

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
December 2, 2013
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Call To Order

Vice Chairman Powell called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Vice Chairman Powell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of the November 18, 2013 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2013 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2 of 9, second paragraph, correct the spelling to read Matt Waitkins
- Page 2 of 9, last paragraph, last sentence should read, “She added that the Safe Routes to School program will benefit the before school, during school, after school, nights, weekends and holidays programs and will serve beneficial for the entire community, not just the students.”
- Page 4 of 9, paragraph 2, should read “Board Member Barnes stated that she hoped that Student Representative Crowley would keep the board informed about James’ fundraising efforts.”

The motion to accept the minutes of the November 18, 2013 meeting as amended passed 4-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell presented a gift from Barnes & Noble for \$385.14 to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for a “Principal’s Night” at Barnes and Noble Book Store.

Business Administrator Shevenell presented a gift from the Brookstone Foundation for \$1,000 to Merrimack High School for the FIRST Robotics Team.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to accept the gift from Barnes and Noble for \$385.14 and the Brookstone Foundation for \$1,000.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following items for approval:

- a) Approval of Eagle Scout Project to Improve Souhegan River Trail
- b) Approval of Nicole Rheault's Request to Survey Students for Doctoral Research.

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

6. Overview of Business and Marketing Programming

Rich Zampieri, Assistant Principal at Merrimack High School, introduced Caroline Masterson and Tammy Lambrou. He spoke about the Academy of Finance, which the high school has been a part of since its inception in 2000. Merrimack high school joins seven other schools in promoting the Academy.

Caroline Masterson teaches all finance-based courses at the high school. Highlights included:

- Accounting 3 is a new course offered this year.
- The students participate in a trivia-based program called Life Smarts.
- Academy of Finance consists of five courses the students must take to graduate the program. It is a curriculum-based activity that the students choose to participate in.
- Nearly 100% of Academy students graduate high school and more than nine out of ten students continue on to college.
- She introduced Sean Woods who stated that he was an Academy of Finance high school graduate in 2009. He credits his success during high school and college and his career moves to the Academy of Finance. He felt that there is tremendous value in this program to help students move forward in their lives and careers.

Tammy Lambrou is the Marketing teacher at Merrimack High School.

- She teaches the Sports Management course which is a dual enrollment course with Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). The students in this class offer events in the school such as the Teacher Appreciation Night to raise funds for the volley ball program, raising money for cancer, and raising funds through "Hock Socks".
- She teaches the Marketing course at the high school, where students learn about the daily activities in the retail environment.
- DECA (formerly known as Distributive Educational Clubs of America), is an organization for business and marketing students. In the past years there have been one hundred forty-two students participating in DECA.
- She introduced Nick Macella, a senior at Merrimack High School. For him, DECA is a lifestyle. His involvement since his sophomore year has led to his election as an officer on the state level. He feels that DECA is not just a business organization. It provides opportunities for students and focuses on leadership skills. He will be attending the National Conference.

Vice Chairman Powell thanked all the participants for bringing this valuable information to the board.

Board Member Barnes asked Nick where and when the National DECA conference will be held.

Nick Macella responded that the conference will be the first week in May in Atlanta, Georgia. Expenses will run around one thousand (\$1,000) dollars. He added that fundraising and personal funds will pay for the conference expenses, including flights to and from Atlanta.

Board Member Barnes asked if the students have prerequisite coursework in order to take the Sports Management courses.

Ms. Lambrou responded that there are no prerequisite courses for this program.

Ms. Masterson added that in order to take Accounting 3, both Accounting 1 and Accounting 2 must have been completed.

Board Member Barnes asked about the transfer of credits from the high school to colleges.

Ms. Masterson responded that Accounting 3 is considered a freshman/sophomore course in college.

Board Member Barnes thanked Mr. Woods for coming back to Merrimack and speaking to the board about his successes due to being part of the Academy of Finance.

Board Member Schneider asked if the marketing and business classes are marketed within the schools, beyond those students who think of finance as a career.

Ms. Lambrou responded that right now the Sports Management course is not open to freshmen but they are given information about the course if they choose to take it in the future. This is the first year freshman can be part of DECA. She added that the high school students themselves do a great job in marketing the courses.

Nick Macella added that this year a few schools in the state are getting middle school students involved with the DECA program and perhaps this is something Merrimack can do.

Ms. Lambrou added that even if a student is not going into the finance field, there are many things they learn as life-skills such as writing checks, budgeting and building a resume to market themselves as an employee or employer.

Vice Chairman Powell thanked all the participants. He thanked Nick Macella for giving Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin a charge to look into marketing these business courses to middle school students.

7. Summary of Merrimack School District Performance on Spring 2013 NECAP Science Assessment

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin gave a summary of the NECAP scores in science for 2013.

- The test scores were for grades four, eight and eleven. The report that he shared with the board included Merrimack results and state results. Each grade level has two reports which are the 2013 results across four reporting levels (level 4 being the highest and level 1 being the lowest) and the differentials in per cents from 2012 across the four levels to show growth or decline over the past year.
- The results reported were not tested last year so there is no trend here because Merrimack results have generally gone up and down.

- What is clear is that the inquiry strand is our poorest performance, which is the reason the results are not higher.
- The standards that are being focused on now and in the future significantly increase the requirements for inquiry.

Board Member Barnes stated that she would be interested in looking at where the eleventh grade NECAP scores in science and math align with the rubrics for what we are expecting the students to follow as far as what the teachers are telling them about their comprehension in these areas of study. She asked if we are really accomplishing establishing the skill sets if we are not performing on the assessments.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that he is hoping to see that our standards and rubrics would exceed those of the NECAP scores. The standards are a more sustainable measure of what the students know and demonstrate.

Board Member Barnes stated that standardized tests such as SATs and Graduate school tests are a measure of performance for getting into these programs. These are standardized measures in their competencies.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that mid-terms and finals have played a major role in student grades. Now with the standards, grades are not dependent on these test grades, but rather are based on completion of the standards. The learning must be prioritized.

Board Member Schneider stated that we are going in the right direction. He added that Merrimack is significantly above the rest of the state in Level 1. That means we are doing something right. We need to apply the competencies now and must be consistent.

Board Member Markwell noted that if you look at the numbers for level 1, Merrimack is below the state levels.

Board Member Schneider responded that what the figures show is more of the districts in the state are at a lower level than Merrimack.

Board Member Markwell commented that the number of students tested was significantly lower than the previous year, but the scores did not radically change with less students being tested. There is a consistency there.

8. Overview of Proposed 2014-2015 School District Budget

Superintendent Chiafery explained that the building administrators and district leadership worked together to determine the budget. They used the District Logic Model and focused on literacy and numeracy because those are the two areas that will be assessed on Smarter Balance, as well as technology integration and ongoing efforts for a positive school climate.

Superintendent Chiafery added that important areas in this budget are technology plans, enrollment projections, Capital Improvement Plan and a furniture replacement plan. She stated that the board's message to her regarding the budget is critical and hopefully will be addressed in the budget. There are several major areas the board may want to address:

Gas Conversion

The board needs to go back and review the plan. Superintendent Chiafery questioned if this would be a warrant article and if it would be a lease/purchase agreement.

Establishment of a Trust Fund specifically for Health Care premiums

The board has to determine if there is some way to have some savings to offset the high costs of the health cost premiums. Superintendent Chiafery added that they would be dealing with legal counsel on this as well as others who may have some knowledge on the establishment of a trust fund.

Retention of a specified percentage of surplus from year-end unassigned general funds.

This money would be used to either reduce the tax rate or be used for emergencies. If used for emergencies, the funds have to be approved by the Commissioner of Education. Superintendent Chiafery added that she will explore what other districts have done to move forward with this particular warrant article and, if so, what might the expenditures be used for.

Classroom Instructional Focus

Superintendent Chiafery highlighted furniture plans, which are all different for each school. Textbooks: The 7th grade needs textbooks for the Life Science course. In the high school, textbooks are needed for finance, marketing and psychology courses. There will be some on-line courses, but textbooks are still needed.

Special Services

The budget for special services is up 2.9% because of a higher rate in tuition costs for schools inside and outside of New Hampshire. As a part of this budget, transportation costs have gone up by 4%. That includes transportation for special education students as well as the general population of students.

Maintenance

Included are Capital Improvement Plan items, as was requested by the board. Included items are asbestos abatement at James Masticola Upper Elementary School, replacement of a section of the roof at the high school and replacement of the chiller (part of the HVAC system) at the high school. There is also an item for the replacement of a 2000 model truck with a plow. Mr. Touseau has had high maintenance costs of this vehicle over the past couple of years and feels it should be replaced.

Proposal for a study of a long-term enrollment project and space utilization.

This study will be done by NESDEC (New England School Development Council) and will be useful in the consolidation of the SAU/SPED offices.

Library/Media Technology

This is the second year of a five year infrastructure plan. This is included in the Capital Improvement Plan. Superintendent Chiafery brought it before the board because it represents a cost of \$214,000.

Figures

The Administrative Budget of 2014-2015 is \$68,728,290.00 as compared to the approved Operating Budget for 2013-2014 of \$66,968,114.00. The difference is \$1,760,176.00 and represents 2.53% more than the 2013-2014 Operating Budget.

The 2014-2015 Default Budget, as required under RSA40:13, is \$68,815,621.00. The proposed Administrative budget is \$87,331.00 less than the Default Budget. During the budget hearings Business Administrator Shevenell will present the Default Budget.

Budget Hearings

On November 19, 2013 Superintendent Chiafery met with Budget Chair Cinda Guagliumi and School Board Chair Chris Ortega. Schedules were reviewed budgetary questions and liaison meetings were discussed and dates confirmed. Ms. Guagliumi will receive the budgetary questions from her committee by December 11, 2013, which means they will have one week to prepare their questions. After she works on the questions, Ms. Guagliumi will forward them to Superintendent Chiafery to present to the board for the December 16, 2013 meeting.

The proposed budget hearings for the school board are:

- December 16:** Regular board meeting and discussions of the Food Services budget and the Maintenance budget.
- January 6:** Regular board meeting and discussions of the Special Services and Library/Media/Tech budgets.
- January 8:** Board Budget Hearings for the upper elementary school, the middle school and the high school, with time available if any department/school needs an additional session.
- January 13:** Board Budget Hearings for Mastricola, Reeds Ferry and Thorntons Ferry Elementary Schools and the Central Office, with time available if any department/school needs an additional session.

Superintendent Chiafery explained when the hearings are held, both large and small items will be discussed. The Budget Committee questions would be heard after the school board asks their questions, which was not the case last year. She would like the questions from the board so they can be given to the Maintenance and Food Service personnel before the meeting on December 16, 2013.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the liaison meetings with the departments will be held after the board has determined it does not need more time with a particular budget.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that he appreciated the board having Budget Committee questions ahead of time. He asked when Superintendent Chiafery would like the board's questions submitted to her.

Superintendent Chiafery replied that she would like the questions for Maintenance and Food Services by December 11, 2013. She would like the questions for Special Services and Library/Media/Technology by December 13, 2013.

Board Member Markwell asked if the meetings on December 16 and January 6 could begin at 7:00 p.m. so the regular board meeting following the budget discussions would not run too late.

Vice Chairman Davis responded that he could not unilaterally make the decision to begin the meetings at 7:00 p.m. He would discuss this with Chairman Ortega.

Board Member Barnes stated that the Maintenance budget has been complicated in the past with several questions to answer. She asked if there could be time at on January 8th that could be used as "overflow" for the Maintenance budget.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that some of the Maintenance budget items have been discussed with Mr. Touseau in the past, and therefor she anticipates having enough time on December 16th. However, if more time is needed, the Maintenance budget can roll over to another date. She added that all the principals and directors have been made aware that they may be called for another night.

Vice Chairman Powell stated that the schedule they received was given to the board with Superintendent Chiafery knowing what is going on in each budget. She and the directors and principals have determined the schedule together. He felt the board should follow their guidance without changing or adding any department's budget to another meeting.

Board Member Barnes stated that she did not see a time scheduled to discuss the warrant articles.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the warrant articles will be discussed on January 21, 2014. She added that she suggested the board members examine the budget books and form their questions as well as determining if more time is needed for a particular budget area.

Board Member Schneider asked for a time-line for the Budget Committee meetings.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the Budget Committee will receive their materials on December 3, 2013. She will receive their questions as soon as possible so they can be funneled out to the board.

Board Member Schneider asked if the board will have enough time to go over the questions for Maintenance and Food Services.

Superintendent Chiafery responded she did not expect a huge number of questions, similar to last year when many Budget Committee members listened, but did not submit questions. They tended to ask their questions at their own hearings.

Board Member Schneider asked if the questions would get proper attention in the time allotted. He would like to get the Maintenance questions given to that department as soon as possible.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that when she met with the Budget Committee, they took what they learned from last year's budget, and everyone felt the time for each budget was sufficient.

Business Administrator Shevenell added that Tom Touseau, Maintenance Director, is not expecting a large amount of questions. He added that the CD's containing the budget will be available on December 3, 2013 as well as be available on the district's web page.

9. Other

a) Correspondence

Board members received correspondence regarding AP courses at the high school. Vice Chairman Powell sent a response to the correspondence.

b) Comments

There were no comments to report.

10. New Business

There was no new business to report.

11. Committee Reports

Student Representative Crowley reported that the winter track started on December 2nd. She also stated that the Student Council is holding a decorating contest of the cafeteria and main lobby with a “Winter Wonderland” theme. The two competing teams are freshmen and sophomores versus the juniors and seniors. Ms. Crowley added that the World Language Department will be doing an exchange program where the students will go to school and live with families while on exchange. She added that the Chinese exchange students arrived on December 2nd. There will be a welcome breakfast for them on Tuesday, December 3rd.

Board Member Markwell stated that the Health Care Cost Containment Committee will meet on December 4th.

12. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments on agenda items.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:00 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.