

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room  
May 20, 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 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 May 6, 2013 Minutes**

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to accept the minutes of May 6, 2013.

Board member Barnes requested the following edits to the minutes:

- Page 8 of 10, paragraph 3, add three words to the end of sentence 1 “... to preserve academics”
- Page 6 of 10, paragraph 3, change the spelling of “Emily” is spelled “Emilie”.

Board member Markwell requested the following edits to the minutes:

- Page 5 of 10, the line above #7 should read Vice Chairman Powell.
- Page 6 of 10, the fourth paragraph from the bottom of the page should read “Board Member Markwell stated that he would support the sidewalks and the whole program more if he had thought more people would utilize them.
- Page 10 of 10, under committee reports, the words “state park” should read “skate park”.

Board member Schneider requested the following edits to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 10, paragraph 3, last sentence should read “...used during the proposed 21 guns salute at the festivities.
- Page 6 of 10, in the middle of the page, Vice chairman Powell stated that the principal’s name on both the parent surveys is incorrect. It should read, “one of the names was incorrect and was a duplicate.”
- Page 7 of 10, the middle paragraph is out of sequence and is duplicated on the next page. Vice Chairman Powell stated the budget committee ...
- Page 8 of 10, paragraph 3 from the bottom, the word “can” should be changed to “could”.
- Page 8 of 10, paragraph 3, the last sentence should read “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 requested the following edits to the minutes:

- Page 2 of 10, first bullet under the highlights, remove the word “the”
- Page 2 of 10, the last sentence of the last paragraph the word “in” should be changed to “is”.
- Page 3 of 10, paragraph 5, should read ...Vice Chairman Powell asked for formal confirmation ...”
- Page 6 of 10, second paragraph from the bottom replace the word “board” with “subcommittee”.

The minutes of May 6, 2013 were accepted as amended 5-0-0.

### **3. Public Participation**

Roy Swonger of 6 Klara Drive commented on the authorization to expend the roofing funds. He also took objection to Vice Chair Powell’s comments about the Budget Committee and the way it did its job.

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

- United Health Group Matching Gift Funds to James Mastricola Elementary School for \$200

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the gift from the United Health Group will be used to support educational programs at James Mastricola Elementary School.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Powell) to accept the generous gift from United Health and its employees in the amount of \$200.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

### **5. Consent Agenda**

#### a) Teacher Nominations

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher nominations.

- Katie Closs, Social Studies Teacher at Merrimack High School
- Susan Heimburg, Computer Technology Educator at Merrimack Middle School

#### b) Teacher Resignation

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher resignation.

- Justin Koon, teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School

#### c) Approval of 21 Gun Salute for July 4<sup>th</sup> Family Fun Day

Chairman Ortega stated that the board would agree to a formal vote on the 21 gun salute when a written request is received from the Rotary, which has not yet been received. The agenda item was tabled for another meeting.

Board member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to accept the teacher nominations and teacher resignation as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## **6. Merrimack Middle School: Reaching for Excellence**

Principal Woelflein introduced Adam Caragher, Assistant Principal; Chris Nawrocki, Science Teacher, Cheryl Smith, Math Coordinator; Dr. Garth McKinney, Language Arts Coordinator; and Jackie Dack, Special Education Coordinator.

Principal Woelflein explained that the reaching for excellence theme is about articulating expectations and holding people accountable for those expectations.

Principal Woelflein announced that Mrs. Christine Nawrocki was named Hillsboro County Conservation District Teacher of the Year for promoting environmental education to students, teachers and the community.

Principal Woelflein reported a grant from the Aco Charitable Foundation funded an iPad 3 for the occupational therapy program. Two separate grants from Exxon Mobil (one from Bon Bon Mobil and the other from D.W Mobil) provided financial assistance for ten students to participate in the camp MI-TE-NA experience.

Principal Woelflein stated that the middle school has a very active parent teacher group that performs studies before they spend money. For example, they analyzed the type of supplies teachers purchased and found the most prudent way to purchase those supplies. The parent teacher group also provided scholarships to 14 eighth grade students so they could participate in the Washington D.C. trip

Principal Woelflein noted the collaboration between the middle school parent/teacher group, the Rotary Club of Merrimack and the middle school student council on a project entitled Peace through Service. The three groups provided funds to bring in a research-based speaker to help students understand successful strategies to offset bullying.

Principal Woelflein announced that Dr. Garth McKinney had been named the New Hampshire Council of Teachers of English Teacher of the Year.

Dr. McKinney reported the level of Rigor in the classroom continues from the work done last year. He explained that clear learning goals are posted in the classrooms. Students know exactly what is expected and how to meet them. He explained the pacing guides for literature and grammar result in a similar experience for all students on all teams.

Dr. McKinney noted a focus on writing during the year through the use of writing prompts at the beginning of the year and the end of the year. The writing prompts track student growth and provides ways to improve instruction.

Cheryl Smith, Math Coordinator reported the focus in the math department is intervention for students as well as adjusting the curriculum to coincide with the unit planners which is part of the SCALES (Strategies for Collaboration and Learning Strategies) work. A few examples are:

- The completion of several unit planners at both grade levels.
- The revision of the scope and sequence of the curriculum for the seventh grade.
- The revision of most of the common formative assessments written last year based on the data that was collected.
- The revision of the end of the year pre-algebra test for seventh and eighth grade students.
- The revision of the end of the year seventh grade standard test to coincide with what is being taught.

Ms. Smith noted that attention was given to several interventions for struggling students.

Ms. Smith stated that the focus for next year will be to continue working on the unit planners and adjust the curriculum to dovetail with the common core.

Jackie Dack, Special Education Coordinator reported that she is involved in overseeing the special education services and placements provided to the neediest students. This involves monitoring individual student three year re-evaluations, annual reviews, Individual Education Plans (IEP) progress monitoring as well as facilitating new special education referrals in a timely manner. The goal is to ensure that all students are placed in settings which best meet their needs in the least restrictive environment. The middle school offers four distinctive special education placements. They are:

- PASS Program (Program for Academic and Social Success) - provides support for students who have emotional disabilities
- Resource Room - provides language arts and math tutoring for students who are functioning two to three grade levels below what they should be.
- Language Based Resource Room - provides support for students who have written expression and reading deficits of a significant nature.
- Learning Support Room – supports students who have multiple disabilities, cognitive impairments, and hearing/visual problems.

Ms. Dack explained that each special education placement was reviewed to identify how different components affected the children's education. The following components were addressed.

- Delivery models
- Data collection (the number of students in the programs compared to the number of special education students and the goals and objectives of each placement program.)
- Review of the staff roles and responsibilities.

Ms. Dack stated that the regular education staff as well as the special education staff was given information about the programs to give them a better understanding of the services that students are receiving so that they can better assist them by providing the necessary accommodations and modifications when they are in the regular education setting. This resulted in improved collegiality between regular educators and special education educators which ultimately enhanced student success. All the teachers are encouraged to move forward together as a positive professional team using current best practices in all educational environments. The focus for next year will be to continue to build cohesiveness between all educators by providing information, support and ongoing open communication.

Adam Caragher, Assistant Principal sited the middle school evacuation drill as an example of the collaboration within the community and the District. Les Carter, retired principal of Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, coordinated the drill with the police department, fire department, highway department, James Masticola Upper Elementary School, food service, central office, maintenance department, Student Transportation of America, and Provider.

Assistant Principal Caragher noted continued improvement with the behavioral intervention. The behavioral intervention at Merrimack Middle School consists of a consequence for an action and to help the students understand the implications of their actions.

Assistant Principal Caragher highlighted several after-school activities. The after-school activities consist of a sewing club, drama club, school newspaper club, wellness club, scrabble club, Science Olympiad club and student council.

Assistant Principal Caragher stated that the athletic programs have had a great year. He announced that Merrimack Middle School received the Tri-County League Sportsmanship Award for the second time in three years.

Board member Barnes asked if there had been additions to the mural at the middle school.

Principal Woelflein responded that the mural Board Member Barnes referenced had been completed. She stated that a different mural was in progress and invited school board members and the community to visit the school to observe the mural progress.

Board Member Barnes recalled the first mural contained items found on the middle school property.

Principal Woelflein added that the teachers use it as a teaching tool.

Board Member Barnes highlighted Math Coordinator Smith's previous experience as a math teacher at Merrimack High School.

Board Member Barnes stated that she looks forward to seeing how the math performance of middle school students evolves in the next couple of years.

Board Member Barnes congratulated Dr. McKinney, the recipient of the English Teacher of the Year Award.

Chairman Ortega thanked the presenters for an informative presentation and congratulated Dr. McKinney on his award.

Chairman Ortega asked Dr. McKinney to speak about breaking the model, modeling key behavior and getting students to own their education.

Garth McKinney explained that it is not so much the book being the content but the skills.

Chairman Ortega had the opportunity to attend the orientation for the incoming seventh grade students. Everyone did a fantastic job presenting the school to the parents and students.

## **7. Teacher Performance and Evaluation Committee: A Progress Report**

Chairman Ortega introduced Committee members Michael Cirelli, Trish Swonger, Jennifer Thornton, Principal Woelflein, Dr. Mark McLaughlin, and Vice Chairman Davis Powell.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated the charge of the committee was to develop a tool that consisted of multiple measures and a process to evaluate the performance of educators in the Merrimack School District.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin also noted that the effort responds to state wide reforms in the teacher evaluation process which require individual districts to review and refine their teacher evaluation tools.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that Susan Villani, a consultant from Learning Innovations WestED, is facilitating the work of the committee. Learning Innovations is a nationally recognized research and development company in education that supports the highest level of support to districts around the country. The District has approximately an eight year affiliation with WestED in a variety of contexts that have produced great continuity across all grade levels.

Trish Swonger reported the fourteen committee members spent 58.5 hours attending formal meetings in addition to reading assignments.

Michael Cirelli, Technology Education Teacher and President of the MTA explained the committee is working on a very large task. To effectively manage the tasks the committee has broken down the evaluation model into smaller components for large and small group discussions. During discussions, teachers, parents, principals and the MTA have openly talked about the pros and cons of each component eventually coming to a consensus on each idea. The consensus approach can be a time consuming process, but it is important because it allows for in depth questions to be answered thoroughly. In the end, this method will yield the best results for everybody because everyone can come to the table and talk about these ideas and work out the concepts.

Mrs. Swonger added the New Hampshire Task Force on Effective Teaching created a substantial document that shared research and recommendations for educator evaluations. The research was based on national standards for professional development agreed upon by all of the major professional organizations in the country.

Mrs. Swonger explained that the document gives guiding principles and recommended foundations for a NH educator support and evaluation system. Districts are encouraged to align their support and their evaluation models with those recommendations.

Models being reviewed by the committee are:

- The current Merrimack School District model which is based on Madelyn Hunter an educational expert.
- Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubrics
- Marzano Causal Teacher Evaluation Model
- TAP: the system for teacher and student advancement
- Charlotte Danielson: Framework for teaching

Principal Woelflein stated that the committee rejected models that gave no room for flexibility. The committee is currently building the Merrimack model that will incorporate best practice, the latest research and that will fit the principles and basic guidelines of the NH Taskforce while still reflecting the Merrimack School District's culture and current initiatives.

Jennifer Thornton stated the first consideration by the committee was the evaluation cycle and how often the educators would be evaluated. The committee spent a considerable amount of time discussing an evaluation process for veteran educators compared to educators new to the district, the rubrics and how to train the evaluators on a new evaluation process.

Jennifer Thornton stated that the Committee's goal is to present an evaluation model to Superintendent Chiafery by the end of the summer.

Vice Chair Powell stated that all members of the committee are very committed to the assignment.

Chairman Ortega extended his appreciation to the entire committee.

Board Member Schneider stated he was anxious to review the committee's recommended evaluation model.

Board Member Markwell asked the committee to provide bullet points of pros and cons of the various models reviewed and what was disqualified and why.

Principal Woelflein responded the Madelyn Hunter model currently being used by the District involves three steps: setting objectives, formal observations, descriptions of effectiveness in the classroom and elsewhere. Some pieces of that we will probably incorporate in a new model.

Principal Woelflein explained the Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubrics allows the district to be flexible and make changes. This model allows teachers to have an end of the year assessment of where they stand in all performance areas as well as areas of improvement.

Principal Woelflein explained the Marzano Causal Teacher Evaluation Model does not allow any modification and cost was a consideration. This model was eliminated.

Principal Woelflein explained that TAP: the system for teacher and student advancement consists of required structured that cannot be modified in any way. This model was eliminated.

Principal Woelflein explained the Charlotte Danielson model is very well known, District educators and administrators are very familiar with it and it permits modification.

Principal Woelflein stated that the five models are very similar with regards to the descriptions of what makes for an effective educator. There is agreement across the research with regards to what should be considered. It was helpful to be able to compare and contrast the five models.

Chairman Ortega asked what types of measurements are being considered.

Mark McLaughlin stated that the committee realized the need for multiple measures. Student achievement will most likely be a measure.

Board Member Markwell asked if minutes of the evaluation meetings were being recorded.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that minutes of each meeting are posted on the district and school web pages within a few days of each meeting.

Chairman Ortega added that the minutes are a summary of the accomplishments during each meeting.

## **8. Third Review of New/Revised Policy to be Eliminated**

- Employee Use of Information Technology (Revised)

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the policy received several iterations, including those from Attorney Peahl. Attorney Peahl assured the District that policy is well within the limits of the law.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin summarized the Employee Use of Information Technology Policy.

Board Member Barnes stated that the policy cited three different documents as resources to reference. She was unable to find two of the documents. They are the “Digital Communication Guidelines for Professional and Support Staff” and “Guidelines for Staff Web Sites and Online Digital Content”.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the references do exist. He will work with Nancy Rose to place the documents referenced by Board Member Barnes are updated in an easy to find location on the web page.

Board Member Barnes referenced the third bullet on page 4 that addressed creating a separate account if connecting with students for school-related purposes. She question if that was something the District wanted to do.

Board Member Barnes also referenced the fourth bullet on page 4 that addressed no discussion of a particular student(s), staff or other confidential District Business. She noted that much information is District business, but not all of it is sanctioned by the District.

Board Member Barnes noted that the School District does not have a person assigned to monitor the dialogue on social media twenty four hours a day seven days a week like many companies do. She feels the policy should be more structured with regards to social media communication. She stated that she is not comfortable with the policy because of the social media.

Board Member Schneider acknowledged the work that went into improving the policy. He felt best practices need to be provided to the users and there needed to be a level of monitoring. He understood Board Member Barnes concerns around social media. He would like for the policy to meet half way between Board Member Barnes concerns with social media and where it is now.

Board Member Markwell referenced the section entitled “Definitions” on page 1. He questioned if all phones should be added.

Board Member Markwell questioned if the purchase of software could assist with the monitoring of social media.

Vice Chair Powell questioned the need for a social media presence for the District. He would need to be convinced of the need and benefit before he would support social media.

Board Member Schneider spoke to the benefits of a well-crafted Facebook page. He noted that certain pictures have appropriately been shared with newspapers for publication. He felt best practices would help guide the policy.



Board Member Markwell stated newspapers often publish an action shot of a student during a sporting event. He has concerns with social media but also sees the benefit.

Chairman Ortega questioned the words “Whenever possible” in line 41 of the policy. The sentence read “Whenever possible, use District-provided communication systems when conducting District Business...”.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that district-provided communication system could be a piece of software or hardware. Some teachers might have a valid reason why they want to use software that is not sanctioned by the District. In that instance, they would need approval from the building administrator or designee.

Chairman Ortega asked that the word “your” be removed or replaced with the word “any” from line 72 of the policy.

Chairman Ortega suggested that the words unless authorized to do so be removed from line 110 of the policy.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the words “unless authorized to do so” are important. It allows for one individual to access files of another with permission from the owner of the files. It was determined that making the one long sentence (lines 108 to 110) into two sentences would add clarity.

Chairman Ortega doesn’t feel the social media can be ignored; however, caution is needed. He wants the policy to be as specific as possible. He would like to see the three documents referenced in the policy to be at least an addendum to the policy. He felt strongly that if a person downloads the policy they receive the referenced guidelines with the policy rather than having to search for them.

Vice Chair Powell also agreed that the guidelines referenced in the policy need to be accessible with the policy.

Board Member Schneider asked that the guideline cited in line 173, “Digital Communication Guidelines for Parents and Community” be a fourth guideline referenced in the policy as well.

Chairman Ortega felt the need to approve the four guidelines as extensions to the policy or included the four guidelines in the actual policy.

Chairman Ortega clarified that there will be a fourth reading of the Employee Use of Information Technology before it is approved.

- Employee Computer, Network & Internet (Current)

There was no discussion to report.

## **9. District-Wide Lease for Two-Way Radios**

Business Administrator Shevenell reported the schools have fallen behind in their radio purchase plans. He stated low leasing rates make leasing two-way radios an affordable option.

Business Administrator Shevenell recalled the 2012 evacuation drill that transported students from Thorntons Ferry Elementary School to Reeds Ferry Elementary School. During that drill it was learned that the Thorntons Ferry radios did not communicate with Reeds Ferry radios due to different styles, models and frequencies.

Business Administrator Shevenell would like for each school have its own frequency, each school have a common frequency, and each school have a frequency reserved for administrators.

Business Administrator Shevenell asked the Board to consider leasing 180 two-way radios at a cost of \$1,220 per month for four years. He recommended the funding come from each school and the technology budget. After four years the District would either keep the radios or decide whether another district-wide lease was appropriate.

Board Member Barnes stated that a four year lease would cost \$14,640 per year and \$58,560 over four years. She asked how much it would cost to purchase the 180 two-way radios.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that each radio would cost between \$250 and \$300 each, or should we buy them outright. The lease over 4 years would end up costing \$325 for each radio. At the end of the lease we would own them. The lease is inclusive of service and repairs.

Board member Markwell stated the 180 two-way radios would provide 2/3 or 3/5 of the teachers with a radio, based on 330 teachers.

Business Administrator Shevenell replied the 2013-2014 budget consists of approximately 344 teachers. He and each principal would map out an organization chart for each school, review emergency procedures and decide which people in the building would need a radio.

Board member Markwell stated that he would support leasing 15 two-way radios up to a maximum of 20 two-way radios per building. He noted that the district pays for many cell phones.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the cell phones are just for the administrators. It is feasible that three or four teachers could be responsible for taking students out to the playground in an emergency situation without a cell phone. The two-way radios would provide teachers on the playground with a way to communicate with the main office.

Board member Markwell understood the desire to have 180 two-way radios for emergency situations. He would support leasing a lesser number two-way radios.

Board Member Schneider pointed out that 180 two-way radios would be approximately 30 two-way radios per school.

Business Administrator Shevenell will provide the Board with a purchase cost compared to a lease program.

Board member Markwell asked how many wired phones the high school had.

Business Administrator Shevenell replied every classroom at the high school has one hard wired phone.

Chairman Ortega believes it is important to understand how the two-way radios will be used in different emergency situations. Consultation with the building administration to go through that process will define who needs radios and how many two-way radios are needed.

## **10. Summer Board Meeting Dates**

Superintendent Chiafery suggested that the Board schedule one meeting in July and one meeting in August.

The Board agreed that the summer meetings would be Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup> and Monday August 12<sup>th</sup>.

## **11. Other**

### a) Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

### b) Comments

Board member Barnes highlighted the Reeds Ferry Elementary School art show held on May 16. The students dressed in character actively doing works of art in the spirit of the artist, the artist in residence, an African drumming group used art to compliment the music program, and there was an ice cream social.

In response to Mr. Swonger's comments during Public Participation, Mr. Schneider stated that the board made a decision not to do the roofing. His preference is to use the money that would have been used for the roof project for the SAU building, if needed. If not, his preference would be to return that unused money back as surplus at the end of the year, provided nothing critical came up.

## **12. New Business**

Chairman Ortega explained that the high school Mandarin program was initially funded with money from the Trust Funds. He reported that the District agreed to fund the program up front with the understanding that Trust Funds would reimburse the District for the cost of the program.

Chairman Ortega read a letter from the School Board to Mr. Christensen and to the Trustees of Trust Funds.

Superintendent Chiafery asked if the School Board could meet on June 3 at 6:30 p.m. for a non-public session with Attorney Peahl regarding pending litigation.

Board Member Schneider asked when the Planning and Building Committee will come before the board to talk about the special services building and the superintendent's building.

Superintendent Chiafery replied at the June 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Board Member Schneider asked if the Common Core and math would be discussed before the fall.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin replied next year is the year for continuing dialog and research with our entire staff. He will confer with Superintendent Chiafery on when to provide the Board with a progress report.

### **13. Committee Reports**

Student Representative Crowley reported the student council and class officers were holding elections. Last week the student council voted on who would receive their scholarship.

Student Representative Crowley reported that the Science Olympiad team traveled to Ohio for the national competition last week and the high school theater group performed the Hunch Back of Notre Dame. Two weeks ago Nick was named Prom King and Hannah was named Prom Queen. The National Honor Society hosted a night for the eighth grade students to tour the high school and receive information on high school life. She noted 27 more days for the seniors and 33 more school days for underclassmen.

Board member Markwell reported that he attended a Planning and Building Committee meeting on May 13<sup>th</sup>. Most of the meeting focused on the defeat of the proposed consolidation of the Special Services Building and Administration offices and next steps. The next presentation to the school board will be June 3<sup>rd</sup>. The committee hopes to figure out what will happen to the current special services and superintendent's buildings and what to do about proposing a new building plan going forward. The space utilization study is ongoing.

Board Member Barnes reported that she attended a Professional Development Committee meeting on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The committee reviewed possible summer courses to improve skill sets. Helen Fitzgerald led a discussing on technology offerings. They spoke about distribution of funding and communicating how funding is released and the approval process for reimbursements.

Board Member Barnes attended a Parks and Recreation meeting on May 15<sup>th</sup>. The committee dissolved all subcommittees including the pavilion group and the dog park group. The committee received a presentation from Kyle Fox regarding the dog park site and some ground water issues.

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

There were no public comments on agenda items.

### **15. Manifest**

Board members took a few minutes to sign the manifest.

At 10:00 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.