

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack High School Cafeteria
May 16, 2011**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

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

1. Call To Order

Chairman Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

Chairman Vaillancourt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of May 2, 2011 Minutes

Board Member Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2011 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 1, item 2, add “Board Member Barnes spoke in support and appreciation of Chairman Vaillancourt’s leadership in this last year”.
- Page 6, item 16, correct the spelling to read Manifest

Board Member Thornton requested the following change to the minutes.

- Page 6 of 6, item 14, paragraph 1, second sentence, should read “...she and Business Administrator Shevenell”
- Page 3 of 6, item 9, paragraph 2, should read “Superintendent Chiafery” instead of “Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin”
- Page 3 of 6, paragraph 5 from bottom, should be Board Member Markwell

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following change to the minutes

- Page 3 of 6, item 9, paragraph 3, insert “School District” before leadership team
- Page 3 of 6, item 9, paragraph 3, should read “the Police Department” instead of Town Council
- Page 3 of 6, bottom paragraph, should read “reduction of one police officer and how it might affect the School Resource Officer (SRO) position at the High School”
- Page 4 of 6, item 11, paragraph 2 remove the word “tight” in reference to the door system
- Page 4 of 6, item 11, paragraph 3, should read “...explained that the budget amount was \$200,000”, removing “put out to bid”
- Page 6 of 6, paragraph 1, Superintendent Chiafery had discussions with Nick Lavallee of Merrimack TV.

Board Member Barnes requested the following change to the minutes

- Page 3 of 6, item 9, paragraph 3 should read “Superintendent Chiafery noted that the updated policy was a work in progress between the school district leadership team the Merrimack police department and the Town Council’s counsel, Attorney Upton.

The motion passed 4-0-1 with Vice Chairman Ortega abstaining.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Consent Agenda

a) Teacher Resignations/Retirements

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher resignations/retirements.

- Pamela Fariole, Grade One Teacher at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Catherine E. Searles, Kindergarten Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Katie Bonin, World Language Teacher at Merrimack High School
- Alison Vermilyea, Grade Four Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School

b) Teacher Nominations

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher nominations.

- Kelly Chiappetta, Grade One Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Keith Conley, Special Education Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Laraine Fay, Grade Five Teacher at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Amy Gilliam, Computer Education Teacher at James Mastricola Elementary School
- Holly Lubelczyk, Part-Time Kindergarten Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Merrimack High School: A Year in Review

Principal Ken Johnson introduced Assistant Principals Peter Bergeron, Richard Zampieri, Cheryl Smith and Technology Coordinator Mark Merrifield. He introduced the presentation, “Faces of Merrimack High School”.

Thirty students briefly offered highlights of their experiences at Merrimack High School. Some students spoke about how educational teams, athletic teams, and independent study programs had a positive impact on their high school experience. All students spoke honestly and proudly.

Chairman Vaillancourt thanked the students and administration for their presentations.

Principal Johnson continued with a presentation of “A Year in Review” highlighting the past year at Merrimack High School. He spoke about accreditation, the “Plan for Success” for the positive NECAP scores, the three day Challenge Day Program (dealing with bullying and harassment), and the annual drop out rate. He continued to site programs that have been successful, such as the Science Olympiad and the FIRST Program. Stressing teachers’ credit in the areas of collaboration, Principal Johnson spoke about State mandated competencies, curriculum, instruction and data sharing. Some outstanding successes of teacher and student awards were mentioned.

Principal Johnson finished with plans for the future, including the creation of a Center for International Studies Program, which would include Arabic as well as Mandarin languages, working together with the University of New Hampshire. There will also be a follow-up with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) recommendations, which include reviewing, amending and creating a more modern mission statement for the next decade.

Principal Johnson introduced the department heads who were in attendance and noted the importance of the Building Leadership Teams (BLT) at the high school. John Snell, chairman of the science department spoke to the board about leadership in the departments. Raymond Blank, math department head spoke about the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) scores.

Principal Johnson completed his presentation by thanking the students who participated, the department heads, teachers, support staff, and especially the parents for valuing their child's education and preparing them to be a part of Merrimack High School.

Board Member Thornton thanked Principal Johnson for his presentation and also thanked the students for coming before the board.

Chairman Vaillancourt also thanked Principal Johnson for bringing the department heads to the meeting. She congratulated everyone for a successful year at Merrimack High School. The dates of June 13, 2011 (Awards Night) and June 18, 2011 (Graduation) were noted.

6. Athletic Fields Needs Committee Report

Chairman Vaillancourt introduced Tim Tenhave and Jim Taylor, members of the Athletic Fields Needs Committee, and gave a brief history of the committee. She noted that the board would not take any action on this project at this time.

Mr. Tenhave reported that the committee had met since 2007 putting the plan together. The committee, which consisted of members of the School District, Merrimack Village District (MVD), Merrimack Youth Association (MYA), the Town Council and various members of town staff, has been dispersed, with not much finality in the project.

Mr. Tenhave explained that there was a need for twenty-one new athletic fields for the entire town, five of which need immediate attention. They include one softball field, three rectangular fields and one adult baseball field. Within the next two to ten years there would be eight additional fields and eight more by build-out, using the projected student enrollment at the time. He added that not only was the land looked at, but buffers, parking concerns and overlapping fields were examined. The committee looked at properties which had over two acres and no buildings. They also discussed funding the projects.

Mr. Tenhave thanked everyone who participated in the project, including Board Member Barnes who became a committee member in 2010.

Board Member Thornton asked if the proposed new high school football field would eliminate the use of the baseball field as a practice field.

Mr. Tenhave responded that with the projected increase in school enrollment, there will be an increased need for another football team, and therefore another football field. Mr. Taylor added that with the projected increase in enrollments, if there is not a second field, would result in a high demand on just one field.

Board Member Thornton asked about the use of artificial turf for the Student Memorial Field, especially when there are several teams using the same field.

Mr. Tenhave responded that the committee had researched data on schools that use artificial fields. They found that there is a greater need of maintenance, and for other reasons, had discounted the use of the artificial turf. Artificial fields are not conducive to several different sports/teams, since the markings on them are permanent.

Board Member Thornton asked about making an athletic complex on one of the largest parcels of land.

Mr. Tenhave responded that the largest parcel was the Flatley property, but there are concerns about this land, especially since there is a wetlands concern. There was the possibility of combining some of the other single parcels together to form a complex.

Board Member Barnes discussed the use of the middle school area for extra fields. If the population grows as predicted, a new school may have to be built to accommodate the overflow of students. Therefore it would not be a good idea to use this land for extra athletic fields.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked about the mechanism for speeding up, slowing down or stopping of the construction based on progress or lack thereof to build out.

Mr. Tenhave responded that right now there is a need for five new fields. The next block is for eight more fields. The trigger that the committee was most concerned with was the fact that corporate fields were no longer available.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked how the committee, community and Town Council could move the project forward.

Mr. Tenhave responded that as a school district, provisions for athletic fields in the Capital Improvement Plan should be advocated.

Mr. Taylor added that there is open space available in the town which could be used by a developer to build many new homes. He felt that it would be appropriate for the developer to make a contribution for more athletic fields, since the new homes would bring in more children to the school system.

Chairman Vaillancourt suggested that Mr. Tenhave and Mr. Taylor attend meetings of the Master Plan Advisory Committee and the Town Council to speak about the plan. She added that she will make a commitment to keep the discussion going about this plan.

7. Board's Response to Reconstruction of School Entrances at Reeds Ferry and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that there have been some changes since his last report on May 2, 2011. At that meeting, the price of the project was reported to be over budget. Another construction management firm has since approached him, wanting to look at the plans. In this management firm's proposal, the amount to complete the project would be \$200,000, which is the amount budgeted for in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained the new proposal. The schools would still have a vestibule and a secure air-lock entrance, but instead of all three sets of doors being reconstructed, the plan proposes two sets of secure doors. He stated that this new plan still accomplishes the goal which is to make the area secure. The price received is not to exceed \$200,000 and the construction will be done during the summer.

Board Member Thornton asked about the third set of doors, which will be locked during the day, allowing access out, but not in. She also asked if we were skimping on anything in order to come in with a low estimate.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that there are two components to the majority of the savings. It is scaling it back so the full canopy is not being done, as well as having a construction manager that hires contractors who really want to do the work and therefore come in with lower estimates. He added that the plans are as before, and there will not be any change in the quality of the work or materials.

Vice Chairman Ortega questioned if someone could enter the building through the third unsecured door if someone were exiting the building and held the door open for them.

Business Administrator Shevenell agreed that there would be three sets of doors to exit through and that this could be problematic if someone were to exit the third door, letting someone into the building without being secured.

Chairman Vaillancourt responded that if someone were attempting to enter through the third door, that person would be seen by the staff person and directed to the secure area. Business Administrator Shevenell agreed that the third door could facilitate someone entering the building, but agreed with Chairman Vaillancourt that the staff person would be trained to watch that door to avoid a non-secure entrance into the building.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that “Perhaps we can work out something with the magnetic locking system where you could only get through those sets of doors from the inside to the outside in the event of an emergency, much like the magnetic fire doors in the hallways.”

Chairman Vaillancourt explained that the money for the project is in the budget. If the project were to move forward, it would mean the District would have in reserve 1.3 million dollars instead of 1.5 million dollars in anticipated loss of revenue. Since the \$200,000 proposal is already in the budget (in the third tier) a decision needs to be made now. She explained that in approving this amount, the board would have 1.3 million dollars in reserve, instead of the 1.5 million dollars agreed upon in the budget process.

Board Member Markwell suggested that the board withhold the \$200,000 and not continue with the project, based on the unknowns coming from the State’s budget.

Board Member Barnes stated that she was uncomfortable with putting the project off. She questioned the plans for the Masticola Upper Elementary School in the future, suggesting that this construction management firm may be interested in completing the entrance project there as well.

Board Member Thornton agreed that she was disappointed at the last meeting because the estimate for the project was so high and was therefore pleased to hear that we could now stay within the budget.

Vice Chairman Ortega stated that he shares the concerns over the funds in the Capital Improvement Plan for the future, but felt that security in the schools is a priority.

Board Member Markwell stated that since building the entrances is not a safety issue, he would support repairing leaky roofs or structural failures instead of going forward with this project until we have more information from Concord on the budget.

Vice Chairman Ortega respectfully disagreed with Board Member Markwell. He felt that securing the buildings is something that needs to be done.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she was looking for consensus from the board to go ahead with the entrance project since we have the money in the budget and the safety of the students and staff should be a priority.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to approve the proposed project for \$200,000 to secure the entrances at Reeds Ferry and Thorntons Ferry Schools, not to exceed \$200,000.

The motion passed 4-1-0 with Board Member Markwell in opposition.

8. Second Review of Updated Policy

- Memo of Understanding with Merrimack Police Department

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she had not received any questions regarding this document and therefore, unless questions arise, it will be placed on the consent agenda at the June 6, 2011 board meeting.

9. Suggested Dates and Possible Topics for Joint Meeting Between Town Council and Merrimack School Board

Superintendent Chiafery reported that Eileen Cabanel, will begin her assignment as Manager for the Town of Merrimack in May and suggested a joint meeting with the Town Council after in July or August. She suggested possible agenda items might include the change of the polling site to Merrimack High School (2012 for National election), the status of the tennis courts on O'Gara Drive and perhaps holding board meetings in the Town Hall meeting room. The potential joint meeting with the Town Council would be hosted by the school district.

Vice Chairman Ortega suggested that Merrimack Safeguard be on the agenda. Superintendent Chiafery and Chairman Vaillancourt agreed.

Board Member Barnes suggested that the Grater Woods Project also be put on the agenda. Chairman Vaillancourt agreed.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that Superintendent Chiafery would speak to the acting Town Manager about scheduling a meeting.

10. Summer Board Meeting Dates

Superintendent Chiafery suggested July 11, 2011 and August 8, 2011 as summer school board meeting dates.

Board Member Thornton replied that she could not confirm a meeting date in July.

Board Member Markwell asked about the location of the meetings.

Superintended Chiafery responded that the summer meeting would be held in the high school cafeteria on the above suggested dates.

Other

a) Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

b) Comments

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the students from the elementary schools would be coming before the board on June 6, 2011. She suggested that the board meeting begin at 7:00 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Vaillancourt announced that the James Mastricola Elementary School received the New Hampshire Excellence in Education Award for Elementary Schools.

Superintendent Chiafery announced that the Sharon Silva, librarian at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School was awarded the New Hampshire School Librarian of the Year Award and the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School library was awarded the New Hampshire Outstanding School Library Award.

Superintendent Chiafery announced that Thorntons Ferry Elementary School will receive a New Hampshire Excellence in Education Award for the school's excellence in a healthy environment.

All three awards will be presented at the New Hampshire Excellence in Education Awards ("ED"ies) ceremony on June 4, 2011.

11. New Business

There was no new business.

13. Committee Reports

Board Member Thornton reported from the Safeguard Group that the Drug Take Back program, in conjunction with the Merrimack Police Department, took in over 81 pounds of prescription drugs.

Vice Chairman Ortega reported that he attended the Professional Development Committee meeting. Highlights included using on-line technology and the Master Plan updates.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items:

Gary Krupp of 4 Ministerial Drive commented that the Year in Review was "awesome"! He also complimented Board Member Markwell for bring up a "needs versus wants" conversation. He mentioned the athletic fields, and appreciated the discussion on the census in looking at the future growth of Merrimack.

15. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 10:02 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).

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

At 10:29 p.m. Board Member Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.