

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room  
June 4, 2012**

**PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Ortega, Vice Chairman Powell, Board Members Barnes and Markwell, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell and Student Representative Yates. Board Member Schneider was excused from the meeting.

**1. Call To Order**

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

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Recognition of Board Student Representative**

On behalf of the board, Chairman Ortega thanked Student Representative Yates for his participation as the student representative on the board and presented him with a gift.

**3. Approval of May 21, 2012 Minutes**

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2012 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 9, paragraph 7, change Board Member Powell to Vice Chairman Powell
- Page 3 of 9, paragraph 12, correct the spelling of Russell to Russell
- Page 3 of 9, paragraph 13, it should be “Mr. Russell added...”
- Page 4 of 9, paragraph 1, change Tim O’Connell to Nick Coler
- Page 6 of 9, paragraph 3, sentence 3 should read “The total number of students ...”.
- Page 6 or 9, paragraph 3, sentence should read, “She also stated that colleges ... which may generate more interest in Latin III and Latin in general, with a three year tract offering.
- Page 9 of 9, paragraph 1, section 13, correct the date of the PERC committee meeting to May 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Page 9 of 9, section 14, paragraph 1, should be “5 Independence Drive”

Board Member Markwell requesting the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 6 of 9, paragraph 4, should be Vice Chairman Powell.

Vice Chairman Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 6 of 9, paragraph 9, should read, “Vice Chairman Powell asked Business Administrator Shevenell how comfortable he felt that the cost would be fully covered by the savings in attrition”.
- Page 7 of 9, paragraph 7, last sentence should read “He suggested that Chairman Ortega reach out and have a discussion with the head of the Town Master Plan Committee”.

- Page 8 of 9, under Correspondence, bullet 1 should read “The board received an e-mail from a parent regarding the release of the junior class on the day of the prom.”
- Page 8 or 9, under Correspondence, bullet 2 should read, “The board received an anonymous e-mail regarding personnel at the high school.

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 9, last bullet, remove “where common forms are developed”.
- Page 5 of 9, paragraph 5 from the bottom, add to the last sentence, “such as consistency with the way calendars are used and populated between the schools.”
- Page 5 of 9, section 8, last paragraph, correct the spelling of Mandarin.
- Page 6 of 9, section 9, add a sentence at the end that reads, “The board members agreed with the proposed dates of the summer board meetings.
- Page 6 of 9, Section 10, first paragraph, second sentence, correct the spelling of “chartered”.
- Page 8 of 9, paragraph 2, correct the date of the board meeting to be June 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Page 9 of 9, paragraph 1, add and apostrophe s (’s) to the word board.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

#### **4. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

#### **5. Consent Agenda**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following items for approval:

- a. Teacher Nominations
  - Kelly Chiapetta, Grade 1 teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
  - Nicole Funicella, Grade 5 teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
  - Ruth Hinde-Moura, Nurse, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
  - Jeffrey LaFlamme, Special Education teacher, Merrimack Middle School
  - Kimberly Ross, Grade 5 teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
  - Kristine Thibeault, part-time Kindergarten teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- b. Teacher Resignations
  - Cindy L. Thomas, Grade 5 teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- c. Approval of Contract Extension (part time to full time) for Latin Teacher at Merrimack High School

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

#### **6. Drug Screening Measures**

Chairman Ortega explained that the presentation by Chief Mark Doyle was in response to Board Member Markwell’s question about drug screening.

Chief Doyle explained that he spoke with the Town Council about providing a drug K-9 if searches in the schools were deemed necessary.

### Overview of what is available with K-9 Unit

Chief Doyle made a presentation regarding the Merrimack Police Department's policies on the use of K-9s to sniff objects for drugs. Points of interest were:

- The use of K-9's to sniff objects is NOT a search within the meaning of the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment.
- School officials may use the police K-9 to sniff objects that are not affixed to or carried by a student. Areas to be sniffed would be lockers, desks and abandoned personal property. The school must have "reasonable suspicion" to warrant a more thorough search.
- Procedure
  - The police department requires a letter of request from the Superintendent of Schools, which identifies which school is to be searched, outlining any reason for the request and acknowledging that prosecution, if any, is the responsibility of the school district and the Merrimack Police Department.
- Parameters
  - K-9 searches will be "administrative" only.
  - Searches will not be conducted in a "lock down" status or unaccompanied by school personnel.
  - Areas to be searched are restricted to the school facility, objects in the classroom or lockers.
  - Parking lots and vehicles within the school property will not be searched without a warrant.
  - Sniffing of a student's person will not be conducted without reasonable suspicion.
- Searches
  - Searches will be conducted using only dogs trained for detecting illegal substances.
  - All searches will be previously authorized by the Superintendent.
  - All searches will be conducted in the presence of the Superintendent or his/her designee.
  - Individuals will not be subjected to bodily searches by dogs.
  - Students will be excluded from any area to be searched.
  - Only the K-9 dog handler will determine what constitutes an illegal substance alert by the dog.
  - If the search findings indicate the presence of illegal substances, the student(s) will be turned over to the police.
  - All evidence, contraband or prosecution, resulting from the K-9 search will be the responsibility of the Merrimack Police Department.

Chief Doyle stressed that the Merrimack Police Department and the Merrimack School District have a good working relationship and a bridge of trust has been formed between the two.

Board Member Markwell made a request that the minutes reflect that he was not the individual who originally requested the information on the drug screening problem and process. The individual who did make the request was former Town Council Chairman Finley Rothhaus. He added that he was relaying what a constituent had asked him to do. He was not aware of any problems at the high school other than the day-to-day normal mistakes.

Chief Doyle responded that it is difficult to define what a "drug problem" is. In his opinion any person who brings an illegal substance onto school grounds that shouldn't be is a problem.

Chairman Ortega asked if anything dramatic has changed over the last two years that would necessitate a change to the policy.

Chief Doyle responded that the changes that have occurred are the types of drugs. There has not been an increase in use, possession of or distribution of drugs in the schools. The dramatic change is in the types of drugs that are being used. Many prescription drugs are difficult to detect.

Chairman Ortega asked what drugs the K-9 in Merrimack can sniff, and are there drugs that the dog cannot detect.

Chief Doyle answered that the major problem is prescription drugs. There are many derivatives of prescription drugs, which make them difficult to detect.

Chairman Ortega noted that the trust between the School Resource Officers and students has been useful in identifying issues. He asked Chief Doyle what would be jeopardized if the trust was broken.

Chief Doyle responded that the School Resource Officers enjoy good relationships with the students and that trust takes years and years to develop. Students are comfortable going to the School Resource Officers with issues that could be problematic. He added that it is the small things that are done day-to-day that foster these relationships.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if there had been a specific request to have the K-9 brought into the schools.

Chief Doyle replied that the idea was brought up at a Town Council meeting. There were no specific incidents or problems. The Town Council wanted to know if there was a problem could the dog be used.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if other districts in the State actively use K-9 units.

Chief Doyle responded that other districts have used K-9 units in the past. The Merrimack K-9 handler has participated in some of those searches.

Board Member Markwell asked if the trust issue with the School Resource Officer is damaged using the K-9 searches.

Chief Doyle explained that it depends on how the incident is handled. It's a matter of education. The approach must be balanced.

Board Member Markwell asked if the searches would be a surprise to the students.

Chief Doyle explained that it depends on the circumstances. He added that the K-9 handler and dog were available to give demonstrations in the schools to educate the students on K-9 searches.

Chairman Ortega thanked Chief Doyle for his presentation and stated that the board values their good working relationship with the Merrimack Police Department and the School Resource Officers in the schools.

## **7. Students' Report about the China Exchange Program**

Chairman Ortega introduced the students who attended the two-week trip to China in April. They were Jackie McLavey, Samantha Maione, Olivia Davis, Chris Lore and Zack Cronin. He added that he and Board Member Markwell were chaperones on the trip.

The students presented a slide show that focused on their experiences, all which were very different from one another.

- Language: The Merrimack students learned Chinese from the Chinese students while they taught the Chinese students English.
- Home: For the first week, Merrimack students stayed in homes of Chinese students. The students from Merrimack had different experiences with their families.
- Food: All the students gave anecdotes about foods they ate while in China. Their basic rule was “don’t ask what it is, just eat it!”
- Touring: The students all agreed that the Great Wall of China was the highlight of their tours.

Board Member Barnes asked how many students in total went on the trip and of those how many were enrolled in the Mandarin course at Merrimack High School.

The students responded that there were 9 students on the trip, 4 students knew at least some of the language.

Board Member Barnes asked the students what interested the Chinese students the most about American culture.

Samantha replied that American music and movies interested the Chinese students.

Jackie replied that the whole aspect of American life was of interest.

Zack stated that they were also surprised at the size of some American families.

Vice Chairman Powell asked about the curriculum at the Foreign Language School.

Zach replied that English was emphasized in all of their classes.

Vice Chairman Powell asked about exchange students from China who came to Merrimack in the fall. He asked if any of the students that hosted them in China had been matched up with them when they came to Merrimack.

Zack replied that one of the criteria for going on the trip was to host a Chinese student during the school year. Sometimes they had the same students as their host families, but that was not always the case.

Samantha added that she thought it would be better if students were matched up with their host students.

Chairman Ortega, who was part of the school trip, stated that everyone got a tremendous amount from this trip, historically and culturally. He also stated that the trip was self-funded.

Chairman Ortega mentioned the other students who were part of the trip to China who were not able to attend the meeting. They were Sarah Day, Ronald (R.J.) Content, Brianna Kimura and Katie Correia. He added that the members of the group were wonderful ambassadors, as they represented Merrimack, New Hampshire and the United States.

## 8. Focus on Merrimack High School: A Year in Review

Principal Johnson introduced the members of his staff that were present at the meeting. They were Assistant Principal Rich Zampieri, Assistant Principal Peter Bergeron, Assistant Principal Cheryl Smith, Technology Coordinator Mark Merrifield, and Technology Education Teacher Jeff Capone. A video was presented that showed the Merrimack High School Chamber Choir performing at the New Hampshire State House.

Principal Johnson presented students from the high school who gave brief reports on their educational experiences in the Merrimack School District. One student was a cancer survivor and spoke about how teachers and staff helped him through his difficult times. Another student spoke about her parents having to move out of state and her remaining in the area and how the staff helped her readjust. Another student spoke about the death of her mom and the help she received at the high school. Other topics covered were music, culinary arts, daily announcements, ecology work, helping students move up from failing to being able to graduate in June, the Science Olympiad, opportunities in business education, public speaking, building confidence, TV production and The Challenge Program. The final student speaking made reference to the phrase “Believe, Go Forward and Inspire” and how it related to his education at Merrimack High School.

Principal Johnson presented the highlights of Merrimack High School for 2011- 2012

- Focus on welcoming freshman and helping them adjust to the high school
- NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges), quantifying the new mission statement, quantifying social and civic expectations and plans to create a student congress.
- The school motto, “Believe, Go Forward and Inspire”
  - Believe refers to the mission statement: Merrimack High School, in partnership with families and our community, provides each student with rigorous educational experiences that develop intellectual potential, physical and emotional well-being, and social stewardship. Students graduating from Merrimack High School will be competent, insightful and creative thinkers, able to compete in a diverse global society.
  - “Go Forward” refers to the Merrimack students being engaged as 21<sup>st</sup> century learners who actively explore material to acquire and comprehend new knowledge.
  - “Inspire” refers to social and civic expectations.
- The Logic Model: All students make continuous progress in reading and math achievements
- NECAP scores: Last year Merrimack High School was the only Class L school to score in the top three in all categories of reading, writing and math. This year scores increased 5% overall and were the best scores of all Class L schools.
- Competencies: Merrimack High School is moving forward with a hybrid grading system.
- Challenge Day: This is the third year for launching the Challenge Day Program, with a focus on bullying/harassment, good decision-making and culture building. On the “Wall of Thanks” the students write on the wall what they are thankful for.
- Science Olympiad: For the four years this has been in existence in Merrimack, the students have won four state championships.
- New Hampshire Scholars Program: Merrimack was the first of Class L schools to join the NH Scholars Program, which is a program that tries to reach the “middle of the pack students” to stretch themselves to take extra courses. Last year there were 83 students involved, this year 103. The goal is to reach 100% of the student body to be a part of this program.

- Gateway Activities: Program for students to take ownership of their school and their community. Activities included working on the cafeteria improvements and an ecological vegetable garden, presenting “The Interview”, a play written and performed by students, Race to Lace (a 5K race organized by a Merrimack student), the video group and “Buy a Bed” for the homeless shelter in Merrimack.
- National History Day: One year ago, one student participated. This year, 160 students participated. 27 students went on to State championships. Of those, two students placed first, nine placed second, eight placed third. Six students will be going to the National competition.
- Running Start Program: Gives juniors and seniors a chance to earn college credits.
- Academy of Finance: Several students have been awarded scholarships. The program works with BAE and Fidelity.
- Advanced Placement Classes: There are currently seven advanced placement courses offered. Eighty-one students took Advanced Placement classes in 14 subject areas.
- Annual College Fair: It was very successful this past year, with 50 colleges participating and about 225 parents/students in attendance.
- Teacher Awards: Sean Muller was recognized as New Hampshire Science Teacher of the Year, Linda Mandra was awarded Gateway Teacher of the Year, Ginny Crook was recognized as Coca Cola Educator of Distinction and Adriana Oancea as No Bell Award for Teaching Excellence.
- Athletics: Merrimack won the state championships in Boys’ Basketball. Other awards were received were Boys’ Indoor Track, Winter Sports, Volleyball, Hockey and Boy’s Baseball.
- Plans for 2012-2013: There will be a focus on the creation of a Center for International Studies and creation of a Student Congress.
- The theme for graduation this year is “I believe we’ve just begun”.
- Jeff Capone presented a video that promotes Merrimack TV and the Educational Channel.

## **9. Pay for Performance Report for 2012**

JoAnn Wegman, chairperson of the Pay for Performance Committee introduced members of the committee in attendance. They were Jan Moynihan-Cooney, Deb Fournier and Bill Sawyer.

Ms. Wegman reported that the committee met 12 times during the school year 2011-2012. In the fall, 266 proposals were submitted to the committee. Of those, 222 were accepted and 44 were sent back for revision. Of those revised, 40 were approved.

Ms. Wegman stated that Merrimack teachers contributed 11,585 hours to Pay for Performance projects in the 2011-2012 school year. The number of portfolios submitted was the same amount as last year.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he had a chance to peruse through the portfolios brought to the meeting, but would like to take a more leisurely look at them.

Chairman Wegman responded that most of the portfolios have gone back to the staff.

Chairman Ortega asked if it would be possible to hold the portfolios for a couple of weeks so the board members could take a thorough look at them.

Chairman Wegman stated that she would leave them at the Central Office for the board members to read.

Board Member Barnes thanked the committee for the presentation and implementing the project.

## **10. Update Regarding Town Master Plan Committee Representation**

Chairman Ortega reached out to the chair of Town Master Plan Committee to get more details on the committee and its make up.

- He was told that the sub-committee was comprised of about 30 members from various areas within the town.
- He noted that Tracy Bull and Jody Vaillancourt had been on the committee since its inception.
- The committee is two-thirds of the way through their work in comprising the plan.
- When the plan is complete, it will be sent as an advisory document to the Planning Board.
- The committee composition is not set in stone. The chairman would desire Ms. Bull and Ms. Vaillancourt's continuation on the committee, as they have made a huge impact on moving the committee forward.

Chairman Ortega announced that he would be the liaison to the sub-committee on behalf of the board.

Vice Chairman Powell thanked Chairman Ortega for taking on the extra responsibility as a member of the committee. He added that Ms. Bull and Ms. Vaillancourt's insights, as they continue on the committee, would be valuable and he volunteered to serve as an alternate to the committee.

## **11. Workshop for School Board and Administrative Team to Revise District Logic Model**

Superintendent Chiafery reported that Nancy Gerzon, consultant from Learning Innovations, would like to set the date for the review of the district logic model. West Ed will once again serve as the facilitator for the revision.

Superintendent Chiafery asked if board members were available on Thursday, June 21<sup>st</sup> for the workshop, beginning at 6:30 p.m. All members of the board accepted this date for the workshop.

## **12. Other**

### Correspondence

Board Member Barnes received a letter stating concerns about what CACR 12 would mean for the funding of Merrimack Schools. She would like this as part of the New Business on the agenda.

Chairman Ortega received a letter from Allison Kronos, teacher and Science Olympiad coach at Nashua North High School who was invited by the Merrimack Science Olympiad team to the National competition. She was very impressed with our students. This speaks volumes to our program.

Superintendent Chiafery received a letter from Teresa Morris, President of NHAGE regarding Linda Mandra, who was awarded the New Hampshire Excellence in Education Award for Gifted Educator of the Year.

### Comments

Student Representative Yates spoke about his experiences at Merrimack High, which included his Eagle Scout project, a vegetable garden and butterfly garden at the high school.

## **13. New Business**



Chairman Ortega noted Board Member Barnes' new business request regarding CACR 12 concerns.

#### **14. Committee Reports**

Board Member Barnes attended the Project Safeguard Meeting on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. They discussed Project Safeguard's participation in the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration. They also had a presentation by School Resource Officer Murray regarding the consequences of DUI (Driving Under the Influence). The National Guard brought a survey to help the committee assess the committee. While there are areas of improvement, the assessment of the committee was quite healthy.

Board Member Barnes attended the District Parent/Teacher group meeting on May 27<sup>th</sup>. The PowerSchool update was discussed, with the goal being the ability to allow the pre-kindergarten through high school students to have access to records. This is still in the testing stage. The district attendance policy was also reviewed.

#### **15. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Jennifer Bull, 5 Independence Drive, gave a very emotional recollection of the China trip that she went on two years ago with Merrimack High School and how it had a positive impact on her life.

#### **16. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

At 10:15 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to recess to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3,II (a), (b), (c).

The motion passed 4-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 10:45 p.m., Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.