

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
March 7, 2016
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

Student Representative Marcus was excused from the meeting. He was attending a National Congress in Washington, D.C. as one of two student representatives from the State of New Hampshire. It is expected that he will be in attendance during a speech to be given by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Moment of Silence for Ashley Guindon

Chairman Ortega shared that Ashley Guindon, a graduate of Merrimack High School, was shot down on her first day on the job as a police officer in Virginia. He shared a quote from her yearbook in which she wrote "Live for something rather than die for nothing." She was laid to rest today in Springfield, MA.

3. Approval of February 15, 2016 Minutes

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2016 meeting.

Chairman Ortega requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 4, line 137 change "...bet..." to "...but..."

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

4. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

5. Second Review of Proposed Calendar for 2016-2017

Superintendent Chiafery referred to questions that had been raised at the previous School Board meeting.

A question Vice Chair Barnes raised in regards to a parent concern about scheduling midterm exams to coincide with surrounding districts was brought to the attention of the athletic director Eric Sabeau.

It was reported the draft 2016-2017 calendar will put Merrimack School District in a similar situation with regards to sports events and midterm exams. However, there will be more flexibility with the sports schedule than 2015-2016 due to the fact that the 2016-2017 school year will be the first year of a two year NHIAA schedule. Changes to the sports schedule may be possible if Athletic Director Sabeau is notified prior to the next NHIAA schedulers meeting.

Vice Chair Barnes had raised the question of calendar alignment for out of district students. These students attend in the districts of Nashua and Hudson.

Superintendent Chiafery had copies of the Nashua and Hudson draft calendars and shared that they both plan the first day on August 30, 2016. This would put both of these districts four days ahead of the Merrimack School District, which is slated to begin on September 6, 2016. Staff orientation for the Nashua and Hudson districts begins before the first day with professional development days peppered throughout the school year.

Vice Chair Barnes had commented that due to the large amount of days off in November school could be in attendance the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that both the Nashua and Hudson school districts will be off from November 23-25 and that all three districts would be in sync if the Merrimack School District kept to the proposed draft calendar.

Superintendent Chiafery then asked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin to speak about the request from several Board members at the previous meeting to elicit feedback from the community on the proposed calendar.

Immediately following the last School Board meeting, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin met with Superintendent Chiafery and Chairman Ortega to develop a draft survey of five yes or no questions. The survey is to include the information on federally mandated holidays (Veteran's Day, November 11th, and Memorial Day, May 29th), and the federal election date of November 8th. The plan is to release the survey tomorrow with a requested feedback date of March 15th. Results would then be shared at the next School Board Meeting.

Board Member Schneider asked how the survey would be disseminated.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that Survey Monkey will be used and that each school will be asked to assist in encouraging parents to respond. This was seen as preferable to just posting it on the district website.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if there would be a way to ensure that people only take the survey once and not multiple times and was told yes.

Board Member Schneider asked if there will be a place for comments and was told there will be one box for comments.

Board Member Guagliumi asked to hear the proposed questions.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin read the questions aloud.

The preamble states: Parent feedback is very important to us as it is one of several data points that the School Board of the Merrimack School District will use to develop the 2016-2017 school calendar. As the Merrimack School Board seeks your input regarding the 2016-2017 school calendar it is important to share some facts about the school calendar that cannot be changed. One, under federal law all schools must be closed on Veteran's Day and Memorial Day. Two, per teacher contract, school cannot begin any earlier than the Monday before Labor Day in any given year. Three, due to the impact of voting on school district facilities all schools must be closed on Election Day, November 8, 2016.

Question Number One: Teacher workshops that are held as a cluster of days at the beginning of the school year would delay the start of school for students by up to four days. Could you support a school calendar that had such an impact on the start of school for students? Yes or No.

Question Number Two: Do you support having no school on Columbus Day, October 10, 2016? Yes or No.

Question Number Three: Do you support having no school on the day before Thanksgiving? Yes or No.

Question Number Four: Do you support having no school on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 16, 2017? Yes or No.

Question Number Five: Do you support having no school on President's Day, February 20, 2017 recognizing that the following week is February school vacation? Yes or No.

Board Member Guagliumi asked to include a question in regards to extending the Christmas Vacation for 2016-2017.

Board Member Schneider suggested being specific and using either December 23rd or January 2nd.

Superintendent Chiafery suggested that January 2nd would be in alignment with the neighboring school districts of Nashua and Hudson.

Discussion ensued among the Board members in regards to which date to choose, if one were to be chosen. If there is to be a change, the majority of the Board members spoke in favor of extending the Christmas vacation to include January 2, 2017.

Board Member Schneider brought up the points of teachable hours and August Academy. The concept of teachable hours was not discussed during contract negotiations this year but August Academy was. These decisions were made after all of the available data was reviewed.

Chairman Ortega noted that the Amherst School District move to teachable hours was brought about by flooding issues that led to more than 11 days of school closings.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the draft school calendar will be included in the survey or linked to the website.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that there will be a link to the calendar from the survey. The draft calendar is now on the district website in the filing cabinet.

6. Scheduling the 2016 Graduation Date

Superintendent Chiafery and Merrimack High School Principal Johnson conferred and agreed on a graduation date of June 11, 2016, with the formal ceremony to begin at 10:00 a.m.

Board Member Schneider asked if the date was firm.

Superintendent Chiafery responded yes, that her office is now receiving calls from people looking to make travel arrangements to attend. She noted that she could adjust the Senior Week schedule if necessary.

7. Other

a) Correspondence

Board Member Guagliumi and Chairman Ortega shared that a parent had reached out to them in regards to the calendar survey.

b) Comments

Chairman Ortega shared that tomorrow, Tuesday, March 8, 2016 is the Deliberative Session, where the Warrant Articles will be reviewed before they go to the voters. It will take place at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School at 7:00 p.m. He encouraged public participation.

8. New Business

There was no new business.

9. Committee Reports

Board Member Powell shared that the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee met on Wednesday, March 3, 2016. Mark Merrifield was in attendance for a conversation around creating more accessibility options for employees such as smartphone applications. A presentation to the maintenance department revealed their lack of computer access and underscored the value of the smartphone applications.

Board Member Schneider was away on business when the Planning and Building Committee met on Monday, February 29th and will have information to share at a later date.

Board Member Schneider shared that the Merrimack Safeguard meeting scheduled for March 3, 2016 was cancelled. This will be re-scheduled so that the team may partake of the annual survey in order to fulfill the grant requirement. The A-OK sub-committee will meet Thursday, March 9, 2016 to discuss the program.

10. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There was no public participation.

11. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 7:30 p.m. Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.