

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Town Hall Meeting Room  
January 4, 2016  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**Present:** Chairman Ortega, Vice Chair Barnes, Board Members Guagliumi and Schneider, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell and Student Representative Marcus.

**Absent:** Board Member Powell was excused.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

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

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Approval of December 21, 2015 Minutes**

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to approve the minutes of the December 21, 2015 meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 7, line 311: Change “Balance” to “Balanced”

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2, line 81: Change “...guidelines that are now met are retained...” to “...guidelines are now met and retained...”
- Page 5, line 221: Change “if” to “when”

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 7, line 328: Begin second sentence with “Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that...”

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes:

- Page 1, line 18: Insert the word “contemporaneously” into the sentence.
- Page 1, line 21: Insert “...Brandon...” before “...Florida...”
- Page 2, line 72: Close the quote.
- Page 8, line 368: Remove the word “is”
- Page 10, line 452 and 453 delete the second “...commended the students...”

The motion passed as amended 4-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

### **3. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

### **4. Consent Agenda**

- a) Approval of Animals in the School Policy
- b) Approval to Construct a Bridge on Grater Woods Trail for \$1,000 from the School District Environmental Education and Forest Management Fund.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the two items for approval.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to accept the consent agenda as presented.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

### **5. Request by Trustees of the Trust Funds for a Proposed Warrant Article to Charge Management Fees to the Related Capital Reserve Fund**

Chairman Ortega invited Trustees Chris Christensen and Bill Wilkes to the table.

Trustee Christensen explained that past practice, allowed by law, was to put a line item in the budget to pay the management fees which proved cumbersome. The assumption was that the Capital Reserve Fund should not suffer diminution due to management fees.

Approximately a year and half ago codification allowed this practice to continue under the condition that the governing body approve of the payment of the management fees.

Chairman Ortega asked what the Board should budget for if the warrant article does not pass.

Trustee Christensen responded that the Capital Reserve Fund stands at approximately \$665,000 to \$670,000 as of the end of November 2015 and at 25 points this would be about \$1,750.00.

A vote on the warrant article occurred at the January 12, 2016 meeting.

Chairman Ortega thanked both trustees for their time.

### **6. Formal Hearing on Technology/Library/Media Budget for 2016-2017**

Chairman Ortega invited Ms. Nancy Rose, Director of Technology, Library and Media Services to the table.

Director Rose began with a brief overview. There is a continuing demand for more technology and improved technology to support instruction. Digital tools, replacement of hardware, online tools, assessment tools, federal e-rate law changes, Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

infrastructure upgrades, and the continuing integration of digital skills into the curriculum are reflected in this year's budget.

Director Rose then addressed questions submitted by Board Members prior to this meeting.

Board Member Schneider asked "Telephone/Library: Is the reduction of the budgeted amount directly attributed to VOIP expansion? Will this drop in additional years based on the additional expansion/upgrade of VOIP per your CIP items?"

Vice Chair Barnes similarly asked, "Telephone: Seeing a decline in cost with the shift to VOIP, is a three-year average prudent for telephone expense? Would looking at the lower rate with VOIP as the benchmark make more sense?"

Director Rose responded that the VOIP project has recently been completed and is still being monitored. Additionally, the e-rate is phasing out VOIP funding. There are digital service contracts in place now.

Chairman Ortega asked for an explanation of the federal e-rate program.

Director Rose responded that it is a free federal program through the Federal Communications Commission. It is aimed at improving internet and communication services for schools and libraries. It is based on the free and reduced lunch program participation and Merrimack qualifies at a 40% rate. There is now more emphasis on infrastructure and wireless connectivity.

Business Administrator Shevenell added that the funding comes from taxes and universal service fees on Verizon phone bills.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question "Software and licensing/Library: Is the \$34K increase combining any other previously budgeted line items, and is the level of run-rate we'll see in future years for these areas?"

Director Rose responded that this is additional software, bi-annual fees, changes in web-hosting based on e-rate policy, and the increase in educational software and services.

Board Member Schneider asked if the move to more digital resources would eliminate hard copy resources.

Director Rose responded that she and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin have been discussing this recently and the new plan is to move away from tech planning to integration planning. It is a challenging area in which to plan.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question, "Additional Equipment/Library: You state that this is to provide additional equipment to go along with the classroom projectors already installed, but don't list what this includes. Is it smart boards? Document cameras? Computer equipment? Just general statements is sufficient-although any relevance or addition to districtwide purchases of smart board technology would be good to note."

Director Rose responded this is the area where interactive technology is covered. Items such as mimio teach bars, document cameras, interactive projectors in the elementary school libraries, and iPad's with Apple TVs are some of the trial technologies.

Chairman Ortega asked how demand for equipment is managed.

Director Rose responded that the elementary schools use the mimio teach bars, the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School uses iPad's and Apple TVs, the Merrimack Middle School uses the document cameras, and the Merrimack High School departments use a variety of technologies.

Director Rose noted that there is a lot of introductory level and experimentation that leads to trying additional technologies.

Board Member Schneider had submitted the questions "Tech Infra Improvement: Item 7, is this for equipment and labor for these installs? Anything that maps to the individual school allocation per my earlier question?" and "Item 8, Will this VOIP expense help reduce costs beyond what you've already noted in the earlier budget item (page 2)?"

Director Rose responded that the money is divided up based on rough enrollments. Some buildings advanced more quickly due to parent funding. The VOIP money is for lease payments that will taper off, but replacement and repair costs will continue.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question "Membership Library: Is this CoSN cost something that we'll see ongoing in future budget years, or a one-time thing?"

Director Rose responded that CoSN, the Consortium of School Networking, is a national organization that supports education technology directors. This is an ongoing expense for a district membership that supports all technology and library staff by offering policy development support, infrastructure design and considerations, and training in best practices.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question "Instructional Equipment Repairs: Will we soon see a shift from repair to replacement as projectors, etc. age?"

Director Rose responded that the Capital Improvement Plan folded the replacement budget into it but that repairs will always be there.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question "Telephone: Seeing a decline in cost with the shift to VOIP, is a three-year average prudent for telephone expense? Would looking at the lower rate with VOIP as the benchmark make more sense?"

Director Rose responded that she and Business Administrator Shevenell discussed this and decided that the three year average will continue to be used as a budget until the district has a few years of data on the VOIP system.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about the cost of repair versus replacement.

Director Rose responded that the district was fortunate to have had the services of an excellent repairman who charged minimal amounts. He is now retired. The increasing costs of repairs combined with planned obsolescence by equipment manufacturers will lead to more purchase than repair moving forward in certain technologies.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if Director Rose would speak about how purchases are made, breaks for education, rebates, warranties, and finding deals.

Director Rose responded that for bigger ticket items quotes are requested from several vendors, with an effort made to stay within the same brands for compatibility issues, paying attention to situations such as the Google versus Microsoft competition to capture more market share, bulk buying.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the e-rate changes would also be cost saving opportunities.

Director Rose responded that the e-rate change would enable an increase in bandwidth.

Chairman Ortega asked about grants.

Director Rose responded that she would like to put more time into applying for grants. Right now most of the larger grants apply to more impoverished districts. The effort versus reward has to be considered. Instead of grants some of the bigger software companies have made their products more affordable and sometimes even free.

Board Member Schneider noted that google.docs is now used more frequently in the workplace.

Chairman Ortega thanked Director Rose for her time and her presentation.

## **7. Formal Hearing on Special Services Budget for 2016-2017**

Chairman Ortega invited Director of Special Services John Fabrizio to the table.

Director Fabrizio opened his remarks by highlighting some of the federal and state laws and regulations that shape the budget.

The number of students being serviced through Special Education over the past four years has remained steady at about 17.5% of the student population of Merrimack.

The budget increase of 2% is being requested for items such as additional air conditioner units for Thorntons Ferry Elementary School and the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, upgrades for testing software, iPads, specific staff training (CPI), out of district placements, the cost of keeping a student in the district, and moving the pre-schools to all three elementary schools.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted a question in regards to Charter Schools and associated costs.

Director Fabrizio responded that the costs include a para-educator salary, occupational therapy, speech, and transportation.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question, “SEP/Tutoring/Salary/Elementary: The 2014-2015 expended amount is huge compared to the budgeted amount, why? Are we exposed given the current and budgeted amounts for 2016-2017?”

Director Fabrizio responded that everything is based on student need and that he then needs to look for unused funds in another area, making sure to stay within the overall budget.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question, “SEP/Tutor/HS and SEP/Tutoring/Salary/HS: The 2014-2015 expended amount for both items is significantly below what was budgeted. Is this an anomaly or a trend?”

Director Fabrizio responded that it is based on student needs and the federal and state mandates.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question, “SEP/Spec Staff Training/Services: This budgeted amount is a \$10K increase, attributed to Mandatory CPI training. Can you explain why this is new and whether this is something that is the new run-rate for this training category?”

Director Fabrizio responded that this is mandated training and staff are required to be re-certified every three years.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question, “SEP/Related Svcs/Elementary and SEP/Related Svcs/Middle: You state the amounts are related to student needs (in one case the previous spend amount is higher) and in the other lower. Is this due to a child moving from elementary to middle? Is this something that will fluctuate from year to year?”

Director Fabrizio responded yes.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question “SEP Asst/Tutors/ Contracted Services: I can see why 3% increases in district-employed paras is budgeted (MESSA contract), but for this item it appears to be a SERESC contracted service. How does the 3% increase related to a contracted service? Or is this 3% just a coincidental amount?”

Director Fabrizio responded that he looks at the contracts every year and tries to keep them balanced.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question “SEP/Ext. Yr Transport Middle and SEP/Ext. Yr Transport High: The 2014-2015 expended amount is very low-just an anomaly?”

Director Fabrizio responded that he budgets this area for a worst case scenario based on projections on which students might choose transportation. He noted that it takes a team always looking at the budget because the Special Education student population fluctuates as students move in and out of the school district.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question “SEP/Transp/Other Org/Charter: Similar to my earlier charter school question-are we expending in this year closely to the budget amount? Or is this something we must budget for generally per the state’s RSA’s?”

Director Fabrizio responded that the population fluctuation issue and the fact that at any time an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) can be re-opened and changed make it difficult to forecast an accurate budget amount.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question “SEP/Tuition/non-public NH/Elementary: The amount of budget is less than previous year-but everything listed seems to be a new out-of-district placement. Are there no carry-over placements from current elementary students? Did they all move to MMS?”

Director Fabrizio responded that students moved to various new educational settings.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question, “SEP/Add’l Equipment: If we look back at previous budgets, how did the A/C requests align with the “other” items (iPads, etc)? Are there more of these “other” items this year than in the past? (appears to be 20K outside of the A/C budget). And can you share the history of the A/C additions you have already done and in which years?”

Director Fabrizio responded that some of the existing technologies and equipment are becoming obsolete. New applications cannot be uploaded to the older devices.

Board Member Schneider thanked Director Fabrizio for the detailed explanations.

Board Member Guagliumi asked for comments on the benefits of moving the Special Education preschoolers to the neighborhood elementary schools.

Director Fabrizio noted the value of learning where the principal’s office, nurse’s office, and the playground are located. He noted the importance of soft skills such as modeling behavior and interacting with peers.

Chairman Ortega thanked Director Fabrizio for his presentation.

## **8. Planning Board Recommendations Regarding the School District’s 2016-2022 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

Chairman Ortega stated that he and Business Administrator Shevenell had attended and made a presentation at the Planning Board meeting of December 15, 2015. After the meeting a letter was received at the Superintendent’s Office outlining the suggested changes the Planning Board has recommended to the School Board. They are:

1. That the Asbestos Removal project be moved to FY 2016-17
2. That the School Board consider the sidewalks or pedestrian improvements as part of their paving projects
3. That the MHS bleachers project be moved to FY 2016-17

Chairman Ortega noted that under point number two, the Planning Board thought that federal and state funding should be sought out to assist with paying for these projects.

Board Member Schneider stated that he cannot support the recommendations.

Chairman Ortega noted the expense of the SPED and SAU Offices and that there is an expectation that this project would be bonded.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted that the Planning Board is not a decision making or budgetary entity, rather an advisory body.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the School Board could get an estimate of the sidewalk costs.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the amount would not be over \$100,000 and therefore it would not appear on the Capital Improvement Plan.

Chairman Ortega took the opportunity to explain that the notably higher budget amount in 2017-2018 is due to the \$1,945,000 budgeted to consolidate the Special Services/SAU Offices.

Chairman Ortega commended Business Administrator Shevenell on his presentation to the Planning Board.

## **9. School Board Budget Hearing Schedule**

Chairman Ortega read aloud the dates for the upcoming budget meetings.

On Thursday, January 7, 2016 the James Mastricola Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and Merrimack High School will present their budgets for the 2016-2017 school year. The meeting will take place at the James Mastricola Elementary School in the All Purpose Room at 7:00 p.m.

On Tuesday, January 12, 2016 the Merrimack Middle School, District, and possible warrant articles will be presented at the Town Hall at 7:00 p.m.

On Monday, January 18, 2016 the approval of the budget will be on the agenda.

Chairman Ortega highlighted additional important dates on the calendar.

## **10. Report on 2014-2015 Annual Measurable Academic Objectives (AMAO's) for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students**

Chairman Ortega invited Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin speak on the issue.

An annual test is administered in February or March and the results are sent to the district in the Fall. This testing is a federal requirement. Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin shared the results of the most recent testing for Merrimack's 34 LEP students.



This year for the first time, the Merrimack School District received a letter with information that one of the three categories was not met. Reasons for this are: the state target rate jumped 5% and Merrimack saw an increase of 12% in new English Language Learner (ELL) students to the district.

Federal law requires that parents be notified when a target is not met. A letter is sent from the school district.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted that he, as a Title III Project Manager received a letter in which he learned that most districts failed to meet category #2. He has volunteered Merrimack to be involved in a process to discuss changes to the current accountability system.

The Merrimack School District is in a Title III cohort with Goffstown and Claremont.

Vice Chair Barnes asked how close Merrimack was to reaching the goal.

Assistant Superintendent responded that we missed by two points. If last year's benchmark was used the district would have passed by three points.

Chairman Ortega asked if the consortium allocation of Title III dollars is pro-rated and was told yes.

#### **11. Board's Consideration of adding "Noteworthy News" as a Standing Agenda Item**

Chairman Ortega opened the floor for discussion.

The Board discussed the value of timely information and transparency. Discussion ensued around the issue of where to draw the line on what to include and if other avenues of dissemination already exist such as in the Comments Section of the agenda.

Chairman Ortega reminded the Board that Board Member Guagliumi has volunteered to spearhead a Communications Committee. He suggested that she work with Superintendent Chiafery to shape a strategy on how to proceed and that this then be a future agenda item.

#### **12. Response to Proposed New Hampshire School Board Association (NHSBA) Resolutions**

Chairman Ortega stated that this was an opportunity to provide Vice Chair Barnes direction on how to vote on the upcoming resolutions.

Vice Chair Barnes was asked to provide some background on the proposed changes. She stated that the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has been replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and that the changes need to be reflected in the NHSBA Policies, Resolutions, and Statements of Belief Manual.

In order for the school board "voice" to be heard at the state level, resolutions need to be up-to-date. Resolutions currently utilize language based on NCLB and need to be re-written with ESSA language.

By consensus the Board's directive was for Vice Chair Barnes to vote for the changes.

### **13. Other**

#### **a) Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

#### **b) Comments**

Superintendent Chiafery stated that due to the presidential election primary scheduled for February 9, 2016; all schools will be closed, but school offices will be open. School Messenger will be used to notify parents of the closing. There is an expectation of high voter turn-out and the issue of parking was taken into consideration when making the decision.

Superintendent Chiafery shared an article highlighting Art Teacher Mary Beth Donovan-Olson and her selection as New Hampshire Art Educator of the Year 2015-2016. Appended to the article is a sample standards-based lesson plan Ms. Donovan-Olson created and taught. It was shared so that other art teachers might also use it in their classes.

Ms. Donovan-Olson will be attending the National Art Education Association Conference in Chicago in March, at the state's expense. It is hoped she can come before the School Board in April or May and share elements of that experience.

### **14. New Business**

Board Member Schneider noted that the Planning and Building Committee is scheduled to meet on Monday, January 12, 2016 and noted that at their previous meeting they asked if there would be a charge from the School Board for any analysis or marketing in regards to the track.

Chairman Ortega noted that the item has been discussed at joint meetings a potential charge and where to fit it in on an agenda. Additional charges related to the fields and property might be considered on a future agenda.

Chairman Ortega shared that the issue of a drug-sniffing dog is potentially planned for the January 18, 2016 agenda.

Chairman Ortega asked the Board Members to come prepared to discuss budget reductions at the Thursday, January 7, 2016 budget meeting.

### **15. Committee Reports**

There were no committee reports.

## **16. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments.

## **17. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:35 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to enter non-public session per RSA 91-A: 3, II, (a), (b), (c).

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 4-0-0.

At 10:53 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.