in the future.

Board Member Barnes reported that pledge cards were distributed to students at the mock DUI (driving under the influence) demonstration. The pledge cards represent a commitment not to get in a car with an impaired driver.

Board Member Markwell reported that he attended a Healthcare Cost Containment Committee on April 4th. Ongoing efforts to increase the health analysis survey participation levels were discussed. The committee is expected to review a corporate health insurance plan and cost.

15. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There was no public participation.

16. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:07 p.m. Vice Chair Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) 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 9:17 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.