

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
July 16, 2012**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

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

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2012 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 13, paragraph 1, add the word “computer” before the word “servers”.
- Page 3 of 13, paragraphs 6 and 7, change EasyPay to EZPay
- Page 8 of 13, paragraph 11, change “loose” to “lose”.
- Page 10 of 13, paragraph 8, change the word “consistency” to “consistent”.
- Page 10 of 13, Section 10, bullet 1, should read: “Board Member Barnes stated that she has three areas of concern. They are O’Gara Drive (the tennis courts and recreation area), Grater Woods (the Memo of Understanding) and Merrimack Safeguard (the new grant application).”

Board Member Markwell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 13 of 13, second bullet, last sentence should read “...he made a presentation to the committee on public sector rates vs. private rates...”
- Page 13 of 13, paragraph 4, Parks and Recreation Committee should be changes to Planning and Building Committee.

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 5 of 13, bottom paragraph should read, “Board Member Schneider asked that if the increase was for the first year only, would the district still be in compliance.”
- Page 13 of 13, under Committee Reports, second bullet under the Budget Committee Meeting, change “...and invite the chairs...” to “invite the chair and vice chair...”.
- Page 13 of 13, same paragraph, sentence should read, “Chairman Ortega said that it would be on the agenda for the August 13th meeting”.

Board Member Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 9 of 13, paragraph 9, should read, “Vice Chairman Powell stated that now the attend/fail bar at the high school is ten unexcused absences per semester to be in danger of attendance failure. He asked if the guidelines would change the bar of the high school attendance to ten per year.”
- Page 9 of 13, paragraph 2 from the bottom, change the date of the meeting to July 16th.

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 6 of 13, paragraph 5 from the bottom, add "...and that if there were no objections it would be placed on the consent agenda for the next meeting."
- Page 9 of 13, paragraph 4, change the word "leverage" to "implementation".
- Page 9 of 13, paragraph 6, last sentence add the phrase, "by the Department of Education"
- Page 10 of 14, first bullet under "Input from the Board", correct the spelling of "O'Gara Drive".
- Page 11 of 13, paragraph 5, second sentence, add the word "that" before "it is not be done..."
- Page 12 of 13, under Correspondence, first bullet should read, "Chairman Ortega reported that an e-mail was received from a parent regarding an issue on the school bus."

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

Gary Krupp, 4 Ministerial Drive, spoke to Common Core Standards. He read from a letter from the University of Chicago regarding the Common Core Standards.

4. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following items for approval:

- Teacher Nominations
 - Stacy Conty, Special Ed. Coordinator, Mastricola Upper Elementary
 - Kristina Doucette, Family Consumer Science, Merrimack High School
 - Janet Fotos, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School
 - Amanda Goguen, Health Teacher, Merrimack High School
 - Elizabeth Graziano, Special Education Coordinator, Merrimack High School
 - Julie Nichols, Art Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
 - Thomas Stepan, Social Studies Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
 - Karen Vittoria, Grade 1 Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Approval of Purchase of Computer Servers for Food Service Program
- Approval of Letter of Support for Town Center Committee Forming Liaison with National Park Service

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Presentation Regarding Technology Infrastructure Budget Plan for 2012-2013

Business Administrator Shevenell gave a brief background. He explained that Ms. Rose, consultant and former Director of Library and Media Services and Technology had done a five-year plan about the specifics of technology infrastructure. Highlights of the budget include:

- Electrical infrastructure upgrade
- Additional network cablings (labs/classrooms)
- Network switch upgrades

- Server upgrades
- Patch panel additions
- Complete WiFi saturation
- Increase machines and establish refresh cycle
- Installation of projectors
- Network/telecom contracting

The proposed budgeted amounts are:

2013-14: \$142,700
2014-15: \$155,100
2015-16: \$172,500
2016-17: \$169,500
2017-18: 162,500

Ms. Rose also presented the proposed scenario for computer leasing from 2013 to 2019. This scenario will produce buyout machines in 2014-15, which could live on and/or go into classrooms. Bring your own device policies would also dramatically affect what would need to be purchased. Lease cost per machine per year is around \$180.00. The amounts proposed for 860 machines are:

2013-14: \$31,500
2014-15: \$54,900
2015-26: \$72,900
2016-17: \$68,400
2017-18: \$81,900

Board Member Schneider asked if the server upgrades were for Administration purposes in each building.

Ms. Rose replied that the administrative servers include file servers and print servers in all buildings, including PowerSchool and Budget Sense.

Board Member Schneider asked that, regarding WiFi saturation, as more things become wireless, are there lower costs for cabling.

Ms. Rose responded that as more WiFi is need, the same amount of cabling is needed.

Board Member Schneider stated that the projectors project will replace classroom televisions.

Ms. Rose responded that the mimeo boards could certainly be added. Right now the focus is on core instructional technology and core infrastructure.

Chairman Ortega stated that one of the challenges is mapping something out six years in advance because technology changes occur very quickly.

Board Member Barnes asked about the absence of telecommunication infrastructure in the plan.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that they are working towards a couple of solutions because technology changes every year.

Board Member Barnes stated that Ms. Rose presented an important piece of information. She added that there are needs to identify who needs what, the critical areas, and where it is fresh.

Board Member Markwell asked if the WiFi would be broken out one building each year or certain areas each year.

Ms. Rose responded that the inclination is to grow in every building every year.

Board Member Markwell suggested that the focus should be in each building before going on to another building. He also asked how the costs are being calculated for WiFi saturation.

Ms. Rose replied that there was a walk-through in every building to determine the needs and that it would be a while before there would be full WiFi in every classroom. She added that the Technology Steering Committee works with the technology educators and building leaders to determine what they want to achieve each year.

Board Member Markwell asked about the phone system, suggesting having “soft phones” in the buildings.

Ms. Rose replied that setting up a software phone as an exclusive classroom phone could be a hazard.

Business Administrator Shevenell added that there have to be “hard” lines for the fire department and the elevators.

Board Member Schneider asked about students bringing their own devices to the classrooms and would this be a cost savings.

Ms. Rose responded that the plan is getting to the point where bringing their own devices or getting a generous gift to purchase devices for each student would be ideal.

Chairman Ortega stated that the information brought by Ms. Rose was a great tool that will be looked at during the budget process.

6. Second Review of Revised Policy on Attendance

Superintendent Chiafery gave an introduction regarding the revised policy on attendance, stating that in preparation for the second review of the revised policy, she met with Assistant Principal Peter Bergeron and Assistant Principal Bill Morris. She stated that the policy was not generated by them, but instead was based on guidelines that are specific to the revised RSA:189:34, 35.

Assistant Principal Morris explained that RSA:189-34 speaks to having a truancy officer coming up with a definition of excused absences in determining a process for interventions to address truancy as quickly as possible. He continued to explain that RSA:189-45 defines ten half days of unexcused absences in a school year as habitual truancy.

Assistant Principal Bergeron spoke about the ten half-days of absenteeism in the policy. He explained that if a student goes beyond the ten absences, the administration meets with the student and the parents if there is a need. If the absences are a “chronic” situation and there is proof of that, the student would receive credit for that class period. In Merrimack’s policy, if a student is truant or if a class is cut resulting in going over the ten absences, the student would not receive credit for that course period.

Vice Chairman Powell asked for a clarification on the number of unexcused absences to be considered truant.

Assistant Principal Bergeron replied that the policy states that truancy is considered after ten half days of unexcused absences per year. The students are aware of this change in policy.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if the RSA's list a definition of "excused absences" or is left up to the individual districts to define them, and if so, do they have to be approved by the Department of Education.

Assistant Principal Bergeron answered that other school district policies were looked at in Southern New Hampshire. He added that all the schools in Merrimack would have consistent attendance policies. This is an ongoing process.

Superintendent Chiafery pointed out the wording of RSA:189-34 regarding excused absences. She explained that it is a three step process to determine an excused absence: 1) There is an obligation to define it; 2) the New Hampshire School Boards Association is contacted for a model policy and 3) Sister school policies are looked at for comparison. She added that we are in compliance with the RSAs and the Department of Education.

Board Member Schneider asked if there is a rule of thumb that if there is a certain point when there are so many absences for a student, unexcused and excused, that the situation is discussed with the student.

Assistant Principal Bergeron stated that a student could have 18 absences but they could be excused absences. There is no magic number, other than the ten half days or five full days of unexcused absences per year.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that in the high school last year, out of the approximately 1,400 students, 27 students were considered habitually truant. She added that the administration tries to work with the students and the parents in a pro-active way to decrease the number of trancies.

Board Member Schneider asked if the best way to address the truancy issue is to keep the lines of communication open.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the actions are pro-active as opposed to re-active and that is done through communication.

Board Member Barnes asked about reclassifying absences if an error is made.

Assistant Principal Morris replied that there would be discussions with parents and the student before it gets to the point of a student losing credit for the course. Errors can be fixed.

Chairman Ortega stated that the half day absence has been addressed in the policy. His point was that students could be habitually absent for less than a half day who would never be, based on the policy, habitually truant. Chairman Ortega continued by stating that he thought it had been said that was true, however, it seems to be a process and procedure, not a policy in terms of dealing with repeated missed classes or a series of periods of missed attendance, even though it fell within less than a half day. He asked if this was less policy and more procedure.

Assistant Principal Bergeron explained that habitually missed classes are followed up by administration as part of the process, not policy.

Board Member Barnes stated that it shows the cohesion of policy and practice in school operations.

Chairman Ortega explained the process. There would be a final reading of the policy at the next meeting. If there are no such requests by the board members, the policy could be placed on the Consent Agenda at the August meeting.

7. Board Response to Lunch Price Increase Options for 2012-2013

Business Administrator Shevenell presented information on the lunch price increase proposal discussed at the June 18, 2012 school board meeting. He explained that the food service program is proposing a price increase that will keep the district in compliance with the Healthy-Free Kids Act of 2012 which requires a school district to increase their "paid" lunch charges until the revenue per lunch matches the federal free reimbursement.

Business Administrator Shevenell continued to explain that currently the average price per lunch is \$2.39. In order to be in compliance for the 2012-13 school year, there must be an average charge per lunch of \$2.51. There could be a price increase each year incrementally to meet the new standard, or a higher price increase now that would allow the district to be in compliance for several years. The preferred option of the Administration would be the latter.

Board Member Schneider stated that a 15-cent increase is what it would be for one year.

Board Member Barnes stated that other options are not equitable to all the students (grades 1-4 do not have an increase in Option B). She also mentioned the coolers that would need to be replaced, which could be afforded by the surplus in Option A as opposed to becoming part of the operating budget.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to accept Option A with a proposed increase of 25 cents across the board, which equates for those families using the lunch program to \$1.25 per student per week.

Board Member Markwell spoke to the motion, stating that he felt that the laws and other things could change over the next few years and therefore would like to see a proposed increase for one year to be reviewed each following year.

Board Member Schneider stated that it is hard to balance the predictability against the actual cost increase. He added that he was in favor of Option A, although he did acknowledge that things could change over the next few years.

Chairman Ortega asked if there are changes in the law in the future and if the districts costs are lower and the surplus was still running, could the cost of lunches be decreased.

Business Administrator Shevenell agreed that the prices could change and that corrections could be made.

Vice Chairman Powell asked Chairman Ortega if he would like to amend the motion to state the amount of the increase in Option A would be "up to \$0.25".

Chairman Ortega stated that the Option A is written to have a level price and that he was thinking about the future years and the costs of the lunches possibly decreasing.

The motion to accept Option A as the proposed price increase for the school lunch program was passed on a vote of 4-1-0 with Board Member Markwell in opposition.

The motion was not amended after discussion.

8. Correspondence from Town Council Chairman Requesting James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for 2012 State Primary Polling Site

Chairman Ortega gave a brief history of the board discussions regarding consolidating the polling places in Merrimack to one location. This was discussed at four meetings, November 2, 2010, February 29, 2011, March 14, 2011 and December 19, 2011. He added that the town was out of compliance on the number of voting booths at St. James, the traffic at St. James was difficult and there could be a savings in terms of personnel of \$2,000 to \$4,000. He added that the cost of purchasing mats for the gymnasium floor at the high school could run around \$11,000.

On December 19, 2011, the use of the high school for a single polling place was denied by the board, based on the concerns of parents, that the half day teacher workshops would be canceled, there were difficulties with the calendar and there was no formal request by the Town Council for this proposal, nor were there any joint meetings planned for discussion.

A letter was received on July 10, 2012 from Tom Mahon, Chairman of the Town Council, asking to consolidate the polling places in Merrimack to one location at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for the September 11, 2012 State Primary election. Up for consideration was to use Merrimack High School as the single polling place for the November 6, 2012 election and thereafter.

A motion was made by Board Member Barnes (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to allow the use James Mastricola Upper Elementary School as the single polling place for the September 2012 state primary elections.

Board Member Barnes stated that she made the motion for the sake of discussion, but was not in support of it. She stated that she had a concern in having people vote while school is in session. She added that she felt there was concern with security issues at the school, with the potential of having the 19,000 registered voters go to the upper elementary school. Even if only one third of the potential voters went to the polling place, which is what is to be expected, there is still the potential of having 6,000 voters.

Board Member Schneider stated that the Town Moderator stated at a meeting that St. James Church would not be used for the primary election in September. He added that there are some unknowns going into this. He added that he was looking forward to the joint meeting with the Town Council to have further discussion.

Board Member Markwell asked where the voting would take place if the board did not agree to the Town Council's proposal.

Chairman Ortega stated that where the voting would take place if not in the schools is not the concern of the school board. He added that the proposal was just for James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for the state primary election and not about the high school.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he was not comfortable with making a decision without some historical data.

Chairman Ortega stated that there would probably be 2,000 to 4,000 people voting in the primary election per Moderator Christenson's statement at the last Town Council meeting. He added that in the interest of the town, the district could accommodate the September primary election at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School.

Board Member Schneider stated that he knows there will be a great impact if the board says no to the proposal at this time. He added that he hoped that by making the decision to use James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for the election it would insure a joint meeting sooner than later.

Chairman Ortega announced a meeting to plan a joint meeting of the Town Council and the School Board is scheduled for July 26, 2012.

Board Member Barnes asked what the plan would be to control the traffic at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School should the school become the single polling place. She would like to see the traffic plan to make sure the school and the students are secure.

The motion passed 4-1-0 with Vice Chairman Powell in opposition.

9. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) an Overview

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin gave a presentation regarding the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). He explained that his presentation was an introduction and the beginning of the conversation with the board.

The presentation highlights were:

- CCSS is the voluntary effort led by the state in an effort to raise academic standards across the country. New Hampshire adopted CCSS in July, 2010.
- Currently 45 states plus the District of Columbia have adopted CCSS.
- CCSS is endorsed by several organizations such as the National School Boards Association, the NH State Board of Education, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the College Board, National Parent Teachers Association and more.
- Common Core State Standards
 - Literacy: Enhanced rigor means text complexity, a significant increase in informational reading and writing, where students gain literary skills and content.
 - Mathematics: Fewer topics with greater focus; combination of how to get the answer (process) and enhance math fluency (product); students must demonstrate deep conceptual understanding of core concepts.
 - Assessment: Smarter Balance will take the place of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP); the focus of this assessment will be on students' demonstration of their knowledge.

- Smarter Balance Assessment Key Features
 - Interim Assessments
 - Summative Assessments
 - Computer Adaptive Assessments

- Timeline
 - No change to NECAP reading, math and writing in the fall of 2012
 - No change to NECAP reading and writing in the fall of 2013
 - Fall of 2013 NECAP math will have a limited number of changes
 - Spring of 2015 will be the first year of assessments under CCSS. Fall testing will be eliminated

- Implications
 - Requires an intensive use of technology to support assessments
 - Requires comprehensive strategy to support teachers in their transition to CCSS and Smarter Balance
 - Requires continuous assessment of district curriculum to support CCSS

- Common Core State Standards
 - Merrimack School District supports continuous growth.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that there is a lot more to come in the future.

Board Member Barnes stated that New Hampshire is the only state in New England to have fall testing in the schools. She added that moving it to the spring would give a true performance rate of the students.

Board Member Schneider asked about the timeline to make changes in curriculum.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the process has already begun. This upcoming year is the critical year to look at all the standards in relation to the Common Core State Standards.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if the assessments would be given at the same grade level as the New England Common Assessment Program.

He also asked if the technology infrastructure would be in place to do this in 2015.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the assessments would be given at the same grade level as the NECAP. He added that it is important to discuss the technological improvements.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if the State of New Hampshire adopted this in 2010, would there be an opportunity to opt out.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin replied that there is no option to opt out.

Chairman Ortega asked about the impetus for the state to go from NECAP to Smart Balance.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin replied that the impetus is to begin to be part of a continuum of consistency for student learning and to join in conversations about what constitutes good curriculum and college career-ready expectations for 21st century learners.

Chairman Ortega asked about the elimination of some of the math concepts at lower levels and pushing them to upper levels.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin spoke about the “zone of proximal development”, which is the inability for students to do certain things at certain times. Things that have been moved in the math curriculum are probability, combinations and similarity in rates of change. This doesn’t mean that teachers are prohibited from mentioning or discussing them, but it does not make a student accountable for activating it.

Chairman Ortega felt that Dr. McLaughlin’s presentation was a great overview and that the next step would be board and community involvement.

8. Request to Hire at Will

Superintendent Chiafery requested that the board grant administrators authority to offer conditional contracts to candidates for professional staff openings. This act will preclude talented individuals from choosing a position in another district. This act assists the administrative team in the hiring process when there is only one board meeting in July and August.

Vice Chairman Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to allow the superintendent and the administrative team to hire at will for professional staff openings.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

9. Other

- a) Correspondence
 - E-mail was received regarding the attendance policy.
- b) Comments
 - There were no comments

10. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery explained, for planning purposes, that the first September board meeting will be held the day after Labor Day, which is Tuesday, September 4, 2012 and the January meeting originally scheduled for January 22nd (Martin Luther King Jr. Day) will be held on Tuesday, January 23, 2013.

11. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes reported on the June 20th meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee meeting. Highlights included the election of a new chair, Tom Thornton, a yard sale at Watson Park, a dog park, and the opening and operation of Camp Naticook. She added that each member of the committee would be assigned a park and stated that if anyone on the board wanted more information on a certain park to let her know.

Vice Chairman Powell requested that Board Member Barnes attain more information on the skate park and tennis courts on O’Gara Drive.

Chairman Ortega asked what it means to be “assigned” a park.

Board Member Barnes responded that being assigned to a park means that she would be knowledgeable about the conditions of the park, the usage, and what needs improvement.

Board Member Barnes attended the meeting of Merrimack Safeguard on June 26th. Discussions included the club's participation in the Rotary breakfast and the July 4th celebration. She added that many people at the July 4th celebration, where she manned a booth, wanted to learn more about Safeguard and how they could become involved. The Merrimack Safeguard website will be discussed at the next meeting.

12. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Gary Krupp, 4 Ministerial Drive, commented that Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin's presentation on Common Core State Standards was excellent.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:40 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.