

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack High School Cafeteria
June 20, 2011**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman Ortega, Board Members Barnes, Markwell and Thornton, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin. Business Administrator Shevenell and Student Representative McLavey were not present.

1. Call To Order

Chairman Vaillancourt called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Vaillancourt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of June 6, 2011 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2011 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 1 of 9, section 2, after William Morris, add (Bill)
- Page 1 of 9, section 2, second paragraph from bottom change “on-line” to on line
- Page 2 of 9, last paragraph, 3rd line, correct spelling of “grade”
- Page 2 of 9, remove ‘ from Thorntons Ferry
- Page 4 of 9, section 4, change “board of directors” to Board of Directors
- Page 4 of 9, item 5, correct the spelling of Shevenell
- Page 4 of 9, section 6, paragraph 2, change all the Trustee to “Trustees”
- Page 4 of 9, change the word “mobil” to “mobile”
- Page 5 of 9, paragraph 10, add “She also noted how the plan closely adheres to the District Logic Model”.
- Page 5 of 9, Section 7, remove (Corbett) from Ms. Goldberg’s name

Vice Chairman Ortega requested the following change to the minutes.

- Page 1 of 9, add Shevenell after the title Business Administrator
- Page 1 of 9, paragraph 3 from the bottom, correct the spelling to “Michael Casseres”
- Page 1 of 9, last paragraph remove “formative assessments for teachers” and replace with “feedback, in terms of student responses”
- Page 3 of 9, section 3, paragraph 1, correct the spelling to “Andrew Trimper”
- Page 5 of 9, paragraph 7, add “that Vice Chairman Ortega responded that we can and should use these as computer lab replacement machines.”

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2011 meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation- Chairman Vaillancourt

There was no public participation.

4. Consent Agenda

(a) Teacher Nominations

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher nominations.

- Richard Bartlett, Jr., Kindergarten Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Jennifer Bissonete, Music Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Nicole Funicella, Grade 1 Teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Garth McKinney, Language Arts Coordinator at Merrimack Middle School

(b) Approval of the District Special Education Manual

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Merrimack Middle School: A Year in Review

Principal Woelflein spoke about the past year at Merrimack Middle School, putting the District Logic Model into action. She explained that SCALES (Strategies for Collaboration and Learning Essential Standards) is the middle school version of the K-6 schools' Collaborative Assessment Project (CAP). SCALES is different than CAP because it involves all subject matters, including reading, math, social studies, science, family consumer science, technology education, and business education.

Principal Woelflein continued to explain the goal is to have more consistency of experience for the students, so that no matter what team a child is on, the experience will be similar. Students will have a unit in common, meaning that all students will be doing the same unit at the same time.

Looking at the "Roadmap for Success" Logic Model Goals column, Principal Woelflein explained each of the goals and how the middle school will reach the goals by 2012-2013.

Ms. Debbie Hodge, Language Arts coordinator for the middle school, explained the Young Authors program that supports and enhances literacy instruction (the writing component). Students submitted works to be judged in two levels - the teen level and the grade level. The 31st Young Authors Annual Recognition Program will be held on June 21, 2011 when thirty-five grade eight students and thirty-six grade seven students will be recognized for their excellence in writing.

Board Member Barnes asked about the different categories for the awards.

Ms. Hodge replied that there are fifteen categories, including fiction, fantasy, play, scripts, etc.

Individual Professional Development Plan

Linda Keane and Teresa Porter-Cascadden were not in attendance. Principal Woelflein made their presentations.

Principal Woelflein referred to the Professional Development Master Plan, which is currently being revised, as required by the State. The plan includes Educator Recertification, District/School Goals and Student Achievement. Every educator in the state of New Hampshire, every three years, has to submit documentation of what he/she has done in order to be recertified. She then presented Teresa Porter-Cascadden's portfolio on Exploring Instructional Strategies to Improve Student Comprehension of Informational Text.

Colleen Powers spoke about co-teaching with Mrs. Adams in grade seven math. The goal was to utilize current practices in co-teaching to improve the achievement of all students. Co-teaching is when two educators co-plan, co-instruct and co-assess a group of students with diverse needs in the classroom.

Erin Gregoire's goal was to incorporate technology to improve reading comprehension. She explained that often students had difficulty writing about a novel, but through technology they were able to express their understanding. As technology did not play a large role in Ms. Gregoire's teaching plan, she found that by taking courses in technology her knowledge in the field improved her teaching techniques within the classroom. She stated that this recertification project made her a better educator.

George Havener stated that he had not accepted the current recertification process very well in the past. However, he now feels that the process made him a better teacher, with a focus on professional growth, learning, and sharing of ideas. It also allowed for contact with the administration on a regular basis.

Board Member Markwell commended Ms. Gregoire's use of technology in the Language Arts Department, which is unusual in a Language Arts curriculum. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and sharing.

Board Member Barnes noted that by using technology in the classroom, the teacher is taking a risk and that by teaching by example, she is a good role model for the students. She also asked about the binders.

Ms. Powers answered that new binders are created every three years for the next recertification cycle.

Vice Chairman Ortega applauded the use of technology in the classroom. He questioned the assessment of the students in achieving success in this area.

Ms. Gregoire replied that she has used several ways to measure the gains the students have made such as NECAP scores and testing reading each year.

Vice Chairman Ortega, in reference to the Professional Development Plan, stated that he felt that everything ought to be about student achievement. If the school and district goals do not align with student achievement, perhaps something is being done wrong. Additionally, if educator recertification is not focused on student achievement, that would be a problem.

Principal Woelflein answered that student achievement is in the forefront of the goals.

Assistant Principal Adam Caragher spoke about Building Behavioral Goals. The objective is to continue to work with behavioral intervention. They have worked with Ms. Polly Bath, a behavioral specialist, to become more proactive rather than reactive. The goal is to ultimately change a student's poor behavior instead of just addressing it after it occurs.

Board Member Markwell asked to be given an example of behavioral modification.

Assistant Principal Caragher responded that by using different interventions (behavior specialist, touching base with teachers and staff members and welcoming the student back to the classroom) the gap is closed. Students realize that there is a responsibility and reminds them that he/she is welcomed back to the community.

Chairman Vaillancourt thanked everyone for their performance in adhering to the Logic Model, which is the “short term/long term goals and objectives for the school district”. She also thanked them for attending the meeting.

Culminating the Eighth Grade Experience

This is the opportunity for students to take a trip to Washington, DC or to have a local experience in Concord.

Present were Barbara DeNutte, Citizenship Educator of the Year and Trip Coordinator, and Caitlyn Paulson, Bryce Bowen, Taylor Rosati and Julia Perry, students at the middle school.

Ms. DeNutte gave an overview of the program. Four days prior to Memorial Day Weekend over three hundred people, which included parents, staff and 79% of the eighth grade student population went to Washington, D.C.

Principal Woelflein spoke about the cost of the trip. The cost was five hundred ninety dollars per student, which included transportation, meals and tips, hotel and some spending money. Because it may be cost preventative for some students, they are looking at fund raising to provide more than the ten full scholarships they provided this year.

Assistant Principal Caragher gave an overview of the trip to Concord.

Students spoke about their experiences on the trips they took, two who went on the local trip and two who went to Washington, DC.

Board Member Thornton thanked the students and asked if there was a follow up project or paper for students who went on the trips. She was told that for some of the students who did not go to Washington, D.C. there was a project.

Board Member Thornton asked if there was a disadvantage for those students who did not go on the Washington, DC trip.

Principal Woelflein explained that the disadvantage was how late in the year, due to the curriculum, the trip is planned. For the students who do not go on the trip there is a comparable experience.

Vice Chairman Ortega thanked the students and commended them on their presentations. He questioned if the 21% of students (roughly 70 students) who opted out did not go because they could not afford it.

Principal Woelflein responded that some students did not even ask their families if they could go due to the price. Some students were not comfortable traveling and some students had other commitments.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked how they will go about setting up scholarships and how many are needed.

Principal Woelflein answered that they have received support and generosity from the parent/teacher group as well as anonymous donors and are looking into further fund raising.

Board Member Barnes stated that a survey at the end of trip is very important. She asked if the information gained this year will affect next year's trip. She also noted that scholarships are the way to go, where lowering the cost would probably not make a difference.

Principal Woelflein explained that it is difficult to get in touch with all the parents to survey them on this year's trip. Hopefully, in the future, e-mail addresses will be acquired and they can be reached easily. She noted that next year's trip has already been booked.

Board Member Barnes asked if the students thought the eighth grade was the right time for the experience. One of the students replied that since students in the high school have the ability to go to China and/or Greece, that eighth grade was the perfect time.

Tri-County Sportsmanship Award

In attendance were students Nick Kachmar, Austen Thompson, Leah Perez, Maegan Howe, Julie Berberian, Blake Williams and Zach Amodio.

Bill Mayo gave a brief history of the award. He explained that this was the fourth year that the award has been given.

Superintendent Chiafery was presented with 2011, Class L, Sportsmanship Award on behalf of the Merrimack Middle School and its athletes, as well as a picture of all the Merrimack Middle School athletes.

6. Science Olympiad Projects

Mr. Muller explained participation in the Science Olympiad and reported how Merrimack placed in the nationals.

Mr. Muller reported that they are currently working on a middle school program.

Students Matt Soucy and Luisa Forger demonstrated their project entitled "The Sounds of Music", which consisted of constructing two instruments (one from the winds and one from percussion) and playing two melodies for the judges - one of which the judges chose, one that they chose. They played both songs for the board.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked how were instruments made.

Both Matt Soucy and Luisa Forger explained the construction of their instruments.

Board Member Markwell asked Matt Soucy about the "flip flops" he used for the percussion device.

Matt Soucy replied that he needed something that was not a musical instrument and decided to use his flip-flops.

7. Pay for Performance Report for 2011

In attendance were members of the Performance Based Incentive Plan Committee: Joann Wegman, Chairman, Christine Nawrocki from Merrimack Middle School, Carolyn Dailey, from James Mastricola Elementary School, Deb Fournier from Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, Cathy Jerszyk from Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Wendy Otavsky, from Merrimack High School, Bill Sawyer from James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, Administrators Nancy Rose and Marsha McGill.

Members of the school board had extra time before the start of the meeting to browse through several portfolios.

Joann Wegman explained that teacher representation from each building which included two administrators who formed this committee, meet eleven times during the school year to review portfolios and revisions. In May, monetary awards were presented based on the number of hours the teacher worked on his/her PFP (Pay for Performance) portfolio. She also reported that the Merrimack teachers contributed over 12,000 hours to PFP projects during the 2010-2011 school year.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked about the criteria for sending back a portfolio.

Ms. Wegman explained that the criteria for accepting a portfolio are; 1) it should promote excellence in education; 2) it should align with the District Logic Model; and 3) it should move the district forward. Sometimes portfolios are sent back for revisions including book keeping situations and administration approval and/or clarification.

Board Member Barnes figured out that each staff member spent 53 hours on their project, above and beyond everything else they do in the course of their work. This number does not take into account all the other individuals who help to prepare, plan and execute their projects.

8. Presentation of the District Technology Plan for 2011 to 2014

Ms. Rose spoke about the high points of the plan. She stated that the overall goal was to provide a framework for moving forward. There are several challenges to the plan. She explained that the plan is a tool, not the “be all and end all”.

Ms. Rose explained that she sees the focus of the plan as the alignment of the technology information and media curriculum with standards from external organizations: American Association of School Librarians, the International Society for Technology and Education, Partnership for 21st Century Learning Skills and the Common Core. All of these organizations come in with standards and benchmarks that are aimed at 21st century learning skills, such as inquiry, creative thinking, creativity and collaboration.

Ms. Rose explained that she would like to focus on a technology program that mirrors and works with and integrates with library programs. She added that there is a hope that students and teachers will learn together. She would like to see pre-planning for infrastructure and equipment improvement, including improving the replacement cycles, incorporating wireless connections, increasing the number of computers per students and looking at the systems already in place.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the approval of the technology plan will appear under the Consent Agenda of the July 11, 2011 meeting agenda, unless there are issues that arise with the State approval of the plan.

Board Member Markwell expressed pleasure and the cost saving benefits of going to a different phone service and offered to help with the project.

Business Administrator Shevenell commended Ms. Rose on all the work she has done on this project. He was not sure what the cost savings would be, but feels there will be a definite savings, thus having to avoid using capitol funds to pay to refurbishing the old system.

Vice Chairman Ortega applauded Ms. Rose's work. He is sure this plan will be a positive example for other districts, as it lays out a vision and objectives and where we are heading.

Board Member Barnes stated that she felt the plan was high level and visionary and liked the collaboration on all levels of the district.

Chairman Vaillancourt thanked Ms. Rose for putting the plan together and incorporating things from the previous plan as well as making it "reader-friendly".

9. Consideration: Seeking Corporate Sponsorship for the Building of a New Central Office

Board Member Markwell spoke to the board regarding corporate sponsorship regarding an SAU (School Administrative Unit) and Special Education office building and any changes to curriculum that might result from sponsorship. He met with Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, focusing on changing the curriculum if the district were to receive corporate sponsorship. He also asked if there would be "staff buy-in" from the district. His hope was that the district would offer courses that would help educate the students in the field of employment that the sponsors support.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that Board Member Markwell had quoted their discussion exactly regarding the electives.

Comments and questions by board members regarding the sponsorship included: What companies were going to be solicited; who would solicit the businesses; would the proposed curriculum changes be restricted to electives; how would the sponsors be recognized in the schools; and would the corporate sponsored curriculum additions take place during the school day or after school.

Vice Chairman Ortega expressed concerns about the cost of the proposal and he wanted to know where the district would define or draw the line with changes to the electives.

Board Member Markwell explained that he did not have an action plan. He came to the board to ask if he had support in researching the project.

Superintendent Chiafery spoke about how generous businesses in Merrimack have been, especially regarding their support of students programs such as the Academy of Finance; BAE and their support of the robotics program, and GT Solar funding for school trips to China. She questioned if a business would be interested in building a central office, since their support has been student based in the past. She hoped that perhaps a construction company who wanted to "go green" could construct a building that they could then use as an example of a "green" building.

Chairman Vaillancourt thanked Board Member Markwell for the work he did on this project. She stated that due to a lack of information, it is difficult to support the idea of corporate sponsorship regarding an SAU (School Administrative Unit) and Special Education office building and any changes to curriculum that might result from sponsorship. She added that if Board Member Markwell wanted to do research, the topic could be placed on a future agenda. She stated that she would consider anything feasible that would make sense for the school district that would align with the curriculum initiatives.

Board Member Markwell requested that board members send him questions/concerns via e-mail so that more research can be done. He asked for help from the board members to work on this, as it should be a group effort.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked if anyone was opposed to moving forward with studying Board Member Markwell's proposal. No one was opposed to researching the plan further.

10. Merrimack Safeguard Update:

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin thanked Board Member Thornton for keeping the board updated on Merrimack Safeguard throughout the year and gave a brief history of the committee, commending Officer Prentice for his work as the Resource Officer at the Merrimack Middle School.

Officer Prentice gave a brief description of the programs of Merrimack Safeguard at the middle school which are funded by a federal grant:

- **Safe Homes:** Parents pledge that there will be no alcohol or drug abuse in their homes and that their children as well as their children's guest will be safe at their house (50-60 people registered).
- **Red Ribbon Week:** This is week dedicated to drug awareness. Every student at the middle school receives red ribbons in October. Red tulips were planted at every school and the police department.
- **Prescription Drug Take Back:** Prescription drug take back days occur twice a year. One hundred and twenty-two pounds of prescription medications were collected in September at the Business Expo and 81.2 pounds of prescription medications were collected in April (the National Take Back Week). There are plans to hold take back days every year.
- **Surveys:** Two surveys are used in order to meet the requirements of the federal grant. They are NOMS (National Outcome Measure Survey) and YRBS (Youth Risk Behavioral Survey). These surveys tell Merrimack Safeguard what direction they need to go: What is the focus, what is the drug of choice, and when are students "using".
- **Parent Teacher Conferences:** There is a presence of Merrimack Safeguard at parent teacher conferences, providing information and getting their identity into the community.
- **New Programs:** New programs will include a Merrimack TV show and the sponsorship of teens to attend the Teen Institute, a leadership camp. There will also be a new clothing line.
- **Youth to Youth Group:** This program started at the middle school with twenty-two eighth grade students who call themselves Merrimack Teens in Action (MTIA). They voted on issues such as picking a mascot. On July 4, 2011, Mack the Moose will be presented as the official mascot.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin added that this is an action-oriented group. They all support the goal of making Merrimack a safe place for youth. The group is required to have the things that are done be research based. He commended Officer Prentice and the Merrimack Police Department.

Board Member Barnes thanked Officer Prentice for his work. She stated that the Business Expo may not be held next year and questioned if the drug take back program will still be held. She also asked about the criteria for the teens being accepted in the Camp for Teens. Board Member Barnes also asked how a family goes about signing up to be a "safe home".

Officer Prentice responded that the drug take back program will continue, even in the event the Business Expo is not held. He also explained the criteria for the camp was for teens to write an essay on why they want to attend the camp. The essays were reviewed by members of Merrimack Safeguard. Four teens were chosen for the camp. In answer to the "safe home" question, Officer Prentice explained that forms can be found at www.beyondInfluence.org.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked about the grant and how much research must be done in order to meet the requirement and what type of data is required to report on.

Officer Prentice responded that it was really difficult to answer; in that it will be about three to five years to see any results. He has seen fewer juveniles in court this past year, which means there are fewer criminal offenses at the middle school.

Vice Chairman Ortega stated that the MTIA (Merrimack Teens in Action) is a fantastic program with 22 teens. He asked if any thought had been given to implementing the program in the upper elementary school.

Officer Prentice replied that moving the program down to the elementary schools would need to be a program in itself.

Chairman Vaillancourt expressed her pleasure with the program at Merrimack Middle School. Parents and students feel that Officer Prentice is a part of the school and a part of the team.

Chairman Vaillancourt spoke about the grant, which came to be because of the Merrimack Drug Advisory Committee. Principal Debbie Woelflein spearheaded the effort to receive the grant. The grant pays for the school resource officer who is also a juvenile officer.

Chairman Vaillancourt commended the entire committee on the marketing and she also commended Officer Prentice on the work that he did with the community's youth, more specifically at the Merrimack Middle School. The grant provides the district with \$125,000 every year for five years with an option to renew in another five years. She is hopeful that, as a committee, as a school district, as a town, and as a community that in 10 years the community will stand behind the program, including funding.

11. Request to Hire at Will

Superintendent Chiafery reported that there are ten open positions within the district. She would like to offer the contracts to the candidates and have their nominations put on the consent agenda for the July and August school board meetings. To be sure that perspective teachers will not go to another district, Superintendent Chiafery asked for permission to be able to hire at will.

Board Member Barnes moved to (seconded by Board Member Thornton) allow the administration to hire at will during the summer months.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

12. Other

a. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

b. Comments

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that Business Administrator Shevenell received several calls from vendors inquiring about the Fourth of July midway. She noted that there would not be a midway this year. She also noted that the Town Council and the Town Manager had publicly announced that there would not be a midway at the July 4th events.

13. New Business

Vice Chairman Ortega referenced an article in the Nashua Telegraph regarding a Nashua Aldermen who proposed that no cell phones be used during city public meetings, citing the Right to Know Law. Through the use of electronic devices (cell phones, computers, etc) there is a fear that people can influence the meeting even though they are not present. Vice Chairman Ortega asked that this be a future agenda item.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that the school district did not have a policy that addressed the use of electronic devices at meetings and that she will look for a sample model policy.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that there will be a meeting with the Town Council and the School Board this summer. One topic for discussion will be the use of the Town Hall meeting room for School Board Meetings. She referenced the public discussion regarding the school budget committee using the Town Hall meeting room for its public meeting. She asked Superintendent Chiafery to schedule a meeting with Town Manager Cabanel, the Town Council Chair, Superintendent Chiafery and herself.

14. Committee Reports

Vice Chairman Ortega and Board Member Barnes both attended the PERC committee meeting on June 14, 2011. They reviewed and accepted the District Technology Plan.

Vice Chairman Ortega attended the Budget Committee meeting on June 14, 2011. They discussed replacing two vacancies. He noted that in April there will be several vacancies on the committee.

Board Member Thornton attended a Parks and Recreation Committee meeting. She reported openings for the summer camp program at Wasserman Park.

Board Member Markwell attended the School Building and Planning Committee. There was no quorum. Discussions included transportation issues.

Board Member Markwell reported that he attended the Professional Development Committee on June 9, 2011.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked Business Administrator Shevenell to investigate the discussions on the parking lots at Reeds Ferry Elementary School.

Chairman Vaillancourt announced that there would be a Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting on June 21, 2011, which she will attend.

15. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no comments on agenda items.

16. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 10:13 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.