

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
February 1, 2016
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

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 January 12, 2016 Minutes and January 18, 2016 Minutes

January 12, 2016 Minutes

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2016 meeting.

Board Member Powell requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 4, lines 183-185, Change "... (Town Council)..." to "... (Voters)..."

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 5, lines 230-231, Change to say "Board Member Guagliumi suggested considering a two-step process that would bring the total to \$150,000. She also expressed concerns over a warrant article for \$100,000 on the ballot this year."

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

January 18, 2016 Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2016 meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2, line 64, Change the first sentence to read "Mr. Rothhaus is the Town Council representative for Merrimack Safeguard."
- Page 2, line 87, extend correct titles to entire panel. "...Merrimack High School Resource Officer Detective Mike Murray, Retired Merrimack Middle School Principal Deb Woelflein, and from Merrimack High School Principal Ken Johnson, Assistant Principal Peter Bergeron and Assistant Principal Rich Zampieri and acknowledged Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin."
- Page 3, line 123, Change "...twenty-five..." to "...twenty five (later corrected to twenty-one)..."

- Page 5, line 220, Change "...pro's/con's..." to "...pros/cons..."
- Page 7, line 297, Change "...administrations..." to "...administration..."
- Page 10, line 445, Change "...School Board..." to "...school staff..."
- Page 13, line 603, Change the sentence to begin "A number of emails on this issue..."

Board Member Schneider requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 13, line 588, Change "The math portion..." to "The English and Math portions..."

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 5, line 213, Change the sentence to read "Board Member Guagliumi asked what we do in Merrimack regarding drug awareness and at what age we begin..."

Student Representative Marcus requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 4, line 159 Change "...drug issue is not a school problem..." to "...drug issue is not only a school problem..."

The motion passed as amended 4-0-1. Chairman Ortega voted to abstain.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell presented for acceptance, a gift in the amount of \$966.63 from Connor McBride. These are funds that are remaining after the completion of an Eagle Scout improvement project of the Reeds Ferry Elementary School nature trail. They will be earmarked for future school beautification and maintenance projects of the grounds at Reeds Ferry Elementary School.

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the gift with sincere thanks.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

5. Parent Involvement Survey Results 2014-2015

Chairman Ortega invited to the table Director of Special Education Dr. John Fabrizio and Parent Support Group representatives Ms. Barbara Publicover, Ms. Trish Swonger, and Ms. Michele Watson.

Director Fabrizio began by providing an overview of the presentation. Areas to be addressed are: an overview of the New Hampshire Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education, New Hampshire state-wide results, Merrimack School District's survey response rate, understanding the changes in the 2014-2015 survey, types of questions asked of parents, and the next steps for the group including new memberships and partnerships.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires that States measure the percentage of parents of children receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. The 2014-2015 Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education was sent out by the New Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE) for the eighth year to parents of children with disabilities (parents of children who have IEP's) to learn more about how school districts are involving families in that child's special education.

The Gibson Consulting Group has been contracted by the State of New Hampshire to conduct this survey.

In 2015 New Hampshire began conducting a census survey over two years and divided the survey distribution into two blocks. Block A (which includes Merrimack) administered the survey during the 2014-2015 school year. The response rate for families of pre-school students was 17% and for school-age students 35%.

Statewide over 2,359 responses were received (290-preschool and 2069-school age). This represents a decrease of two percentage points from the prior year. Statewide, the average scale score decreased one point to 560. Responses at the pre-school level averaged higher (609) compared to school-age (552). Across the state, 35.4% of parents met or exceeded a scale score of 600, indicating that they believe districts are facilitating parent involvement as a means of improving services for their child.

This overall total was comprised of 47.6% of parents of pre-school students scoring at or above 600 (an increase of 4.4%) and 33.7% of parents of school-age students scoring at or above 600 (a decrease of 2.4%).

Ms. Publicover then reviewed the Merrimack response rates and the survey results. She prefaced her presentation by noting that this is the first time two years of scaled scores have been made available. In the past the State only provided percentages.

In a review of the data, it was noted that the response rate in Merrimack among pre-school parents decreased 16% and among school-age parents 14%.

Of the 150 people who did fill out the survey, 95 of them had filled it out the previous year. This was seen as a strong indicator that good data is being gathered.

The percentage at or above the NCSEAM standard (36% at Merrimack/35% Statewide) indicates the percentage of respondent who agreed that their child's school facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.

The on-line survey completion rate for pre-school parents was Merrimack 21.8% and Statewide 25% and for school-age parents Merrimack 19% and Statewide 25.4%.

On the question, "Did you complete the survey for the same child last year?" pre-school parent responses were Merrimack 28.2% and Statewide 50%; and for parents of school age students Merrimack scored 49.2% and Statewide the response was 64.9%

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the issue of “survey fatigue” was discussed by the Special Education Parent Support Group at monthly meetings. Solutions or activities that are the outcomes of the surveys need to make parents aware of the fact that their input was important to this outcome.

Ms. Swonger spoke about the cohorts. A response rate of 15%-17% is considered an acceptable return rate and one that provides valid results. Merrimack’s rate has decreased over the years and survey fatigue has been discussed. A statewide committee made the decision to move to a two year cohort plan.

The Merrimack pre-school results are based on a smaller cohort than that of the school-age cohort. Any numerical change in the cohort creates a larger impact in the cohort results. Ms. Swonger looked at the pre-school data over the last two years and proportionally the results are not as low as test results would indicate.

Ms. Swonger then spoke about the scale scores. When the surveys began the results were reported for each question as a percent of respondents in agreement with that question. This was considered a good starting point. The survey was designed to be reported in scale scores and it is advancing towards that goal.

Ms. Swonger reminded the School Board of a presentation she had provided to them last year on this topic and Chairman Ortega commented that he remembered it.

She proceeded to provide an explanation of the scaled score. An item’s placement on the scale (item location), indicates its level of difficulty. The level of a district’s scaled score on the scale indicates mastery. The target score for Merrimack is 600.

In preparation for Director Fabrizio’s presentation of the test results, Ms. Swonger asked the Board to keep these points in mind. As it relates to the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), easier questions are more yes, no and concrete, and relate directly to the formation of the IEP. Secondary level questions open up more of a continuing two-way dialogue in regards to the implementation of the IEP. Tertiary or highest level questions deal with the integration of learning and communication in all areas for all parties involved.

Moving to the scaled scores provide a more holistic and relational picture of where we are as a district and within the State.

Director Fabrizio used a PowerPoint presentation to provide specific examples of low, secondary and tertiary level questions that are on the pre-school and school-age surveys. It was noted that all of the questions are important regardless of their placement on the scale and work to address or improve on their results is ongoing.

Merrimack’s pre-school average score decreased from 594 to 552 and the school-age average score dropped from 565 to 554. Director Fabrizio noted that the survey results also provide opportunities for the Special Education Department to address the questions and specific ways to answer them.

Board Member Guagliumi asked about the timing of the mailing and when it is sent out. She asked if it is always sent out during a certain period of time. Group A’s survey was sent out over the holidays.

Director Fabrizio responded that Group B was just sent out by the State. One of the questions that arose from Group A was if enough communication was sent out ahead of the survey. Next year the survey for Group A will be prefaced by stronger communication efforts at the state and local level.

Board Member Guagliumi asked how the survey is handled when more than one special education student is in the family. She asked if there was a household survey and if the completion rate per household could be tracked.

Director Fabrizio responded that the survey goes to each special education student. We do not have the capability to know the completion rate per household.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the district has the capability to track households with multiple special education students to see if the surveys are filled out and returned.

Director Fabrizio responded that the survey is anonymous.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about surveys where students have parents in separate households and if it can be known if both surveys were completed. She assumed the answer to be no based on the anonymity of the survey.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if new students will be put in Group B in order to collect immediate data.

Director Fabrizio responded that Merrimack will always be Group A, regardless of students moving in and out of the district.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if students aged 18-21 get their own survey or if it continues to go to the parents.

Director Fabrizio responded that parents continue to receive surveys until their child is past the age of 21. Students with custodial rights will receive their own survey beginning at age 18.

Chairman Ortega noted his surprise on the low online response rate in comparison to the print version.

Director Fabrizio responded that it might be due to the fact that there are surveys everywhere today, every time you make a purchase and this might be another example of “survey fatigue”.

Chairman Ortega spoke about the 15-16% response rate threshold and asked what approach Merrimack will be taking with the data. What is the goal?

Director Fabrizio commented that the question provided a perfect segue for Ms. Watson’s presentation.

Ms. Watson spoke about the rebuilding process as children graduate and thus the parents “age-out” of the system. One suggestion from another district was to form a committee with representatives from each building. Merrimack utilized this idea to add five new members and the revised group has already met twice. Structural changes include moving to quarterly meetings, creating focused agendas and adding new members. The transition will be seamless thanks to the continued support of long-term members.

The re-organized group will focus on training, maintaining positive areas of response, future planning to address the more difficult areas, re-organization/revitalization of the Parent Support Group and questions and next steps.

Director Fabrizio noted that the Parent Support Focus Group already has plans to discuss their goals based on the survey results. He then noted the communication challenge in today's world. Moving online to Facebook, online videos, webinars, and other electronic formats are being used to address the issue.

Ms. Publicover noted the importance of partnerships between families and schools working together. This relationship provides the valuable and timely information needed to make good decisions.

Ms. Swonger summed up by stressing that the purpose of the survey is to direct the next line of inquiry. The results show where the district lands, where to investigate and then this information is used to create a course of action.

Chairman Ortega clarified that his point, in regards to the survey results, was how to sustain and move forward methodically as a group as parents leave the group.

Ms. Publicover acknowledged and thanked the parents who have stepped forward to be involved in the Parent Support Group.

Chairman Ortega acknowledged the immense value to the district of the three parents at the table, Ms. Publicover, Ms. Swonger and Ms. Watson. He also acknowledged and thanked, on behalf of the Board, those parents who have come forward and stepped up and volunteered to get involved and continue on with the important work that the group has done.

Board Member Guagliumi reminded the group to reach out to the School Board whenever they need help.

6. New Hampshire Department of Education 2013-2014 Determination Report

Director Fabrizio retained his seat at the table to report that again this year the Merrimack School District received the best possible score of all zeroes in all areas on the Determination Report. This determination is an annual federal requirement under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA).

Chairman Ortega congratulated Director Fabrizio on the continued perfect scores.

Director Fabrizio acknowledged the important contributions of others in his department, the eight coordinators among the buildings for their constant awareness of the requirements and the two administrative assistants.

7. Reconsideration of the Scope of the Merrimack Middle School Roof Project

Business Administrator Shevenell reminded the Board that the roof bids had opened on Friday, January 29, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. Four bids were received out of which one bid offered to do the entire Merrimack Middle School roof for \$260,000 less than the proposed amount for this year which is for three quarters of the roof. This is a national contractor, highly recommended by the

manufacturer, with a very strong safety and quality record. They have not yet conducted business in New Hampshire. The entire project would begin and finish during the 2016 summer vacation.

Chairman Ortega asked when a decision needed to be made.

Business Administrator Shevenell requested a decision tonight. The contract will be contingent on the approval of the 2016-2017 budget.

The other option offered by this vendor would be to replace three quarters of the roof resulting in a budget reduction of \$296,000.00.

Vice Chair Barnes asked what the remaining part of the roof would cost in a later year. She asked the cost difference between the whole roof and the partial roof.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that the amount was \$435,000.00 for the remaining 25% budgeted for 2017-2018.

Vice Chair Barnes asked what the remaining cost was to be in the original budgeting for the roof project.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that it was \$487,000.00.

Vice Chair Barnes asked for the range of the other bids.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that they ranged from about \$1.139 million dollars to \$1.8 million dollars for the entire roofing project.

Board Member Guagliumi noted that there are other advantages to having the project done all at the same time.

Business Administrator Shevenell agreed and added that there are fixed costs such as setting up the staging and safety issues.

Board Member Schneider expressed concerns about repairs and maintenance with an out of the area vendor.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the company is located in Connecticut and that The Merrimack School District does business now with other Connecticut vendors. He does not see their lack of market penetration in New Hampshire to be an impediment to awarding them the contract. The warranty is guaranteed by the manufacturer.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) that the School Board authorize the Business Administrator to accept the bid for the entire roof project at a cost of \$260.00 less than the originally budgeted amount for the entire project; and to waive the two week waiting period so as to accept the bid in a timely fashion.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

8. Board Response to Draft Warrant Articles on the 2016 Warrant

Chairman Ortega directed the Board Members' attention to the draft Warrant Articles that had been provided to them in their packets; mailed out before the meeting. He noted that they had all been drafted by Business Administrator Shevenell and reviewed by legal counsel. He stated that the warrants will now be reviewed and for those requiring a School Board vote, motions will be made and voted on at this meeting. Those with money attached will then be voted on by the Budget Committee and then forwarded to Town Meeting.

Chairman Ortega then invited Business Administrator Shevenell to introduce the seven warrant articles and provide details as needed to clarify or explain them. He began with reading the preamble which states:

To the inhabitants of the School District in the Town of Merrimack, County of Hillsborough, New Hampshire, qualified to vote in School District affairs:

You are hereby notified to meet at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School in said District on Tuesday, March 8, 2016, at 7:00 p.m. for Session I (Deliberation), to discuss the matters to be voted on by official ballot; and to meet at the designated polling site, James Masticola Upper Elementary School on Tuesday, April 12, 2016, Session 2 (Voting) for the choice of School District officers elected by ballot and any other action required to be inserted on said official ballot. The polls for the election of school district officers and other action required to be inserted on said ballot will open on said date at 7:00 a.m. and will not close earlier than 7:00 p.m. to act upon the following subjects:

Article #1 To elect all necessary school district officers for the ensuing year. (Vote by Ballot.)

Article #2 Shall the Merrimack School Board be authorized to accept on behalf of the District, without further action by the voters, gifts, legacies and devises of personal or real property which may become available to the District during the fiscal year? (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the School Board Vote: ___-___-__).

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that this is an annual request that allows the School Board to accept gifts of land or property without the need to first go before the voters.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to accept Warrant Article #2 as written.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

Article #3 Shall the District approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association which calls for the following net changes in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated Amount</i>
2016-2017	\$750,714
2017-2018	\$742,335
2018-2019	\$764,605

and further raise and appropriate the sum of Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Seven Hundred Fourteen Dollars (\$750,714) for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at the current staffing levels? (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the School Board Vote: __-__-__.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: __-__-__.)

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that this three year contract averaging a 3% a year increase, maintains an 85/15 percent contribution split on the HMO portion of the health insurance plan, increases the budget for staff development for graduate studies by \$30,000.00, and increases the insurance buyout from \$1,500.00 to \$3,000.00 which allows the ability to offer lower cost plans to employees as an employer cost saving measure.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) to accept Warrant Article #3 as written. He noted that the new lower cost plan offerings will bring real dollar savings to the district.

The motion passed 4-0-1. Chairman Ortega voted to abstain.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

Article #4 Shall the District, if Article #3 is defeated; authorize the School Board to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article #3 cost items only? (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the School Board Vote: __-__-__.)

Business Administrator Shevenell explained this is traditionally referred to as the “trailer” whose purpose is to authorize the School Board to bring the parties together if Warrant Article #3 is voted down in the election due to costs in order to bring about a new agreement more acceptable to the voters. This avoids the need to go through Superior Court to petition to hold a special meeting.

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to accept Warrant Article #4 as written.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

Article #5 (Special Warrant Article) Shall the District raise and appropriate an amount up to Seventy Five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000) or Ten percent (10%) of the unencumbered surplus funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year 2015-2016, whichever amount is less and to transfer that amount to the School District Repair Capital Reserve Fund? (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the School Board Vote: __-__-__.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: __-__-__.)

Business Administrator stated that currently there is \$27,000.00 in this fund.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that at the previous meeting, the amount of \$75,000.00 was suggested as an alternative to the \$100,000.00 amount.

Chairman Ortega commented that the amount is at the School Board's discretion and that in order to write the warrant article an amount needed to be inserted.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) to accept Warrant Article #5 as written.

Board Member Schneider stated that at the previous meeting he had spoken in favor of the \$75,000.00 amount. He would be amenable to a change to \$75,000.00.

Vice Chair Barnes referred to a comment made at the previous meeting of the high cost of certain large-scale catastrophes and emergencies such as Hurricane Sandy and the high school bleachers. This is the reason to bring the School District Repair Capital Reserve Fund to \$100,000.00.

Superintendent Chiafery shared that she and Business Administrator Shevenell, when deciding what to put before the School Board, thought to ask for \$75,000.00 this year and the same amount again another year. This decision was made based on what they heard during the Board members previous discussion as well as what the voters might find palatable.

Board Member Powell agreed with this strategy.

Board Member Guagliumi stated her support for the warrant article.

Board Member Schneider commented that the roof savings of approximately a half a million dollars will allow for more significant funds to be allocated for this fund next year.

Student Representative Marcus noted that the two year suggested funding increase of \$75,000.00 each year would bring the fund up to its highest level ever. He further added that this subject becomes moot when the potential roof savings is factored in.

Chairman Ortega noted his prior interest in raising the fund level in anticipation of catastrophes. The commitment to grow the fund over time is a more acceptable option to him.

The motion passed as written 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

Article #6 Shall the District vote, pursuant to RSA 35:9-a, to authorize the Trustees of Trust Funds to charge any contractual management expenses incurred for the management of any District Capital Reserve funds for which the Trustees have been granted custody pursuant to RSA 35:2 against the capital reserve funds involved, rather than paying such expenses from the District general funds. Such authority shall remain in effect until rescinded by vote of the District which shall not occur within five (5) years from the date of this original authorization. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the School Board Vote: ___-___-___.)

This warrant article was drafted by Attorney Kathy Peahl. It formalizes an existing practice.

Superintendent Chiafery added that this is a revised warrant article previously shared with the School Board. Attorney Peahl made clarifying changes and recommended using lay language in the voter's guide.

Board Member Schneider noted a typo on line six "...five (5) years form the date..." and suggested changing "form" to "from".

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to accept Warrant Article #6 as amended.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

Article #7 Shall the District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$72,283,299? (Should this article be defeated, the operating budget shall be \$71,466,384 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the District or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only?) (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the School Board Vote: __-__-__.) (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: __-__-__.)

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that this budget is \$1.615 million dollars more than last year for an increase of 2.29%. The budget is higher by \$816,000 or 1.13% over the default budget. This is due to several large capital projects budgeted for the coming year.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the Merrimack Middle School roofing project change amount of \$260.00 will be reflected in this budget proposal.

Business Administrator Shevenell responded that the amount change had not been factored into the proposed budget for 2016-2017.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept Warrant Article #7 as written.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that the approximately half a million dollars that the Board cut in its last meeting brought us closer to the default budget. The reason we are not below default is the result of the budgeted capital projects totaling about two million dollars. If this amount was deducted from the then proposed budget we would be well under the default amount.

Board Member Guagliumi commented that she prefers that these capital projects be included in the operating budget rather than as warrant articles because of the safety issues associated with them.

Board Member Powell agreed and added that as it relates to the high school track, putting this project in the operating budget shows the Board's commitment to replacing it. If the track replacement was presented as a warrant article and then voted down another year would pass before it could be re-addressed.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

Chairman Ortega noted that the Warrant Articles will be forwarded to the School Budget Committee for consideration and then discussed by the School Board at Deliberative Session on Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at James Masticola Upper Elementary School in preparation for voting day on April 12, 2016.

9. Board's Initial Response to the Presentation Regarding Drug Awareness in the High School and Community

Chairman Ortega referred to the previous School Board meeting at which a distinguished panel comprised of representatives from the Merrimack Police Department, Merrimack High School and Merrimack Safeguard presented information.

This was an information gathering session an opportunity for discussion.

Board Member Schneider shared that this is only the second time in four years on the Board that information on the issue of drugs in the community has been formally presented to the School Board. A large amount of information was presented and there are widespread perceptions in the community as to the reality of the drug situation at the Merrimack High School. He acknowledged the various points of view and recommended gathering more information and educating students, parents and the community before bringing in a drug sniffing dog.

Discussion ensued among the members on the responsibility of individual Board members to report social networking posts to authorities when said posts refer to drugs. Due to the inclination of people to exaggerate on social networking sites, the challenge is one of discernment and will be left up to the individual members to exercise their own judgment on the matter.

Board Member Guagliumi recommended that the next curriculum to be reviewed be the Health Curriculum. Specifically, she is interested in knowing what aspects of education are going into this issue, what programs are already in place in the different schools, what changes have been made in the district recently and over the past few years, and what changes might be recommended going forward specifically around this topic.

Board Member Powell stated that the first step would be in promoting the educational piece as it relates to the canine dog.

Student Representative Marcus agreed that education is the primary way of tackling the drug problem. He re-iterated his position on the very important trust relationship that now exists between administration, students and the school resource officer at Merrimack High School; and that bringing in a drug sniffing dog would be detrimental to that trust. There are tangible examples of students coming forward to report situations that involve drugs that are based on this trust.

Board Member Guagliumi suggested increasing the School Board's presence in Merrimack Safeguard by adding a second committee assignment.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin agreed that Merrimack Safeguard can do a better job in advertising its work. Merrimack Safeguard has been a very public group powered by a very small number of people. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at St. James United Methodist Church Hall and the meetings are always open to the public.

Vice Chair Barnes suggested an outside assembly to introduce the drug dog to students and advised keeping the dog out of the school building.

Vice Chair Barnes spoke in support of the many avenues of outreach conducted by Merrimack Safeguard in the past and lauded the hard work of the committee. She noted the challenge to the committee of creating awareness of their offerings and resources within the community.

Board Member Schneider shared that at the last Merrimack Safeguard meeting outreach was part of the discussion. The A-OK (Ask for help, Offer help and Keep it going) campaign will be a topic at the upcoming meeting. Discussion is ongoing as to the grant funds that will be freed up when they are no longer used to pay for the school resource officer at the Merrimack Middle School.

Board Member Schneider stated that he is not against the drug sniffing dog going into the school and that it is important that students are educated about him. Additionally, as we move towards spring and prom season more drug education is advisable.

Student Representative Marcus shared that the concept of the dog visiting is the damage to trust and it does not matter if the dog is in the school or on the school grounds. Drugs are not usually kept in the lockers. They are kept in the backpacks. Even bringing in the dog for educational purposes is not advisable. Student privacy rights are also at issue.

Chairman Ortega shared that he would like to hear from area superintendents on this issue. He would like additional data, especially from communities who have utilized drug sniffing dogs in their schools. A recommended review of the Health Curriculum would also yield helpful information.

Chairman Ortega referred to an excellent Merrimack Safeguard presentation directed at parents. This was given by a law enforcement officer describing the effects of on the body of misusing drugs that he and Board Member Guagliumi had once attended. He thought this would be a valuable presentation for students to attend. More education before bringing in a drug sniffing dog is advisable. He would prefer more data before making a decision.

Board Member Guagliumi asked what support the district/community now offers parents in regards to tools, places to go and networking options. She would like to see data on this.

Chairman Ortega observed that the discussion resulted in some items relating to curriculum and what other districts have done as areas of follow-up. This issue will continue to be addressed on future agendas.

10. Second Review of New Policy

Video and Audio Recording in School Classrooms

Superintendent Chiafery began by noting that this is one of the more challenging policies she has brought before the Board as many questions invite further questions. She and Business Administrator Shevenell had attended a legislative workshop earlier in the day sponsored by the New Hampshire School Administrators Association (NHSAA) and spoke with Senator Stiles who oversees the Senate Education Committee and Representative Ladd who oversees the House Education Committee.

In a review of all of the pending legislation they discovered proposed House Bill 1372 which has sponsorship by eight representatives and two senators. Its purpose is to clarify the specific legislation that passed in the last session that limited video and audio recording in school classrooms. What this legislation put in place created a maelstrom and the new proposed Bill would amend the original to allow the use of audio and video recordings in classrooms, if part of a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The new Bill also clarifies that recordings are not to be used specifically for teacher evaluations without Board approval after a hearing and parental notification. It goes on to further clarify by inserting the language "Nothing in this section shall preclude the use of audio or video recordings for student instructional purposes."

This change came about to protect teachers from having their teaching recorded, archived and used against them. This proffered change is assumed likely to pass. However, between now and when it reaches the Senate in June 2016, the policy will be very limited.

Superintendent Chiafery recommends moving forward with approving the proposed policy. She stressed that there will be questions she will be unable to answer specifically during the policy change interim.

On Thursday, January 28, 2016 she met with the District Parent Group and presented the existing policy for their comments. Many questions were asked of Superintendent Chiafery and due to the current language of the policy they were unanswerable. Questions were recorded to provide testimony in support of the Bill change.

The policy is divided into two parts. Part A requires written parental consent and is called an "opt in policy". Part B does not require parental consent.

At the last School Board meeting, Board Member Guagliumi had raised the question about why the yearbook would be listed in Section B2. Superintendent Chiafery answered that some districts do not have a print yearbook, but rather have a video yearbook.

Student Representative Marcus asked about presentations, also found in Section B2. Presentations in this section refers to student presentations such as speaking at Town Meeting and the "Battle of the Books." These are not considered instructional.

Further meetings with attorneys is necessary and will be ongoing. In consideration of this, Superintendent Chiafery is not ready to present this policy for consent. She plans to provide more information at the February 15, 2016 School Board meeting. She asked the Board if it would be acceptable to hold a public hearing connected to a School Board meeting sometime in March.

Board Member Schneider asked if tabling the policy until the June legislative session would be more advisable.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she brought this policy forward based on questions that had been raised by administrators at weekly Leadership Team meetings. This policy would at least provide guidance during the interim.

Superintendent Chiafery suggested that at a minimum she consult with Attorney's Christina and Peahl and ask them what is best to do at this time.

Board Member Powell asked about a question he had raised at the last meeting in regards to student smartphones. Superintendent Chiafery responded that she had no answer to that question at this time.

Vice Chair Barnes shared that at a presentation at the New Hampshire School Board Association Delegate Assembly, long-standing member Attorney Barrett Christina specifically stressed the importance of having some sort of policy in place. Do something now to be compliant and correct it later when it is out of compliance.

Chairman Ortega expressed his appreciation for Board Member Powell's question as he also thought the existing policy was vague as to who the policy applies to; is it educators, students or parents.

11. Other

a. Correspondence

Board Members Powell, Schneider, Guagliumi and Chairman Ortega all received correspondence referring to the presentation by Police Chief Doyle at the previous meeting.

Chairman Ortega received correspondence from United States Senator Ayotte in response to copying her on the letter the Board sent to FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) in regards to the Kinder Morgan pipeline, thanking him for the letter. She shared her work in opposition to the project.

Chairman Ortega referred to a letter sent to Superintendent Chiafery in regards to the academic calendar. Starting school after Labor Day puts Merrimack students at disadvantage because midterms are then scheduled during games. Almost all other districts began school earlier and thus held their midterms a week earlier than Merrimack. The New Hampshire Interschool Athletic Association (NHIAA) scheduled games around those other districts. The concern expressed was that exams should be a student athlete's main focus and this schedule makes that that difficult for them.

b. Comments

There were no comments.

12. New Business

There was no new business.

13. Committee Reports

Student Representative Marcus shared that on the previous Saturday the Merrimack High School Granite State Challenge Team placed second in the state, losing to a Nashua team. The Merrimack student section was one of the largest contingents in attendance. He emphasized that this is one of the clubs that received increased funding this year thanks to the budgeting recommendations made by Principal Johnson.

Board Member Guagliumi attended a Parks and Recreation meeting at which it was shared that Wasserman Park will be the site of a Color Run sponsored by the elementary schools parent groups. The purpose is to mingle students before they move to the James Masticola Upper Elementary School. This event has the unanimous approval of the Town Council and Parks and Recreation.

Board Member Schneider attended a Planning and Building Committee the previous Monday, January 25, 2016. He shared recent Planning Board recommendations for Capital Improvement Projects and the School Board's response, discussed a joint meeting with the Town Council and discussed the potential disposition of the land on O'Gara Drive. He suggested they consider looking at the land involved and the fact that the lease will expire in a few years. During the meeting debate ensued as to whether the proposed SAU/Special Services offices site is a larger parcel than that where the skate park is currently located. The proposed SAU Special Services office site measures about one acre and the skate park land is about three acres. He also shared the information with the Planning and Building Committee that the Merrimack High School track project would be going into the operating budget.

Board Member Powell shared that the Budget Committee met on the Tuesdays of January 19 and January 26, 2016. On January 19th budgets were presented by the all of the district schools and Special Services. A "Mental Health Expenses" presentation was given by Director of Special Services Fabrizio and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Assistant Principal Julie DeLuca. On January 26th budget presentations were made by Food Service, Library and Media, Maintenance, and District-Wide. The roof at the middle school was widely discussed. Board Member Powell will share the new information regarding the roof at the next Budget Committee meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 2, 2016.

Vice Chair Barnes attended the New Hampshire School Board Association Executive Committee meeting to discuss the retirement of the regulatory directory and resultant transitions that will take place. She also discussed the upcoming March 4, 2016 meeting at which they will meet with the Congressional Delegation. She anticipates the meeting to involve heavy discussion about No Child Left Behind (NCLB) being replaced by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the impact on local school districts.

Vice Chair Barnes attended the Grater Woods meeting on January 19, 2016 where the recently approved foot bridge funding was discussed. This project is a high priority and construction will begin as soon as feasible.

Vice Chair Barnes shared that the District Parent Group met on Thursday, January 28, 2016 at which time the Color Run was also mentioned. The new policy was reviewed and questions were referred to the Superintendent's Office. The "Mental Health Expenses" presentation was shown at this meeting also.

Chairman Ortega attended the SERESC Board meeting on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 at which the audit completion was discussed.

14. Public Comments on Agenda

Parent Trish Swonger of 6 Clara Drive shared her thoughts on the topic of bringing Gunny the drug-sniffing dog into the schools. As a member of Merrimack Safeguard she is involved in

discussions on this issue and how this might be perceived. She expressed concern that the trust that has been built up over the past decade would face serious damage if drug dogs were allowed into the school and result in very negative publicity.

Ms. Swonger stated that the desired relationship is one of guidance, teaching, and working together and that bringing in the drug dog would create a more adversarial relationship. Additionally, social media would erupt in response to it.

She strongly recommended educating the students, parents, and community well before any drug dogs are brought in to the schools.

Merrimack Safeguard members attend school orientations to provide education, and the health classes at the high school are also very good sources of information.

15. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 8:45 p.m. Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.