

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
James Mastricola Elementary School - All Purpose Room
January 7, 2016
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Budget Presentation: James Mastricola Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

Chairman Ortega invited to the table Principal Emilie Carter and Assistant Principal Michelle Romein from the James Mastricola Elementary School, Principal Kim Yarlott and Assistant Principal Nick Coler from the Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Principal Bridey Bellemare and Assistant Principal Julie DeLuca from the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

Principal Carter began by speaking about the five year plan in place in each school for furniture replacement. She noted that the James Mastricola Elementary School will continue to purchase music equipment used for instruction, concerts and school-wide assemblies.

Principal Yarlott highlighted three specific items: replacement basketball hoops, replacement amplifier system, and replacement of four computer tables.

Principal Bellemare shared an aerial photo of the location of the proposed new preschool playground equipment. She noted that this is contingent on preschool for each elementary school being passed.

School Board members pre-submitted questions were then read aloud and answered by the members of the panel.

Vice Chair Barnes submitted the question “Furniture: Please explain why TFS bookcases are \$400 each where MES and JMUES are \$200 each?”

Principal Carter responded that the style is different. She is requesting three shelf, metal, on wheels bookcases. The others are wood and stand stationary.

Vice Chair Barnes submitted the question “Gifted and Talented: Please discuss the number of impacted students from this funding. Please compare it to the former “enrichment” program. The source of the concern is we fund extension services for the elite student and not the above average but not quite elite. How are they enhanced and challenged academically?”

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that 167 students are in the program (8 at Reeds Ferry Elementary School, 8 at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, 10 at James Mastricola Elementary School, 31 at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, 39 at Merrimack Middle School, and 71 at Merrimack High School). The program began as an enrichment program and is now specifically a gifted and talented program based. At one time it reached over 300 students.

There is a design in the plan for the students just below the gifted and talented level. Classroom teachers are also supported in their ability to provide academic challenges for all students.

Vice Chair Barnes 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 a benchmark make more sense?”

Vice Chair Barnes agreed with Principal Carter that this question had been thoroughly answered at the previous budget meeting by Director of Technology and Library Media Nancy Rose.

Board Member Schneider had submitted the question “Math/text/tfs: The increase in textbooks/materials is more this year than in the past by about 25%. What is unique about this year?”

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that the increase will go towards the text, printing, and worksheets that accompany the text. The James Mastricola Elementary School and Reeds Ferry Elementary School were already accounted for and now Thorntons Ferry Elementary School will be included as a cost center.

Board Member Schneider had submitted the question “Maint/facilities dev/tfs: This is a total sum of materials and labor to install the playground at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. I have not seen a recent map of where on the site this is intended to be installed. Can you update the board on where this is planned to be installed and specifically is it directly exposed to the open area behind the school that is closest to where the proposed Northeast Energy Direct (NED) pipeline location is being considered? If so, has consideration been given to a more protected (and perhaps more closely located to the building) area for installation?”

Business Administrator Shevenell referred to the map that had been provided.

Chairman Ortega thanked the panel for their time.

4. Budget Presentation: James Mastricola Upper Elementary School

Chairman Ortega invited to the table Principal Marsha McGill and Assistant Principal William Morris.

Principal McGill highlighted three items: the purchase of texts, instructional materials, and resources to support literacy instruction and writing at a variety of levels, materials and resources to support a standards based math program, and the continuation of replacement of cafeteria tables.

Board Member Schneider had submitted the question “Reading/Test/MUES: This budget is nearly \$2K higher than previous years. Are unique items being planned for this year versus previous years?”

Principal McGill responded that the additional funds will go towards the purchase of E-readers and digital and printed text in the literacy program. The state assessment is in a digital format.

Board Member Schneider had submitted the question “Furniture/Repl/MUES: Are the two cafeteria tables both needed this year? Are they past the ability to be repaired? Are any changes planned in the style/function of these new tables versus the existing ones that will remain?”

Principal McGill responded that the school is in year two of a seven year furniture replacement plan. Repairs have been made and the welding is not holding up as well. The vision is to move to rounded tables.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question “Furniture: Please explain why the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School bookcases are \$400 each where James Mastricola Elementary School and James Mastricola Upper Elementary School are \$200 each?”

Principal McGill responded that the bookcases are used in the classrooms to support the leveled libraries and teachers prefer the smaller ones so they may move them around the room as needed.

Board Member Guagliumi asked about deferred furniture items from last year.

Principal McGill responded that the purchase of student desks, kidney shaped tables, and teacher chairs has been completed.

Chairman Ortega thanked Principal McGill and Assistant Principal William Morris for their presentation.

5. Budget Presentation: Merrimack High School

Chairman Ortega invited to the table Principal Kenneth Johnson, Assistant Principal Richard Zampieri and Assistant Principal Peter Bergeron.

Principal Johnson opened his remarks by offering the budget statement for the viewers. He noted that most of the items have been reduced or level-funded. Proposed increases are in the co-curricular transportation account, new texts, additional equipment in several departments, furniture, and replacement athletic equipment.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question: “Co-curricular: The grid (which is appreciated, thank you) talks about the maximum amount spent. By whom? Is it the total cost or total amount district funded?”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that this a fixed amount, paid for by the district, and that it covers all transportation. As teams move forward in their seasons they use more of the budgeted funds. Fundraising will cover lodging, supplies, and other needs.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if this is the maximum amount spent and if parent contributions would be needed to cover additional transportation.

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that this amount covers all transportation costs.

Board Member Schneider referred to a similar question he had submitted and asked why the total was the same as the athletic and if the transportation includes bus trips and plane trips.

Principal Johnson responded that the past accepted practice for the last five years has been to support budget-based equity in regards to transportation. The funding is identical, but unpredictable. Any unused funds will be returned to the taxpayer.

Chairman Ortega noted that this provides clarity from and that the School Board can make adjustments when working on the budget.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained how the estimates were created. Estimates were based on furthest likely travel distance and highest number of participants.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that this year more data was collected and shared with the School Board and that this is very helpful during the budget process.

Board Member Powell asked if the budget for travel had a method behind it.

Principal Johnson responded that the athletic transportation costs are fixed and known and that the transportation costs are unknown.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question: “Gifted and Talented: Can you explain how this one is different from other Gifted and Talented programs? It mentions fine arts.”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that this refers to programs that benefit the entire student body. They include: the Quiz Bowl Team, National History Day, Granite State Challenge,

Future Problem Solvers, trips to science and art museums, dramas and musicals, and a philosophy conference.

Student Representative Marcus noted that the Quiz Bowl, National History Day and other items are also listed in another line item and asked if it was a duplication.

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that this was for additional needs as determined by the gifted and talented teacher.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question: “Travel: Talks about having an administrator at all away events: Is this both sports and co-curricular events? Does it cover foreign trips like those to Europe and China?”

Principal Johnson responded that one year ago the New Hampshire Inter Athletic Association (NHIAA) requested an administrator presence at all home and away games. This item covers both athletics and co-curricular events, but not trips to foreign countries.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question: “Student Publications: Please explain how revenue is managed that offsets the cost to publish (advertising revenues).

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that revenue received is minimal and exclusive to the newspaper. There is no active solicitation of outside sources. Driving schools, bridal and gown stores and prom promoters may approach the school. Any funds received are brought to the central office to be deposited into this line item.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question: “Athletic Supplies: Please share how we manage our AEDs and if they are in place for off-campus sports as they are for on-campus sports. Examples include tennis, hockey, swim and ski teams. Are there comparable supplies for co-curricular events with risk such as US FIRST.”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that the three AED’s are located strategically throughout the building and are checked regularly by the school nurse. There is an AED at Westside Arena in Manchester for the hockey team, one at the YMCA for the swim team, and the Ski Patrols carry AED’s with them. One is always with the athletic trainer and one each for the boys and girls lacrosse teams. At present there is no AED at Wasserman Park for the tennis team.

Board Member Schneider had submitted the question: “Athletics/Equipment Repairs/HS: This line item is new and significant, discussing the reconditioning of helmets and shoulder pads, as well as repair of wrestling mats. Were these items never previously repaired? Were they covered in a different line item before? And as you’ll see in a later question, how do these tie to other repair budget categories for athletic equipment?”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that the helmets, shoulder pads and game apparel are tested for their integrity by an outside certifying agency source every year. Face mask pads,

grommets, chin straps, etc. are repaired as needed. This was previously covered under a different line item.

In regards to the wrestling mats, they have not been repaired or replaced in over five years.

Principal Johnson spoke to the questions in the area of athletic supplies.

Board Member Schneider had submitted the question: “Athletic Supplies/MHS: “This item includes as one component something called ‘Football equipment reconditioning’. Can you call out how this is different than the previous ‘equipment repairs’ category? Are there things covered here beyond just the pads and helmets? I’m wondering whether this was the category previously used in other budget years for various repair costs.”

Principal Johnson responded that this item addresses ice rink rental, ski slope rental, swim rental, and medical supplies. This line item also includes roughly 10-15% of the football helmets and shoulder pads that were submitted and rejected for re-conditioning and not calculated in the new helmet request.

Principal Johnson stated that the difference between the line items on page 4 and page 16 was to call out repairs because the standard is increasing. In the past, repairs fell under supplies and it was agreed that a separate line item was needed.

Board Member Schneider asked for a clarification between pages 4, 16 and 23.

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that page 4 relates to re-conditioning and repairing of the equipment, page 16 relates to athletic supplies and facility rentals, and page 23 is for new helmets.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the new line item is due to the extensive reconditioning effort this year. It was done to provide clarity.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that terminology was addressed and that there was an attempt to call out athletic equipment repairs for the first time. She did not think it appropriate to leave this under supplies. She referred to this as a transition item.

Chairman Ortega and Business Administrator Shevenell recommended omitting the language “...also includes football equipment reconditioning...” and clarifying some of the other text next for year.

Board Member Guagliumi requested the 2014-2015 expenditures from Business Administrator Shevenell.

Vice Chair Barnes asked for a more detailed breakdown of the line item account number for the hockey rink account in regards to ice time, slope time, etc.

Business Administrator Shevenell agreed to attend to these requests.

Board Member Schneider submitted the question: “Athletic/Equipment Replacement/Merrimack High School: This one calls out specific items to purchase new. In terms of helmets and pads, I’m assuming this is to replace items not repairable in earlier budget items? Has this been a trend in the past? In terms of the goal posts, have we verified that this year we must replace them? Last year’s conversation seemed inconclusive. Want to make sure this is a true “need” versus a “want”.

Principal Johnson responded that these items have reached the end of their shelf life. In regards to the goal posts the joints are sound and certified as safe, but there is significant corrosion and rusting and they are beginning to list. The strong recommendation is to replace them now before any new field or track improvements.

Board Member Guagliumi reminded the Board that last year an engineer was contracted to check the goal posts for integrity.

Chairman Ortega asked where the soccer goals appear in the budget.

Principal Johnson responded that they are on page 21.

Vice Chair Barnes had submitted the question “Tech Ed: Please explain the District Printing program and its elimination.”

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the teacher who previously did the printing had retired in 2000 and has been working as a contract worker. This will end in December 2016. The district will go through a transition to more online printing with items such as teacher handbooks and school handbooks.

The printing of items such as the voter’s guide and the annual report will be contracted out. The equipment will remain in the printing area during the transition.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted that PowerSchool, the online information portal, will be used more broadly in areas such as online school registration. This will begin with kindergarten registration.

Additionally, School Messenger will be leveraged to collect more parent email addresses so that school newsletters may be sent electronically.

6. Budget Discussion

Chairman Ortega had asked the board members to seek recommendations from administration for cuts so they could be discussed tonight.

Vice Chair Barnes would like to see cuts up to one million dollars, not to include the Merrimack Middle School roofing, the Merrimack High School track, and the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School playground equipment. Additionally, she would not want to see reductions in force because of it. If there was a case for it, it should have been in the budget with the other reductions in force for the original presentation.

Board Member Guagliumi was in agreement with the cut of one million dollars. She found the tiered approach very helpful last year in guiding decision-making and requested that this format be used again this year.

Board Member Schneider stated that the only item he would be comfortable pushing into a later year is the paving project. He would not support any of the Planning Board recommendations of moving up some of the Capital Improvement Plan items.

Board Member Guagliumi asked about the fund that was drawn from last year and Board Member Powell stated that it was the Special Education Emergency Fund.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that there was an overage of special education students.

Board Member Schneider noted that the preschool staffing already exists and the extra cost to install the playground should not be touched.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the bids for the roofing project will go out on January 29th which might be an area for cost savings.

Chairman Ortega noted that the challenge of finding an amount falls between capital improvement and staffing.

Chairman Ortega stated that the next budget meeting will be on Tuesday, January 12, 2016 and the regular school board meeting will be held on January 18, 2016.

7. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

At 8:30 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the public meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In-Favor.

The motion passed 5-0-0.