

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room  
May 6, 2013  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Ortega, Vice Chairman Powell, Board Members Barnes, Markwell and Schneider, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, and Business Administrator Shevenell. Student Representative Crowley was excused from the meeting.

**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 April 15, 2013 Minutes**

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2013 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 7, Section 7, paragraph 2, sentence 3 should read, “He explained that he was from Morocco and wanted to share his growing up experience with the students”.
- Page 3 of 7, Section 7, paragraph 2, change “appreciated” to “appreciative”.
- Page 3 of 7, Section 7, paragraph 4, first sentence should read, “The students responded that they had taken either French or Arabic or a combination of the two....spoken.”
- Page 3 of 7, Section 7, paragraph 8, change “grand” to “grant”.
- Page 3 of 7, Section 7, paragraph 8, last sentence add “they” after “He added that”
- Page 3 of 7, Section 7, paragraph 2 from the bottom, correct the spelling of Board Member Barnes
- Page 6 of 7, section 9, paragraph 2 should read, “Board Member Barnes asked that if a board member wanted to switch assignments with another board member it would be done among the board members and reported to the Chair versus submitting all the assignments that needed reassigning.”

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 6 of 7, paragraph 3, sentence 1 should read, “Board Member Schneider.....dates for teacher workshops with time being spent at the beginning of the school year.....the implementation.”

The motion passed 5-0-0.

**3. Public Participation:**

There was no Public Participation.

#### **4. Consent Agenda**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following items for approval:

Teacher Nominations:

- Natalie Cate, Math Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Kelly Chiappetta, Grade 3 Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Kimberly Ross, Grade 5 Teacher at James Masticola Upper Elementary School

Teacher Resignations/Retirements

- Mary Beyer, Grade 2 Teacher at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Jody Pellatt, Special Education Teacher at Merrimack High School
- Laura Hutter, Math Teacher at Merrimack High School
- Eileen LoVerme, Special Education Teacher at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

#### **5. Rotary Club Plans and Request for July 4<sup>th</sup> Family Fun Day**

Steve Russell, Chairman of Family Fun Day 2013, gave a presentation on last year's event. The sponsors for the event this year are Merrimack Rotary, the Town of Merrimack, the Firefighters Union, the Merrimack School District and perhaps one or two more sponsors. Dunkin Donuts is a new major sponsor this year. He added that Tom Touseau has been very helping in the planning to make sure everything is in order.

Highlights of the presentation include:

- Pat McGrath explained an opportunity to have a formal color guard as well as a 21-gun salute to honor those who serve and have served in the military for generations. There is a good possibility that this would take place at the beginning of Family Fun Day, after the parade. He asked how the school board felt about the 21-gun salute since the event takes place on school grounds.
- The slide presentation showed examples of last year's festivities. They included face painting, chalk art, bounce houses, jousting, sliding, singing, a dunk tank, arts and crafts, Police and Fire demonstrations and food venues.
- The stage will be moved this year to a better location.
- There was concern that the vender booths were too far apart; therefore, the vender booths will be placed closer to each other.
- Non-profit volunteers worked a total of 179.5 volunteer hours, resulting in almost \$2,000 being donated back to them.

Chairman Ortega thanked the Rotary Club for bringing back Family Fun Day. He added that it was great last year and was sure it would be even better this year. He then called upon Superintendent Chiafery who had spoken with the school attorney to see how to best handle the 21-gun salute, since school property is a gun-free zone.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that there are State and Federal laws regarding firearms in a school zone. However, there are exceptions for programs approved by the board. She explained that legal counsel suggested a formal approval process. The board may want to ask the committee questions such as would real ammunition will be used. Legal Counsel suggested that the Rotary Club provide a written response to all questions on Rotary letterhead.

Superintendent Chiafery suggested that the board take a formal vote on the 21-gun salute because this is an exception to a rule or regulation for a specific purpose. She added if the Board were to approve the 21-gun salute, the approval would be for this year only. Future 21-gun salutes would require the Board's approval on an annual basis.

Vice Chairman Powell commented that he was not aware that the volunteers received some of the income, as opposed to the Rotary keeping all the profits. He suggested that the members of the Rotary let the public know that the money that comes in goes right back into the community. He asked if live ammunition would be used during the proposed 21 guns salute at the festivities.

Mr. Pat McGrath replied there would not be live ammunition. Live ammunition is not used in other formal settings such as a funeral for a service person.

Vice Chairman Powell asked for formal confirmation that live ammunition will not be used at the event.

Board Member Barnes stated last year there was a lot of open space. She asked if there would be an area, not necessarily food-based, for people to get out of the sun.

Mr. Russell responded that the request for shade would be taken under advisement. He noted that Chill Zone will be providing mist stations.

Board Member Barnes suggested a "dry" place be provided as well.

Mr. McGrath added that the stage is being moved this year; there will be some shade from the trees. He added that the parking lot provides shade as well.

Board Member Schneider asked if extra electric panels will be installed again this year and if one panel would be sufficient since things are being moved around.

Mr. Russell responded that they are planning for one additional electrical panel which will be near the food vendors, which would eliminate the need for generators. He added that there will be a distribution panel for the sound system to provide clearer and crisper sound. He offered the school board the use of the extra panel if needed during the year.

Chairman Ortega explained since there did not seem to be concern from the board, he would place the approval of the 21-gun salute for July 4, 2013 Family Fun Day on the Consent Agenda for the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mr. Pete Giacapuzzi explained that they are still looking for volunteers. The web site for volunteering among other things is [www.merrimack4th.com](http://www.merrimack4th.com). This year the day will be more organized and there will be a schedule for the volunteers.

Mr. Russell stated that his email address is [srussell@kollsman.com](mailto:srussell@kollsman.com).

Mr. McGrath added that this year the event will remain open until 10:00 p.m. after the fireworks. Last year it closed at 8:00 p.m. He also stated that Jet Black Sunrise, a local band made up of former Merrimack High School students, will be performing at the event.

## **6. Focus on Thornton's Ferry Elementary School: A Year in Review**

Principal Bridey Bellemare explained that the school-wide expectations at Thorntons Ferry are based on three principles: respect, responsibility and safety. She went on to say that the presentation tonight would highlight various accomplishments and initiatives that capture a myriad of ways that the staff works in close collaboration with students to develop creative, rigorous and purposeful learning opportunities. Over the past few years they have been fortunate to have received funds for technology advancement through the operating budget, grants and the generosity of the Parent Organization at the school.

Mrs. Denise McLaughlin, the Education Technology Integrator at Thortons Ferry spoke about the Technology program. Highlights included:

- The projects presented will reflect how technology integration in the classroom instruction means more than teaching basic computer skills and software programs in separate computer classes.
- Effective Technology Integration happens across the curriculum in ways that deepen and enhance the learning process. In particular it supports four key learning components: active engagement, participation in groups, frequent integration and feedback, and connection to real world experts.
- Technology Integration is achieved when the use of technology is routine and is transparent.
- Learning through projects using technology allows students to be intellectually challenged while providing them with a realistic snapshot of what the modern day workplace looks like.
- Through projects, students acquire and refine their analysis and problem solving skills as they work individually and in teams to find, process and synthesize information that they found on line.
- The Big Universe Program provides resources across many areas. Students enjoy the element of choice that they have with the vast materials available to them. It is a great way to expand a classroom library, differentiate instruction and support the standards. Seven students participated in the Big Universe Contest, four of whom were winners in the National Big Universe Contest. Two students shared some of their experiences with the board.

Sarah Croteau, Grade 4 Social Studies Teacher at Thornton Ferry explained that students researched specific topics and created presentations on "What does it mean to be a citizen of a community, a state and a country."

- This project incorporated several Common Core Standards including writing and speaking. They researched candidates for both the Presidential and the NH Governor's race during the 2012 election. Students then made presentations to other students in the school who then made educational voting decision at the mock trial in the school. Two students made presentations to the board relating to this project.
- The unit on New Hampshire History and Economy focused on how New Hampshire's geography affects its economy. The students created a video for the NH Class Active Video Contest which is sponsored by the Governor and the New Hampshire Department of Tourism. This project addressed Common Core Standards in reading, writing and speaking. Two fourth grade students made a presentation that showed the video that would be entered into the contest. They explained that 10 students worked about 25 hours to produce the one minute video. The winners of the contest will be announced on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Sue Weghorst, Thorntons Ferry Library Media Specialist, created a Literary Circle with students from four fourth grades. The book they read was "Saving Zasha" which is a historical fiction book which took place in post-World War II in Russia. They researched how dogs were used during the war in the United States, Russia and Germany. The students answered questions about the story in the traditional written journal form and also experienced some blogging. Two students spoke about their experiences, including using a NOOK as well as blogging.

Angela Aubin, Fourth Grade Special Education Teacher spoke about Mimio Teaching Interactive Technology using a white board to make a project interactive. The students used a special pen to right click and drag items, just like a mouse on a computer. She showed a video of two students showing how the mimio works, including a mimio place value lesson. She then showed communication devices used by a few non-verbal students who use them as their "voice".

Collette St. Germain, Kindergarten Teacher at Thorntons Ferry, explained that one of the first things a student learns is their address. A video showed an address entered into Google Maps for the students to find where they live. This uses a mimio board. She then explained using technology is a great way to enhance the learning in a classroom. Another video highlighted the possibilities that technology can provide the student with some amazing school connections. A student showed the invention he made on his home tablet and brought it into the classroom to share with his classmates.

Chairman Ortega told the students that their presentations were very articulate and that they were very well poised and thanked them for their participation.

Vice Chairman Powell agreed that the presentations were fantastic, noting the NH Tourism piece.

## **7. Formal Signing of Master Agreement Between the Merrimack Teachers Association and the School Board**

Chairman Ortega thanked Board Member Barnes and Vice Chairman Powell, Mr. Mike Cirelli, President of the Merrimack Teachers Association and Mr. John Snell, lead negotiator, for going through good faith negotiations for the benefit of the District and the town of Merrimack.

Superintendent Chiafery presented the agreement to Mr. Cirelli and Mr. Snell to sign and then she and Chairman Ortega signed the agreement.

## **8. Request to Conduct Parent and Student Surveys at Mastricola Schools Germane to Travel Plan**

Ms. Tracy Bull gave a brief history of the travel plan. She explained that in accordance with the Safe Routes to School Travel Plan grant and project, the sub-committee has received the formal "notice to proceed" in conducting the project, effective April 19, 2013. The first necessary task will be surveying the students and parents relevant to the Mastricola Complex regarding current transportation habits to and from school, along with perceptions of walking and biking as viable methods of doing so. An in-class mapping exercise will also be conducted relevant to Grades three through six to ascertain current travel routes. Surveys will be conducted anonymously, minus grade level and the sex of the students.

Ms. Bull added that in order to successfully complete the surveys prior to the conclusion of the 2012-13 school year, she requested the board to consider waiving the two-week rule. Doing so will yield adequate time to work with building level Administration in order to conduct the surveys in the most effective and efficient manner.

Mr. Matt Waitkins, Consultant from the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, passed out copies of the Travel Plan that was done in Hollis, NH. He explained that the purpose of the surveys is to gather information about the trips to and from schools, to identify issues and concerns that students and parents have about their trips to and from school and to determine the feasibility of starting a Safe Routes to School program. The student surveys will be conducted in the schools by the teachers. The parent surveys will be available on line or sent home with the students. Ms. Bull will be composing a cover letter to the parents. The benefits from this program are increased funding for sidewalks and other infrastructures and increased funding for curriculums that focus on living healthy life styles. He added that the purpose of the mapping exercise is for the students to indicate their routes to and from school, whatever the mode is. It gives them the opportunity to try and connect where they live and where their school is.

*(Note: The rest of the presentation by Ms. Bull and Mr. Waitkins is inaudible. Their responses are therefore based solely on notes taken at the meeting.)*

Board Member Barnes stated that there is a typing error on question 3 of the Parent Survey for the Mastricola Elementary School. The word “then” should be changed to “than”. She also spoke about the numbers possibly being skewed. For example, question 4 asks “Why does your child NOT walk or bike to school?” Some children may attend before school activities and therefore would be driven to school but take the bus home from school. There also could be other variables that could skew the replies concerning the other school dismissals as well as traffic. Finally, she noted that question 6 in the student survey mentions “inadequate sidewalks”. She asked what is meant by this, i.e. not enough sidewalks or not properly maintained sidewalks. She noted that young students may have difficulty interpreting this.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that the one of the names was incorrect and was a duplicate and they had to fix one of them.

Board Member Schneider asked if the time of year makes a difference when the questions are asked. A nice weather survey may be different than a winter survey. He suggested that “in good weather” be added to the questions.

Board Member Markwell asked if they were just looking to waive the two-week rule.

Ms. Bull responded that they are asking for the two-week rule to be waived so that the surveys can be completed and the data collected before the end of the school year.

Board Member Markwell stated that he would support the sidewalks and the whole program more if he had thought more people would utilize them.

Ms. Bull responded that this is about creating opportunity and identifying the barriers the children see. She added that this is not something that will happen overnight.

Chairman Ortega stated that the survey wants to know why people are not walking or biking to school. He added that the subcommittee needs to go through the process and better understand what is happening.

Board Member Barnes stated that the surveys should say “to and from school”. She added that having the infrastructure opens the opportunity for funding. Without the foundation it doesn’t open us up to

more opportunities. The Jogging Jaguars are in place now, but now we are talking about three schools that would benefit.

Mr. Waitkins responded that we are talking about a planning process to see if there is an interest as well as seeing if there are issues and barriers.

Vice Chairman Powell asked if this project will cost the district any money.

Mr. Waitkins responded that they have been approved for a 100% reimbursable grant.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to conduct a survey at James Mastricola Elementary School and James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, waiving the two-week rule, for the Safe Routes to School Plan as requested.

Board Member Schneider stated that he sees an increase in the number of students walking to the middle school, adding that this may have to be addressed at a later date.

Ms. Bull responded that the district will benefit from all this information which could be used in the future, which would include the middle school.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Ortega thanked Ms. Bull for her representation to this sub-committee and other committees. He added that Safe Routes to School is a milestone and she has done a wonderful job as the district's representative.

## **9. Reconsideration of Roof Replacement Project at Merrimack High School**

Business Administrator Shevenell referenced the final disposition of the roofing project contained in the 2013-14 approved budget.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the original proposal in the Capital Improvement Plan for the replacement of a large section of the high school roof was \$1,024,300. As budget deliberations progressed, the board chose to defer the entire project to a future year. When the board's budget was presented to the Budget Committee, the Budget Committee decided that some progress in 2013-14 was better than removing the project in its entirety. Therefore, the Budget Committee chose to place \$385,920 back into the operating budget in order to make some headway to replace the "blue" section of the roof. Upon final review, the board voted 5-0-0 to accept the changes that were made by the Budget Committee which was then presented at the deliberative session and subsequently approved by the voters on April 9, 2013. At the last board meeting the question that arose was whether the board wanted to go through with the roof project as it did not originally have it incorporated into their operating budget. The School Board has to decide whether or not to go forward with the roof project.

Business Administrator Shevenell stressed that any delay in the decision will not allow the project to happen in the 2013-14 school year. Most companies that work in weather dependent trades have to schedule their work far in advance to make the most out of the construction season. The bid that was placed before the board was the lowest by \$75,000 to \$80,000 when compared to other authorized installers. These bids are developed in the fall and are awarded contingent upon the item passing in the budget. This is done well before the deliberative session to ensure there are enough funds available to complete the task and to make sure that the work will be on the company's summer schedule. If not for

this approach, the board could run the risk of no bidders or bidders that charge a premium price well above the norm.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to expend \$385,000 to contract for roofing improvements at Merrimack High School in Section B on the map and to waive the two-week rule.

Board Member Barnes stated that she had made the original motion to cut the money from the budget to preserve academics. She stated that she felt that it is the board's responsibility to maintain the infrastructure in which the students learn. She added that the board needs to be more proactive with the roofing project instead of being reactive.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he thought the Budget Committee put it in such a way that the voters could not have a voice as to whether or not they wanted the \$385,920 added back into the budget. Even if that money is put back in, it still came in under the default budget so if the board is voting against the \$385,900 they are voting for a higher budget. He added that he really disagreed with how the Budget Committee went forward with this. He stated that he would rather see the money put towards refurbishing the superintendent's office and special services buildings. He asked how much money was needed to renovate those buildings.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that there is \$56,000 in the Planning and Building Committee budget for the special services building to incorporate drainage and add an ADA accessible ramp.

Superintendent Chiafery added that the Planning and Building Committee is going to return to the board at either the next meeting the first meeting in June to talk about additional reporting to the board on the outcome of the vote of the consolidation of the superintendent's office and special services buildings. She suggested that the board take that opportunity to ask about the roofing projects.

Board Member Schneider explained that it was not a unanimous decision by the Budget Committee. He added that there are three things that could be done with the money: return the money to the taxpayers, fix the roof or fix the blue building. He said that not knowing the resolution and the discussion of the Planning and Building Committee of the special services building, he would not commit to the high school roof.

Chairman Ortega stated that he had originally wanted to spend the money on the high school roof, but had greater concerns for the superintendent's office and special services buildings since the voters had not passed the warrant article on the consolidation.

Board Member Markwell stated that he felt the money could be used for projects other than the roof at the high school. He suggested putting the roofing project forward as a warrant article next year, adding that he thought the public would support the article. That way the \$385,920 could be put where it is needed, whether it goes for another project or goes back to the tax payers.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the \$1,024,300 was the low bid for the project. Next year attempts will be made to get the same company to bid on the project, but bid will probably be higher. He emphasized without question the larger portion of high school roof must be replaced and would cost \$600,000. The smaller section of the high school roof could be delayed.



Board Member Markwell asked if the roof repair had a greater sense of urgency than it did the last time Maintenance Director Touseau spoke to the board.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that Mr. Touseau had another opportunity to assess the high school roof and reported a greater sense of urgency to repair the large section of the high school roof.

Board Member Schneider stated that he thought Mr. Touseau had said the roofing project could be put off at least one year. He expressed his concern that the 2013-14 budgets did not include \$600,000 to replace the large section of the high school roof. He also expressed concern with the unknowns.

Board Member Barnes stated that the board would never pay \$150,000 in interest on a one million dollar budget for the roof for one year. That is essentially what would be done with the projected cost increase. It is a fiscal decision to say that the board is going to defer paying more next year. There will be more discussions about the blue and green houses. She added that the board needs to do the right thing with the roof because they are avoiding bigger problems.

The motion failed 1-4-0 with Chairman Ortega, Vice chairman Powell and Board Members Schneider and Markwell in opposition.

## **10. Other**

### Correspondence

Chairman Ortega stated that he received a note regarding the publication, "US News Report" which reported the top high schools in the country, noting that Merrimack High School did not make the top twelve in New Hampshire.

### Comments

Superintendent Chiafery reported there will be two emergency evacuation drills during the month of May. The evacuation drill at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School will occur on May 16 (the rain date is May 17). The drill will require staff and students to walk to Veteran's Park in the event they need to be moved out quickly from the school and cannot be bussed. She noted that this is the first school to do this type of drill.

Superintendent Chiafery reported that the evacuation drill for the middle school will be held on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The drill will involve transporting middle school students and staff to James Masticola Upper Elementary School.

Superintendent Chiafery thanked the fire and police departments for partnering with the district with the drills. She added that all parties will be notified in advance of the drills.

## **11. New Business:**

There was no new business.

## **12. Committee Reports**

Tracy Bull reported on the Safe Routes to School sub-committee which met on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

- The informal meeting contained discussions on the status of the project.

- They reviewed the time table,
- There was discussion on the importance of a quorum to approve meeting minutes.
- Ms. Bull emphasized that the sub-committee is strictly advisory in nature.
- May 8<sup>th</sup> will be National Bike to School Day. JMUES will take part in this.
- The next meeting is tentatively scheduled on May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Bull reported that the Town Center Committee met on April 29<sup>th</sup>. They reviewed the Safe Routes to School Program.

Ms. Bull reported that the Souhegan River Walk sub-committee met with the Town Manager and the Public Works department. They will meet with the Conservation Commission regarding an easement agreement.

Board Member Schneider reported on the Merrimack Safeguard meeting. Two hundred and forty-two pounds of prescription drugs were collected at the new drop off area at the police station. He added that Beyond Influence pamphlets were distributed.

Board Member Markwell reported on the Park and Recreation Committee meeting on April 17<sup>th</sup>. They discussed the summer concert series, the day camp, a bus trip to wineries, skate park closings and the dog park.

### **13. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Tracy Bull, 5 Independence Drive, stated that she appreciated the liaison with the Rotary Club for the Family Fun Day on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **14. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest at 9:45 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to recess to non-public session per RSA 91-A: 3, II (a), (b), (c), and (e).

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

At 10:47 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the public meeting.