

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
November 7, 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 October 17, 2011 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2011 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Pages 2, 3, and 4 of 11, section 6, all references to Ms. Heath should be Dr. Heath
- Paged 4 of 11, paragraph 6, last sentence remove the word “post” before the words “graduate classes”
- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 9, add to the last paragraph “unless further discussion is warranted”

Vice Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 7 of 11, paragraph 4 should read “Vice Chairman Ortega”

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 11, paragraph 2 from the bottom should be replaced with the following two paragraphs:

“Principal Johnson began by explaining that class rank will continue to be placed on the transcripts, but will be eliminated from report cards, progress reports and PowerSchool. The reason for the elimination is that discussions of class rank by students proved to be unproductive. He noted that after the school year 2011-2012 class ranks would be available through their guidance counselors. Honor Society will continue, as will the top ten class dinner.”

“Principal Johnson stated that parents and students have received a copy of the Competency Based Grading System Plan this year and that it will also be placed on the high school web site.”

- Page 5 of 11, paragraph 2, add an “s” to the word “project”
- Page 5 of 11, paragraph 3, should read “... explained that assignment requirements...”, deleting the word “an”.
- Page 8 of 11, paragraph 2 from the bottom, delete “doing it that way” from the last sentence. It should read, “It may not logistically work out by combining projects that include town land and school land together”.
- Page 10 of 11, paragraph 1, should read: “Chairman Vaillancourt explained that the board does not always give a formal charge to the School Planning and Building Committee on capital projects, however we do typically run projects by them. (Remove the next sentence entirely). She asked if the administration has enough information to make a decision or recommendation regarding the track separate from a formal charge regarding the field.”
- Page 10 of 11, paragraph 5, add “in the very near future” to the end of the sentence
- Page 10 of 11, paragraph 7, change the word “field” to “track” and add the word “not” before “to be placed...”
- Page 10 of 11, paragraph 7, add the words “for use” after the word “safe”.
- Page 11 of 11, first paragraph, second line, replace the word “standard” with “standards”

The motion to accept the minutes as amended passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation

Barbara Publicover, 75 Amherst Road, invited the board and the public to the first Special Education Parents’ Support Group District event, which will be held on November 14 at 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the James Mastricola Elementary School library. The topic will be Helping All Children Academically and Beyond.

4. Consent Agenda

- Approval of Partnership Agreement Between Southern New Hampshire University and the Merrimack School District

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to approve the Partnership Agreement between Southern New Hampshire University and the Merrimack School District.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. 2011-2012 School Calendar Adjustment

Superintendent Chiafery presented the proposed school calendar adjustments due to the three school days that were eliminated due to the power outage from the late October snowstorm. Her proposal included:

- June 14, 15 and 18 would be utilized to complete the needed 180 days. Superintendent Chiafery added that in the 2010-2011 school year the last day of school was June 27th.

- The first quarter will end November 10 instead of November 4, providing 46 days in the first marking period. Report cards will be issued Friday, December 2, 2011.
- The second quarter will end January 27, 2012 instead of January 20, 2012, which will provide 45.5 days in the second marking period.
- Superintendent Chiafery added that the third and fourth quarter ending dates would be amended as needed.
- Professional development days and school vacations will be adhered to as planned.
- Superintendent Chiafery noted that at least two parents have asked that Veterans' Day be used as a make up day. She responded that Veterans' Day and Memorial Day are required by the State as no school days.

Board Member Markwell asked about having November 24, 2011, the day before Thanksgiving, as a make up day. He added that most companies he is familiar with do not have that day off.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that some families use that day for travel. Professional and support staff was in agreement to keep November 24th as a no school day.

Board Member Barnes stated that some people have suggested that Civil Rights Day in January be used a make up day.

Vice Chairman Ortega noted on the calendar that make up days are inserted for June 19-25 and questioned what would happen if more days are needed for make up days beyond the 25th.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she is not averse to looking at a teacher workshop day and Civil Rights Day as possible make up days. However, she added, she is averse to making major modifications at this juncture, and suggested that the board stay the course of this calendar. She added that much time is spent on the calendar and there are several different opinions and that there are some tight parameters to work around.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked if there is any implication of going to school beyond the 29th of June.

Superintendent Chiafery explained that contractually the school year cannot go beyond June 29th.

Chairman Vaillancourt referenced an e-mail from Claudia Simone, a Merrimack resident, regarding the school calendar. She noted that Ms. Simone made three suggestions to adjust the calendar for this year. These include making Veterans' Day, the day before Thanksgiving and the week between Christmas and New Year's Day as school days. Chairman Vaillancourt replied to Ms. Simone that it is the law that there be no school on Veterans' Day and in the past several families have voiced their support for the day before Thanksgiving as a holiday.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that it was premature to make any further adjustments to the calendar and that the board always welcomes public comment and parental input regarding the calendar. She invited the public to attend any board meetings when the calendar for the following year is discussed, since this year's calendar was previously been voted on and approved.

6. Establish December Budget Hearing Dates

Superintendent Chiafery reported that the December school board meetings are scheduled for December 5th and December 19th. In working with Business Administrator Shavenell and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Superintendent Chiafery listed three potential dates to review the administration's budget, which the board will receive on December 5th. These dates are December 8th, December 12th and December 15th.

Board Member Markwell noted that the Town Council meets at the Town Hall Meeting room on Thursdays and therefore these proposed meetings would have to take place in the high school cafeteria. He added that he would not be available on January 2nd or 3rd to approve the budget, which needs to be done after the first meeting of the board in January.

Superintendent Chiafery responded by stating that the January 2nd date could be used as another date for discussion if needed.

Chairman Vaillancourt proposed that December 8th and 12th be school board budget meeting dates and that December 15th be used as a snow date.

Board Member Barnes noted that there is an annual open house for Merrimack Safeguard on the December 8th and asked if the budget meeting could begin at 7:30 p.m. rather than 7:00 p.m.

Board Member Thornton stated that the dates were fine and agreed that it would be nice to have all board members' input on the budget at the board meeting.

Vice Chairman Ortega announced that he had tentative business travel for December but those dates did not interfere with the December 5th, 8th or 15th proposed meeting dates.

Superintendent Chiafery confirmed that the budget meeting would be at 7:30 p.m. on December 8th, 7:00 p.m. on December 12th and 7:00 p.m. on December 15th, if needed. The December 19th school board meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m.

7. Ongoing Budget Preparation for 2012-2013

Superintendent Chiafery asked for the reconsideration of the paving of Lyons Road in the amount of \$110,000. The question she asked of the board was if Lyons Road has already been appropriated, if the board agreed to go forward with the project, then could the parking lot reconfiguration be looked at solely for \$55,000.

Chairman Vaillancourt responded a consensus from the board could be taken, as a formal vote is not necessary.

Board Member Barnes asked if the Lyons Road project, for \$55,000, was to go forward, would the reconfiguration project go below the benchmark for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the Reeds Ferry parking lot reconstruction project alone would cost \$110,000.

Board Member Barnes stated that since Lyons Road has been a nightmare for years and therefore needs to be paved, she is in support of the project.

Board Member Thornton asked if the newly paved Lyons Road would be compromised when the Reeds Ferry parking lot reconfiguration is done.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that there would be vehicular traffic on the road after Lyons Road is paved, but there would be no damage to the recently paved road when the parking lot project is done. He explained that he would coordinate with the town of Merrimack to do the paving, which will lesson the cost of the project.

Board Member Markwell asked Business Administrator Shevenell when the paving project is expected to begin.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that hopefully the work will be done during the April vacation, and if more time is needed it will take place when school is out in June.

Chairman Vaillancourt added that she has a concern about releasing the money for this project because of pending legislation to the New Hampshire Retirement System that could cause the school district to have to increase their contribution level. However, since nothing has changed at this point, the only increase in the expenditures from the budget that will be needed is \$200,000. That leaves a remaining \$992,075 in the budget that was set aside or reserved and not expended due to the uncertainties in legislation that could have possibly impacted out budget. The paving of Lyons Road would leave \$937,075; the \$200,000 for the NHRS would leave \$737,075 in this budget cycle that would not be spent.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that he had already released money to the NHRS. He requested a formal vote on the paving of Lyons Road.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Thornton) to release \$55,000 for the purpose of repairing Lyons Road in this fiscal budget.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

8. Other

- **Correspondence**

E-Mail from Sharon Redfern

An e-mail was sent to Board Member Thornton and Vice Chairman Ortega from Sharon Redfern, a resident of Merrimack regarding school being held on Thursday, November 3 in spite of the fact that there were still people without power, unpassable roads and the middle school having no power.

Vice Chairman Ortega replied to Ms. Redfern's message, stating that Superintendent Chiafery was in contact with the Merrimack Police and Fire Departments and was told there was a commitment from Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) that power at Merrimack Middle School would be restored by 7:30 a.m. Unfortunately PSNH was not able to restore power to the middle school until later in the day, adding that at no time were the students or staff unsafe.

E-Mail from Jennifer Yeomans

An e-mail was sent to Chairman Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman Ortega and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin regarding the Partnership between Southern New Hampshire University and the Merrimack School District. Her concern was signing an exclusive contract with the University.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded to Ms. Yeomans and assured her that this program was not exclusive to Southern New Hampshire University.

- **Comments**

Student Representative Yates announced the high school theater department production of "The Curious Savage", a heartwarming comedy about money and greed, would be held November 17-19, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. Tickets will be available at the door.

9. New Business

- There was no New Business.

10. Committee Reports

- Board Member Markwell reported that in a follow up to Healthcare Cost Containment there is an article in Partners Health Magazine about one of the Merrimack Paraeducators regarding health screening and the ability to receive rapid treatment at Southern New Hampshire Health Systems.
- Board Member Markwell attended the meeting of the School Planning and Building Committee on October 24, 2011. There was discussion about the committee meetings being televised, to which the members responded that the Planning and Building Committee is a research and development committee. Since they do spend any money, the committee members do not feel it is necessary to have their meetings televised. They will, however, put the topic on a future agenda for discussion.

The Planning and Building Committee also had concern about the March budget deadline as it relates to the high school athletic field charge, especially if more time is needed and if the deliberations could be extended, if needed, into April.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the March date is in place so that the board that issued the charge would be in receipt of the information. Therefore there will be no extensions into April.

- Board Member Barnes reported that she attended the meeting of Merrimack Safeguard as a substitute for Board Member Thornton. She reported that Drug Take Back Day resulted in a collection of 136 pounds of medication. She also reported that there is an open house scheduled for December 8, 2011 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Saint James Methodist Church. She also reported that "Above the Influence" presented its annual report. The meeting also included a review of the middle school drug and alcohol use survey.

Chairman Vaillancourt reported that there was an article in the Nashua Telegraph about School Resource Officer Prentice starting a youth group at the middle school to support Merrimack Safeguard.

- Board Member Thornton reported on the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee on October 19, 2011. The Haunted Walk was very successful. The Christmas Tree Lighting and Christmas Parade is the next large event. She also stated that the goals and objectives of the committee were discussed.
- Vice Chairman Ortega reported that he and Superintendent Chiafery attended the meeting of SERESC, a consortium of local school districts. The annual report was reviewed. He continued to report that there was a very interesting presentation on a new program being implemented to help in terms of special education between educational staff and medical staff.

11. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

12. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 8:25 p.m. Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) 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 9:05 p.m. Board Member Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to adjourn the meeting.