

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack High School Cafeteria
July 11, 2011**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

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

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 June 20, 2011 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2011 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 4 of 10, paragraph 9, change “who went to Washington” to “who did not go to Washington”
- Page 9 of 10, section 13, change “Nashua Selectman” to “Nashua Aldermen”
- Page 10 of 10, section 14, add that Board Member Barnes also attended the PERC committee meeting with Vice Chairman Ortega.

Board Member Markwell requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 6 of 10, section 8, add that Board Member Markwell expressed pleasure and the cost saving benefits of going to a different phone service.
- Page 7 of 10, section 9, paragraph 1, add “Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that Board Member Markwell had quoted their discussion exactly regarding the electives.”
- Page 7 of 10, section 9, add that there was a question by Vice Chairman Ortega, expressing concerns about the cost of the proposal and he wanted to know where the district would define or draw the line in any changes to the electives.
- Page 8 of 10, section under surveys, change YBBS to YRBS (Youth Risk Behavioral Survey)
- Page 9 of 10, paragraph 3, change “upper elementary school” to “Merrimack Middle School”.
- Page 10 of 10, committee reports, add “Board Member Markwell reported that he attended a Professional Development Committee on June 9, 2011.”

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following changes and clarifications to the minutes.

- Page 7 of 10, section 9, paragraph 1, change the first sentence to read “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.”
- Page 7 of 10, section 9, paragraph 3 from the bottom change “...corporate sponsorship regarding an SAU Superintendent’s Special Education Office Building and any changes to curriculum that might result from sponsorship.”

- Page 7 of 10, section 9, the last sentence should read "...asked if anyone was opposed to moving forward with studying Board Member Markwell's proposal."
- Page 8 of 10, correct the spelling of "Mac the Moose" to "Mack the Moose"
- Page 9 of 10, paragraph 4, sentence should read "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."
- Page 9 of 10, section 12, the sentence under comments should read "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."
- Page 9 of 10, last sentence, add "will" before "look"
- Page 10 of 10, paragraph 1, should read "...with the Town Council and the School Board this summer. One topic of 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."
- Page 10 of 10, under committee reports, paragraph 5, add "...parking lots "at Reeds Ferry Elementary School", regarding traffic flow and the size of the parking lot.

The motion passed 3-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

- D.R. and K.F. Bantham, State Farm Insurance Co. to James Masticola Upper Elementary School for \$250.00 for Project Safeguard
- Dartmouth College to James Masticola Upper Elementary School for \$750 in thanks for student participation in the Dartmouth College Research Project.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to accept the gifts.

The motion passed 3-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

(a) Teacher Resignation

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher resignation

- Cheryl Fish – Grade 4 teacher – Reeds Ferry School

(b) Teacher Nominations

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher nominations.

- Kathleen Chartier – Math Teacher – Merrimack Middle School
- Jocelyn Demuth – Part-Time World Language Teacher – Merrimack High School
- Bryan Dine – Language Arts Teacher – Merrimack Middle School
- Angela Groccia – Special Education Teacher – Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Carole Lewis – Computer Education Teacher – Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Melissa Lloyd – Grade 1 Teacher – Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Wendy Toribio – Math Teacher – Merrimack Middle School
- Lei Xue – Part-Time World Language Teacher – Merrimack High School

(c) Approval of District Technology Plan for 2011-2014

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

The motion passed 3-0-0.

6. New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) Employer and Member Contribution Rates for 2011-2012 and Follow up Action by NHRS Trustees

Business Administrator Shevenell passed out material from the New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) which included the member contribution rates as well as the employer contribution rates. He then gave some background information relating to the NHRS and the budget.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that currently the State's share of the retirement for teachers is almost five per cent (4.88%) The teacher salaries are approximately twenty million dollars, which amounts to around one million dollars that the State has paid to the retirement system. According to House Bill 2, the State will no longer be supplementing the NHRS, which means that the district will have to come up with the one million dollars for the NHRS. He also noted that the contribution rate for teachers would probably increase from 5% to 7% of their salary.

When the board met at the annual Deliberative Session, there was the expectation that the district would have a shortfall in aid from the State. At that time, the board put together a list of potential cuts of revenue amounting to 1.5 million dollars, divided into three tiers.

Board Member Markwell questioned whether or not the State is hoping to continue to fund the NHRS at the current rate until 2014. If that is the case, did it mean the board does nothing at this time?

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that what the State wants to do is stop the rate-setting process because there are other things that need to be clarified.

Board Member Markwell asked if the Board of Trustees of the NHRS felt their constitutional rights were being compromised.

Business Administrator Shevenell agreed that the Board of Trustees is saying that it is unconstitutional because the State's cost-provision has been eliminated so that employers are picking up 100%. House Bill 2 authorizes the State to spend three and one half million dollars for the entire state to the retirement system which doesn't amount to very much for each district.

Board Member Markwell agreed that he had heard it would be around \$450.

7. Review of Tiered Budget Cuts in Relation to NHRS

Business Administrator Shevenell passed out a copy of the proposed budget reduction for 2011-2012 and explained that out of the one and a half million dollar proposed reductions, one million dollars has to be reserved to pay the increase in the expenditure to pay for the NHRS.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked Business Administrator Shevenell to please explain the difference between the increase, the potential decrease, the loss of revenue and the potential increase in expenditures. She also explained that the proposed half million dollar reduction was to cover a loss of revenue. She explained that now it appears that the loss of revenue is not going to be an issue. She asked Business

Administrator Shevenell to explain why the potential increase in expenditures was not looked at previously.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that at the annual Deliberative Session the district could have asked for a one million dollar increase in the bottom line of the budget to take care of any increase in expenditures. Instead, a reduction to the budget was planned to put towards the increase in the appropriation of the New Hampshire Retirement System. If the budget had been decreased by the one million dollars, we would still be here looking for the one million dollars for the retirement system.

Chairman Vaillancourt suggested that at the August board meeting the Power Point presentation be viewed as an explanation of the loss of revenue versus the increase in expenditures. The board will use that meeting to take any formal votes, any formal action that might be considered and work from the three tiers of proposed reductions.

Board Member Markwell asked if there is a particular order of the proposed cuts. He cited, for example, a seventy-one-passenger bus on tier three. He stated that he would rather cut that than a staff member or a co-curricular activity.

Chairman Vaillancourt responded that the board came to the figures based on the information received at that particular time. She asked that everyone should come prepared to the August meeting to discuss the tiered reductions in order entertain any changes. She felt that the board has the responsibility to explain the rationale behind any decisions made.

Business Administrator Shevenell added that he felt Board Member Markwell made a good point when he noted that changes could be made in the order of the tiers because we did not have all the information at the time the reductions were proposed. He explained that it is not a “cut” in the reductions, but a transfer of one million dollars in order to feed the New Hampshire Retirement System.

Board Member Markwell stated that this is a tough and painful situation. He added that he was encouraged that the state is being proactive and trying to fix some of the issues.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the government could have addressed the problem two years ago, but they did not. She said that it would not be easy, but the problems can be fixed, noting that other towns and districts have the same concerns.

Business Administrator Shevenell agreed with Chairman Vaillancourt. He noted that the police and fire departments have to fund another 9% (police) and almost 11% (fire) of their salaries into the NHRS.

Board Member Markwell stated that the police and fire departments have more dangerous jobs and have to be younger and possibly retire sooner than school employees. They are actually going to have to pay more into the retirement system due to the fact that their cycle is shorter than teachers who may work thirty years in the system.

8. Topics and Tentative Dates for a Joint Meeting of Merrimack Town Council and Merrimack School Board – Marge Chiafery

Superintendent Chiafery and Chairman Vaillancourt met with Town Manager, Eileen Cabanel, and Town Councilors Rothhaus and Dwyer on June 30th to plan for a future joint meeting between the Merrimack School Board and the Merrimack Town Council. Proposed agenda items and presenters are:

- Joint Minutes of 9/13/10
 - Athletic Fields
 - Status of Tennis Courts on O’Gara Drive
 - Merrimack Safeguard
 - Change of Polling Site To Merrimack High
 - Grater Woods Stewardship Plan Update
 - Single Stream Recycling
(topic raised by F. Rothhaus)
- Chairman Vaillancourt
Tim Tehnave and Jim Taylor
Board Member Barnes and Jackie Flood
Officer Tom Prentice, Betsy Abrahams and
Principal Johnson
Town Moderator Lynn Christensen
Board Member Barnes and Matt Shevenell
Rick Seymour and Tom Touseau

Chairman Vaillancourt clarified some of the items on the list. She stated that Town Council Chairman Finlay Rothhaus hopes to educate the children about the single stream recycling and that more families will become aware of the single stream recycling.

Board Member Markwell stated that the use of single stream recycling causes damage to paper products and the Town of Merrimack may consider returning to the sorted recycling method.

Chairman Vaillancourt responded that Mr. Rothhaus indicated nothing of the sort.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that using the Town Hall meeting room for school board meetings was discussed. Town Manager Cabanel indicated that further discussion on this topic be between Superintendent Chiafery and her at another time, due to a long agenda for the meeting. Chairman Vaillancourt suggested that a formal agreement between the Town Council and the school board be put in writing on this topic, which was agreed to by the Town Manager.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that it was suggested the joint meeting between the Town Council and the School Board be held at in the Town Hall meeting room. Her concern was the size of the group (approximately twenty people). They would like to look at the room to determine if it is useable for such a large group. If not, the meeting would be held at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School. The proposed date for the joint meeting is the week of August 22nd or a date in September, which is not the best time since it is the beginning of the school year. The Town Council will inform the Board of the date, time and place of the joint meeting.

9. Update on Anti-Bullying Training – Dr. Mark McLaughlin

House Bill 223, which passed in May 2010, is known as the Anti-Bullying Bill. Mandatory training for all individuals who would or could come in contact with students is one of the provisions of the bill. The policies were summarized so that there is an understanding of the guidelines under which people work or operate, including what to do and what not to do. Mandatory reporting requirements were also a part of the training.

Consequences to the students when bullying occurs were also part of the training. According to research, bullying leads to severe and long lasting depression in students, particularly in those cases where it occurs over a period of time. There is a direct link between on-going bullying and increased rates of suicide. Everyone who comes in contact with a child needs to be aware of the consequences of bullying.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is completed every two years. In 2009, in the state of New Hampshire, one quarter of all students reported having been bullied, one third of all students reported that bullying is a greater fear than discrimination (racial or sexual) and fear of HIV and drugs. These

numbers are probably even greater since students usually under-report instances of bullying for fear of retribution, fear of being labeled, and a fear of not being believed.

One of the researchers suggested that the myths around bullying be discussed, such as teachers telling students that bullying is just a part of growing up, that students just need to “deal with it”, that it will get better over time, or that bullying makes you “tough”.

To this date seven hundred sixty-eight people in the Merrimack School district have been trained on the anti-bullying policy, including professional staff, para-educators, custodians, food service workers, substitute teachers, volunteers, bus drivers and administration. Participants receive a certificate of training that should be posted for the students to see. This is an effort to create a “bully free zone” resulting in an increase in the comfort level of students.

Board Member Barnes remarked that the program is very comprehensive and thanked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin for being so proactive.

10. Other

(a) Correspondence

Superintendent Chiafery reported that since the last board meeting she received notice from the Commissioner’s Office that all six of the schools have met the standards for public school full approval.

(b) Comments

Board Member Markwell asked about the agenda items to be rescheduled for a later date.

Chairman Vaillancourt explained that some items would be future agenda items since there were board members who were not present at this meeting.

11. New Business

There was no new business.

12. Committee Reports

Chairman Vaillancourt attended the June 21st meeting of the Town Master Plan Steering Committee. Land use was discussed in great detail. The committee is being brought up to speed with the current land use requirements, talking about visions for the future and zoning changes. The committee will meet in July and August.

13. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Gary Krupp of 4 Ministerial Drive stated that he was glad to hear that the budget cuts were not as bad as anticipated. He questioned the “tiered list” as “never being done before”. He suggested that the economics classes at the high school study recycling.

Chairman Vaillancourt clarified her comments regarding the tiered approach to reductions. This is the first year the district has been met with uncertainty regarding the state budget and the implications to the district.

14. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 8:15 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 3-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 8:38 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 3-0-0.