

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
December 5, 2011**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

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

1. Call to Order

Vice Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Vice Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of November 21, 2011 minutes

Board Member Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2011 meeting.

Student Representative Yates requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 7 of 7, Section 10, change to Roy “Swonger”

Board Member Thornton requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 5 of 7, paragraph 2 from bottom, change “a few thousand dollars” to “approximately \$200,000.”
- Page 6 of 7, paragraph 6, last sentence should read “They do not spend any more money than is necessary”.

Vice Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2 of 7, change to Joe Kearns
- Page 2 of 7, paragraph 5, should read “The budget committee hearings will be held in January and February, followed by a budget committee public hearing and then the deliberative session in March. The final vote on the budget will be taken at the polls in April 2012”.
- Page 4 of 7, last paragraph insert the word “increased” before “student eligibility”
- Page 7 of 7, paragraph 1 should read “requested that accommodations for tables be set up for the budget committee members at the school board budget hearings.”

The motion passed 2-0-1 with Board Member Markwell abstaining.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

- Barnes and Noble Book Store to Thorntons Ferry School for \$350.00 for “Principal’s Night” at Barnes and Noble.

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

The motion passed 3-0-0.

5. Focus on the District’s Instrumental Music Program

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin introduced the members of the instrumental program in the district: Pat Cunningham from Merrimack High School, Holly Levine from Merrimack Middle School and Bunny Saranita from James Masticola Upper Elementary School.

A video showcased the Instrumental Music Program in the Merrimack School District.

Pat Cunningham explained that the music curriculum is being revised and competencies are being implemented at the high school.

Bunny Saranita gave a description of the music program at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School (JMUES).

Highlights included:

- The elementary schools provide students with basic music; the instrumental learning begins in grade five.
- Trial nights are held where parents and students can look/listen and play musical instruments to determine their instrument of choice.
- Students take weekly music lessons and are encouraged to attend band rehearsals before school.
- JMUES is included in the Cavalcade of Bands Concert in the spring.
- Recital nights are held at JMUES during the year, including family recitals.
- Visiting musicians are invited to the school to speak to the students.

Holly Levine gave a description of the music program at Merrimack Middle School.

Highlights included:

- The full band is a graded subject.
- The Concert Band practices 3 days a week, before school begins. The Jazz Band practices 2 days a week before school.
- The bands have several formal concerts including the Cavalcade of Bands in March and the winter and spring concerts.
- Ms. Levine added that the students are committed to a level of dedication and responsibility that very few of their peers experience.

Pat Cunningham described the music program at Merrimack High School.

Highlights include:

- The high school has three band classes: the Concert Band, the Jazz Band, and the Marching Band
- All of the band classes are accredited class.
- In attendance were several high school music students who showed many of the awards received by the high school bands.
- “Smart Music” is the web based software program used in the high school. This program plays music along with the students and instantly accesses their performance.
- Six band members performed at the All State Band/Orchestra Competition in April.
- High school band member Dominick DeFrancisco explained his participation in the music program at the high school. He participated in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. He stated that he is planning on furthering his education with a college degree in music.
- Parents, students and teams of educators play an essential role in the musical education of the students.

Another video was shown featuring Merrimack alumni that have chosen music as their career choice.

Board Member Thornton thanked everyone for their presentations. She asked Ms. Cunningham to expand on the explanation of the web-based program.

Ms. Cunningham responded that “Smart Music” is becoming very popular. She gave an explanation of how the program works and stated that she encourages students to purchase the program on their own.

Board Member Markwell thanked the participants for their time and for their presentations.

Student Representative Yates also thanked everyone, especially the students who came to the meeting on a school night and the teachers who gave him a solid background in music.

Vice Chairman Ortega also thanked everyone for their participation. He stated that there is a unique opportunity to see the continuity of music program at the Cavalcade of Bands with James Masticola Upper Elementary School, Merrimack Middle School and Merrimack High School all participating.

6. Review Proposed Parking Lot Reconfiguration at Reeds Ferry Elementary School

Business Administrator Shevenell introduced Steve Keach of Keach Nordstrom Associates, a Civil Engineering firm. He explained there are too many vehicles and not enough parking spaces at Reeds Ferry Elementary School. The adjoining wetlands are a major challenge.

Steve Keach explained that there are currently 107 parking spaces at Reeds Ferry Elementary School. Currently, two of the 107 parking spaces are designed as handicapped spaces. The proposed reconfiguration would add 39 spaces, resulting in 146 total spaces. The 146 parking spaces would include 5 spaces designated as handicapped spaces as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Mr. Keach reported that in July he composed a cost opinion. The overall cost opinion of the reconfiguration would be about \$1,000 a space. Therefore the cost opinion was \$39,500 to construct the spaces, resurface the entire area and stripe the entire area. He continued to report that in the parking lot to the left there is an embankment that will need about 250 yards of fill which is about 20 truckloads.

Business Administrator Shevenell contacted a reliable contractor who has worked with the school department in the past. This contractor gave a ballpark figure for constructing the spaces, resurfacing the lot and restriping the lines. This figure is reflected in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Board Member Markwell asked why all the handicapped spaces were not together in one area and closest to the entrance of the school.

Mr. Keach responded that there are also needs for handicapped parking when the gym is being used. Handicapped spaces were made available on the southerly side of the gym where there is a break in the fence. He also explained that of the 5 new handicapped spaces, one is considerably larger to accommodate handicapped vans.

Board Member Markwell, as a member of the Planning and Building Committee, stated that there was concern that the space between the gated area by the gym and the wall would not be enough space for people to back out. He added that another discussion at the Planning and Building Committee meeting focused on the traffic pattern.

Mr. Keach responded that there is not a lot of opportunity to change the pattern. The area is not conducive to concentric loops.

Board Member Thornton voiced her concern with the pick up of students at the end of the school day. There is a safety concern with students running through the parking lot. She added that she was not so sure that adding the parking spaces would alleviate that problem.

Mr. Keach responded that if the teacher spaces were to be near the busses, parents would be excluded from that area. There would be 63 spaces, not including handicapped spaces, which would probably be enough for the entire staff and faculty during regular school hours.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that if additional parking spaces are provided, the parents need to be educated on the traffic pattern change.

Board Member Thornton asked Superintendent Chiafery if 63 parking spaces for faculty and staff would be enough.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she thought that 63 spaces would be enough for the staff and faculty at the school. She suggested that the principals of Reeds Ferry School be asked to do a count of those who would be parking in the designated area.

Mr. Keach explained that if more spaces are needed for faculty and staff, the 12 parking spaces on the side of the island that are protected by a fence could be made available.

Board Member Thornton expressed concern that parents would end up parallel parking, which would result in the blockage of other cars and/or empty spaces. She did agree that the plan would alleviate some of the very dangerous situation.

Mr. Keach stated that he thought that colored parking spaces for faculty/staff is a good place to start. The spaces not appropriate for parent parking would be marked. The two would be segregated.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked Superintendent Chiafery about the process for the board to use the information presented.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that Mr. Keach had come to clarify the project that is part of the CIP. She thanked him and added that the board would take the plan under consideration before the final rendering on December 21, 2011 or January 2, 2012.

7. Overview of Proposed 2012-2013 School District Budget

Superintendent Chiafery explained that there are outcomes that need to be decided upon to complete the administration’s budget for 2012-2013.

- Items yet to be determined are:
 - Wages: The school board is currently engaged in collective bargaining with the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association (MESSA)
 - Possible Warrant Articles
 - Asbestos removal at Merrimack High School
 - Roof replacement at James Mastricola Elementary School
 - Parking lot reconfiguration at Reeds Ferry Elementary School
 - The timeline for the school board to approve the budget is approximately one month from the date of issuance by the Superintendent of Schools, which is January 2, 2012
- Enrollments: Comparison of actual enrollment on the first Monday after Labor Day 2011 with projected enrollment for September 2012.

Grade	Actual Enrollment 9/12/11	Projected Enrollment 2012-2013	Increase/ Decrease
K-4	1,423	1,359	(64)
5-6	643	630	(13)
7-8	612	624	12
9-12	1,451	1,398	(53)
ODP/Preschool*	120	116	(4)
TOTAL	4,249	4,127	(122)

- ODP/Preschool line represents out-of-district placements and those children 3 and 4 years old in district preschool programs at Reeds Ferry and Mastricola Elementary Schools.

- Personnel - Professional Staff
 - K-4: Proposed elimination of 4 full-time teaching positions
 - James Mastricola Elementary - one grade 4 teacher
 - Reeds Ferry Elementary School – one grade 3 teacher
 - Thorntons Ferry Elementary School – one grade 2 teacher and one grade 4 teacher
 - Upper Elementary School- Proposed elimination of one full-time teaching position
 - One grade 6 teacher – student teacher ratio will be 25:1 in grade 6 classes
 - Merrimack High School- Proposed elimination of 2 full-time teaching positions
 - One full-time math teacher
 - One special education teacher
 - Administration - Proposed elimination of 1 assistant principal
- Employee Benefits
 - Health Coverage - the guaranteed maximum rate is 6% for 2012-2013. This represents more than was budgeted for healthcare in the 2011-2012 budget
 - Dental Coverage - There is 0% increase for the 2012-2013 school year
 - NH Retirement System - Employer contribution will remain the same
 - Retirement Incentive - 19 teachers have applied for the retirement incentive as of November 15, 2011. Funding for 10 of the 19 requests has been included in the budget.
- Classroom/Instructional Focus
 - The administration is recommending that a fourth year of a five year furniture replacement plan be continued for the three elementary schools and the upper elementary school as well as the high school.
 - The administration thought it would be prudent to consolidate all of the school software and licensing accounts into one account to be overseen by the library, media and technology budget. The intent is to provide each school with one interactive technology system and two document cameras to equip learners at all levels with access to technology tools.
- Transportation
 - The school district will go out to bid for transportation services for the 2012-2013 school year and beyond. The budget reflects a potential increase of 10% for transportation services.
 - The sole increase in the 2012-2013 special education budget is due to a predicted higher percentage rate for student transportation.
- Maintenance
 - Included in the proposed budget is the sixth year of a twelve-year lease purchase agreement to provide heating, ventilation and building efficiency upgrades to reduce energy consumption in all utilities.
 - Tom Touseau, Director of Maintenance, has recommended that asbestos abatement occur in designated sections of Merrimack High School.
 - The administration is recommending the replacement of wall unit tables at Reeds Ferry Elementary School.
 - The carpet at Reeds Ferry Elementary School needs to be replaced.

b. Comments

Board Member Thornton asked Superintendent Chiafery if she had spoken with Moderator Lynn Christensen concerning splitting the cost of the floor covering for the high school gym with the Town should the high school become the sole polling place for the town.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she had not heard from Lynn Christensen regarding the floor covering in the gym. She explained that Ms. Christensen had come to a previous school board meeting to discuss the plan for using the gym as the sole voting place for the town. She added that there is a concern about the school calendar in regards to voting in the school.

Board Member Thornton asked if the Town Council has committed to splitting the cost of the floor covering and if it was a part of the Town's budget.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she was not sure if this item is in the Town Council budget.

Vice Chairman Ortega asked if the Town Council is moving towards establishing a single polling site for the town.

Superintendent Chiafery responded she would check with Ms. Christensen. She added that she put the full cost of the gym floor covering into the school board budget to make sure it is part of the school board deliberation.

Board Member Markwell asked if moving the polling places to the high school would save money for the taxpayers. He suggested there be a joint meeting with the Town Council. If that is not possible due to time restraints, he suggested that the Town Council get a consensus on the project.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she would find out if the Town Council has budgeted for the floor covering. She explained that the school board would need to know before January 2, 2012.

Vice Chairman Ortega suggested that there be a formal discussion about the school calendar which will be affected if the high school becomes the sole polling area in Merrimack. He suggested the item be placed on a future agenda to be voted on before the budget deliberations.

10. New business

There was no new business.

11. Committee Reports

Board Member Markwell attended the Planning and Building Committee on November 14, 2011. At the meeting, Tom Sullivan from Sullivan Construction, Inc. gave an outline on "Building Green". Another item discussed was the track and field.

Board Member Markwell attended the Professional Development Committee meeting on November 10, 2011 where the anti-bullying training, the para survey and the master plan update were covered.

Board Member Thornton reported on the November 30, 2011 meeting of the District Parent Group. There was an in depth discussion regarding the school calendar and how it is crafted. There was also a presentation from Barbara Publicover regarding the District Special Education Group.

Board Member Thornton announced that on December 8, 2011 Project Safeguard is holding an open house at 6:00 p.m. at St. James Methodist Church.

12. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Andy Schneider, 34 Woodland Road, spoke about the music program. He commended the use of technology in the music program as well as the over all success of the program.

Alexander Doyle, 2 Findlay Way, spoke about the music program in the high school. He stated that he felt it was because of his success in music that he has become successful in his other subjects. He would like to expand the music program if possible.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:15 p.m. Board Member Thornton moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 3-0-0.