

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
December 3, 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 November 19, 2012 Minutes

Vice Chairman Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2012 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 12, paragraph 4, correct the spelling of “state”.
- Page 3 of 12, following paragraph 7, add the following paragraph: “Board Member Barnes showed interest in seeing comparative data across the New England states.”
- Page 10 of 12, first paragraph should read, “Board Member Barnes added that the MTA voted in favor of and approved the sidebar agreement”.

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 12, add a bullet at the end that states, “Life Science was the area addressed in K-6 this year.”
- Page 5 of 12, section 7, paragraph 2, first sentence, replace “has been done” to “will be done”.
- Page 6 of 12, paragraph 9 should read, “Board Member Schneider asked if the layout of the inside of the building would remain the same”.
- Page 6 of 12, paragraph 10, should read, “Mr. Touseau replied that the layout of the inside of the building would remain the same.”

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 12, paragraph 8, should read, “Board Member Schneider asked that since the state...”
- Page 5 of 12, paragraph 2 from the bottom, remove the last sentence and replace with “He stated that if the warrant article does not pass, additional significant money needs to be spent to sure up the blue building in the years to come.”
- Page 7 of 12, paragraph 4, second sentence should read, “He added that while the facilities at the upper elementary school were workable, they were not ideal”.
- Page 9 of 12, paragraph 2 from the bottom, correct the spelling of “council” to “counsel”.
- Page 10 of 12, paragraph 8 should read, “Superintendent Chiafery explained that there is no budgetary process, as this issue is related to letting the RIF affected employees know in advance the budget process if their position might be impacted.”

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

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell presented the following Gift/Grant under \$5,000;

- Barnes and Noble to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for \$372.33 for “Principal’s Night” at Barnes and Noble

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to accept Gifts and Grants under \$5,000 as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following items for approval:

- Approval of March 6, 2013 as Budget Deliberation Session and March 7, 2013 as the back-up date
- Approval of Increasing Part-Time Special Education Teacher Position to Full-Time at Reeds Ferry Elementary School

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

The motion carried 5-0-0.

6. Use of Merrimack High School as the Sole Polling Site for General Election

This item was eliminated from the agenda, as Town Moderator Christensen did not attend the meeting.

7. Advanced Placement Honor Roll Distinction for Merrimack High School-

Principal Ken Johnson spoke about the reasons Merrimack High School made the Advanced Placement Honor Roll. He attributed the increase in scores to parents who value education and prepare their children; students taking ownership and pride in their education; a rigorous curriculum and excellent teachers.

Linda Mandra, Gateway Director at the high school and Advanced Placement coordinator, stated that Merrimack was one of nine schools in New Hampshire, one of 93 schools in New England and 1 of 539 schools in the nation to receive this award. Certain criteria must be met including an increase in participation by at least 4%, and the maintenance or increase in the number of students receiving a 3, 4 or 5 on the exam. Advanced Placement courses offered at the high school are Biology, Calculus, Chemistry, English Literature and Composition, Psychology, and Statistics. One student is taking an advanced placement Computer Science course through the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS). Some students are taking Virtual High School (VHS) advanced placement courses in European History, Physics and World History.

Bill Maniotis spoke about the AP Calculus course. There are presently 35 students in the class. Fifty-seven percent of the students received a high score of 5 on the test. He continued to speak about AP English Literature. Ninety-three percent of the students passed the test with 70% of the students achieving a 4 or 5 on the test.

Wayne Stuck spoke about the AP Psychology course. Twenty-two students took the test, with 50% receiving a 3, 4 or 5 last year. He expects the scores of the 16 students in his class this year to have higher scores. He added that in recent years a score of three has been recognized as an honorable score.

Tray Sleeper spoke about AP Chemistry. He presented information on former AP Chemistry students and their successes.

Board Member Schneider stated that the excellence of the Merrimack teachers has been strong over the years and still is today.

Board Member Barnes stated that there is a broad spectrum of AP success stories ranging from Arts to Science-based disciplines at the collegiate level at Merrimack High School. She noted that Merrimack has had twice the success rate of the national average in the AP courses. She asked what else could be offered for the high school students.

Ms. Mandra responded that the expansion of adding more classes is always desirable as well as offering the resources necessary to teach the classes.

Board Member Barnes asked if AP courses in foreign languages are available.

Ms. Mandra replied that Merrimack is not offering foreign language AP classes at this time. Some students have taken these courses on line through either VHS (Virtual High School), which is lead by a facilitator, or VLACS (Virtual Learning Academy Charter School), which is independent study.

Board Member Barnes asked if Merrimack gets credit for VHS or VLACS classes.

Ms. Mandra responded that these classes do show up on the AP roster and credit is given.

Board Member Barnes asked if there are resources for those classes.

Ms. Mandra replied that there is a teacher who facilitates the online courses.

Chairman Ortega thanked the participants for their presentations and stated that it is an accolade for the entire district to have received such recognition for the AP classes.

8. Overview of Proposed 2013-2014 School District Budget

Superintendent Chiafery pointed out the tools used to prepare the 2013-14 budget.

- a) The four major areas of the District Logic Model which are literacy, numeracy, technology integration and school climate and environment
- b) District technology plan
- c) Enrollment projections (internally and externally)
- d) Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
 - Technology infrastructure as part of CIP
- e) Furniture replacement
- f) School Board's message to the administration

Superintendent Chiafery gave an overview of the 2013-14 Budget. Highlights included:

Items yet to be Determined:

- Salaries
 - The Board is currently engaged in collective bargaining. The financial impact of a completed agreement is unknown at this time.
- Possible Warrant Articles
 - Consolidation of the special services office building and the superintendent's office building into a new district administration office building.
 - The board needs to consider appropriating a dollar amount from the unencumbered surplus fund remaining at the end of fiscal year 2012-13 to replenish the reserve fund to bring it closer to \$100,000.
 - During the 2011-2012 legislative session, lawmakers approved a statute that permits the board to place before the voters a warrant article to retain a specific percentage of funds from the year-end unassigned general funds to reduce the tax rate or for emergencies that would be approved by the Department of Education.
- Other
 - The board may want to include additional items in the budget that administrators may have not considered. A list of items that were eliminated from the final budget will be presented to the board during budget deliberations.
 - The timeline for the board to approve the budget has been extended from the first Monday of January to the board's second meeting later in the month (January 22, 2013) and submitted to the Budget Committee for its review.

Enrollments

- The number of students for 2013-2014 is projected to decrease from 4,094 students 4,009 students.
- There appears to be a need to focus on the preschool population of three and four year olds, which feeds into the kindergarten program. More children with special needs are being identified at these ages.
- The overall district enrollment continues to decline, this year by 85 students. The elementary (K-6) and middle school (7/8) grades have leveled off as compared to the high school grades, which have decreased by 100 students.

Personnel-Professional Staff

- It is proposed to reduce 6.5 positions, plus adding two half-time positions.
- Elementary School (K-4)
 - Projected enrollment in kindergarten at Reeds Ferry Elementary School causes the administration to recommend the deletion of one half-time teaching position. The student to teacher ration for morning and afternoon sessions will be 15:1.
 - Projected enrollment in preschool at James Mastricola Elementary School generates the need to add one half-time preschool teaching position. The student to teacher ratio will be 12:1.
 - Elimination of one third grade teaching position at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, with the student to teacher ratio being 21/22:1.
- Upper Elementary School (5/6)
 - Elimination of one full-time teaching position from the fifth grade level. Student to teacher ratio will be 24/25:1 for all fifth grade classes.

- High School
 - Given the decrease in the projected enrollment of 100 students, the administration is proposing to eliminate four full-time teaching positions: one world language position with a focus on French, one physical education teaching position, one math teaching position and one education technology integrator teaching position.
 - The administration is recommending the addition of one half-time Mandarin Chinese world language teaching position, to be funded by the school district.

Wages-Contracts

- The school board has a negotiated agreement with the Merrimack Educational Support Staff (MESSA) for the 2013-2014 school year. The second year of a three-year agreement is reflected in this budget.
- The school board has a negotiated agreement with the administrators through the Advise and Confer process. The financial impact of the second year of a three-year agreement is reflected in the budget.

Employee Benefits

- Health Benefits
 - The guaranteed maximum rate cap for health insurance coverage is 3.5% for the 2013-2014 school year. That represents \$281,233 more than the budget for 2012-2013.
- New Hampshire Retirement for Professional Staff and Classified Staff
 - The employer contribution rate in the New Hampshire Retirement System for both professional staff and classified staff will increase by 23% for 2013-2014, which represents \$738,244 more than was budgeted in the 2012-2013 budget.
- Retirement Incentive for Professional Staff
 - Twenty-five teachers have applied for the retirement incentive as of the November 15th deadline. The board is contractually obligated to fund a minimum of 10 applications per school year if 10 or more requests are made. Funding for 10 of the 25 requests has been included in the 2013-2014 budget. The proposed budgeted amount of \$407,902 for 2013-2014 is \$152,054 less than the 2012-2013 budgeted amount of \$559,956.

Classroom Instructional Focus

- The administration is recommending that the fifth year of a five-year furniture replacement plan be completed for the three elementary schools and the second year of a five-year furniture replacement plan to be continued for the upper elementary school.
- The administration is also requesting the purchase of new biology texts that align with the competency-based initiatives at the high school.

Special Education

- The special education portion of the budget has increased by 2% primarily due to out-of-district placements within and outside New Hampshire.

Maintenance

- The board approved the six-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) plan on October 1, 2012. The board previously expressed its desire to have three major items included in the maintenance section of the operating budget. There are asbestos abatements at two wings of James Mastricola Elementary School (\$248,000) a secure entrance and office reconstruction at JMUES (\$328,000) and roof replacement at Merrimack High School (\$1,024,300).

- Included in the proposed budget is the seventh year of a twelve-year lease purchase agreement to provide heating, ventilation and building efficiency upgrades to reduce energy consumption in all utilities.
- Also included in the budget is the replacement of the carpet in the library at Reeds Ferry Elementary School. She suggested board members visit the library area at Reeds Ferry Elementary School to see the condition of the carpet.

Library/Media/Technology

- In 2012 the board approved the five-year Technology Capital Improvement Plan and determined it should become part of the district's comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan. The administration is proposing to upgrade a number of pertinent components, including electrical infrastructure, network cabling, network switches, serves, patch panels, WiFi expansion and an upgraded phone system.
- The administration is proposing to employ the concept of leasing for the acquisition of computers to upgrade an entire school at one time.
- Acting Director of Library/Media /Technology Programs, Nancy Rose, is proposing to install more classroom projectors.

Budget Comparison

2013-2014 Proposed Administration Budget	\$67,291,503
2012-2013 Approved Operating Budget	<u>\$65,426,994</u>
	\$ 1,864,509

The proposed administrative budget is 2.85% more than the 2012-2013 approved operating budget.

The 2013-2014 default budget as required under RSA 40:13 is \$67,374,992. The proposed administrative budget is \$83,489 less than the default budget.

Board Member Schneider asked about the factors that led to the default budget being slightly higher.

Business Administrator Shevenell replied that the health insurance benefits as well as the New Hampshire Retirement Plan are part of a number of items that led to the default budget being higher. A full explanation will be available in the near future.

Chairman Ortega asked if this budget includes the costs to fix the Special Services building other than what the insurance and the Emergency Fund cover.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that no other expenses for the blue building were budgeted for. With the renovations being done, the administration felt that would suffice. She noted that it has been requested that the Emergency Relief Fund be increased so if there is a need for more repairs, funds could be taken from that fund.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that it is imperative that Special Services return to the blue building as soon as possible. He noted that the entire roof is going to be replaced and work is being done on the interior of the top floor of the building.

Chairman Ortega stated that for the 2013-2014 budget the drainage problem at the blue building would not be taken care of. If the warrant article fails, the cost of the repairs of the blue building will go into the 2014-2015 budget.

Board Member Schneider asked if the warrant article on the consolidation is passed, would there still be a request to add \$50,000 to the Emergency Repair Fund.

Business Administrator Shevenell replied that there is still a need for the extra money in the Emergency Repair Fund even if the warrant passes.

Chairman Ortega asked that if the warrant article fails, should money be used to shur up the blue building.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that over the last four or five years the fund has been actively engaged in funding projects that have not been anticipated. She added that if the board wants to know the cost of other repairs, such as replacing the boiler system and drainage system, more concrete figures could be provided.

Chairman Ortega stated that as a result of declining enrollments and/or interest in some classes, there has been a need for Reduction in Force.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that last year it was not known Mastricola Elementary School took on the greatest infusion of kindergarten students. She added that everyone is committed to lower ratios and equity across the board.

9. Use of Upcoming Board Meetings for Budget Discussions and Budget Hearing Dates for the School Board

Chairman Ortega reviewed a tentative schedule for the Board to address the budget that was sent to the board members from Superintendent Chiafery November 29, 2012. They are:

Monday, Dec. 17, 2012 (regularly scheduled Board Meeting) will be a formal hearing on the Food Service Budget as well as a review of major items in the Maintenance budget.

Monday, Jan. 7, 2012 (regularly scheduled Board Meeting) will be a review of major items in the Special Services, Library/Media/Technology, and district wide budgets.

Wednesday, January 9, 2013 will budget hearings on James Mastricola Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, Merrimack Middle School and Maintenance.

Monday, January 14, 2013 will be budget hearings on Merrimack High School, Special Services, Library/Media/Technology and District Wide.

Wednesday, January 16, 2013 will be an alternate date for the budget hearings.

Tuesday, January 22, 2013 (regularly scheduled board meeting) is when the budget will be finalized.

Board Member Schneider asked if the department heads would be at the review hearings as well as the budget hearings.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that, for example, Tom Touseau will attend the December 17th meeting to go over the maintenance budget. He will return on January 9th for the formal hearing.

Board Member Schneider stated that the members of the budget committee have been told that their questions need to be compiled by December 9th. He asked when the department heads would be able to respond to those questions.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the questions would be answered as soon as possible. The four biggest area of the budget, maintenance, Special Services, Library/Technology and the District would probably be discussed first.

Board Member Schneider stated that the Budget Committee is going to request as many members as possible attend the meeting.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the administration is open to whatever process works best. If the responses to the questions are given at the meeting on December 17th, it would be at a public forum and given to all budget committee members. This may have to be done a couple of times.

Board Member Schneider then stated that simpler questions would show up early, the more difficult ones that need more research would be done later.

Chairman Ortega explained that it was a tentative schedule and was looking for consensus from the board.

Board Member Barnes asked if the regularly scheduled board meetings on December 17th and January 7th would occur prior to discussion of budget items.

Chairman Ortega replied that the budgetary items would be discussed at the end of the regular agenda.

Board Member Barnes asked if perhaps the regularly scheduled board meetings in December and January should begin at 7:00 p.m. so that all the items on the agenda could be done prior to budget discussions.

Chairman Ortega replied that is not possible to plan in advance, because it is not known what items will be on the agenda. He did not want to change the time of the meetings until agenda items are known.

Board Member Markwell suggested that the alternate date for the budget hearing (Wednesday, January 16th) be used for a short board meeting if the time is needed for budget wrap-up. There is a lot of work to do on the budget and he did not think any items should be rushed.

Board Member Schneider asked if the Town Hall Meeting Room is large enough to accommodate the twelve members of the budget committee as well as others who may want to attend the meeting.

Chairman Ortega stated that the desire of the budget committee to have tables set up would be difficult to accommodate in the Town Hall Meeting Room. He noted the dates Town Hall Meeting Room is not available the high school cafeteria will be used.

Board Member Schneider asked if the cafeteria is used, could the fans be turned off during the meeting.

Board Member Markwell responded that the fans are part of the heating system and could not be turned off.

Board Member Barnes asked about using the upper elementary school instead of the high school cafeteria for the meetings, especially since it can accommodate live broadcasts.

Chairman Ortega stated that he would look into using the upper elementary school as well as other alternate meeting places.

Board Member Markwell added that if the gym is used, the mats will have to be put down to protect the floor, which makes it a less ideal place for the meetings.

9. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega reported that he received one request from a community member suggesting community surveys take place. This will be an upcoming agenda item

b) Comments

Vice Chairman Powell reported that he received a question from a resident of Merrimack who wanted to know why things were so hectic at the high school during the general elections. This individual went to Town Moderator, Lynn Christensen, to ask about it. Her response was she had to talk to the school board about this before she could respond to his question. Vice Chairman Powell stated that he thought the whole thing was set and done. He had hoped to ask Ms. Christensen about it and was disappointed she was not able to attend the board meeting.

10. New Business

There was no new business.

11. Committee Reports

Tracy Bull reported on the Town Center Committee. There were no meetings in November, but much is going on between meetings. These include:

- Removal of old loading dock (from Harcross site) adjacent to Watson Park in early preparation for the proposed trails.
- Moving forward in working with National Parks Service.
- Sale of privately owned parcel along the river (amid Merrimack School District property) with the Conservation Commission funding of \$15,000. The committee unanimously approved this. There will be a hearing before the Town Council December 6th with an anticipated closing date in December. This is being done in preparation for trails as outlined in the Town Center Pedestrian and Trail Master Plan. The trails are set to exist from Merrill's Marauders Bridge area, along the Souhegan River, across Merrimack school district property to an area near the central Fire Station beneath the Route 3 bridge and over to Watson Park.
- The next meeting will be December 17th.

Ms. Bull also attended the Safe Routes to School Travel Plan Task Force meeting on November 20th. It was an informational meeting. Traffic counts have taken place and the results will be available in January. She added that National Bike to School Day would be held in May. A Safe Biking Path was discussed as well as interest from a local Junior Girl Scout troop is interesting in volunteering. The next meeting will take place on January 22nd.

Board Member Barnes attended the District Parent Group meeting on November 28th. She reported that one of the highlights of the meeting was a presentation by the Chamber of Commerce. She noted that the Chamber of Commerce gives a scholarship to Merrimack students. They also discussed PowerSchool being adopted at all grade levels. She added that a discussion took place on ideas for future meetings.

Board Member Markwell attended the Parks and Recreation Committee meeting on October 17th. There was discussion on the location of the dog park. The decision was made to recommend Wasserman Park as the site. Also discussed was the return of the building rentals at Wasserman Park. Halloween plans and the Tree Lighting were also discussed.

Board Member Markwell attended the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee Meeting on November 7th. The discussion focused on increasing participation in the healthcare survey throughout the district.

Board Member Markwell also attended the Planning and Building Committee meeting on November 26th. Tom Touseau gave an update on the “blue” building and other Capital Improvement Plan work. The next meeting will be on December 10th.

12. Public Comments on the Agenda Items

There were no public comments on the agenda items.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:05 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) 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 10:00 p.m. Board member Schneider moved (seconded by Board member Markwell) to adjourn the public session.

The motion passed 5-0-0.