

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack High School Cafeteria
April 4, 2011
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Call To Order

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

Chairman Vaillancourt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of March 21, 2011 Minutes

Board Member Ortega moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to approve the minutes

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes

- Page 1 of 8, paragraph 6, change the word “office” to “offices”
- Page 3 of 8, section 5, paragraph 3, change the word ‘ipad’ to i-Pad”
- Page 4 of 8, paragraph 4, first sentence, add “Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin shared with the Board that” before “Principal Johnson...”
- Page 5 of 8, paragraph 2, remove the last sentence starting with “Member Barnes....”
- Page 6 of 8, paragraph 7, remove the words “at the high school” and replace with “kindergarten through grade twelve”
- Page 6 of 8, paragraph 7, change the word “accept” to “apply for”
- Page 7 of 8, paragraph 3, change the word “is” with “wasn’t”
- Page 8 of 8, section 10, change the word “Greater” to “Grater”

Board Member Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 4 of 8, section 6, paragraph 4, change the tense to reflect the past tense
- Page 4 of 8, paragraph 2 from the bottom, insert the phrase “up through grade eleven” after “reading seems to hold its own in proficiency”
- Page 7 of 8, paragraph 4, sentence 4, add the word “be” before “part of the operating budget” and change the word “viable” to “friable”

Vice Chairman Thornton requested the following changes to the minutes

- Page 6 of 8, second paragraph from the bottom should read “Business Administrator Shevenell reported that currently students in grades kindergarten through grade four ride the bus together, students in grades five and six ride together, and students in grades six through twelve ride together. He could review a model where grades kindergarten through grade six ride together and grades seven through twelve ride together. That model may provide some efficiency that could reduce the number of busses by at least one.”
- Page 7 of 8, paragraph 6, insert the following sentence between sentences two and three, “It was nice that the three positions that were eliminated could be attained through attrition.”

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 5 of 8, and page 7 of 8 change the words “loose” to “lose”
- Page 5 of 8, paragraph 4, replace “...100% in...” to “...100% proficiency requirement in...”
- Page 5 of 8, last paragraph, sentence two should read “First, there will be a new town manager and a new police chief and the concern for the potential removal of the school resource officer at the high school.”
- Page 6 of 8, paragraph 1, change the word “module” to “model”
- Page 6 of 8, paragraph 2, add the following to the end of the paragraph. “If a teacher is eliminated, the department heads could absorb some of the students, but not all. Approximately fifty students would be without a teacher and specific teacher duties and obligations would be affected.”
- Page 6 of 8, last paragraph, replace the words “is a question” with “was a concern expressed”
- Page 7 of 8, paragraph 5, should read “Superintendent Chiafery noted that when she proposed the 3 tiers of possible reductions, she considered the charge that the School Board gave to her which included not increasing class size or diminishing any programs we have in place now.”
- Page 7 of 8, paragraph 7, last sentence, should read, “...proud of the Board for preparing for the possibility for an increase in expenditures of another million dollars.
- Page 7 of 8, paragraph 5, remove “everything” and replace with “capital projects steady so as not to cause tax spikes”

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Acceptance of Gifts/Grants under \$5,000 (Business Administrator Shevenell)

- From Shaw’s to Thornton Ferry Elementary School for \$250 to support nutrition health and wellness in the building through the distribution of a parent information booklet.
- From the Lions’s Club to Merrimack High School for \$1,000 to be used by the economics classes who will be making \$25 loans to small business around the world through the KIVA High School program.
- From the Local Government Center WELLDollar Program to the Merrimack School District for \$4,000 for construction of a wellness walking trail at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. The Local Government Center is the provider of the District’s health insurance.

Board Member Ortega moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to approve the Gifts/Grants under \$5,000.

Board Member Ortega asked Business Administrator Shevenell to explain what the pamphlet for the Shaw’s gift will look like. Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the pamphlet will not be marketing material for Shaw’s, but will show in some small way that Shaw’s is a sponsor.

Board Member Swonger commented on the gift from the Lions Club. He felt that the students get involved in the whole practice of micro-lending.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

a) Teacher Resignations

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher resignations.

- Sheila Haven - Grade Four Teacher at James Mastricola Elementary School
- Deborah Hodge - Language Arts Coordinator at Merrimack Middle School
- Steven McGettigan - Computer Technology Educator at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Bruce Bonin - Computer Technology Educator at James Mastricola Elementary School
- Diane Dufour - Family Consumer Science Teacher at Merrimack High School
- Stephen Rand - Science Teacher at Merrimack Middle School
- Catherine Jerszyk - Grade Two Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Gary Filiault - Math Teacher at Merrimack High School

b) Approval of Expenditure of IDEA Recovery Funds for \$423,854.00

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to approve the Consent Agenda.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

6. Merrimack High School Science Olympiad State Competition Results Sean Muller, James Davis and Students Caitlin Ortega and Kevin Palm

Student Caitlin Ortega reported that the Science Olympiad is a competitive science team that competes in twenty-two events in various subjects such as anatomy and physiology, forensics, chemistry, and build events. She explained that this year there were three teams made up of forty-four students. Merrimack won fourteen gold medals, fourteen silver medals and eight bronze medals.

The coaches for the teams are Mr. Muller, Mr. Davis and Mrs. Soucy along with nine teacher mentors. Sponsors include Conductive Compounds of Nashua, the Merrimack Rotary Club, and Merrimack Family Chiropractors.

Several fundraisers have been planned to help raise money to assist with expenses for the teams to attend the National competition in Madison, Wisconsin.

Chairman Vaillancourt, Board Member Ortega and Vice Chairman Thornton gave thanks to the team and teachers for the presentation, their inspiration and she wished them good luck.

7. Presentation about Literacy Efforts in Grades K-8

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin introduced the educators making the presentation: Nicole Rheault from James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, Susan Matthews from James Mastricola Elementary School, Sydney Conti from Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, Dianne Macon from Reeds Ferry Elementary School and Debbie Hodge from Merrimack Middle School, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Diane Macon spoke about the Collaborative Assessment Project (CAP) which focuses on an initiative that guarantees that all students will possess the essential skills and strategy development and the implementation and refinement of CAP. She added that Professional Learning Teams (PLT) is the glue that holds the project together.

Sydney Conti spoke about the role of the Language Arts Coordinators relative to coaching, training and resources. She explained that the Language Arts Coordinators work very closely with teachers to carry out the standard curriculum.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked for an explanation of the acronyms for Title I and MARS.

Ms. Conti explained that Title I is the federally funded grant for reading and math intervention in the three elementary schools. The acronym MARS refers to Math and Reading Success.

Susan Matthews continued to explain the roles of the Language Arts Coordinator. They are able to diagnose students' reading or writing difficulties by examining the results of standardized testing.

Nicole Rheault spoke about the traditional role of the Language Arts Coordinator with an emphasis on coordination and integration. They track the students' progress throughout their transition from one class to another and one school to another to determine the best interventions for the students.

School Board Member Swonger wanted to know to if resources were available from the State or professional associations or other districts.

Ms. Macon explained that the Language Arts Coordinators work with standards that were adopted by the State Department of Education. Many of programs implemented were accomplished while working alongside other districts, other resources, and other schools.

Board Member Ortega asked if there were trends or challenges that need more focus.

Language Arts Coordinator Macon stated that, based on formative data, they use teacher created formative assessments, which are definitely positive trends.

Board Member Ortega reported that he had attended the James Masticola Elementary School Battle of the Books. Four teams consisting of six fourth grade students had to read seven different books. All the students were clearly engaged and inspired by the activity.

Board Member Barnes reiterated that the Language Arts Coordinators are involved in world language, literacy, the safety committee, the math task force and the library. She gave kudos to the Language Arts Coordinators for their efforts.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the Language Arts Coordinators are teacher leaders. She added that there is Board and District support in terms of staying true to the Logic Model (short term and long term objectives and goals for the District), the Collaborative Assessment Project and the standard based curriculum. She suggested the School Board meet with the Language Arts Coordinators at least once a year.

8. Board's Response to Proposed Budget Cuts to Defray Possible Additional Expenditure for Retirement Costs

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that some of the Board members, including herself, have received questions regarding the three tiered approach. Since there is the potential loss of revenue from the State and the potential increase in expenditures, more work has to be done to help people understand the differences between the two.

Board Member Swonger explained the difference between expenses (how much money we are going to spend as a District) and revenue (how much money will be raised). He reported that the expenses of salaries, insurance and retirement make up two-thirds of the budget in the amount of \$65,721,000. Most of the revenue comes from local school taxes and property taxes.

Board Member Swonger stated that the budget approved by the voters is a "hard ceiling" budget, which means the expenses cannot go above the amount the voters authorized. Revenues must cover the expenses. The District is not allowed to borrow, cannot go into debt and cannot retain a surplus.

Chairman Vaillancourt questioned the potential loss of State funding for vocational programs and how it would affect the Merrimack School District.

Business Manager Shevenell explained that the Merrimack School District receives about eight thousand dollars in transportation aid to transport students to vocational centers or applied technology centers. The centers receive State subsidies in order to educate students from other districts. If the subsidies are cut, districts may have to share tuition costs.

Vice Chairman Thornton asked if the District was required to provide transportation to the vocational programs. Business Administrator Shevenell responded the high school handbook states that the District will provide transportation to the vocational centers. Superintendent Chiafery added that the District has an obligation to facilitate students' attendance at the vocational centers. The District's primary vocational contract is with Alvirne High School in Hudson. Additional vocational contracts include Nashua High School North, Nashua High School South, and Milford High School. Presently, there is one bus transporting students to Alvirne High School and two busses transporting students to Nashua.

School Board Member Barnes stated that she was not only concerned about the availability of student parking at the vocational centers, but also questioned the responsibility of the District when students transport themselves to and from the vocational centers.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she and Business Administrator Shevenell attended a business meeting of the New Hampshire School Administrators. She explained that the New Hampshire School Administrator Executive Director, Mark Joyce reported that the legislative process had just begun and that potential budget cuts won't be known until June.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that if the District is going to fill the open staff positions, the matter should be addressed formally so that Superintendent Chiafery can take action before April 15, 2011.

Board Member Ortega moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to instruct Superintendent Chiafery to give notice to the affected professional and support staff identified in phase one and phase two of the reductions to the budget.

Superintendent Chiafery clarified that the affected professional staff would not be offered a contract at this time and the affected support staff would not be offered a statement of employment at this time.

Board Member Barnes asked Superintendent Chiafery how lower student enrollments impact the reductions reflected in the budget.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that in tier 1 there are three professional positions – two school psychologists and one kindergarten teacher who are not returning in the fall. In tier 2 there are two teachers who are retiring. These positions will close. Unless there is another whole kindergarten class a new contract will not be offered for a kindergarten teacher.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the last possible date for a commitment on the construction of the entrances at Reeds Ferry Elementary School and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School would be mid May. The contractors need time to enter bids and complete the construction.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that budget discussions will continue at the July School Board meeting. Superintendent Chiafery will continue to update the Board on legislative decisions.

Board Member Swonger asked if there was a legal time line for putting out a bid. Business Administrator Shevenell replied that there is no legal time line, but he would like to give bidders at least thirty days to respond.

9. Other

• Correspondence

Chairman Vaillancourt highlighted a letter from Robert Best, Chairman of the Merrimack Planning Board appointing Chairman Vaillancourt to the Town of Merrimack Master Plan Advisory Committee and Tracy Bull as the alternate to represent the School Board. The first meeting will take place on April 19, 2011.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she was interviewed by a consultant regarding the Town's Master Plan. They were very interested in her perspective of the future of the school system, as well as the growth patterns over time.

• Comments

School Board Member Ortega attended the Math Night at the James Masticola Elementary School where the principal and the team presented the math curriculum and explained how they present it to the children.

Board Member Ortega spoke about Destination Imagination. He attended the State competition at Nashua North High School where four Merrimack teams competed. One team from the James Masticola Upper Elementary School took first place and will attend the Global Competition at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Chairman Vaillancourt invited everyone to attend the Merrimack High School musical, Urintown, on April 14, 15 or 16.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin defined “rigor” which is a central tenant in current education conversations, and referenced the book, Rigor is Not a Four Letter Word by author Barbara Blackburn. The high school art department created visuals that would help to express the students’ sense of rigor. He presented the elementary and high school definitions of rigor that are now posted in every classroom.

10. New Business

There was no new business to report.

11. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes reported that she attended a Program Evaluation and Review Committee (PERC) on March 22nd. The committee reviewed a psychology and literature course to be offered to juniors and seniors in the fall. It will bring forth a new era of literature and some publications where students can look at the characters and psychology of the conditions the characters are facing in the book.

Vice Chairman Thornton reported that she attended the Merrimack Safeguard, formerly the Drug Advisory Committee on March 31st. She noted that Officer Prentice has formed a new group within Merrimack Safeguard which consists of approximately twenty youth. She reported that the Merrimack Police Department is sponsoring a prescription drug take back day on April 30, 2011.

12. Public comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:45 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to recess to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a),(b),(c).

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

At 10:27 p.m. Vice Chairman Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.