

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
September 17, 2012**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

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

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 September 4, 2012 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chair Powell) to approve the minutes of the September 4, 2012 meeting.

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 1, first sentence should read, "...made a presentation, which proposed a number of changes in the proposed school board and Budget Committee process.
- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 1, first bullet, replace "the time" with "the review process"
- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 4, second sentence should read, "The joint meetings would give the Budget Committee and the school board the opportunity to ask questions of each department."
- Page 8 of 11, last paragraph in Section 11, should read, "Board Member Schneider wanted to make sure the public understands that maintaining membership in the NHSBA is important, as it gives significant benefit to the district."
- Page 9 of 11, first paragraph after the bullets should read, "Board Member Schneider stated with the way the policy is now stated, the collaboration ...".

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 5 of 11, paragraph 7 should read, "Board Member Barnes stated that she was concerned that the budget committee is in a position to steer the direction of the board's dialogue. This could create an environment of influence in the Budget Committee as the board deliberates in its own hearing subsequent to the workshops. She added that the Budget Committee should look at the budget submitted by the school board rather than be at the table for review of the original budget submitted by administration.
- Page 6 of 11, first paragraph, second bullet, replace the word "and" with the word "an".
- Page 6 of 11, first paragraph, fourth bullet, should be NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges)
- Page 6 of 11, first paragraph, fifth bullet should be deleted and replaced with "Address staffing with a supply and demand approach using enrollments to determine head-counts."
- Page 6 of 11, last paragraph "site based" should be "site-based".
- Page 9 of 11, Section 14, correct School Representative Crowley's name to Kiera.
- Page 11 or 11, Section 17, paragraph 2, should be "carte blanche".

Board Member Markwell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 5, first sentence, insert “and after” after “...utilize the time”.
- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 5, last sentence “...should be autonomous from the school board”.

Vice Chairman Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 11, section 7, paragraph 3, should be a 0.5 kindergarten instructional assistant position.

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 11, 1st paragraph after “CIP” add “as it relates to the Master Plan currently under development”.
- Page 3 of 11, section 7, paragraph 1, change “tentative” to “current”.
- Page 4 of 11, section 8, paragraph 2, remove “that would be acted on” and replace with “the school board could act upon.”
- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 3 from the bottom last sentence, remove the word “to” between committee and submitting.
- Page 5 of 11, paragraph 3, second sentence, change “sure about” to “supportive of”.
- Page 5 of 11, section 8, replace the second sentence with, “He will discuss the information at the next meeting and ...administration.”
- Page 6 of 11, second paragraph, last bullet should read, “The roofing project needs to be contained within the operating budget.”
- Page 6 of 11, fourth paragraph, sixth bullet, remove “be streamlined”.
- Page 9 of 11, Section 13, should read, “Chairman Ortega reported receipt of a letter...”

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation

4. Acceptance of Gifts/Grants under \$5,000

Business Administrator Shevenell presented the following gifts/grants for consideration:

- From Shaw’s to James Masticola Upper Elementary School for \$150.00
- From State Farm Companies to Merrimack High School for \$500.00 for the girls’ soccer programs
- From the Town of Merrimack Trustee of the Trust Funds to James Masticola Upper Elementary School for \$963.00 for the Lego League for students.
- From the Parents and Teachers of Thorntons Ferry (PTTF) to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for \$963.06 to update the sound system.
- From Lifetouch National School Studios to James Masticola Upper Elementary School for \$1,236.00 to help the Enterprise City Program.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to accept the gifts and grants under \$5,000.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the consent agenda:

Exceptions to Use of Specific Course Materials

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

6. New Hampshire Special Education District Report

Director of Special Services, John Fabrizio, presented the State's Compliance Determination Report for the Department of Special Services. The report is based on the Americans with Disabilities Act of 2004 and is for the 2010-2011 school year. The report shows how the district is doing in meeting the needs of special needs students. Mr. Fabrizio reported that the district was in compliance in all areas.

Chairman Ortega asked what Mr. Fabrizio sees as the most challenging areas.

Mr. Fabrizio responded that it is difficult to close the records of students who have moved out of the area, which is a compliance indicator. He also felt that arranging schedules to have meetings with these students' families is very challenging.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if there have been difficulties with students coming into Merrimack from other towns in order to stay compliant.

Mr. Fabrizio responded that it is not an issue within New Hampshire. He added that when special needs students come into the district from other states, it could be more difficult.

7. Presentation of Capital Improvement Plan for 2013-2018

Superintendent Chiafery introduced Tom Touseau, the Director of Maintenance for the school department. She explained that no action would be taken at the meeting, but instead it would be a chance for board members to ask questions about the Capital Improvement Plan.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained the process would be to bring the plan before the Planning and Building committee, then the school board for review, deliberation and approval, and finally to the Merrimack Planning Board.

Business Administrator Shevenell reviewed the items for the 2012-2014 budget, which included:

- The roofing project at Merrimack High School
- The asbestos removal at James Masticola Elementary School
- The paving at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- The consolidation of the SAU and Special Services offices
- The secure entrance at James Masticola Upper Elementary School
- The technology infrastructure upgrade

Mr. Touseau reported that four sections of the roof at Merrimack High School need to be replaced.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that Mr. Touseau has done an outstanding job maintaining the roof at the high school.

Chairman Ortega noted that the warranty expired in 2003 and 2004 for those sections referenced for replacement.

Board Member Schneider asked if the quote on paving had been coordinated with the town's paving projects so that there would be a savings, as there was with the Reeds Ferry Elementary School paving project.

Business Administrator Shevenell replied that the price for paving was representative of working with the town.

Board Member Schneider asked what the current office area at James Masticola Upper Elementary School would be used for with the new secure entrance being constructed.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the nurse's room would remain where it is, adding a much-needed bathroom. He added that there would be no renovations to the existing office space, other than perhaps some cosmetic work. He suggested that perhaps the remaining area would be used for special education or guidance. Principal McGill will be part of the discussions about the area.

Vice Chairman Powell thanked Mr. Touseau for the time he spent putting together the map of the roof, finding it very helpful and easy to follow.

Board Member Barnes asked if there is asbestos in the area being renovated and if so, would the price of the renovations include that cost.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the asbestos removal cost was included.

Chairman Ortega asked why the entire roof at the high school was not being replaced.

Mr. Touseau explained that there were some areas still under warranty and some areas that did not need replacement at this time.

Chairman Ortega explained that the Capital Improvement Plan contains only six years of capital improvement projects. The district keeps a list that goes out further for specific projects.

Business Administrator Shevenell spoke about the upgrades needed to the high school track and field, which include synthetic turf for the field and refurbishing the track. He added that the track and field should be bundled as one project.

Mr. Touseau agreed that the two projects should be bundled together. He explained that the track is patched and repaired every year, but it is becoming more and more difficult and the amount of repairs is increasing.

Chairman Ortega announced that Rich Hendricks would be at the next meeting to specifically discuss the high school track and field projects as well as the consolidation of the SAU and Special Services offices.

Board Member Markwell asked about the logic behind moving from school to school during the asbestos removal over the summer, rather than completing one building at a time.

Mr. Touseau replied that the plan was designed to complete the elementary schools first. However, it became apparent that the removal of the asbestos at the high school needed to be completed before the elementary schools.

Board Member Markwell asked if it would be more cost effective working in one school at one time, depending on which areas were the worst.

Mr. Touseau replied that the square footage dictates how much removal and retiling is done during the summer recess.

8. Common Core State Standards: Focus on Math

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin shared the district's best thinking about the Common Core Standards as they relate to mathematics. He noted that the students' best interest is most important. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for math follows the concept of how students learn. Highlights of his remarks included:

- Using learning projections that follow how students learn concepts creates the CCSS for mathematics.
- Math and procedural skills are very important.
- CCSS require both a factual skill base (knowledge) and a procedural application (understanding).
- There are eight math practices throughout the grades:
 1. Making sense of problems and persevering solving them
 2. Reasoning abstractly and quantifying
 3. Constructing viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
 4. Modeling with math
 5. Using appropriate tools strategically
 6. Attending to precision
 7. Looking for and making use of structure
 8. Looking for and expressing regularity in repeated reasoning
- There are fewer topics with a greater focus on the topics that are expressed.
- There is a combination of how to get the answer (process) and enhance math fluency (product).
- Students must demonstrate a deep conceptual understanding of core concepts.
- He noted the rigor of the standards in grades 4 and 6 as examples.
 1. Grade four is numbers and operations and fractions. Key words are explain, recognize and generate, compare, understand, replace, solve word problems and apply and extend.
 2. Grade six is statistics and probability. Key words are recognize, understand, display, summarize and describe.
- The challenge is to try and support our teachers and students.
- There is no single tool to support CCSS in math. It is very difficult to find a program to support it. What needs to be done is to review what is in place and determine the next step.
- Everyday Math:
 1. Everyday Math was implemented for grades 1 and 2 in 2004-2005 and then implemented in two-year cycles up to grade six.

2. From the years 2005 until 2011 there has been an increase in performance. Third grade went up nine points, fourth grade up sixteen points, fifth grade up ten points, sixth grade up one point, seventh grade up five points, eighth grade up nine points and in 2007, when grade eleven was implemented, it went up sixteen points
 3. Are the tools being used in Everyday Math working and could they work better being supplemented or is a new resource chosen? That entails considerable research, a pilot program, implementation and a review of the results.
 4. There are limitations to Everyday Math as it relates to its facts and automaticity while it excels in application.
 5. Everyday Math on-line supplemental program for math facts fluency, Autocreek and flashcards were the resources looked at.
 - Everyday Math on-line supplemental program for math facts fluency yielded the poorest results
 - There are limitations to every program in achieving Common Core State Standards in mathematics”
 - Autocreek and flash cards had almost equal results
 - Dedicating 15 to 20 minutes of dedicated facts each day produces strong results
 - Autocreek is very expensive. The Everyday Math on-line supplemental program for math facts fluency yielded the poorest results and flashcards proved to work the best. The decision was made to insist on the use of flashcards.
- Teachers provide students with rigor facts and conceptual understanding.
 - The district goal is to support teachers to gain familiarity with CCSS. The goal for the 2013-2014 school year is to transition from familiarity with CCSS to the instructional implementation of the CCSS and to continue to review the tools. The goal for the 2014-2015 school year is to work on implementation for 2015 testing.
 - The challenge is to seek leverage with what seems to work, weed out what doesn't work, combine the best that does work, and support our teachers.
 - Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that it is a complicated task to provide the best education for the students. He added that he was seeking response and guidance from the board on the Common Core State Standards for Math.

Board Member Schneider asked to explain how to not just do better on testing, but also to understand what is learned for skill sets. He asked to explain the philosophy shift as well as the Common Core Standards.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the district has the opportunity to prepare the students for college and career readiness. There is an increased need for students to gain considerable skills in the understanding of concepts.

Board Member Schneider asked if there would be an opportunity to allow students to be challenged when needed, especially at the elementary level.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that yes, there will be the opportunity. The issue is whether or not the resources would meet and extend the opportunities for student learning. In order to use these resources, the administration continues to seek those things that require being supplemented and researches those that are new.

Board Member Barnes stated that, from personal experience, she has found resources such as extra math to practice math facts, have always been and continue to be enforced and encouraged.

Board Member Markwell asked why flash cards were eliminated and now are being used again with Everyday Math. He also wanted to know the plan for basic math to return to the classroom to help meet the Common Core Standards.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin replied that one component of Everyday Math that it appears to be limited in its effectiveness. That is what the district seeks to enhance keeping the students' best interests in mind.

Chairman Ortega stated that review and assessment of current materials and tools would be done and then it would be determined how to support teachers who, in turn, support students. He asked how significant this would be when amendments to current tools and materials would be known.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin replied that this has been looked at for several years. He continues to meet with math facilitators and the leadership teams. It is an ongoing process and is still evolving. He added that he is confident that there is a good process in place.

Chairman Ortega asked what could be expected next.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that he would continue to meet with the math facilitators and leadership teams. He added that the next thing to do is to talk about is Common Core Standards in Literature. He added that any new finding relative to mathematics would be shared with the board.

9. Board's Message to the Superintendent for 2012-2014 Budget Preparation

Chairman Ortega read the compilation of thoughts and ideas of the board members from the last meeting concerning the 2013-2014 district budget.

The Merrimack School Board desires that the school district and the administration budget for quality education for our students, while keeping the taxpayers in mind. The expectations are:

- We will remain committed to the school district logic model.
- We will continue to make data-driven decisions.
- We will maintain appropriate staffing levels based on enrollments and the needs of our students.
- We will continue to prioritize projects contained in our Capital Improvement Plan. Required maintenance projects such as roofing should be included in the operating budget and not be placed on the ballot as warrant articles.
- We will be forward thinking in our support of curriculum and technology.
- We will continue to examine co-curricular activities.
- We will explore opportunities to consolidate building infrastructures as a means of reducing operating costs.
- We support the administration's efforts to create a reduced or level-funded budget. Understanding that this may result in cuts to staffing and programs, it is the board's desire that administration clearly share the consequences of such actions with the board and its constituents.
- Rising costs in healthcare, increased premiums to the New Hampshire Retirement System and the state's continuing trend to shift costs to the local level, continue to present substantial financial challenges to the budget of 2012-2013. However, the Merrimack School District continues to position itself well to meet these challenges. We will remain prudent with our expenditures without sacrificing the quality education of our students.

10. Reconsideration of Plans for the Formation of the Teacher and Evaluation Performance Committee

Superintendent Chiafery reported modifications that were made to the proposal.

- A purpose statement was added.
- The committee composition decreased from 21 to 13.
- Rather than using 10 school days for meetings, 2 school days, 2 Saturdays and 6 afternoon/evening meetings would be scheduled.
- The process has been pushed out in time so that applications would be due on October 5, with the status known by the week of October 15th.
- The first meeting of the committee would be October 30th.
- Administration will choose the educators and the school board would choose the parent participants.
- A portion of October 15th board meeting would be used to select the parents for the committee.

Vice Chairman Powell asked about the hours for the Saturday meetings.

Superintendent Chiafery responded the hours on Saturday would be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Board Member Schneider stated that he liked the reduction in size and liked the compromises on meeting dates and times. He was in favor of the new proposal.

Board Member Markwell stated that the meeting hours of 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. could be a challenge for some parents.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the committee could adjust the time.

Chairman Ortega asked if the board would be willing to waive the two-week rule.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to accept the documents as presented with punctuation changes, for solicitation and distribution, waiving the two-week rule.

Board Member Markwell stated that he prefers not to waive the two-week rule until feedback is received from the public.

Chairman Ortega pointed out that delaying the process would delay the entire project.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she is more concerned with the board's time line and having enough time to go through the applications.

Board Member Markwell asked if it would be possible to push the date of the board review of the applications until October 8th.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that October 8th is Columbus Day, and so it would be October 9th. She stated that this was a concern in that the board would only have one week before their board meeting to review the parent applications.

Chairman Ortega stated that he respected the two-week rule and he also wants to make sure there is time for feedback.

Board Member Schneider asked how the information would be distributed to parents.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the distribution date would be September 20th and that the information would be sent home through PowerSchool and would also be sent home with the elementary school students. She added that if there was a difference in the timeline for the board, adjustments could be made.

Board Member Schneider stated that he was concerned that if the two week rule was followed the board would only have one week to review the applications of parents.

Board Member Barnes stated that she was comfortable waiving the two-week rule because it is better to disseminate the information to parents and for them to respond two weeks prior to the scheduled board meeting.

Board Member Markwell asked if the first “official” meeting of the committee could be pushed up to November 9th instead of October 30th.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she would prefer adjusting the dissemination of the application time rather than asking the consultant to rearrange her schedule.

The motion passed 3-1-1 with Board Member Markwell in opposition and Chairman Ortega abstaining.

11. Reconsideration of Merrimack High School as the Sole Polling Site

Chairman Ortega explained that the school board had a number of meetings leading up to last December when the Town and School District Moderator had approached the school board requesting to use Merrimack High School as the sole polling place. He noted that the request was to use Merrimack High School as the only polling place in town. At the time of the request the polling sites in town were the James Masticola Upper Elementary School, St. James Methodist Church and St. John Neuman Church. He reported careful consideration by the school board, which included a review of the school calendar and the challenges of holding all elections at Merrimack High School resulting in school being closed for adequate parking for the election, must be given. The school board voted to decline the moderator’s request to use Merrimack High School as the sole polling site.

Chairman Ortega further explained that during the summer the school board members received a request from the Town Council to approve James Masticola Upper Elementary School as the sole polling place for the September 11, 2012 NH State Primary elections due to the fact that St. James Methodist Church and St. John Neuman Church polling sites had been eliminated. The Town Council also requested that the School Board and the Town Council discuss using Merrimack High School as the sole polling site for the November elections when they have their joint meeting on September 2012.

Chairman Ortega reported that the school board approved the Town Council’s request to use James Masticola Upper Elementary School for the polling place for the primary election. There was discussion at the joint meeting between the Town Council and the School Board to consider using Merrimack High School for the November election. He noted that one criterion that was part of the School Board’s original decision was no longer a concern. The high school need not be the place where all elections are held. In other words, the school does not need to be closed for all elections. Therefore, Chairman Ortega asked the School Board to reconsider Merrimack High School as a sole polling site.

Chairman Ortega stated that the School Board takes seriously that the primary function of the school board is the student learning. He reported, however, that there were more than 3,800 non-school uses of school facilities last year.

Board Member Markwell moved (no second) to reconsider the Merrimack High School as a single polling place for all elections.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) that Merrimack High School be offered as a sole polling place for the town for the November elections and annually for the April elections and retain James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for the polling place for the September primaries and the every four year presidential primary.

Board Member Schneider spoke to the motion, stating that one of the biggest concerns of not using the high school during a Presidential Election would be the traffic flow. Having the April elections at the high school would give people more time in the polling booths to read the questions that are on the ballot.

Vice Chairman Powell asked about the gym floor coverings at the high school.

Chairman Ortega stated that the Town Council and the school board each budgeted half of the cost of the \$11,500 mats.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the amount was not in the Town Moderator budget. The line item was removed from the 2012-2013 budget since there had been a vote not to use the high school for the elections.

Chairman Ortega stated that he would engage in conversation with Tom Mahon and suggest assistance with the purchase of floor coverings. He added that he would support the motion to use the high school for the November general election, but not for the local election in April based on the historically low turnout numbers provided by the Town Moderator.

The motion failed 2-3-0 with Board member Barnes, Vice Chairman Powell and Chairman Ortega in opposition.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to allow the use of Merrimack High School as a single polling site for the November general elections only (every two years).

Board Member Barnes stated that there is more parking for the general elections, which is needed based on figures produced by the Town Council. Also these days are and can be scheduled in the future as teacher workshop days.

Board Member Markwell stated that if the high school were only used for the November elections, then the mats that would be purchased would only be used for those one day every two years.

Chairman Ortega stated that the Town Moderator had stated publicly that the mats would pay for themselves over time. The savings would come from a reduction in staff in only having one polling place.

The motion passed 4-1-0 with Board Member Markwell in opposition.

12. Other

- Correspondence

- Chairman Ortega received an email from a parent regarding Gateway.
- The board received correspondence regarding special education.
- Chairman Ortega received correspondence regarding make-up work at the high school.

- Comments

There were no comments

13. New Business

There was no new business.

14. Committee Reports

Board Member Schneider attended the Professional Development committee meeting. The committee is looking for a vice chairman as well as a community member to serve on the committee. There were some general updates as well as a review of the Professional Development Master Plan.

Board Member Barnes reported that Merrimack Safeguard would be participating in the fall expo on September 29th. She added that the prescription drug take back collection would also be held on September 29th at the Merrimack Police Department.

Board Member Barnes reported that she and Vice Chairman Powell attended the PERC committee meeting. The science curriculum and world language would be future agenda items for the committee.

Board Member Markwell attended the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee meeting on September 5th. There was discussion regarding the survey sent out and how to increase participation in the survey.

Board Member Markwell attended the Planning and Building committee on September 10th. There was discussion on the synthetic turf for the high school field, noting that there would be a significant cost difference between using natural grass or using synthetic turf. He added that the committee approved the Capital Improvement Plan.

15. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Gary Krupp, 4 Ministerial Drive, commented on the Common Core presentation, noting that Everyday Math may be working for current assessments, but it won't be in the future. He stressed that it would be better if a formalized plan for new math was established in the near future.

16. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 10:00 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded Board Member Schneider) 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 10:35 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.