

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
March 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 the March 4, 2013 Minutes and the March 6, 2013 Minutes

Vice Chairman Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2013 meeting.

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the March 4, 2013 minutes:

- Page 3 of 6, paragraph 4, changed the word “asked” to “stated”.
- Page 3 of 6, paragraph 11, “School Warrant” should be changed to “SAU/SPED Warrant”.
- Page 6 of 6, paragraph 2, rewrite the paragraph to read, “Board Member Schneider asked Chairman Ortega to attach a copy of the proposed calendar with the memo he intends to send out, as well as putting it on PowerSchool for the upper grades and sending home a copy to parents of children in the lower grades.”

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the March 4, 2013 minutes:

- Page 6 of 6, paragraph 1, change “useful, constructive” to “detailed”.
- Page 6 of 6, paragraph 2, add “He also suggested sending a communication to parents on the final approval of the calendar and the factors that went into making the decisions regarding the proposed calendar.”

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

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to accept the minutes of the March 6, 2013 minutes.

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

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following items for approval:

- Teacher Resignation
 - Dolores Pestana-Desmond, World Language Teacher at Merrimack High School
 - Debra McLaughlin, Reeds Ferry Elementary School Media Specialist

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Response to Intervention: Merrimack School District's Implementation

Assistant Principal McLaughlin explained that RTI (Response to Intervention) is whole school systemic approach to differentiating instruction that meets the needs of all students and addresses four questions.

- a) What is it that we want all students to learn?
- b) How will we know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills?
- c) What happens in our schools when a student does not learn?
- d) How do we enrich and extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

Several years ago, recognizing the advisability of learning more about RTI, the team at Mastricola began an intensive investigation of RTI and tried to figure out how they could turn it into something that would fit the school. The purpose of the presentation to the board was to talk about the process, which was an intensely driven protocol, culminating in the article published in the Hammill Institute on Disabilities.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin introduced Dr. Naomi Schoenfeld, Professor at Rivier College, Joanne Green, Special Education Coordinator at Mastricola Elementary School, Emilie Carter, Principal at Mastricola Elementary School, John Fabrizio, former Principal at Mastricola Elementary School, Jane Hoover, Guidance Counselor at Mastricola Elementary School and Susan Matthews, former Language Arts Coordinator at Mastricola Elementary School.

Mr. Fabrizio stated that about ten years ago, James Mastricola Elementary School became involved in PBIS, Positive Behaviors Intervention Supports. That affiliation was a State affiliation as well as an affiliation with Rivier College. The process was to align a tiered system of helping children, whether there was a lot of intervention or minimal intervention.

Joanne Green explained that through the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, 2004 it was recommended that before a student is evaluated for Special Education, an RTI model be explored. It was recommended that struggling learners be identified at an early age and then the support they need would be provided without going through the Special Education process. The feeling was that many of these students just needed a "little something extra" and needed to be taught in a different way. It was set up so that Special Education teachers would work with their students and work with any other students that might be struggling. This strengthened the Special Education process since the neediest students were found. The Diamond Model, "Where All Kids Shine", was developed so that all the students in the building are reviewed on a regular basis, which is something that was never done before. By the end of September every year, all the students in the building are discussed and the team identifies students who have an "at-risk" profile and are struggling in some way. Interventions have been put into place and action plans have been made for any student who needs help.

Sue Matthews spoke about the Diamond Model. Most models responding to interventions were developed in the shape of a triangle, which were sectioned into 3 parts: the lowest part being the regular classroom instruction (which all students receive), the central area which was supplemental or targeted interventions for students with some needs, and the tip for those students who need more intensive and individualized instruction. To make the process more inclusive for all learners the team envisioned the traditional triangle mirrored in the shape of a diamond so it represented those students who exceeded grade level performance as well. That is what made their model so distinctively different from all other models. The diamond model includes intervention as well as enrichment pieces. In using the diamond model, it became clear that the Child Intervention Team needed a more comprehensive program and approach. That is when BLING was started (Benchmark Assessment, Learning Strategies, Interventions and Extensions, New Learning, and Giving Support). The team decided they would meet three times a year. In the fall, every child was looked at to see how they were doing. The data was looked at very carefully to determine what could be done to help the struggling learners or to give other learners something to extend their learning. The team met during the middle of the school year when those students who were struggling were looked at again, as well as those students who were already in intervention to make sure that the interventions were working. They also met at the end of the school year to review and see the total results, which resulted in planning for the following year. She added that at her new district in Hooksett, she introduced the Diamond Model and everyone loved it.

Jane Hoover spoke about PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support), which provided the team with a foundation for the diamond model, since PBIS is a tiered intervention concept. The common language developed through PBIS made it much easier for staff members to embrace the idea of a common language with RTI, talking about student achievement and struggles. Working with the PBIS model helped to dovetail with the whole RTI model because it provides for both ends of the spectrum. One of thing that has come out of RTI and PBIS working together is that those children who appeared “at risk” became part of the Silent Mentor Program where 40 staff members currently are mentoring about 62 children in the building, making children much more available for other learning during the school day. The blending of these two programs effectively allows the whole child to be supported and monitored in addition to the academic piece.

Emilie Carter spoke about the Collaborative Assessment Project in Literacy, which began seven years ago when the essential standards of every grade level were chosen and teachers gave formative assessments. It was determined that data was needed to see if children were learning what was taught and if they were not, what could be done to support them and get them on grade level. A big part of the process at James Mastricola Elementary School is the “CARAT meetings” which are progress-monitoring meetings. In the fall the BLING meetings are held where the whole child and every child is discussed. If it is determined that a child requires intervention, if the teacher sees the child is not making progress, a CARAT meeting is held. The teacher speaks with the language arts coordinator and that coordinator brings all the people to the meeting who should be together and the progress of the child is looked at. The teacher goes away with an action plan for 6-8 weeks. If the child is not making progress in that time, they go back to the table. It’s a very fluid process. When this process began about five years ago, the teachers were not comfortable. Right now it is so embedded into their culture that when they meet it’s all about the kids. She added that she was very proud to be a part of this very strong team.

Naomi Schoenfeld spoke about coming to Merrimack because she was interested in the PBIS program. After meeting with the staff at the school, it became clear to her that the RTI process they were using was unique and was worth spreading to others. She brought the idea of publishing the information to the team. She became involved with the publication process. Through publication, the Merrimack Diamond

Model went to the National level of scholarship in this area and it was judged to be worth sharing with the country.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that Merrimack has convened a district RTI task force made up of language arts coordinators, special education coordinators, principals, director of special services, and assistant superintendent. They have investigated and talked about the strengths and the weaknesses in each building. They have taken great pains to not move too quickly because each building has to move at its own pace.

Vice Chairman Powell congratulated the group on being published and for giving their time and dedication to the project and to the children.

Board Member Barnes asked if they had received any feedback on the publication.

Mr. Fabrizio responded that the publication was received last week in the March 2013 volume. General feedback has not been received yet.

Dr. Schoenfeld added that the material is reviewed by various people in the field who give their feedback without the writers knowing who they are and then the article has to be rewritten before it is published. In most cases, more details were required.

Board Member Barnes stated that the copyright date was 2012, so she did not know if it had come out sooner than now.

Mr. Fabrizio responded that it took about two years from start to finish for this to show up in print. It was a long process.

Board Member Barnes noted that Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin mentioned that this is becoming a district-wide initiative and asked about some of the adjustments for the different buildings that are needed. She also asked about the time line for getting this process out to all buildings.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that “porous borders” need to be established. They are helping teams reorient themselves. The task force has made inroads on that and they have worked with the leadership teams on it. He added that he was reluctant to give a time line of events. There are changes that are already happening. Each building has an RTI team; each building is working on some substantive initiatives already. It is ongoing and every month brings them closer to district implementation.

Board Member Schneider asked if, through this process, students with an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) were able to move away from an IEP.

Ms. Green responded that it is an ongoing process and at times it may be that an IEP is not needed. The other factor is the Title 1 students. Previously if a student was labeled a Title 1 student, they labeled as such for their entire education. Now it is possible at the end of a year, a student may no longer be labeled as a Title 1 student.

Board Member Markwell asked if, at a later date, someone could supply data to the board regarding the reductions in IEPs. From a budgetary standpoint, IEPs have not gone down.

Mr. Fabrizio responded that there would not be any information as to who would not have an IEP because they were never in the system as having one. He added that a trend could be seen over time at James Mastricola Elementary School but not district-wide. Right now there is still some identification that is needed for the targeted children who need intervention and an IEP.

Dr. Schoenfeld stated that the national trend is for increases in IEPs, so what you may be looking for is a lower increase as opposed to a flat or lowering line. She suggested that the board look at the national numbers.

Board Member Schneider stated that he would also like to see the number of children potentially coming off IEPs as well as the ones who have been identified that need an IEP.

Ms. Green stated that there is a drop in all levels of students with learning disabilities. There are many other disabilities, but this is talking about learning disabilities, the number of which has dropped at James Mastricola Elementary School.

Board Member Markwell stated, "Negative growth is a positive". He would like to see continued data on this. He congratulated the team on being published, which is a remarkable achievement.

Chairman Ortega asked about the inspiration of making the triangle into a diamond. He also asked about the additional work that it takes to provide intervention as well as enrichment.

Ms. Hoover responded that a tremendous amount of time was spent in order for children to be successful academically, socially and emotionally, behaviorally. The team started talking about the children who exceed the expectations and where the interventions or extensions should be put in the triangle. They tried to fit them all into the tip of the triangle but realized that they would not all fit. They figured out a way so that all children receive what they need in the middle. At both ends, where the most support was needed, the triangle was expanded into a diamond.

Chairman Ortega asked what it was like to make the commitment to all the students (collect data, review data and define the interventions) and how that is working.

Mr. Fabrizio responded that the in beginning it was all about meetings. There were 13 individuals (including para-educators, parents, preschool teacher, and first, second and third grade teachers) who met over the summer on their own time. They talked about the goals for the whole year.

Ms. Hoover stated that a lot of the programming is done, especially in the enrichment programs, but had never been put into a package prior to the Diamond.

Ms. Carter added that once the Diamond was created for all the children, they questioned how they were going to get to all the children. That is when BLING was established. The challenge was to look for the children who needed the enrichment and the extensions. So when they all met in September to discuss all the children, there was a focus on the enrichment of some of the children. At the end of every BLING meeting there is a very large "to do" list.

Chairman Ortega congratulated the team on the effect this has in the school. He added that he is proud of them for the publication, but is even more proud of the impact they are making on student development and that they thought "outside the box" and thought of implementing something that was different. He also suggested that all of the work that went with this process was instrumental in James Mastricola Elementary School being named "Elementary School of the Year".

6. Third Review of Proposed School Calendar for 2013-2014

Chairman Ortega recalled the February 19th board meeting when the first review of the proposed calendar was made. The board had requested feedback on the calendar from the public. Some responses were received, but not many. At the board meeting on March 4th the board decided to leverage PowerSchool with notices home to solicit input from parents before finally acting on the calendar. A number of correspondences with a number of opinions were received. He thanked the parents for their feedback. To summarize:

- 66 emails were received regarding the calendar
- 27 liked the calendar exactly like it is.
- 54 positive comments that school was beginning after Labor Day
- 12 comments wishing school would start before Labor Day
- In terms of combining the February and April vacations into one vacation in March:
 - 25 comments in favor of a March vacation
 - 41 comments in favor of vacations staying as they are
- 1 person noticed both February and April vacations fall at month end and since they are involved in accounting would prefer they not fall on those weeks.
- 3 people preferred that Merrimack vacations align with the Massachusetts vacations.
- 1 person wanted the spring vacation to align with the Easter holiday.
- 10 people commented that the board should try and minimize the 1-day holidays (Columbus Day, MLK Jr. Day, Presidents' Day) to keep the children in school so they could get out earlier in June.
- 1 person liked the idea of more 1-day holidays.
- 5 people requested a shorter Christmas vacation
- 5 people requested a longer Christmas vacation
- 5 people took issue with having the Wednesday off before Thanksgiving.
- 1 person felt there should be a longer Thanksgiving holiday
- 3 people noted that we should look at instructional hours instead of 180 days; extend the school days to shorten the calendar
- 2 people brought up the idea of "blizzard bags" – instruction would be ready for students in the event of a snowstorm and they would work from home. If 80% of the students complete the work, that could be counted as an instruction day.
- 1 person requested that we align our calendar with the Manchester School District
- 1 person requested we look at sending students to school for a whole calendar year.

Chairman Ortega noted that the comments were varied, and that many of them were based on personal issues. Of most interest to the board in terms of the number of people who responded were references to Labor Day, (starting school before or after) and the question of two vacation weeks verses one vacation week in the spring. At the last meeting, it was determined that combining two vacations into one would not be something that could be done for the next calendar year based on the calendars of other districts, such as Nashua and Hudson. He then opened discussion for deliberation on the calendar.

Board Member Schneider requested looking at other options regarding the calendar be put as a future agenda item so that issues would be discussed prior to the calendar being done for the following year.

Chairman Ortega agreed that the process needs to be started far in advance.

Board Member Schneider stated that he wanted to discuss Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Columbus Day as days that can be removed so that there is a “clean edge” at the end of next year.

Board Member Barnes asked if there was ever a year when there were no snow days.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that in the 12 years that she has been in the district, there was one year with no snow days.

Vice Chairman Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider for discussion) that January 20th (Martin Luther King Jr. Day) be removed as a holiday and have it as an in-session day.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he would like to have the last day of school earlier than it is on the calendar. He noted that the board has received feedback that another day off right after the Christmas break is troublesome. There are quite a few parents that do not have that day off.

Board Member Schneider stated that if January 20th is taken off as a holiday, people might take issue that the district does not celebrate what Martin Luther King Jr. stood for. He noted that Merrimack does not have Presidents’ Day off, but does have Martin Luther King Jr. Day off. He added that if he had to choose either Columbus Day or Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a day off, he would go with the board’s decision.

Board Member Barnes stated that if school were in session for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, she would like to see the day and the person recognized for who he was. There is a lot of curriculum that deals with Martin Luther King Jr., Columbus Day and Thanksgiving. She added that unless there is an educational foundation for having school on these days, she would not be in support of the motion.

Chairman Ortega stated that he is not in support of the motion. In looking at Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Columbus Day and Presidents’ Day there may be childcare issues on those days.

Vice Chairman Powell would like to see Presidents’ Day off and Martin Luther King Jr. Day off. As far as timing, a break does not seem to be needed after just coming back from vacation. As far as symbolism of the day, the board can suggest there be more activities in the schools related to those days, which is more than if they just have the day off to have a day off.

Board Member Barnes stated that in wanting more, that would mean asking the building leaders and all teachers to make adjustments to their schedules. She added that she thought there should be an academic impact to have that day in session.

Board Member Markwell stated that he has heard from parents regarding Columbus Day and from parents who were concerned with having the three-day Thanksgiving recess. Some parents have to take those days as personal days. He added that he thought that Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a day that more people have off, as compared to Columbus Day or the day before Thanksgiving. He therefore would support having Columbus Day as a day in school as well as the day before Thanksgiving.

Board Member Schneider stated that he would also like to see the days in question as days that celebrate the meaning of the holiday if school is in session. As far as the days off, he would rather see Columbus Day as an in-session day since there is a wealth of knowledge to be shared about it.

Chairman Ortega called the question.

The motion failed 2-3-0 with Board Member Schneider, Board Member Barnes and Chairman Ortega voting in opposition.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to make Columbus Day, October 14, 2013, as an in-session day.

Board Member Schneider stated that he preferred to have Columbus Day off instead of having Martin Luther King Jr. day off.

Board Member Markwell stated that the feedback showed that more parents wanted the day before Thanksgiving as an in-session day.

Board Member Schneider was concerned that a small number of parents responded to the survey and therefore a judgment should not be based on those results.

Board Member Markwell stated that he looked forward to hearing from parents, whether it is a ye or a nay vote so as to have a better understanding of what the parents want.

Board Member Barnes stated that Nashua and Hudson have Columbus Day off. We would have a population of students who attend these schools for the VoTech program with no education that day.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that Nashua has school on the day before Thanksgiving, so our students would lose an educational day. It is the same with starting school after Labor Day where Nashua begins before Labor Day. Also, he felt that some sort of formal survey has to go out. The board cannot pretend to assume how its decisions will affect everyone.

Chairman Ortega agreed that a more comprehensive look at the calendar has to be made before major changes are made. He added that this is next year's calendar so people should be able to make plans based on this calendar. He then called the question.

The motion passed 3-2-0 with Board Member Barnes and Chairman Ortega in opposition.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to accept the calendar as amended.

Board Member Schneider asked if the changes made mean that June 16th 2014 becomes a make-up day.

Superintendent Chiafery replied, "Yes".

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Ortega concluded how important the feedback is. The concept of a single vacation was discussed and will be examined as well as educational hours vs. school days. He thanked all the people who wrote to the board.

7. Board's Response to the Request to Create an Easement Agreement for the Souhegan Riverwalk

Chairman Ortega stated that at the January 14th board meeting the board received a presentation from the Town Center Committee about the proposed Souhegan Riverwalk that will go from Watson Park, under

Route 3 by the Fire Station, along the riverside, and up and under the Everett Turnpike where they intend to connect it with property at the Wildcat Falls Conservation area. The proposed trail crosses over school district parcels at the backside of the fire station and along the Turnpike with a one-acre parcel that was purchased by the town by the power lines. They have asked for consideration of the project and consideration of an easement on the property to move the project forward. They have also asked for a board member to work with the committee on consideration of an easement. The board has not as yet discussed this so he opened the subject for discussion.

Vice Chairman Powell was very impressed by the presentation made to the board. He asked if the Town Council has one of its Council Members on the committee.

Tracy Bull, board liaison to the committee stated that Council Member Dwyer is the liaison to the Town Center Committee but he is not regularly in attendance at the meetings. The sub-committee comprised of people who made the presentation to the board would be the ones dealing with the easement.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if the board representative would be part of the sub-committee.

Ms. Bull responded that the appointed school board member would work in conjunction with the sub-committee. The board member would advise and confer with the sub-committee, specifically regarding what the board wants. Because she is the district's representative to the sub-committee and not a board member, she cannot cast a vote on it, where a board member could. She added that there are members of the sub-committee who have dealt with easements before and are very knowledgeable about the process and the necessary considerations that go into it.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he believed the board should go forward with the easement and volunteered to be the board representative on the committee.

Chairman Ortega stated that in the sub-committee's presentation they provided an example of what an easement agreement would look like.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he supports the idea but not necessarily the text that was provided.

Board Member Barnes asked how often the sub-committee meets and how quickly the sub-committee wants turn around in the easement agreement. She also asked that since the trail design is already done and they know the intersection to the district property, is this something that is ready to go to legal counsel for their review.

Chairman Ortega suggested that we are a few steps away from legal review, since none of the board has walked the trails and discussed the potential impact.

Ms. Bull stated that it is a process. Her understanding is that the Town Center Committee members have conversations electronically and over the telephone. Once they know which board member is appointed, they will work cooperatively with that person. As far as the trail being delineated, they are looking forward to knowing that they have the go-ahead to start flagging.

Board Member Barnes asked when the flagging would start and when the project would begin.

Ms. Bull stated that the planning piece of the project is one-year process. As soon as it is reasonable to do so, members of the sub-committee will begin the flagging. By the time of the first anniversary date

in the fall with the National Parks Services, they would be ready to move onto the second phase, which is the actual physical development.

Board Member Barnes stated her concern that the board only meets once a month during the summer and that any decisions pertaining to this project would be delayed.

Ms. Bull responded that as a committee they only meet once a month, so that is not a problem.

Chairman Ortega stated that the impression that he got was that the desire to begin this process is a bit of a "catch 22". There is the pursuit of the easement with the Department of Transportation. So the question is where is the committee in terms of getting the easement from the DOT so that the district easement can be connected. Of course, he stated, the goal is to move forward as quickly as possible.

Ms. Bull stated that there is a weaving together of elements in a reasonable timely manner.

Chairman Ortega moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) that the board pursue the request of the Town Center Committee to create an easement and to have Vice Chairman Powell as the board representative to that Committee.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Ms. Bull stated that the Committee does not meet until the end of April so she will let the sub-committee know that Vice Chairman Powell has been appointed. She stated that he does not have to attend the Town Center Committee meetings. She added that the sub-committee would want to be in touch with him long before the April Town Center Committee meeting.

8. Discussion regarding the Modified Budget Process Used to Develop the 2013-2014 Budget

Chairman Ortega stated that this year, in listening to voters at the polls last year who narrowly decided to keep the Budget Committee. The Budget Committee presented their interpretation and their proposed modifications to the budget process as a means of listening to the voters. Many changes were implemented in terms of process, calendars and ultimately how the budget is moved from the school board to the Budget Committee. Now that deliberative sessions are done, it is pertinent to record for next year what worked well and what could be improved.

Board Member Barnes stated that the process itself had merit, but the execution needs to be tightened up a little bit. The one thing that she thought was detrimental was that the submitted questions by the Budget Committee were addressed prior to the board's dialogue. She stated that going into this, the board did not want to steer their discussions based on the questions of the Budget Committee. That was exactly what happened. A lot of the questions that the board asked might have been asked differently or in a different context if they had known their questions would be after the Budget Committee questions. That did not help the flow of dialogue with the building leaders. She would be strongly against going forward and having the Budget Committee's questions frontloaded

She stated that budgetary questions have to come at the very end, so whatever wasn't brought up could be brought up in a written question, and a prepared answer as it was presented to the board. The little ticket items that the Budget Committee asked for were done upfront because they were in writing by the Budget Committee and were presented on big ticket items nights. The large ticket items that the board wanted to discuss were put off on those same nights because there was not enough time to ask about them. She clearly thought the process skewed their dialogue.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he knew something was not right, but realized that it was the questions being asked upfront. He added that he appreciated the change in the calendar. He stated that it has merit and with a little tweaking it would work for next year.

Board Member Schneider stated that it was good that the Budget Committee got to ask questions, but as the school board they should have had the opportunity to ask questions first, to make sure the questions were asked in the right order, that big ticket items were done on big ticket days and little items were done on little days. He felt that they were feeling their way through the process. At the Budget Committee meeting it was noted that the discussions that were held with the department heads were much crisper, much quicker and they were able to move through their process much cleaner. He suggested that Budget Committee Chairman Cummings and Vice Chairman Beard attend a board meeting to give their feedback on the process.

Chairman Ortega stated that he thought having more time on the budget allowed the board to have a more detailed analysis and that he felt much better prepared. He agreed that it was a challenge having the Budget Committee questions prior to the board questions. He added that he was comfortable with the process. He asked Superintendent Chiafery how the Administration felt about the process.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that Administration had a bit of a difference of opinion. She stated that they thought covering the big-ticket was an important thing to do for the board because that is where the major bulk of the funds were spent. The difference is having the Budget Committee giving the questions earlier. Not all people asked questions, but when they did there were a number of them and the board was able to funnel those off to the respective division so there was less dialogue with the Budget Committee during deliberations. She added that doing the work ahead of time was really important. So the written questions are definitely beneficial without question because they could be shared with the department heads. If department heads needed additional help a member of the Administration or a member of the board would be able to work with them. She added that she thought it just came down to how it was presented. As far as preparation, she stated that she would not want to change the time line because the extra time for preparation was needed.

Board Member Schneider stated that perhaps the process could be turned a little upside down, not changing the preparation but changing the order of things.

Board Member Barnes stated that the process really redirected her dialogue. At the end, instead of the board asking the questions, Budget Committee Vice Chairman Beard had a similar question and his questions were answered. She stressed that the Budget Committee's questions should be at the very end so that they don't steer our direction. The fact that it is a combined process has a lot of merit and did a lot of good. It just needs to be tweaked.

Chairman Ortega stated that the process was tried and now it is going to be refined. The key is refining when certain questions are presented.

9. Scheduling the 2013 Graduation Date

Superintendent Chiafery and Principal Johnson have conferred that graduation this year is set for Saturday, June 15, 2013 at 10:00 a.m. on Student Memorial Field.

10. Other

a) Correspondence

There was no correspondence other than the numerous emails discussed earlier.

b) Comments

Board Member Barnes attended the Merrimack Chamber of Commerce Scholarship Dinner and Awards Ceremony. The money raised is for scholarships for Merrimack Seniors going to college. Last year the event raised enough money for five scholarships of \$1,500 each. It was a great event.

11. New Business

There was no new business

12. Committee Reports

Tracy Bull gave a report of the Safe Routes to School Travel Plan Task Force. The last meeting was February 19, 2013, but since there was no quorum, the meeting was informal.

- They discussed plans for introductory participation in Bike to School Day, May 8, 2013. The potential biking event at the upper elementary school is being developed under physical education instructor, Rich Greenier.
- Bike safety observations and rewards at the upper elementary school plans are being developed under physical educator instructor Katie Cleasby.
- The contract process is close to ready for submission to New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Final notice to proceed with the grant work will follow the Department of Transportation's approval of the contract.
- The New Hampshire Department of Transportation is preparing to announce the seventh and final round of SRTS infrastructure grant funding as a stand-alone program. Letters of intent will need to be submitted late summer with grant application deadline likely in September. Awards should be announced in April, 2014.
- The next meeting is April 16th at 3:30 p.m.

Ms. Bull gave a report on the Town Center Committee:

- The meeting was on March 4, 2013
- There were updates on the Safe Routes to School program.
- There was discussion surrounding recent presentations by the Longa family made before the Merrimack Conservation Commission and the Merrimack Planning Board indicating their interest in redevelopment of their land along the Merrimack River.
- The Town Center Committee has authored a letter to Community Development Director, Tim Thompson, describing the committee's relevant interests in walking trails as they apply to the redevelopment of that parcel.
- Debra Huffman displayed a poster and spoke with interested residents about the proposed Souhegan River Walk.

- Andy Powell performed research on the agreement between the Town and New Hampshire Department of Transportation regarding the use of the pedestrian bridge. He will be looking for a more formal agreement.
- Pat McGrath will be contacting New Hampshire Department of Transportation for information regarding Merrill's Marauders Bridge and write a brief summary of the history for use on a sign to be placed there.
- The Church Street subcommittee met with the Town Manager, Public Works, Police Department, Fire Department, all of whom are in favor of closing the intersection of Church Street and D.W. Highway. Kyle Fox will research the property lines. The Town Council approved the redesigning of the intersection of Wire Road and D.W. Highway. Chief Doyle will place the matter on the Highway Safety Committee agenda.
- The Watson Park pavilion raising will take place on Saturday, April 27th.
- The next meeting is scheduled for April 29th.

Student Representative Crowley reported that the Sophomore Semi-Formal is going to be held on Saturday, March 22, 2013. She also announced that spring sports are starting this week. The next Student Congress Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 20th and discussions will include parking space availability and the implementation of a salad bar. Last week was Penny Wars Week where all grades participated to see who could raise the most amount of money. The sophomores won. A total of \$350.00 was collected and was donated to Hurricane Sandy victims. It was a great success and the students are very proud of it.

Board Member Schneider reported on the Budget Committee meeting held after deliberative session to vote on the teachers' contract agreement. They passed it on a vote of 6-2-1 (six in favor, two against and one abstention). That corrected the vote where many of them had abstained while waiting for the adjustments to the figures. The next meeting of the committee is after the election to debrief on the process and how they want to move forward.

Board Member Barnes attended the Celebration of Song which showcased choirs from Thornton's Ferry, Reeds Ferry, James Mastricola Upper Elementary, the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School Vocal Workshop, Merrimack Middle School, the Chamber Choir at the High School and the Merrimack High School Choir last Tuesday at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. It was a great night with hundreds of parents attending. It was a real testimonial to the music program in the schools, what talent there is, and how it grows from Elementary to High School.

Board Member Barnes also reported on the Park and Recreation Committee. The Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for Saturday, March 23rd at 10:00 a.m. at Wasserman Park. There will be the First Annual Dog Easter Egg Hunt also the same day at 1:00 p.m. This will bring awareness of the Dog Park, which is planned, for Wasserman Park. Donations to the dog park will be accepted there. Pet's Choice is co-sponsoring the event.

Vice Chairman Powell reported on the Teacher Evaluation Committee, which met in early March. Great strides have been made from looking at four different models to eliminating two of them. The final cut will be made, but not necessarily fully adopting one or the other models, but taking information from them to put into the Merrimack model. The next meeting is in April. He encouraged everyone to visit the district web site where the full report on the committee is made.

Chairman Ortega stated that the board is trying to get parent representatives from the committee to come and give a report on the work of the committee.

13. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Tracy Bull, 5 Independence Drive, spoke about the proposed calendar. She stated that she was grateful that Martin Luther King Jr. was left on the calendar as a day off from school because that day is very proximate to the end of the quarter and has been a “relief day” before final exams. While that only affects one building, it is still 1/3 of the total school population.

14. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:40 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to recess to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3,II (a), (b), (c).

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

At 10:05 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.