

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
February 18, 2013
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 February 4, 2013 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2013 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 12, section 5, first bullet, the second line should read "...to collect, process, and validate..."
- Page 4 of 12, paragraph 7, the web site reference should read www.merrimackpact.com
- Page 4 of 12, paragraph 8, change "on line" to "online"
- Page 6 of 12, section 6, move paragraph 3 on page 6 of 12 "Chairman Ortega recused himself..." to the end of paragraph 11 on Page 4 of 12.
- Page 5 of 12, bullet #4, change "89.011%" to read "11%"
- Page 5 of 12, bullet #5, change "89.011%" to "11%", "88.012%" to "12%", "87.13%" to "13%", "85.15%" to "15%"
- Page 5 of 12, bullet #8, "is competitive" should read "is now competitive"
- Page 11 of 12, replace the last sentence of the State Retirement Costs paragraph with "The discussion regarding moving to a defined contribution plan focused on the unfunded liability by the existing plan and how it makes it unattainable to make a move at this time."

Vice Chairman Powell requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 12 of 12, section 13, paragraph 2 change the word "February" to "January"

Chairman Ortega requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 12, second bullet from the bottom, the word "though" should read "through"

The motion to accept the minutes as amended passed 4-0-1. Board Member Markwell abstained from the vote.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

- Local Government Center to Merrimack School District for \$500

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the \$500 will be used for worksite health and safety initiatives that will benefit District employees.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the acceptance of the gift under \$5,000.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. First Reading of New/Revised Policies and Policies to be Eliminated

- a) Employee Use of Information Technology (Revised)

Nancy Rose, the Acting Director of Library and Media Services addressed the contributing factors that led to the development of the proposed policy entitled, “Employee Use of Information Technology”. She explained that the Employee Use of Information Technology policy is an attempt to be a framework for responsible use that provides guidance and tools to help the school community make good choices in using and integrating information technology.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Nancy Rose read aloud the “Employee Use of Information Technology Policy (Revised)”.

Board Member Barnes stated that parents are probably not aware of the fact that anytime a student name is put into an e-mail, that correspondence becomes an educational record and is subject to inspection. She felt strongly that parents need to be provided with that important information.

Nancy Rose replied that efforts can be increased to make parents aware of the fact that emails containing a student’s name can be subject to review, similar to a handwritten note being part of a student’s record.

Board Member Barnes referenced the ninth item under the Code of Conduct section of the policy that specifies an employee demonstrating responsible use of information technology will follow established procedures for all school-related internet presence (communication, websites, blogs, social media, etc.) or secure approval from building administration or his/her designee for approval of exceptions. She asked if there were established procedures for social media.

Nancy Rose responded that the established procedures are to be followed when conducting all types of District business. She stated the goal of the policy is to provide the framework for the District to provide tools to employees to use responsibly. Use of tools other than for District business would require administrator approval or would be in violation of the policy.

Board Member Barnes asked if the intent of the Employee Use of Information Technology policy was to address communication as a representative of the school district through non-school district social media sites.

Chairman Ortega stated that the policy was created with the intent to address communication concerns as noted by Board Member Barnes. He encouraged the Board to have additional discussion if it felt the policy was not explicit enough in areas of concern.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that the spirit of the “Employee Use of Information Technology” policy was to create norms for responsible use of technology.

Nancy Rose explained that the concern is more about a person making the right decision whether that communication is through the use of technology, correspondence, or conversations.

Board Member Barnes understands the lack of granularity in the policy for longevity purposes but feels the policy is vague. The policy does not address what is right and what is wrong. She noted a difference between a post on the Internet compared to a conversation on a playing field. She anticipates the need for training, education, role play and case studies. She is concerned about applying a policy without guidelines to back it up effectively.

Nancy Rose noted the difference between a policy and policy procedures. She stated that it was important for the policy to be flexible enough to support future technology without having too many details that would require constant updates to the policy. This policy is intended to allow the use of integrated technology with responsibilities.

Board Member Schneider noted that care has to be given when using social media to protect student confidentiality.

Nancy Rose stated that efforts are being made to create a curriculum of skills that will address digital citizenship and ethical and responsible use of technology.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that the established procedures for the policy might eliminate many concerns about the policy.

Board Member Markwell does not favor adding details to the policy because it would require constant updating of the policy.

Board Member Markwell stated that many companies will terminate employment as a result of inappropriate use of information and technology. He asked if termination of employment should be added to the list of consequences.

Mark McLaughlin indicated that he would take Board Member Markwell’s comment under advisement.

Chairman Ortega noted that the Employee Use of Information Technology Policy is replacing a policy that is only three years old.

Chairman Ortega questioned if the term “email” was too specific.

Chairman Ortega highlighted, per the policy, the responsibility of the user is to use district-provided communication systems when conducting district business, particularly business involving students, personnel, or financial information. Exceptions to the protocol require approval by the building administration. He added social media would be excluded because it is not a district-provided communication.

Chairman Ortega explained that it is important to the Board that approved school district pages on social media sites be differentiated from those that are not approved by the School District.

Chairman Ortega referenced the code of conduct that addresses the need to respect privacy and not to look in files, folders, or other systems of others either deliberately or accidentally. He questioned how to write into policy that a person shouldn't accidentally do something.

Nancy Rose responded that it was carried over from the previous policy.

Chairman Ortega asked how to handle school related clubs that have social media sites that are run by parents.

Nancy Rose replied that the School District is limited in what it can do enforce guidelines to non-school sponsored groups.

Chairman Ortega asked that the District's Legal Council review the policy as it relates to the law.

b) Employee Computer, Network and Internet Use (Current)

Superintendent Chiafery and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin read aloud the policy to be removed "Employee Computer, Network and Internet Use"

Vice Chairman Powell asked why new policy did not include the reference to school-related websites that are not hosted on the School District server need to be approved by a building administrator.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin took Vice Chairman Powell's question under advisement.

Superintendent Chiafery recommended that discussion relative to "Employee Use of Information Technology" policy be continued on March 18th at which time the administration would address the Board's questions and concerns.

6. Reconsideration of Board Votes for Warrant Articles on the Teacher Contract and the Operating Budget Based on Budget Committee Votes

Chairman Ortega reviewed the Budget Committee's votes on the Warrant Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 8.

Chairman Ortega explained that it was realized during a Budget Committee meeting that the amount of Article 6, the teachers' contract, should be reduced from \$768,400 to \$633,753. The reduction was reflective of seven early retirements rather than ten early retirements.

Chairman Ortega explained that the Budget Committee cannot amend Article 6 because it is the collective bargaining agreement reached between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association. He explained that the legal council recommended that the School Board make an amendment to Article 6 to reduce the dollar amount of Article 6 at the Deliberative Session. The Budget Committee would then reconsider their vote on Article 6 at the Deliberative Session. As a result of a pending amendment to Article 6, the majority of Budget Committee members chose to abstain and the vote was recorded as 0-1-10.

Chairman Ortega recommended that the School Board make an amendment to Article 6 at the Deliberative Session.

Superintendent Chiafery clarified that the Budget Committee would vote on Article 6 and any other amended Articles at the end of the Deliberative Session.

Chairman Ortega explained that the Budget Committee made a motion to increase the School District budget from \$65,880,964 to \$66,266,884. The increase of \$385,920 represented the amount of money to repair the smaller section of the high school roof. The Budget Committee's motion to add \$385,920 to the budget passed 6-5-0.

Chairman Ortega reported that the Budget Committee voted 10-1-0 on Article 8.

Vice Chairman Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to recommend Article 8 on the Warrant as printed.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he felt the Budget Committee put the School Board in an uncomfortable position. He felt the School Board provided due diligence through its budget process realizing that it would encourage voters to approve the construction of a new building for central office and special services. He emphasized the maintenance director's opinion that the high school roof repair could be delayed without repercussions. He felt that the Budget Committee discarded information presented to School Board. Vice Chairman Powell stated that he will vote for the motion reluctantly because the other option would be to vote for the default budget which is larger.

School Board Member Barnes stated that she will vote in favor of the motion because it is lower than the default budget and it supports the Capital Improvement Plan. She explained that it was with apprehension that she made the motion to reduce the budget by \$1,024,000. It was to preserve educational related funding in light of the majority of the School Board's directive to administration to deliver a level funded budget.

Board Member Schneider stated that he provided the Budget Committee with an explanation of the School Board's decisions during its budget process. He explained that some Budget Committee members felt it is important to balance the Capital Improvement Plan over many years. The Budget Committee voted 6-5-0 to increase Article 8 by \$385,920. The Budget Committee was hopeful that by increasing the budget the cost of the high school roof repair that the School Board would reconsider the high school roof repair.

Board Member Markwell noted that the School Board voted 4-1-0 during one of its budget meetings to reduce the budget by the amount of the high school roof repair project. He acknowledged that the voters could reduce Article 8 by the amount of the high school roof repair at the Deliberative Session. If not, the School Board could decide not to expend the money for the high school roof repair and return that amount to the voters at the end of the fiscal year as surplus funds. He felt next year would be a better year for the high school roof repair project.

Board Member Schneider added that the Director of Maintenance presented the Budget Committee with his opinion that the high school roof could be delayed another year.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

7. Warrant Presentations for Deliberative Session on March 6, 2013

Chairman Ortega reported there was a slight chance that Board Member Schneider will arrive late to the Deliberative Session and that Board Member Markwell will not be in attendance at the Deliberative Session due to business travel.

Chairman Ortega acknowledged that Board Member Markwell, as liaison to the Planning and Building Committee, would have been the appropriate Board member to move and present Article 2, the construction and original equipping of a new special services and central office consolidated building. Chairman Ortega volunteered to present Article 2 knowing that Board Member Markwell would be out of town on business.

Board Member Markwell expressed his concern over the financial impact of building a new consolidated special services and central office building. He acknowledged the need for a new consolidated special services and central office building and hoped the voters would support Article 2.

Chairman Ortega will move and Vice Chairman Powell will second Article 2.

Vice Chairman Powell will move and Board Member Barnes will second Article 3.

Board Member Barnes will move and Board Member Schneider will second Article 4.

Board Member Schneider will move and Vice Chairman Powell will second Article 5.

Board Member Barnes will move and Vice Chairman Powell will second Article 6.

Vice Chairman Powell will move and Board Member Barnes will second Article 7.

8. Board Discussion Regarding Tentative Disposition of the Special Services Building and the Superintendent's Office Building

Chairman Ortega suggested that the Board discuss tentative disposition for the special services building and the superintendent's office building should Article 2 pass. He stated that the Board may want to consider charging the Administration and/or the Planning and Building Committee to investigate ideas on the Board's behalf. Previous ideas were to demolish the buildings for additional parking spaces at the high school, allow the police and fire to use the houses for training or a private market sale.

Board Members Markwell and Schneider would like for the Planning and Building Committee to explore disposition options.

Vice Chairman Powell agreed that the Planning and Building Committee would be the appropriate place for the work to begin. He would support turning the two buildings over to the police and fire for training.

Board Member Barnes stated that the Planning and Building Committee has done best when given a deadline for their work. She felt June 2013 was a reasonable deadline for a disposition recommendation.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to ask the Planning and Building Committee to provide the School Board with recommendations or solutions for the disposition of the special services building and the superintendent's office building by June 30, 2013.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

9. Proposed School Calendar for 2013-2014

Superintendent Chiafery presented the Board with a proposed calendar for 2013-2014. She considered input from both the Merrimack Teachers Association and the Merrimack Education Support Staff when creating the proposed calendar.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that during recent collective bargaining sessions representatives from the Merrimack Teachers Association and the School Board requested that the five teacher workshop days be scheduled five days before the first day of school for students.

The important dates for the proposed 2013-2014 calendar are:

- Five Teacher Workshop Days (August 26 to 30)
- The First Day of School (Tuesday, September 3)
- Columbus Day (October 14)
- Veterans' Day (November 11), required by law
- Thanksgiving Recess (November 27 to 29)
- Holiday Recess (December 23 to January 1)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (January 20)
- Winter Recess (February 24 to 28)
- Spring Recess (April 28 to May 2)
- Memorial Day (May 26), required by law
- Last Day of School (June 16)

Vice Chairman Powell noted that students from Merrimack attend vocational programs in Hudson and Nashua. He asked how the proposed calendar aligned with Hudson and Nashua school calendars.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the proposed calendar was traditional. Differences between the calendars may be the teacher workshop days. Plans will be made to work around those differences.

Vice Chairman Powell noted that Columbus Day has been a teacher workshop day in the past. He asked why the Superintendent proposed not to have school on Columbus Day.

Superintendent Chiafery explained that Columbus Day has not been used as a teacher workshop day for a period of time. It has been a day for families to enjoy a long weekend or visit colleges.

Vice Chairman Powell stated his goal is to finish the school year as early in the month of June as possible. He would prefer that Columbus Day and Martin Luther King Jr., Day be school days.

Board Member Barnes asked when was the last year that school was in session on Columbus Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. She questioned attendance on those days.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that Nashua and Hudson would most likely not have school on Columbus Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. If that were the case, the vocational programs would be affected.

Board Member Barnes highlighted an email from a parent who suggested one vacation week in March rather than one vacation week in February and another vacation week in April. She stated the consequences of changing the vacation schedule would result in a loss of fifteen days for the students who

attend vocational programs in Hudson and Nashua. It would also increase the length of the summer vacation which could impact the retention of information learned during the previous school year. She asked if Superintendent Chiafery had received similar vacation requests from parents.

Superintendent Chiafery responded two districts had considered having one vacation week in March in place of the February and April vacation weeks; however, did not implement the change. If Merrimack were to consider a March vacation week instead of the February and April vacation weeks, she would recommend advanced planning for years 2014-15 or 2015-16.

Board Member Barnes stated that she would not support a March vacation to replace February and April vacations because of the impact to the students attending vocational programs in Hudson and Nashua.

Board Member Schneider felt the chances of having the last day of school occur on Monday, June 16 was very low. He noted the proposed school calendar could be manipulated multiple different ways. He stated some districts in the state count instructional hours rather than count 180 school days. Tracking instructional hours can reduce the school year by five or six days or allow the district to do other things during the school year. Districts that count instructional hours have added approximately 20 minutes to each school day. He acknowledged that a change from counting days to instructional hours would require planning with advance notice. He would like to be able to compare a future calendar driven by instructional hours to a 180 day calendar. He would be supportive of a March vacation week survey.

Board Member Markwell stated that he would prefer to have school on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day and school on Columbus Day. He noted that most working parents have to work on those days.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that even though the first day of school is the Tuesday after Labor Day, the last day of school was three days earlier as a result of moving the teacher workshop days from within the school year to the last week in August.

Board Member Barnes stated that when there was school on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day there was high absenteeism on that day.

Board Member Schneider asked when the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day changed from a half day of school to a no school day.

Superintendent Chiafery recalled that the half day on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day became a no school day in 2001.

10. 2012 New England Common Assessment (NECAP) Results

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that once the school sites receive their New England Common Assessment (NECAP) data the building leadership reviews the data with staff, discusses the results, looks for trends and then develops school site improvement plans. The same process is performed at the District level.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that year to year data is compared, District data is compared to State data, cohort data is review and topic areas are also reviewed.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported:

- There was decline in the highest performing scores in both reading and math.
- There were increases in the lowest scores.
- In most cases Merrimack exceeded or matched State performance in reading and math. This year there are areas where the State out performed the District.
- When the State scores decline, Merrimack scores decline also, but not always at the same rate.
- Over multiple years it can be seen that the scores of the current grade 11 increased 11% from scores taken when they were in grade 4.
- Modest fluctuations in math between grades 4 and 8. A significant drop at grade 11.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported areas of focus in math this year are data, statistics and probability. The area of focus in reading is analysis and interpretation. He noted that the two are similar in that they ask for higher order of thinking. Content support is being provided for teachers in math. A district writing group is working to develop a writing continuum. The outcome would be enhanced instruction to support analysis and higher order of thinking. Professional development to support data driven instruction and targeted instruction in literacy are ongoing.

Board Member Markwell asked if the testing was performed at the same time of day, day of week from year to year.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the testing occurs in October for one week at the same time in the morning.

Board Member Barnes stated that third grade students are tested on the third grade curriculum in the early weeks of the third grade. All other New England states take these tests in the spring of the school year. The science NECAP is the only subject that New Hampshire is equal with the other New England states because the test is given in the spring.

Board Member Barnes stated that test, Smarter Balance, will begin in the spring of 2014. She felt based on the circumstances that the NECAP tests are given, the State has good educators and the District educates better than the state in most cases. Moving forward the New Hampshire test will be equal to the other New England states.

11. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega reported that the School Board received an email from a parent regarding the school calendar. The parent desired to see survey, a longer summer and a consolidated February and April vacation.

b) Comments

There were no comments.

12. New Business:

Board Member Markwell asked when the Logic Model meeting with Nancy Gerzon would be rescheduled.

Superintendent Chiafery reported that the Logic Model meeting would be rescheduled in April.

13. Committee Reports

Chairman Ortega invited Tracy Bull, the liaison to the Town Center Committee and the Safe Routes to School Committee to present a report.

Tracy Bull reported that the Safe Routes to School Task Force met on January 22 to review the status of the grant project. At that time the Task Force was waiting for the notice to proceed from the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) in order to engage in the bidding process with Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) in order to begin work. She announced since that time notice was received and work has begun. She stated that the NRPC believed that the task force would be able to complete the travel plan in time to apply for the larger \$250,000 infrastructure reimbursement grant which will come up for a seventh and final round late this summer or early in the fall of 2013. The major focus of the January meeting was preliminary review of the data outcomes from the air pulse traffic count studies that the NRPC conducted over the course of a week in November. The traffic count included Baboosic Lake Road, McElwain Street, Woodbury Street, O'Gara Drive, School Street, and Bishop Street. The task force also discussed participation in the Bike to School Day.

Tracy Bull reported that the Town Center Committee met on January 28. She provided the Town Center Committee with the same Safe Routes to School Task Force report just presented to the School Board. The status of the Souhegan River walk was reviewed. The Town Center Committee is working on the necessary easement agreement from the DOT in the Merrill Marauders Bridge area. A new subcommittee was formed to begin addressing the decommissioning of the lower portion of Church Street. The next meeting is scheduled for February 25.

Chairman Ortega asked Tracy Bull to convey to the Town Center Committee his appreciation for the desire to move forward quickly. He also asked that Mrs. Bull let the committee know that it is his intent to discuss the Town Center Committee easement proposal and a School Board representative as an agenda item in the near future.

Student Representative Crowley reported that the high school winter pep rally will be held on Friday. She proudly announced that the hockey team is 15-0. The senior night for varsity basketball was last Friday. Mr. MHS will be held on Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

Board Member Schneider reported the initial meeting of the District Wellness Committee. The committee is interested in providing district-wide wellness initiatives. The recent Local Government Center Assessment was discussed. The next meeting will be held in May.

Board Member Barnes reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee met on February 6. She announced the Winter Carnival will be held on at Wasserman Park on February 23 from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m. The dog park was discussed. She reported that the O'Gara Drive tennis court work was removed from the budget.

Board Member Barnes reported that the Merrimack Safeguard web site is www.merrimacksafeguard.org. Vice Chairman Powell reported the teacher evaluation committee met on February 7. The four evaluation models were reviewed. The February 9th day long meeting was canceled due to snow.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Tracy Bull, 5 Independence Drive, spoke as the liaison to the Town Center Committee and the Safe Routes to School Committee. She noted that The Merrimack Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan includes a sidewalk on O’Gara Drive. She explained that the O’Gara sidewalk plan will have a relevant bearing on the disposition of the special services building and the superintendent’s office building. She stated that she would be willing to relay only information from the School Board to the Town Center Committee.

15. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 10:15p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.