

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting
October 1, 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 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 17, 2012 Minutes

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2012 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 11, Section 6, the word “need” in the last sentence should be “needs”.
- Page 6 of 11, number 5, add a bullet between the second and third bullets that will read, “There are limitations to every program in achieving CCS in mathematics”.
- Page 6 of 11, number 4, the sentence should read, “There are limitations to Every Day Math as it relates to its facts and automaticity while it excels in application.”
- Page 6 of 11, number 5, first bullet add “on-line supplemental program for math facts fluency” after “Every Day Math”.
- Page 6 of 11, number 5, fourth bullet, add “on-line supplemental program for math facts fluency” after “Every Day Math”.
- Page 6 of 11, paragraph 3 from the bottom, sentence should read, “Board Member Barnes stated...she has found resources such as extra math to practice Math Facts, have ...encouraged”.
- Page 9 of 11, Section 11, paragraph 2, change “thee” to “the” and in the last sentence the joint meeting date should be September 6, 2012.
- Page 10 of 11, paragraph 6, change Town Council to Town Moderator
- Page 10 of 11, paragraph 11, replace “two days per year” with “one day every two years”.
- Page 11 of 11, under Committee Reports, paragraph one, change Planning and Development committee to Professional Development Committee (twice in the paragraph)

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 4, add the word “current” before “office area”.
- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 3 from the bottom, replace the word “repaved” with “patched and repaired”.
- Page 9 of 11, paragraph 2, add “if the two week rule was followed” after the words “was concerned that”.
- Page 9 of 11, paragraph 2 from the bottom, change “James Masticola Elementary School” to “Merrimack High School”.

Vice Chairman Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 10 of 11, add the following sentence to paragraph 6. “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 requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 11, Section 6, paragraph 1, change John Fabrizio’s title to Director of Special Services.
- Page 3 of 11, Section 6, paragraph 3, insert “with these students’ families” after the word “meetings”.
- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 7, the sentence should read, “Board Member Barnes asked ... price of the renovation include the cost of remediation.”
- Page 6 of 11, last paragraph, should be “...limited in”
- Page 7 of 11, paragraph 1, last sentence should read, “He asked how significant this would be when amendments to current tools and materials would be known”.
- Page 9 of 11, last paragraph change “does recognize” to “takes seriously”
- Page 9 of 11, last paragraph, last sentence, after “reported” add “however”
- Page 10 of 11, paragraph 7, at the end of the last sentence add, “based on the historically low turnout numbers provided by the Town Moderator.”
- Page 10 of 11, paragraph 12, the sentence should read “Chairman Ortega stated that the Town Moderator had stated publicly that the mats would pay for themselves over time”.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

Patricia Swonger, 6 Clara Drive, made two announcements. First was regarding the Merrimack Special Education Parent Support Group. There is going to be a free workshop on “Transition: Life After High School” on October 2, 2012 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the high school. The second item was the New Hampshire Parent Involvement in Education Recognition Ceremony. Out of sixteen individuals and groups being recognized for their outstanding work in parent and community education, two individuals were from Merrimack. They are David St. Jean, former Special Services Director, and Diane Foss, Speech and Language Pathologist at the high school.

4. Recognition of Merrimack High School Chinese Language Contest Winners

Mandarin teacher, Lei Xue explained that the The Confucius Institute at UNH sponsored the statewide Chinese Language contest, which was open to all first and second year Chinese language students. Both listening and reading skills were part of the contest. Seven students from Merrimack participated, with three taking top honors. They were Donald Andrew Halpin and Kyra Gustafsen, both taking first place, and Matthew Correia, taking second place.

Board Member Barnes asked if there were a number of students who could not take Mandarin 2 this year because they were seniors taking Mandarin 1 last year.

Ms. Xue replied that some of those seniors are now taking Chinese language courses in college.

Board Member Markwell recognized many of the students in the video presented from his trip to China last year with Chairman Ortega.

5. New Hampshire School Board Association Membership Benefits

Executive Director, Ted Comstock, introduced Barrett Christina, staff attorney and policy director of the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA). He gave a brief explanation of the New Hampshire School Board Association. The NHSBA is a private non-profit organization whose members are the elected school board members throughout New Hampshire. Since 1916, the New Hampshire School Boards Association has provided member school boards with training, support, advice, information, and other essential services to help school board members perform their very important jobs.

NHSBA is governed by a 21-member Board of Directors comprised of individuals from every region in the state and they are responsible to set the policy direction of the NHSBA. Members are elected annually at the Delegate Assembly, to which each member school board sends a representative. The representative from the Merrimack School Board is Board Member Shannon Barnes.

There are many services provided, some of which are not known to the public:

- Vital information on critical state and federal education issues
- Orientation sessions and materials for new board members
- Answers to daily questions from member school boards and superintendents concerning NH school laws and regulations, legal issues and collective bargaining/contract negotiations
- Expert guidance on how to interpret and apply new educational developments, as well as state and federal programs and regulations
- Convenient access to the online statewide Teacher Labor Contract Database
- Timely legal and legislative updates
- Informative publications on “cutting edge” school board issues
- Individualized training sessions on specific topics of interest, including board relations, communication skills, collective bargaining, Right to Know and superintendent evaluations.
- Help with finding new administrators in the district
- Strong Legislature advocacy in representing the voice of school boards at the NH Legislator
- The NHSBA makes for “one stop shopping” for all school boards in the state.

Executive Director Comstock spoke about the resolution process. In September, the call for resolutions was sent to all school board members in the state. Any school board can submit further resolutions to the NHSBA by October. Then the NHSBA makes initial recommendations to the Delegate Assembly, which meets in January. The Delegate Assembly will then debate and discuss and ultimately adopt or not adopt the resolutions that have been presented for consideration.

Board Member Markwell stated that in terms of lobbying, the NHSBA membership dues are paid with taxpayer’s money and some taxpayers may not agree with what they are lobbying for. He suggested that a spin off group be formed for lobbying, so that the people who want to give money to a specific cause may do so. He added that such a group would be completely independent of NHSBA’s other functions.

Executive Director Comstock reported that the National School Boards Association in Washington, D.C. has developed a separate group that has been set up for lobbying. He added that being a non-profit group limits the amount of lobbying they can do. He will take Board Member Markwell’s suggestion to the Board of Directors and asked that he put his request in writing.

Board Member Markwell asked if an increase in membership dues is expected.

Executive Director Comstock responded that for the last four years there has been no increase in dues. The NHSBA understands the fiscal challenges facing the school districts. Because of this, some things that were costly to the boards previously are now part of the membership dues, such as training.

Vice Chairman Powell noted that when he attended the new board orientation 10 years ago as a new member, the training was very helpful. He added that Merrimack takes full advantage of the policies piece, having each separate school board develop their own policies would not be feasible.

Executive Director Comstock stated that if the NHSBA does not know the answer to a question, they would put the school board in touch with people who can help them.

Chairman Ortega asked if there are figures for direct lobbying.

Mr. Comstock replied that less than 7% of the NHSBA's time is spent on lobbying.

Chairman Ortega explained the process for the resolutions. The call for resolutions has been received. Board members will review the resolutions presented and if a board members wants to propose a new resolution, it will be presented to the school board and voted on. He stressed that our Representative, Board Member Barnes, is not acting independently. She represents the whole board.

Chairman Ortega added that the Merrimack school board could not address some of the issues independently, but as an organization of all the boards, the process works.

Attorney Comstock stated that Board Member Barnes is a great delegate to the assembly. He added that Merrimack has had a major role in the NHSBA.

6. Update on Merrimack High School Track/Field Upgrade and Consolidation of Special Services/SAU Office

Consolidation of Special Services/SAU Office

Rich Hendricks, Chair of the School District Planning and Building Committee, introduced Gage Perry, the Vice Chairman of the committee, as well as other committee members present in the audience. He then gave a brief history of the project. Originally the consolidation idea was placed on the Capital Improvement Plan in 1999. Nothing was done at that time. In 2006 the school board proposed the consolidation of the offices in 2009; in 2007 the consolidation date was pushed out to 2008; in 2008 the school board gave a formal charge to the committee to prepare a comprehensive report of the best solutions to the issue. In 2009 no date was proposed for the consolidation. Since 2010 the proposed date to consolidate the offices is 2013, where it stands now. He stressed how urgent it is to push this up to 2012-13, due to the fact that the Special Education office is not handicapped compliant, there is no access to the downstairs and there is little, if any, privacy for testing, meetings, etc. Also, the SAU office, which is about 50 years old, no longer provides the much needed work area for the Administration, as it is neither adequate nor safe.

Mr. Hendricks explained that many opportunities have been lost because this project keeps getting delayed. In 2009 state aid was available that would have covered 40% of the cost of the building. That aid is no longer available. He suggested that the board take advantage of the lower interest and bonding rates that are available for funding the new building.

Mr. Hendricks added that they are working on a space utilization study for all the schools. He also stressed that the existing offices would still be in use for a period of about one and a half years. Administration's CIP that was submitted to the Planning and Building Committee once again pushed the consolidated SAU/Special Services offices out two years in place of the track and field, stating that student needs were an imperative and the planning and Building changed that unanimously by placing the SAU/Special Services in the 2013-2014 year.

Mr. Hendricks spoke in detail about an already explored option of moving the Special Education office to the James Masticola Upper Elementary School. He stated that simply having some available square footage with an existing school building cannot be the sole criteria as it does not translate into a savings for this proposed project. The total cost for the renovation would be \$671,000 as opposed to having the Special Ed office in a new building with a cost of \$340,000. In addition, the logistics of trying to install a separate and distinct use for the Special Education office creates problems that make this solution simply not a beneficial solution.

Limitations include:

- Most of the existing space must be reconfigured
- Totally new lighting and additional power and wiring would be required
- New heating radiators and controls would be required and the spaces would need to be air conditioned
- Separate staff washrooms and a wheelchair accessible public washroom would be required
- Existing walking routes would be disrupted on the ground floor
- The relationship between spaces would be limited by existing geometry
- School buses would block the access to the allocated parking spaces. Visitors to the Special Services office would have to park elsewhere.
- There is insufficient parking at the school and allocating 12 existing parking spaces to the Special Services offices makes the situation worse.

Gage Perry added that there would be a privacy issue in the existing building. The area would be very noisy due to its location near the playground.

Track and Field Upgrade

Mr. Hendricks explained that the committee has done extensive research on the use of synthetic turf (also called field turf) as opposed to the use of real grass. The district gave the committee an estimate to maintain the current high school athletic field of \$30,000 annually for about 630 hours of upkeep and supplies to maintain it. Synthetic turf costs approximately \$5,000 annually to maintain. It largely includes using a sweeper to remove particles from the playing surface.

Mr. Hendricks continued to report that the cost of installing a new field combined with a new track is approximately \$975,000 (\$820,000 for field and \$150,000 for track). The installation time is about 2-3 weeks. The cost to replace the field turf eventually is about \$600,000. The warranty is usually for 8 years. Life expectancy is 10-12 years depending on the use of the field.

Mr. Hendricks added that the total cost of the grass field over a 10-year period would be \$570,000 as compared to the cost of the turf field of \$750,000 according to the prepared chart. However, the turf field could be used much more extensively than the grass field. The grass field is used for approximately 25 hours of the year for an average cost of \$134.00 per hour of use. The field turf is estimated at 68 hours of use, for a cost of \$30.00 per hour of use. Utilization is the key. He added that another factor to be

looked at is the fact that since utilization is less on the grass field, students are required to use other fields in the town. This is a liability issue. Having the synthetic turf would mean more utilization and keep the students in one place for practices and games.

Mr. Perry stated that there are safety advantages to using synthetic turf. It is much more forgiving and it is level. Therefore athletes would not have as many injuries from contact sports that they would have on the grass field.

It was noted by Mr. Hendricks that one concern with a field turf is that it get very hot during the warm months. However, it can be watered to keep the temperature down, and cloud cover can also keep the temperature down.

Mr. Hendricks stated that extra funding could come from corporations, local companies and booster clubs and signage opportunities. This has not been looked at yet, but will be.

Board Member Barnes stated for clarification that the cost of using James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for the Special Services office does not allocate additional money for utilities in one space (new) as compared to the other (JMUES). Maintenance costs are also not included for utilities.

Mr. Hendricks responded that was correct, so in reality there would be a bigger cost savings.

Board Member Barnes asked what sports would be played on the field and would need striping for the specific sports.

Mr. Hendricks replied that for sure the field would be used for football, soccer and lacrosse. He was not sure about field hockey. He again stressed that it would be nice to have a new track/field, but it is necessary to have a new SAU/Special Services office.

Board Member Schneider asked if the figures were for the Special Services office at the upper elementary school only. He wanted to make sure the money would be for a building for both the SAU and Special Services offices.

Mr. Hendricks responded that there are many limitations to the Special Services office being relocated to the upper elementary school, as well as being more expensive than incorporating it into a new building with the Administration.

Chairman Ortega commented that the committee full report looked at renovations as well as acquiring existing space on the market to rent or purchase.

Business Administrator Shevenell asked about the field turf in relation to health issues.

Mr. Hendricks replied that there have been studies done from a safety standpoint, noting that there had never been any link between staff infections and synthetic turf.

Mr. Perry responded that most of the concerns with field turf producing bacteria related to turf that was used indoors and did not allow the sun to burn off the bacteria. This field, of course, would be outside and therefore be exposed to sunlight to burn off any bacteria.

Board Member Markwell stated that the synthetic turf having lead problems was clarified by the manufacturer. There is no concern for lead poisoning.

Chairman Ortega asked if the \$1.5 million figure for the building of the SAU offices includes the \$400,000 reduction.

Mr. Hendricks replied that the figure was between \$1.4 million and \$1.5 million.

Chairman Ortega stated that the board had been given a wealth of information. He agreed that the current SAU and Special Services buildings are old and inadequate. In terms of the field, he agreed that there is a need for more fields in town and that increased use by using synthetic turf is one of the ways to solve the problem. He added that the ongoing maintenance and replacement costs are only about \$20,000 more than the current maintenance costs of the grass fields yet we get three times the use for them.

7. Board's Response to Capital Improvement Plan for 2013-2018

Chairman Ortega explained that on September 17th the board received the amended CIP budget. Now was the time to move this forward or amend it as it. He asked the board members if there were any adjustments.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Chairman Ortega) to move one million dollars for the track and field upgrade and the SAU/Special Services building to 2014-2015.

In speaking to her motion, Board Member Barnes explained that by moving the high school track and field project from 2015-2016 to 2014-2015 there would be a monetary savings. It would make for closing the gaps in budgeting i.e. 2014-15 CIP expenses would go from \$1,908,140 to \$908,140. The CIP expenses for 2015-2016 would go from \$2,144,340 to \$1,144,340. She added that her motivation was to bond both the SAU/Special Services office and the track and field upgrade.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he was not comfortable with a bond of one million dollars for the field and track.

Board Member Barnes replied that the board should first deal with the savings and then a Capital Reserve Fund for facilities could be discussed. She added that bonding should not be too often or too liberally done.

Board Member Markwell stated that if a Capital Reserve Fund would be for the replacement of the field/track upgrade, then it should be done for the warranty time of the field (13 years).

The motion failed 1-4-0 with Board Members Schneider and Markwell, Vice Chairman Powell and Chairman Ortega were opposed.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to move the paving project of the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School circle and lower lot (\$150,000) and the upgrade to the James Masticola Upper Elementary School entrance and office upgrade (\$328,000) to the 2014-2015 Capital Improvement budget.

Board Member Markwell explained that shifting the load to the next year would allow for the SAU/Special Services offices building consolidation.

Vice Chairman Powell asked about the current status of the pavement at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. He added that he felt that it was important to do whatever had to be done in order to move the consolidation of offices forward as amended.

Board Member Barnes stated that she was strongly opposed to moving the entrance and office upgrade of James Mastricola Upper Elementary School out for another year since there is a need for a secured entrance at the school. She added that there could be a problem with security during the elections, since the school will be open during that time.

Board Member Schneider agreed that the entrance to James Mastricola Upper Elementary School has to be done as soon as possible for security reasons. James Mastricola Upper Elementary School is the only school to not have a secured entrance at this time. He added that the cost of the new SAU/Special Services building would not have an immediate impact on the 2013-2014 budget since it would be bonded. He also agreed that moving the paving project at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School would be appropriate.

Board Member Markwell responded that the staff at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School could handle the security at the school as they have always done. He stated that at this particular time, the consolidation of the offices is a greater priority.

Vice Chairman Powell agreed that something needs to be done about the security at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, especially during the elections. He suggested speaking with the Moderator about security during the elections.

Chairman Ortega stated that he supports the need to have a secure entrance into James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. He added that he was not as concerned about the voting at the school as he is with the fact that James Mastricola Upper Elementary School is the only school in the district without a safe entrance.

The motion to move Thorntons Ferry Elementary School paving project and the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School secure entrance from the 2013-2014 CIP failed 2-3-0 with Board Members Schneider and Barnes and Chairman Ortega in opposition.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to move the paving project at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School to the 2014-2015 Capital Improvement budget.

In speaking to the motion, Board Member Schneider stated that the paving project at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is the one item that can safely be delayed.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Vice Chairman Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to accept and move the Capital Improvement Budget forward.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

8. Year End Surplus to Reduce Taxes

Business Administrator Shevenell reported on the Year End Surplus. In years past it was called the Unreserved Fund Balance.

The General Accounting Standards Board clarified these balances into five areas:

- Non-spendable Fund Balance
- Restricted Fund Balance
- Committed Fund Balance
- Assigned Fund Balance
- Unassigned Fund Balance

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the Unassigned Fund Balance, which is the Year End Surplus, is less than last year. It is approximately \$1.5 million. Some reasons for this surplus are that money had been tucked away for the NH Retirement System emergency, Health Insurance costs had changed and the bond had been refinanced. He will come back to the board with the itemized list of surplus funds.

Board Member Schneider asked if the terms of the bond remained the same when it was financed.

Business Administrator Shevenell replied that the Municipal Bond Bank is authorized to refinance at a better interest rate.

9. Board’s Response to Budget Committee Regarding Budget Process Modification

Chairman Ortega explained that the board was presented with a proposal from the Budget Committee for potential changes in the process that the Budget Committee had taken in light of the vote last April to disband the Budget Committee. Based on the proposals made, he and Superintendent Chiafery presented a proposed calendar for the budget process.

December 3, 2012	Superintendent presents budget overview to School Board
December 4, 2012	Budget materials are available for Budget Committee members
December 4-21, 2012, January 2-4, 2013	School Board members and Budget Committee members review budget material, prepare and submit written questions to the Superintendent to be forwarded to administrators for their responses
December 17, 2012 January 7, 2013	School Board uses portion of scheduled board meetings to gain information on designated budget topics.
January 8-18, 2013	School Board designates dates for budget hearings
January 22, 2013	School Board approves the final budget and submits it to the Budget Comm.
January 29, 2013	Budget Committee conducts work session for designated schools/depts.
January 31, 2013	Snow Day for Budget Committee, if necessary
February 5, 2013	Budget Committee conducts work sessions for designated schools/depts. Budget Committee reviews warrant articles
February 12, 2013	Budget Committee conducts meetings which include a Public Hearing and final action on the budget
March 5-7, 2013	School Board/Town Moderato select date for Deliberative Session
April 9, 2013	Town votes on Budget

Board Member Schneider asked if Superintendent Chiafery envisioned allowing the Budget Committee to have liaison meetings during January, or would they wait until the School Board was done with their deliberations.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the liaison meetings were not listed specifically, but they were very important. She added that the school board would set the dates for the hearing, at which time she would work with the budget committee to set up the liaison meeting dates.

Board Member Schneider suggested that since this is a proposal for this year's budget specifically, there should be a follow-up meeting to see what worked and what didn't work.

Chairman Ortega responded that having a follow up meeting was an excellent idea.

Board Member Markwell stated that he appreciated moving the budget deliberations to after the holidays.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the proposed budget approval process.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

10. Request for New Hampshire School Board Association (NHSBA) Resolutions

Chairman Ortega explained that the deadline for additional resolutions to the New Hampshire School Board Association is October 22, 2012. These resolutions must be submitted and voted on at the next board meeting. Board Member Barnes would then bring them back to the school board to be voted on.

11. Other

a. Correspondence

- Chairman Ortega reported that the board received an email from parents thanking the board for establishing the teacher evaluation process.
- Chairman Ortega received an e-mail regarding Everyday Math and the Common Core Standards.
- Chairman Ortega reported that he received correspondence from the Merrimack Teachers' Association requesting representation on the Teacher Evaluation Committee.
- Superintendent Chiafery reported that she received correspondence from Lorri Hayes representing the Merrimack Teachers' Association regarding representation on the Teacher Evaluation Committee. She added that she has taken it under advisement and will share any forthcoming information.

b. Comments

There were no comments

12. New Business

There was no new business.

13. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes attended the Parks and Recreation Committee on September 19th. Items discussed included the review of items of importance for their budget, the restoration of the tennis courts, and the regrading of O'Gara Drive.

Board Member Barnes attended the Merrimack Safeguard meeting on September 26th. Elections were held. Jody Vaillancourt was elected chair, Tom Prentice was elected vice-chair and Finlay Rothhaus joined the committee as the Town Council liaison. The dates of the meetings were changed to the first Thursday of the month at 6:00 p.m. She added that they participated in the fall expo and had good exposure to let people know what Merrimack Safeguard is about. The Prescription Drug Take-Back program was held at the Merrimack Police Department and 98 pounds of drugs were taken in a four-hour period.

Board Member Markwell attended the Planning and Building Committee meeting on September 24th. They covered the material covered in tonight's presentation regarding CIP and the space utilization report.

Chairman Ortega missed the meeting of the Master Plan Steering Committee due to work demands, and therefore was not able to share the attorney's opinion on CIP, regarding the oversight of CIP by another body. He has shared the board's feedback as well as the attorney's opinion with the chair of the committee.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were none.

15. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:50 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to recess to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (c), (e), (j).

The motion passed 5-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 10:32 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.