

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack High School Cafeteria
October 3, 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 Yates

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 September 19, 2011 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2011 meeting

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 3 of 12, section 6, paragraph 1, change language other than English to “foreign language”
- Page 4 of 12, paragraph 9, remove the “s” from “parent/teachers” meeting.
- Page 9 of 12, paragraph 4 , after the “guard rails.....path”, add “ The redesign will also improve the line of sight for bus drivers and pedestrians as well alike, which is necessary for safety reasons.”
- Page 12 of 12, section 14, replace Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin with Vice Chairman Ortega

Board Member Markwell requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 3 of 12, paragraph 3 from the bottom, change Mr. Putnam to Mr. Putney
- Page 5 of 12, section 8, paragraph 2, add paragraph to read “Board Member Markwell asked about the possibility of a steel construction for the SPED/SAU building.”
- Page 6 of 12, paragraph 6, change Vice Chairman Ortega to Board Member Thorntons
- Page 10 of 12, paragraph 8, add “by the School Planning and Building Committee” after “areas should be examined...”

Board Member Thornton requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 8 of 12, paragraph 2 from the bottom, change \$55,000 to \$100,000.

Vice Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 7 of 12, paragraph 5 from the bottom, add “Board Member Barnes mentioned, among other things, wireless technology.”
- Page 8 of 12, paragraph 7, change sentence to read, “Vice Chairman Ortega understands and agrees, and stated further that he was not convinced that there are not more line items that should be included in future years.”

- Page 10 of 12, paragraph 5 from the bottom, after “examined” add “by the School Building and Planning Committee” in order...
- Page 10 of 12, paragraph 5 from the bottom, change to read, “He also asked that Superintendent Chiafery report to the board on the different uses of the high school field beyond the school system ...”
- Page 10 of 12, paragraph 2 from the bottom, replace “extensive information and ... board” with “with a proposed charge for the School Planning and Building Committee”.

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 4 of 12, paragraph 1, change “...local business people were” to “...local business people had been...”
- Page 4 of 12, section 7, paragraph 1 change to read “Mr. Les Carter”
- Page 4 of 12, section 7, bottom paragraph, add “recent” before “focus”
- Page 6 of 12, paragraph 10, remove “at the last minute”.
- Page 6 of 12, paragraph 10, after “meeting” remove “instead...thoughts” and add “as a courtesy to other board members, but was not required”
- Page 6 of 12, paragraph 2 from the bottom, after “front entrance construction” add “at James Masticola Upper Elementary School”.
- Page 6 of 12, paragraph 2 from the bottom, delete “...and asbestos...moved up”
- Page 6 of 12, paragraph 2 from the bottom, after “SPED/SAU building should...” add “not” [be moved up].
- Page 7 of 12, paragraph 5, should be SPED/SAU
- Page 9 of 12, paragraph 2, change “people have been satisfied” with “has been sufficient”
- Page 9 of 12, paragraph 5, after “worst parking situation” add “in all the schools in the district”
- Page 9 of 12, paragraph 3 from the bottom, replace the word “track” with “field”
- Page 9 of 12, last paragraph, add the word “field” after “high school”
- Page 10 of 12, paragraph 1, remove “issue” and change to “possibility”
- Page 10 of 12, paragraph 1, second sentence should read “...research has been done and nothing has come before the board.”
- Page 10 of 12, paragraph 1, replace the last two sentences with “Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she had no objection to marrying the two projects, but she didn’t necessarily think they had to be done together because she saw the track as being a more urgent need. She asked Business Administrator Shevenell to speak about the lifetime of artificial turf.”
- Page 11 of 12, section 11, sentence 3, replace the word “resolution” with “resolutions”.
- Page 11 of 12, last paragraph, sentence should read “...the new Mandarin teacher helped introduce members of the...”
- Page 11 of 12, last paragraph, change Merrimack School District to Merrimack Chamber of Commerce.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2011 meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation- Chairman Vaillancourt

There was no public participation.

4. Consent Agenda

- From Invent Now, Inc. (Camp Invention) for \$250 each to Thorntons Ferry School, Reeds Ferry School, James Mastricola Elementary School and James Mastricola Upper Elementary School as a thank you for hosting/promoting Camp Invention

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. District Special Education Data and District Determinations

Superintendent Chiafery congratulated David St.Jean, Special Education Director, Barbara Publicover and Trisha Swonger on receiving awards from the Parent Involvement in Education organization.

Mr. St. Jean explained that under federal law, New Hampshire has to have a state plan for special education. Audits are done by the state every year to review how the district is meeting the standards, where improvement is needed, and what the consequences are for not complying with the law. Noting that there are eleven factors that are considered to meet the requirements, he reported that Merrimack has met the requirements, scoring 100% (zero on the scale) for all factors that are applicable to Merrimack.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked for clarification regarding supplanting town dollars for federal dollars. He also asked if the number of special education students in district decline, are we still required to have the same number of resources on staff to service them.

Mr. St. Jean explained that if the number of students decreases then we could decrease the amount of dollars needed.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained the district must justify budgeting a lesser amount than was spent the prior year for the Special Education Department. The district must make certain it is not purposely lowering the operational budget with federal funds.

Mr. St.Jean explained the rules from the state of New Hampshire for filing grants. "Funds provided to the LEA (Local Education Agency) may not be used to reduce the level of expenditures for the education of children with disabilities made by the LEA from a combination of state and local funds below the level of those expenditures for the preceding fiscal year."

Vice Chairman Ortega asked how Merrimack compares to other districts as to getting a perfect score over the last five years.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she did not know the exact number of other districts that have receive a perfect score over the last five years. She noted that Mr. St. Jean and his staff are committed to trying to make sure that the indicators are met.

Board Member Thornton thanked Mr. St. Jean and his department for all their hard work, noting that the district has received a perfect score for at least five years in a row.

Board Member Barnes stated that the communication from the Special Education Department has been enlightening for her. She thanked Mr. St. Jean for overcoming several restraints and stated that she looked forward to him addressing the board in the future regarding grant money.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that over the last few years there have been reductions in the special education staff, noting that the department still needs to deliver the same services to the students even with the reduction. She voiced her appreciation to Mr. St. Jean for meeting the time line requirements of the Special Education Department and for appearing before the board.

6. Overview of Professional Development Activities Summer 2011

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that this summer's professional development activities focused on two areas - to support content growth and to support professional development that builds leadership.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin continued to say that at the high school last year and this year, a very comprehensive initiative was taken where teachers, administrators and teaching teams worked to identify competencies in each course. Then they needed to develop lesson planning, competency assessment design and grading practices using instructional data. Nancy Gerzon worked with the teams to support building leadership teams, setting the stage for work to be done for this year.

In the middle school, the teams focused on identifying core standards for content area, developing formative assessments, understanding and developing learning progressions and developing lesson plans that support Understanding by Design protocols. SCALES (Strategies for Collaboration and Learning Essential Standards) leaders were responsible for these professional development areas.

In the elementary schools a team of 45 teachers met during the summer to plan workshops to be held on the first day of school. On August 30, 2011 sixteen sessions were held. They were workshops for teachers, by teachers.

7. Final Update Regarding Summer Maintenance Projects

Business Administrator Shevenell presented a visual report on the summer projects that were part of the budget, the Capital Improvement Plan and the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) grant for the district. These included the entrances to the Reeds Ferry and Thorntons Ferry Elementary Schools, the Get Set Program at the high school and the asbestos removal and new cafeteria tables at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

8. Summary of 2011 Spring NECAP (New England Common Assessment Project) Science Results

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin shared a packet showing the results of the NECAP science results from 2009 through 2011. The chart shows percent of students scoring proficient or better compared to the percent of students scoring below proficient and substantially below proficient. It also shows Merrimack scores compared to scores across the state.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that the district is guided by state standards, but locally these standards are interpreted so they can be addressed for Merrimack specifically.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted that in grade eight the NECAP science results are not very positive. Looking at statewide results, there is also a significant dip from fourth grade to eighth grade, which all districts are trying to understand and evaluate.

Board Member Markwell asked what is being used to validate what is currently happening, including what is successful and what needs to be worked on.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained “inquiry” as the category of questions that appear on the science NECAP. These are not recall questions, but rather are complicated open-ended questions that require students to engage in a number of processes that will lead them to a conclusion. He added that the language arts departments help with science inquiry beginning in the elementary schools.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that a district-wide science committee was put in place last year for grades kindergarten through 12. In trying to develop the curriculum, there are two areas of focus. These are defining skill sets for students in grades kindergarten through 12 and developing appropriate applications for those skill sets.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked how much work is guided by the state and how much is our ownership. Since the numbers are not where they should be, he asked how much leeway the district has in solving its own problems.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the state provides the standards but does not give any further direction on how to achieve them. He added that we have adopted the Understanding by Design (UbD) protocol which asks what needs to be accomplished, what needs to be known in order to accomplish that and what is the “take away” for the students. He also stated that there is a lot of discretion to develop lesson plans. The state does not say how to solve the problems just that the problems have to be solved.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin hoped that by next fall the new science curriculum will be rolled out.

Board Member Barnes stated that she was pleased that the eleventh grade students, now seniors, have shown improvement in their scores and that there is an action plan. She added that there are a lot of initiatives of which people are not aware of. She added that there is room for improvement.

Student Representative Yates stated that at the high school more inquiry questions are appearing on tests. These give students a bigger picture of what is contained in the NECAP test. He suggested that students complete practice tests to prepare them for the NECAP tests.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that we should be teaching inquiry wherever possible, even if they were not on the NECAP tests. Process and inquiry matter, not necessarily because the information is on the NECAP test.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the eighth grade test scores were very disappointing. She added that she is hopeful that in the next few years, with the initiatives that have been taken (our logic model, literacy, numeracy, etc.) the district will continue to make progress in the NECAP scores, noting that sometimes improvement takes time.

9. Other

a. Correspondence

Chairman Vaillancourt cited the e-mail received by a local business owner regarding maintenance in the school district.

b. Comments

There were no comments.

10. New Business

There was no new business.

11. Committee Reports

Board Member Markwell reported that he had been to the School Planning and Building Committee meeting on September 26, 2011, where the proposed SPED/SAU construction was discussed. The proposal is to keep the original footprint of the building, not make it smaller. It was determined at the meeting that the building would be a steel structure to make it more affordable, noting that the structure itself would not change but the materials in building the structure would change. I would look like a “traditional” building with masonry (brick) or vinyl siding. It was suggested that a local building with similar structure be found for committee members to view.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that she had heard that televising the meeting of the Planning and Building Committee had been discussed at the meeting. She asked if any decisions had been made regarding this.

Board Member Markwell responded that there had been discussion, but no formal vote was taken.

Chairman Vaillancourt explained the benefits of televising the Planning and Building Committee meeting, noting that all information should be shared with the public. She encouraged televising these meetings.

Board Member Markwell reported that sometimes there are no minutes handed out at the meetings, nor is there an agenda sent out prior to the meetings. He agreed that if the committee meetings are televised, it might become a more formal meeting with a set time and an agenda.

Vice Chairman Ortega stated that any elected body in the town should make themselves available of the services we have (recorded or televised) in the interest of transparency to the public. He also agreed that all meetings should be conducted in a formal fashion.

Board Member Barnes spoke about the SPED/SAU building, noting that very few people in the community probably know the extent of the research and reporting that was done by the Planning and Building Committee. Therefore, televising committee meetings would be advantageous to the public.

Chairman Vaillancourt agreed that the report on the construction of the proposed SPED/SAU building was complete and very well done and should be shared with the public. She continued, noting that the Planning and Building Committee is autonomous and the school board can only make suggestions to the committee. She stated that there was board consensus that Board Member Markwell suggests to the Planning and Building Committee that they televise their meetings.

Board Member Markwell agreed that he would bring the suggestion to have meetings televised to the Planning and Building Committee.

Board Member Thornton reported that the Kids Kove project is complete. Students from the high school as well as students from other schools helped complete this project. The Halloween Walk will be held at Wasserman Park on October 28th. Volunteers are still needed. The committee is looking forward to resurfacing the skate park.

Vice Chairman Ortega reported that he attended the Budget Committee meeting on September 20, 2011, where training was done by Business Administrator Shevenell. At the meeting following the training there was continued discussion on meeting space for the committee. Based on the committee's schedule and conflicts, the meeting will take place in the high school cafeteria and will be televised.

Vice Chairman Ortega reported that he attended a technology committee meeting. Nancy Rose reviewed the list of at least one dozen technology projects introduced or completed during the summer as well as those to be done throughout the year. Since dedicated technology resources are not readily available, volunteers make up a large part of who is helping to accomplish these projects. The committee will continue to work with Ms. Rose for the upcoming budget considerations.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that Tracy Bull attended the meeting of the Master Plan Steering Committee. Draft copies of the minutes were passed out to the school board. The Economic Development portion was a major discussion at the meeting.

12. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no comments on agenda items.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:15 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 5-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 10:06 p.m. Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.