

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
February 15, 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 7:02 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of February 1, 2016 Minutes and February 8, 2016 Minutes

February 1, 2016 Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2016 meeting.

Student Representative Marcus requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 7, line 338, Change “He does see their...” to “He does not see their...”
- Page 15, line 719, Change “...student’s...” to “...students...”

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 11, line 522, Change “...\$1,615 thousand dollars...” to “...\$1.615 million dollars...”
- Page 12, line 566, Change “...second time in his ten years...” to “...second time in four years...”
- Page 16, line 766-767, Change “...discussed a potential joint meeting with the School Board...” to “discussed a joint meeting with the Town Council...”
- Page 16, lines 767-771, Change the sentence to say “During the meeting debate ensued as to whether the proposed SAU SPED site is a larger parcel than that where the skate park is currently located.”
- Page 16, lines 771-772, Change “The O’Gara Drive land...” to “The proposed SAU SPED Office site...”

Vice Chair Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 11, line 535-537, Change “...last meeting added to the budgeted capital...” to “...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.”
- Page 7, after line 314, Insert “What is the difference of the cost between the whole roof and the partial?”
- Page 7, line 316, Change “... amount was \$487,000.00.” to “\$435,000.00 for the remaining 25% budgeted for 2017-2018.”

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 5, line 206, Change "... if he completion rate..." to "...if the completion rate..."
- Page 5, line 210, end the sentence with "...per household."
- Page 7, line 338, Change "...Merrimack..." to "...the Merrimack School District..."
- Page 13, line 636, Change "...making and decision." to "...making a decision."

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

February 8, 2016 Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2016 meeting.

The motion passed as submitted 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus abstained.

3. Public Participation

Merrimack High School sophomore Bailey Carrillo was supported by classmates Grace Corbett and Meghan Glisson as she read a letter written by her mother, Kristin Carrillo, in support of replacing the track at the Merrimack High School. All three students are also members of the Merrimack High School cross-country indoor track and outdoor track teams.

Ms. Kristin Carrillo is the President of the Merrimack Road Runners, the booster club for running sports at Merrimack High School and Merrimack Middle School. She is also a nurse and was unable to attend this meeting due to her work schedule.

Ms. Bailey Carrillo read aloud her mother's letter. She began by noting that the Merrimack Road Runners Booster Club had voted unanimously at their January 20, 2016 meeting to support the budget proposal to replace the high school track. In the letter Ms. Carrillo noted the decaying condition of the existing track and the possibility of it soon becoming unusable due to safety considerations.

As a Division One school system, Merrimack is one of the very few communities with a track in such deplorable condition. If it becomes unusable, scheduling practices and games to outside locations would be a nightmare and the transportation costs could be prohibitive.

It was also noted that in the Spring the Merrimack Invitational is sponsored by the Merrimack Road Runners in an effort to raise money for all of the Merrimack High School and Middle School running programs. This is the largest fund raiser of their season.

A new track would create the opportunity for the Merrimack School District to submit a bid to host the 2017 Division One Outdoor State Meet which would bring outside money into the school district and all of the running programs.

4. Acceptance of Gifts and Grants under \$5,000.00

Business Administrator Shevenell presented for acceptance, a gift in the amount of \$1,500.00 from the HealthTrust. This gift was received by the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee (HCCC) and will be used for worksite health and safety activities to benefit district employees. Three designated Health and Safety Coordinators for the District will attend a full day training session.

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

5. Science and Art Interdisciplinary Course at Merrimack High School

Chairman Ortega invited to the table Science educator Dr. Sarah Campbell and Art educator Ms. Carolyn Rordam who in turn introduced the student presenters.

Pointilism was the theme of the first project presented. The student was unable to attend and the educators displayed and explained the processes involved. Pointilism uses small dots to create an image.

Senior Zoe Goulet then presented her crocheted fish tails. She noted her interest in art and lack of prior interest and understanding in previous science classes and appreciated learning science in the integrated environment. During this project she learned about coral reefs.

Senior Meryl Rogers shared what she had learned by making planets using Styrofoam balls, plaster of paris and a water marbling kit. She was interested in seeing how temperature affected color. After experimenting with several mediums she found success with cold temperatures. This led to an understanding of science behind this as it relates to surface tension. An important observation noted by Merrill was that once she was finished she still had a continuing interest in growing and expanding her ideas. She was also surprised by the fact what she learned has real life applications. She greatly appreciated learning from her classmates that science and art do overlap and complement each other.

Senior Seeda Sam-sok project on optical illusions was based on her curiosity about the eye's interceptors. She shared a project that appeared to show black and white rectangles that were curved but up close were shown to be all straight lines. Her second project was a demonstration of how color and direction were used to create an illusion of depth. In her closing remarks she noted her surprise at how much science she had learned.

Junior Kim Ortega shared her 3D oil paintings. Her decision in choosing this medium was piqued during a unit on pigment and color. Pigment and linseed oil were combined with three different fillers in order to create a thick texture that would hold on a canvas and the results were compared. Kim researched fillers used by various artists as well as commercial fillers and chose aluminum hydroxide, titanium dioxide and beeswax for her three fillers. She then explained how she incorporated each filler and the results of each ending with a preference for beeswax. Kim stressed her desire to speak to the School Board about this class. She had always viewed herself

as a science student and is now looking at a double major in science and art as a result of taking this class.

Board Member Powell asked about class size and was told the class consisted of sixteen students all taught in one class by both teachers instead of the original plan to enroll thirty-two students split into two classrooms with one teacher at a time. This allowed for immediate teacher input and a more seamless experience.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about standards-based grading.

The educators' responded that the students receive a half a credit each in art and science. Students also learned to articulate their processes, which will be valuable when they interview for college. The success of the class was in the co-teaching by an art teacher and a science teacher.

Vice Chair Barnes asked what the credit looks like on a transcript and both educators responded that the credit is a general credit.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the class attracted more science or art students. Both educators acknowledged the importance of students coming from different backgrounds and expressing those viewpoints.

Vice Chair Barnes asked about future classwork.

Educator Rordam responded that one possibility is a math/science class using origami folding techniques. Practical applications include the understanding of protein folding and the unfolding of a telescope in space.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin added that there has also been talk about collaborating with the automotive teacher to create a class involving welding and art.

Board Member Guagliumi noted her strong support for the interdisciplinary classes and asked if the educators had discovered new ways to approach the course next year.

Educator Campbell shared a class on pencil-making that led to the idea of making ink which did not happen due to time constraints. Part of the concept of the class is to discover the students' interests and pursue them creatively.

Student Representative Marcus shared his concerns about a lack of depth in this class and asked about the science gaps.

Educator Campbell noted that the class is an elective after a student has taken physical science and biology and is not intended to be a traditional science class.

Board Member Schneider noted that the interdisciplinary classes bring excitement to learning and appreciated that the class builds on science prerequisites. He shared his appreciation for a 1950's Disney video titled "Donald in Math Magic Land" that combines science, math and art; noting its relevancy today. He noted the real world connections that this course provides.

Chairman Ortega thanked the educators and the students for their presentations. He noted the connections to the logic model as they relate to empowering student directed learning and creating life-long learners. The importance of “failing forward” is a powerful life skill for the students to be encouraged to practice.

Chairman Ortega noted the circular design of a liberal arts education and was pleased to see the addition of more interdisciplinary courses at the Merrimack High School.

6. Review of the Outcomes from the Non-Public Board Meeting on February 8, 2016

Board Member Schneider had attended the meeting and shared the outcomes of the contract talks. Competitive compensation, encouraging academic achievement, hiring more new and younger teachers, and healthcare costs were the focus of the talks. The Merrimack School District, even after the proposed three percent increases over the next three years, would still be below some of the surrounding districts. Tuition reimbursement for teachers who pursue their own advanced degrees and retirement incentives are also included in the contract. One of the major focus areas was healthcare. Currently the split is 85 percent paid by the employer and 15 percent paid by the employee. This split will continue and in the second year more plan options will be offered. The contract was approved 3-0-1 with Chairman Ortega recusing himself. The details will be available on the Merrimack School District website with regular updates as they occur.

7. Review of the Outcomes from the Budget Committee’s Public Hearing and Work Session

Board Member Powell reported that each of the departments were well prepared to answer questions after their presentations. Warrant Article #3, the contract, was recommended by a vote of 10-0-1. Warrant Article #5, relating to increasing the budget surplus fund by \$75,000.00 was recommended by a vote of 10-0-1. Warrant Article #7, the budget was also recommended by a vote of 10-0-1.

8. Preparation for Warrant Presentations for Deliberative Session on March 8, 2016

Chairman Ortega recommended specific members to move the specific warrant articles and read them aloud. Article #2, the acceptance of gifts and property to be moved by Vice Chair Barnes and seconded by Board Member Schneider. Article #3, the MTA contract to be moved by Board Member Schneider and seconded by Board Member Powell. Article #4, the MTA contract trailer to be moved by Board Member Powell and Board Member Guagliumi. Article #5, the Repair Capital Reserve Fund to be moved by Board Member Guagliumi and seconded by Vice Chair Barnes. Article #6, the management expenses for the Capital Reserve Fund to be moved by Fund Manager Mr. Christensen and seconded by another trustee. Article #7, the School District Operating Budget to be moved and seconded by the Budget Committee.

9. Proposed School Calendar for 2016-2017

Superintendent Chiafery opened her remarks by referring to a letter placed at each Board Member’s seat before the meeting outlining the calendar requests of the Merrimack Teachers Association and the Merrimack Education Support Staff Association. Contractual obligations state that teachers cannot start the school year before Labor Day and the two federal holidays that

must be observed are Veteran's Day, November 11, 2016 and Memorial Day May 29, 2016. Input from the Town Moderator will lead to no school on Election Day, November 8, 2016.

August Academy will be held August 29-September 2, 2016 with school opening on Tuesday, September 6, 2016. Other notable dates are no school on Labor Day and Columbus Day, Thanksgiving Break to be Wednesday-Friday, November 23-November 25, 2016, Christmas Break from December 26-January 1, 2017, and no school on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

February vacation from February 27-March 3, 2016 and April school vacation April 24-April 28, 2016 would both follow school vacations in Massachusetts. The last day of school barring any inclement weather would be June 15, 2017.

Board Member Powell asked if the Veteran's Day holiday was a floating holiday and was told only if it falls on a weekend.

Vice Chair Barnes referred to a letter the Board had received from a parent of a student athlete requesting that midterms coincide with surrounding districts exams and asked if the NHIAA calendar had been considered when the calendar was created.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the start date for school is limited by the MTA contract and that each quarter is made up of approximately 45 days per quarter. She did get input from various sources.

Vice Chair Barnes requested a second look to see if there is any possibility of making this accommodation.

Vice Chair Barnes shared her concern about calendar alignment for Merrimack's out of district students and how much instruction might be lost for special education and vocational students.

Vice Chair Barnes commented that there are a lot of days off in November and that because this is an election year we should consider holding school on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

Board Member Schneider observed that the Christmas Break is the shortest possible as it is only one week long. He also noted the benefits of the August Academy to both the teachers and the students. One concern is in the area of teachable hours and the long-term planning involved in implementing it.

Student Representative Marcus noted that this year Labor Day fell very late and that it should not be an issue for the next few coming calendar years.

Chairman Ortega added that the late start date and the front-loading of teacher workshops even out as the school year proceeds and that hopefully we would be more in line with other districts by mid-terms. He noted that other area school boards are also in the process of setting their calendars and that it would not be possible to get definitive dates from them at this time. He suggested using PowerSchool and handouts to request feedback by the end of February on the proposed calendar. The results would be reviewed at the March 7, 2016 School Board meeting.

Board Member Schneider added the request that it be posted on the district website to allow for as much public input as possible.

Board Member Guagliumi shared that she will be meeting with Superintendent Chiafery and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin the next day to discuss some Communications Committee initiatives and that the calendar is one of the items on that agenda.

10. Drug Awareness Initiatives in the Merrimack Community

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin provided an update and follow-up to the previous meeting's presentation by Merrimack Chief of Police Doyle and Merrimack High School administration. He noted that the challenge is taken very seriously and that data is used to make decisions in combatting the issue. Merrimack is fortunate to be the recipient of a long-term federal grant; part of which funds Merrimack Safeguard and provides connections other districts do not have. The grants manager for the Northeast Region, Cydne Kimbrough is a nationally recognized scholar on the issue of substance abuse among youth. In a conversation with her she suggested resources to assist with further defining the drug abuse problem. They include gathering information from Poison Control and emergency room visits that relate to substance abuse, being mindful of privacy concerns.

The issue of connecting to the broader community is seen as vitally important to naming the challenge and its dimensions and the community response to addressing them. Cydne Kimbrough is willing to come to Merrimack to moderate this event.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reminded the Board that Merrimack Safeguard meets the first Thursday of every month at St. James Church and strongly encouraged the participation of the community in the constructive dialogue about combatting substance abuse issues in the Merrimack community.

More updates will be provided at future School Board meetings.

Board Member Schneider asked if the use of the drug sniffing dog Gunny has come up in discussions at the Merrimack Safeguard meetings.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded yes and that additionally he has been informed by Cydne Kimbrough who is also connected to the federal arm of the Department of Health, that canines are rarely used. She emphasized to him that there can be no substitute for trust and that the use of canines only works when it is part of an educational initiative.

Chairman Ortega thanked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin for gathering the information and sharing it with the School Board.

11. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega referred to a letter that had been included in members packets mailed out prior to the meeting. It was from the St. James United Methodist Church Community Food Pantry Director Donna Jackson to the Reeds Ferry Elementary School PFA, thanking the students, parents and faculty for their contributions in filling up the pantry.

Board Member Powell brought up the award that Thorntons Ferry Elementary School was nominated for and asked if there was any new information on this.

Superintendent Chiafery shared that Thorntons Ferry Elementary School was now one of three finalists for Elementary School of the Year for the State of New Hampshire. The visitation by the Selection Board will be conducted in March and the results are expected to be known in April.

Board Member Schneider received an email in support of the high school track, another in support of using the canines as part of the pro-active effort in the schools and email asking about the budget and contracts.

Chairman Ortega received an email from a resident about the budget, specifically the psychologist position that was discussed last year.

b) Comments

Vice Chair Barnes referred to House Bills #1687 and #1688 that are going before the House Judiciary Committee this week. They pertain to the liability issues to communities in regards to school playground equipment. She recommended that the School Board reach out to local delegates stating a position on these Bills. She shared her concern that the Skate Board Park might eventually come under the domain of the School Board that their needs to be a position taken beforehand.

Superintendent Chiafery and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin met with State Representative Balcom, Vice-Chair of the House Education Committee. They discussed with him their thoughts on some upcoming bills and asked if members of the delegation would be available to attend the March 7, 2016 School Board meeting, which is prior to the bills going to the Senate.

At that time she would make it known that the playground equipment was furnished by the parent groups for the betterment of our children. The playgrounds cannot be monitored by school district personnel when school is not in session and that liability during these times does not seem reasonable.

Board Member Schneider shared that he has had residents imply that schools have been withheld from election use by the School Board. He is open to offering the schools for use during national elections.

Chairman Ortega noted that the School Board has always been willing to work with the Town Moderator on this issue.

12. New Business

There was no new business.

13. Committee Reports

Student Representative Marcus shared that the statewide solo and ensemble festival was recently held by the New Hampshire Music Educators Association. Both Merrimack Middle School and Merrimack High School participate in this contest which is judged by university music

educators. As it relates to co-curricular funding he sees this as a great example of how these funds are used. Groups varied from brass quintets, woodwind choirs, duets, trios, and trombone ensembles. Merrimack's participants equaled all the other schools combined and this has been the case for several years. The funding goes towards the purchase of the required music that changes every year. He thanked the School Board for the funding.

Board Member Guagliumi had attended a professional development meeting the prior week and is scheduled to attend a Parks and Recreation meeting this week. The Empty Bowls event is scheduled for this week, and it is sponsored by the National Honor Society.

Board Member Schneider met earlier in the day with the Wellness Committee. They will be looking into new ideas for fitness challenges for both students and staff. Some might include fitbits. There was also discussion about the current state of the Food Service Program. Outside recess policies in the different schools was also discussed. Lastly, they discussed how much of the \$1,500.00 from the HealthTrust might be made available to the Wellness Committee.

Board Member Powell shared the highlights of the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee meeting that was held the previous Wednesday. The presentation of the site of service plan generated great interest. This plan would become available during open enrollment for the 2017-2018 plan year.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There was no public participation.

15. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:07 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.