

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
January 24, 2011
Merrimack High School – Cafeteria
PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES**

PRESENT: Chairman Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman Thornton, Board Members Barnes, Ortega, Swonger and Student Representative McLavey. Also present were Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, and Business Administrator Shevenell.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vaillancourt led the pledge of allegiance.

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

Chairman Vaillancourt requested a moment of silence in memory of former Merrimack School District Superintendent Claude Leavitt.

2. Approval of January 3, 2011 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to approve the January 3, 2011 minutes.

Board Member Barnes requested the following corrections.

- Consistency with the capitalization of the words Board and Board Member throughout the document.
- Consistency with the usage of the title of Chairman or Chair and the title Vice Chairman or Vice Chair.

Board member Ortega requested the following corrections.

- Page 3 of 5, last paragraph, the word “review” should be changed to “reviewed”.

Vice Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following corrections.

- Page 3 of 5, paragraph eight, the second and third sentences should read “She stated that past practice of previous boards has not been to spend the extra surplus money added into the operating budget at a deliberative session. She stated that legally the Board could spend surplus money if the operating budget failed and the default budget became operational, but, would like to believe that it wouldn’t.”
- Page 4 of 5, paragraph two, the sentence should read “Board member Ortega asked if the Board was required to set aside any amount of money and if so, is there a specific amount that is required.”
- Page 4 of 5, section 5 should contain another sentence stating that Superintendent Chiafery also noted that the food service, James Masticola Upper Elementary School and maintenance budgets would be presented that evening.

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

Pat Merchant of 118 Baboosic Lake Road, asked how it was determined that students be left in the building the day of the bomb scare.

Ms. Merchant stated that when her daughter rides the bus to school, she arrives with two minutes before the start of the school day. She expressed her displeasure over the fact that it took twenty minutes for a bus to respond to a broken down school bus containing students. She stated that one very cold morning buses were late and students had to wait outside in extreme cold. She asked that parents be notified when school buses run late.

Chairman Vaillancourt explained that the Board does not answer questions during public participation. She informed Ms. Merchant that her complaints would not be addressed at the Board level. She asked Ms. Merchant to call the Superintendent's office in the morning and noted that the administration would address her concerns.

4. Consent Agenda

a) Teacher Nomination

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher nomination.

- Amanda Spadafora, Health Teacher at Merrimack Middle School

Board Member Swonger moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Draft Warrant Articles for the 2011 Warrant

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that Article 3, the teachers' contract, was revised with the assistance of legal counsel in an attempt to make it more clear and concise. He corrected a typo in the budgeted request that changed the total of Article 6, the operation budget, to \$65,340,419. That amount represents the Administration Budget (\$65,728,466) less the School Board Adjustments (\$388,047).

Board Member Ortega moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to recommend Article 2.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Board Member Swonger moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to recommend Article 3 as written.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that Article 3 is a two year contract and the estimated increase in the cost is \$630,656. The \$630,656 increase minus \$450,000 in savings realized by the school district due to an increase in the negotiated contribution level by the Merrimack Teachers Association toward the cost of their health insurance and other changes in the health plan design resulted in the appropriated dollar amount of \$180,656 for Article 3.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to accept Article 4.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Board Member Swonger moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to recommend Article 5.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Vaillancourt clarified that it is this Board's intent to ask the voters to speak on whether they are willing to place money in a capital reserve fund at the end of budget years 2010-11 and 2011-12 prior to putting the construction of a consolidated Superintendent and Special Services Office building on a warrant article.

Board Member Swonger moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to recommend Article 6.

Board Member Swonger compared the proposed 2011-12 budget and the collective bargaining agreement to the 2010-11 budget plus the roofing project and a different collective bargaining agreement. He noted a total increase of 0.76% from last year to this year.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Vaillancourt announced the School District deliberative session would be held on Monday, March 7, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School. Voting will take place on Tuesday, April 12, 2011.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that at a recent Town Council Budget meeting she heard the Town Manager make what she considered an unprofessional and ill informed comment regarding salary increases pertaining to the School District administration. She encouraged those who saw the meeting and have questions and/or concerns to contact her or any other board member for the complete information and all the facts.

6. Summary of Professional Development Activities on January 14, 2011.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin summarized the various professional development activities that took place on January 14, 2011, the half-day teachers' workshop.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the kindergarten through grade six teachers worked on the next step of the collaborative assessment project. Activities included ways to assess progress, assess how the district is doing on particular topics and how to make decisions based on the data collected.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the seventh and eighth grade teachers continued their standards work at the middle school level. He also noted the continued and consistent efforts to support the instructional leaders at the middle school.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the high school teachers worked on the development of competency-based assessments which is an appropriately slow and deliberate process.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the elementary level paraeducators spent the afternoon learning about Response to Intervention, a national initiative. He explained that Response to Intervention develops in-class interventions as part of the regular program.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the secondary level paraeducators spent the afternoon learning about behavior management.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the nurses spent the afternoon with a specialist in the field of children's mental health.

Board Member Swonger stated that he was pleased with the fact that professional development is staying course to the plan and the way it is being approached. His examples included a focus on using data to make decisions, self assessment, and measuring things that are more qualitative than quantitative such as student engagement.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she has been please with the data-driven decisions and the District's Logic Model for years. She explained that the Logic Model is the document that drives the School District's short term goals and long term objectives regarding education pertaining to technology, literacy, numeracy and school climate. She believes that standards-based work and competencies are going to bring the District into the next generation of education. She stated that the elementary level ground work has now reached the middle school level. She added that the Logic Model has allowed the District to continually stay focused on the same goals.

Chairman Vaillancourt thanked all staff, paraeducators, nurses, and administrators for their effort in helping the District to reach its goals.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that input from the staff, administrators, and parents regarding half-day workshops would be helpful prior to the Board's consideration of the 2011-2012 school calendar.

7. Second Review of Updated and New Policies

a) Administering Medication to Students.

Superintendent Chiafery responded to all the questions raised by the Board at the previous meeting.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the Administering Medication to Students policy would appear on the next consent agenda.

b) Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention

Superintendent Chiafery responded in detail to questions raised by the Board at the previous meeting.

Student Representative McLavey stated that high school students do not speak up about bullying incidents as much as students in lower grade levels.

Student Representative McLavey will share the Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention policy with the high school student council next week.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she is proud of the School Board's review of policies. She noted that Board members have questioned policy content that has resulted in additional consultation with the attorney resulting in improvement to the policy.

8. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the Board received at least two emails requesting that the School Board consider not scheduling the February 2012 vacation the same week as the Massachusetts.

Chairman Vaillancourt received email from George Markwell indicating that his previous comments were misrepresented. She explained that Mr. Markwell wanted it clarified that he did not support putting money aside in a capital reserve fund for the construction of a combined special services and superintendent office building. However, if the school board wanted to create a capital reserve fund for that purpose he felt it should be placed on a warrant article for the voters to decide.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the School District does not have the authority to set aside money as savings for future years without voter approval through a warrant article.

Board Member Ortega reported that the Board received an invitation from Rosemarie Rung to attend a Merrimack Parents Action League meeting on Wednesday, March 2, 2011 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the town hall meeting room and that Chief Milligan will speak about underage alcohol and substance abuse in Merrimack.

b) Comments

Superintendent Chiafery stated that there were technical difficulties with PowerSchool this past week. She announced that report cards would go home with students in kindergarten through grade four on February 4. Report cards for students in grades five through twelve would go home on February 11.

Board Member Ortega requested that the Board be notified of the administration's response to Ms. Merchant's concerns that she raised during the public participation.

9. New Business

There was no new business to report.

10. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes reported that the Program Evaluation and Review Committee members reviewed rigor posters that were created by art students. The committee selected an appropriate poster for each grade level to be voted on by the students at Reeds Ferry Elementary School.

Mark McLaughlin stated that the rigor statement speaks to the District's position on what it means to provide a rigorous education for students from the teacher's perspective and what it means for students to be engaged in rigorous learning.

Board member Barnes reported that the Grater Woods Subcommittee decided not to change any work done to date, including trail plans. The Subcommittee set a tentative goal to have the document ready to present to the Merrimack Conservation Commission in April.

Board Member Barnes reported that she attended a New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) Delegate Assembly on January 15. Topics that were discussed included the bullying law, the evergreen law and the retirement plan. She reported a favorable vote regarding the retention of surplus funds. She noted that Londonderry School District reported that bond rates were based on the inability to retain a surplus.

Board Member Barnes reported that she attended a parks and recreation meeting. She shared the O'Gara Drive tennis court agreement between the School District and the Town of Merrimack, effective through 2018 as it needs to be decided between the School Board and the Town Council. She reported that based on that document the parks and recreation department was seeking to have the O'Gara Drive tennis courts deemed inactive. She requested that the O'Gara Drive tennis courts be discussed at the next joint meeting with the School Board and the Town Council.

Board Member Ortega reported that he attended a Budget Committee meeting on January 11th. The food service, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and the maintenance budgets were presented. He reported that the library and media, the special services, the three elementary schools, the high school and the district-wide budgets would be presented to the Budget Committee on January 25, 2011.

Board Member Ortega reported that he attended a Professional Development Committee meeting. The committee discussed the coordination and plans for the January 14, 2011 half-day teacher workshop. The Professional Development Master Plan was reviewed as it pertains to travel reimbursement and credits.

Board Member Ortega reported that he was unable to attend the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee meeting due to business travel.

11. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments to report.

12. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:10 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.