

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room  
August 13, 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

**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 July 16, 2012 Minutes**

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2012 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2 of 11, Section 5, second sentence should read “He explained that Ms. Nancy Rose, Consultant and former Director of Library and Media Services and Technology, had done...”
- Page 3 of 11, paragraph 3 from the bottom, change it to read, “Board Member Barnes asked about the absence of telecommunication infrastructure in the plan.”
- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 5, change “ask” to “asked”.
- Page 5 of 11, paragraph 6, last sentence, insert “of unexcused absences” before “per year”.
- Page 6 of 11, first paragraph should say that “Board Member Barnes stated that it shows the cohesion of policy and practice in school operations.” Delete the rest of the paragraph.
- Page 6 of 11, last paragraph add at the end, “The motion was not amended after discussion”.

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 11, paragraph 7 from the bottom should read, “Ms. Rose responded that as more WiFi is needed, the same amount of cabling is needed.”
- Page 6 of 11, Section 7, paragraph 3 should read “Board Member Schneider stated that a 15 cent increase is what it would be for one year.”
- Page 7 of 11, Section 8, paragraph 3, end the first sentence put a period after State Primary election. Next sentence should read that “Up for consideration was to use Merrimack High School as the single polling place for the November 6, 2012 election and thereafter.”
- Page 8 of 11, under Common Core State Standards, under Mathematics, should begin, “Fewer topics with greater focus”.

Vice Chairman Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 1 of 11, last paragraph, should be “Vice Chairman Powell”.
- Page 5 of 11, paragraph 2, after the word list, add “a definition of” before “excused absences”.
- Page 9 of 11, paragraph 4 after the bullets, add the word “grade” before “levels”.
- Page 9 of 11, paragraph 6 after the bullets, add the word “grade” before “levels”.

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 5 of 11, delete the last paragraph and replace with “Assistant Principal Bergeron explained that habitually missed classes are followed up by administration as part of the process, not policy”.
- Page 6 of 11, paragraph 2, change “could” to “would” in the last sentence.
- Page 8 of 11, paragraph 1, at the end of the first sentence add, “per Moderator Christenson’s statement at the last Town Council meeting”.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

### **3. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

### **4. Consent Agenda**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following items for approval:

- Teacher Nominations
  - Jacqueline Dack, Special Education Coordinator, Merrimack Middle School
  - Timothy McMahan, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Approval of Attendance Policy

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

### **5. Budget Committee Considerations for Budget Preparation**

Chairman Ortega introduced Bill Cummings, Chair of the Budget Committee, and Todd Beard, Vice Chair of the Budget Committee. He explained at the July board meeting that Board Member Schneider, liaison to the Budget Committee (“ the Committee”), gave a report on a recent meeting of the Committee, which discussed some proposed budget process changes.

Board Member Schneider added that the intent is not for these changes to be voted on at this meeting, but rather to have discussions back and forth between the Committee and the board.

Mr. Cummings explained that the Committee came to an agreement that the process needs to be revamped and improved. The discussion was in response to the warrant article that was voted on, which was to remove the Budget Committee. He explained that the goals are:

- a. To improve efficiency and eliminate doubling of the work
- b. To streamline the process and compress the meeting schedule and
- c. To hold joint budget workshops for the Committee and the board, possibly moderated by Superintendent Chiafery.

Mr. Beard spoke about the proposed joint meetings. He stated that specific questions would be submitted ahead of time. He added that these joint meetings would be held during school board meetings.

Mr. Cummings explained that they were looking for a dialogue with the board to move forward with some or all of the changes based on the board's meeting schedule. He presented an example schedule that was based on the board meetings schedule.

Mr. Cummings explained that the joint meetings would not have every Committee member at the microphone. Instead, one person from the liaison teams would be the speaker.

Chairman Ortega asked for clarification on the four points that were being proposed:

Mr. Beard responded that the four points were:

1. All members of the Committee would prepare specific questions for department heads' review
2. Department heads would have more time to prepare their responses
3. The proposal prevents repetitive questions to the department heads
4. Some efficiency would be realized in the process.

Board Member Markwell emphasized that all discussions on the budget would take place after the winter holidays.

Superintendent Chiafery explained that in past budgets, the board's work began in September. Monthly meetings were held with the principals, assistant principals and directors to discuss the budget. December has been a "reading month" and January the month of hearings.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that one thing she would like to process further is the notion of questions being asked by the Committee members and having a written response by the department heads.

Mr. Beard responded that there was no request for written responses to questions. It would be more of an outline provided to help the department heads be prepared for the questions being asked.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that an outline of elements most important for a given topics ahead of time would foster better understanding.

Business Administrator Shevenell went over the proposed calendar presented by Mr. Cummings:

- The budget books would be handed out in December
- The Committee would have the month of December to formulate their questions
- The board would not hold any budget meetings in December; they would wait until the joint meetings scheduled for January 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.
- The board would take a vote on the budget on January 29, 2013

Mr. Beard added that January 29<sup>th</sup> would be the "flux" meeting when additional questions for clarification could be asked.

Mr. Cummings responded that once the budget books are distributed, the liaison meetings would begin. Hopefully by the first or second joint meeting all the questions would be prepared and visits with the department heads and the venues would be completed.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the liaisons have been important to the administration and hopes that the meetings with them continue.

Board Member Schneider asked if individual school board members meet with the department heads prior to the meetings to ask questions.

Chairman Ortega responded that the board has to operate on the budget between the first and third weeks of December. That does not allow for the formal process of individual visitations.

Board Member Schneider said that with three scheduled joint meeting, the school board would only have three weeks to prepare the full budget. His concern is having adequate time to prepare the proposed budget.

Board Member Markwell stated that he was not in favor of the school board members meeting with the liaisons, explaining that he wants the board's research to be independent of the Budget Committee's research. After each group has completed their research, then they could come together. He added that moving the joint meetings to begin in the middle of January makes more sense.

Board Member Schneider added for clarification that if there is an on-site group, the school board could leverage that to not take up extra time at the sites. The on-site element was the important part.

Board Member Barnes asked if the liaisons actually go to the venues that are being discussed and if Budget Committee decisions are made at that time.

Mr. Beard responded that the liaisons ask questions and visit the venues. No decisions are made at that time.

Board Member Markwell stated that when the Budget Committee was first established, it was to be a second set of eyes. He added that if the voters want to continue with the Budget Committee, the members should have deliberations on their own and the school board would have it's own deliberations.

Board Member Barnes suggested that being made aware of the liaison meeting would allow board members to attend those meetings. She added that this is a way to not duplicate the efforts by asking the department heads the same questions over and over.

Mr. Beard explained that three people make up the liaison groups. He also expressed concern about having school board members at liaison meetings and building visits that could influence the budget discussions.

Board Member Schneider explained that the board makes the budget proposals and presents them to the Committee. It could be possible that a second set of different questions are needed in order for the Committee to complete their job.

Chairman Ortega stated that the liaisons are supposed to solicit questions from the Committee members so that all questions are asked at the liaison meetings. Therefore, when the administration makes their budget presentation they know all the questions and information. Chairman Ortega thanked Mr. Cummings and Mr. Beard for attending the meeting and for listening to the voters in interpreting the results of the warrant.

## 6. Presentation of the Proposed K-12 Arts Curriculum

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin introduced Sharon Putney, Assistant Principal at Thortons Ferry Elementary School and high school music teachers Ken Dugal and Pat Cunningham.

Ms. Putney read the mission statement for the Merrimack School District Arts Program:

*It is the mission of the Merrimack School Districts Arts Program to build well-rounded, life long learners by fostering self-expression, critical thinking and creativity using a variety of materials and techniques in both the performing and visual arts.*

The K-12 Arts Curriculum is the end product of a multi-year effort representing the work of the district arts educators. (“The document” refers to the binder containing the Arts Curriculum). Ms. Putney has been in the forefront of putting this together.

Curriculum Highlights of Ms. Putney’s Presentation:

- Alignment to State and National Standards  
The district arts curriculum is based on an external set of criteria developed by State and National leaders in arts education. The document reflects those content standards and maintains our district’s unique imprint.
- Understanding by Design (UbD)  
The model of curriculum design requires that teachers work collaboratively to identify a “why”, or “what for” for units of study and courses, to establish a content for learning and understanding. These are called “Enduring Understandings” and they are observed throughout the document.
- School to School and Grade to Grade Consistency  
The document reflects a K-12 scope and sequence, logically building from one skill/content set to the next. The clear articulation of skills and knowledge that is expected of all students at each grade level reflect the standards-based design of the document.
- Focus on “Understanding” and “Doing”  
The necessary balance, central to the upcoming Common Core State Standards (CCSS), is reflected in the document. The premise of all effective learning is that students must understand why and how something “is” before one is required to “do” that thing. Otherwise, the gain in learning is considered half achieved. The combination of understanding and doing or applying is consistent with best practice and CCSS expectations.

Board Member Barnes stated that the Arts Curriculum was reviewed by PERC (Program Evaluation Review Committee). She stated that the curriculum shows great consistency, is a comprehensive plan and is easy for a lay-person to understand. She added that there is a consistency of understanding about expectations, structure and flow, and gives a wonderful foundation for students going on with study in the arts.

Board Member Schneider stated that consistency is very important and that it puts credence to the arts as a program rather than a “filler subject”.

Chairman Ortega referred to the logic model and standard based curriculum. He thanked Ms. Putney for her years of effort, and thanked Mr. Dugal and Ms. Cunningham for their attendance at the meeting.

Superintendent Chiafery explained that the intent was that board members would walk away with an understanding of the curriculum. She added that the Arts Curriculum is one of the most difficult to put together. She commended Ms. Putney and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, along with every art teacher in the district, for their efforts in putting this curriculum together.

## **7. Outcomes from the Planning Meeting for the Joint Meeting of the Merrimack Town Council and Merrimack School Board**

Chairman Ortega explained that he, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel, Town Council Chair Tom Mahon and Superintendent Chiafery formed a draft agenda for a joint meeting for September 6, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the high school cafeteria.

Board Member Schneider asked if there were enough people present at the meeting to approve the September 10, 2010 minutes of the joint Town Council and School Board minutes.

Chairman Ortega replied that there were enough people.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he hoped school board members would receive some background information on some of the items on the agenda such as Single Stream Recycling and how it relates to the district.

Chairman Ortega replied that in relation to Single Stream Recycling, the educational portion is that the Town Manager has some ideas of promoting it in the schools and in the community. He will follow up with the chairman to see if it would be possible to have some materials available for the board members.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the Town Council is going to be reviewing the draft document at their meeting on August 16<sup>th</sup>. Once both parties have reviewed it, each one of the presenters will be contacted and asked if they have materials to put into the packet.

Board Member Schneider questioned the agenda item referring to the next meeting date. His concern was that “regularly scheduled meetings” be held during the year.

Chairman Ortega responded that the agenda item referred to the next meeting date. He will raise the concern of having regularly scheduled joint meetings during the year.

## **8. First Review of New Policy**

### Exceptions to Use of Specific Course Materials

Superintendent Chiafery read the policy aloud. She explained that the policy was drawn up by the leadership team. Information from other school districts located in the southern tier of New Hampshire as well as the New Hampshire Department of Education was considered.

Board Member Barnes referred to two typographical errors within the document. They were Section 6, first sentence, add an “s” to the word “object” and the second paragraph at the beginning, remove the “s” from the word “materials”.

Board Member Schneider asked if there was an attempt to take this policy and create some standard way that parents interact across all the different schools.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the policy is an individual parent related policy. She added that #6 of the policy was Merrimack School District oriented, specifically because of questions received at the middle school about the health education. Therefore, an opt-out form was created.

Superintendent Chiafery added that each case is different. The administration would make sure the parents know exactly what they have to do for consistency across the schools.

Vice Chairman Powell applauded the administration for developing the plan. It is very encompassing and easy to read and understand. He added that helping the parent/guardian through the process is most commendable.

Chairman Ortega asked that if there is an acceptable alternative course study, what happens when the student is in class and the teacher is discussing the alternative material.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that this is all new and there needs to be open conversations with parents and administration. He suggested that students could engage in other appropriate activities. A major task is to make sure that a student's time is well spent while in school.

Chairman Ortega asked, regarding item number 5, if any consideration had been given to the school board becoming a member of the team dealing with an issue.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that anyone could come to the board regarding any issue. However, this policy has to do with course material, which is up to the educators themselves.

The next review of the policy will be at the September 4, 2012 school board meeting.

## **9. Other**

### a) Correspondence

- Letter from Tom Mahon, Chairman of the Merrimack Town Council thanking the board for allowing the Rotary Club to use the James Masticola athletic fields for the event on July 4, 2012.
- Board Member Schneider received a letter from a former teacher regarding the social studies curriculum.
- Board members have received several e-mails from a constituent regarding several school issues.

### b) Comments

There were no comments.

## **10. New Business**

Board Member Markwell asked if there would be a future agenda item regarding the criteria for teacher employment such as length of employment and higher learning.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that on August 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> there is going to be a collective bargaining training session, which Board Member Barnes will be attending. Teacher evaluations will be examined in September. For the length of the upcoming school year, the criteria will continue to be academic performance and seniority. There will be no other criteria added.

## **11. Committee Reports**

Board Member Barnes reported on the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee on July 26<sup>th</sup>. There was a presentation by Peter Flood regarding the pavilion at Watson Park. She added that she has been assigned to O’Gara Drive. Holly Lewis, student representative on the committee, will be working with her on the O’Gara Drive project. She added that she is also assigned to Bishop Field, which is next to the middle school. The Committee reviewed the August 7<sup>th</sup> WZID block party which was a success. The skate park fall schedule will begin on Thursday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. The park hours for Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday will be 3:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Board Member Barnes also attended the Merrimack Safeguard Meeting on July 26<sup>th</sup>. The committee is hoping that the website will be up and running by October. They also looked at grant applications, the member survey and the Grater Woods Memo of Understanding. The election of officers will be held on September 11, 2012.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if Board Member Barnes’ report on O’Gara Drive would be available before the joint meeting with the Town Council.

Board Member Barnes replied that her report would probably not be ready, but she does have the assessment from last year and will forward it to the board members.

Chairman Ortega attended the Master Plan Steering Committee. The committee is reviewing the Master Plan section by section. Cultural, historic and natural resources were reviewed at the last meeting. One section of the Master Plan relates to the planning of the document, the conclusion and recommendations. It suggests the formation of another committee to work on Capital Improvement. The other committee would be separate from the Planning Board, the School Board and the Planning and Building Committee.

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

Gary Krupp of 4 Ministerial Drive spoke about the policy of alternate materials in the schools. Speaking to the law, he did not think the law provides that parents are required to assess the student upon completion of the material. He encouraged board members to read the law regarding the Exceptions to Use of Specific Course Materials.

## **13. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:16 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 10:15 p.m. Vice Chair Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.