

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
March 21, 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.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

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

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of March 7, 2016 Minutes

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2016 meeting.

Board Member Powell requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 2, line 51 change to make clear that Athletic Director Sabean was not at the meeting.

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 2, line 53 change "...last year..." to "...2015-2016..."
- Page 4, line 170 insert the word "School" before "...Deliberative Session, ..."

Chairman Ortega requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 2, line 51 delete the word "...be..." from the sentence.

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted to abstain.

3. Public Participation

Ms. Trisha Swonger of 6 Clara Drive, Merrimack, NH spoke about the Theater Department program at the Merrimack High School. She shared that the Merrimack Educational Theater Group performed at the New Hampshire Educational Theater Guild Festival at Coe Brown School and was chosen to advance to the state level festival which is scheduled for April 1 and 2 at Kingswood High School.

On May 12, 13 and 14, the Theater Group will perform "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown" at Merrimack High School in the Little Theater.

Ms. Bonnie Dunham of 16 Wren Court, Merrimack, NH spoke about the High School Boy's State Championship Basketball game in which both teams thought they had won and fans were celebrating in the stands and on the court. When it was made official that Merrimack High

School had not won, the team and the fans were gracious in accepting the decision. Their good sportsmanship was a positive reflection on Merrimack High School and the community at large.

Board Member Powell added that a friend, also in attendance remarked to him about the good behavior of the Merrimack High School fans.

4. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following teacher resignation:

-Virginia Crook Merrimack High School Social Studies Teacher

Board Member Schneider shared that Mrs. Crook began her teaching career when he was a student at Merrimack High School. All of his teachers will now be retired. He applauded her excellent career.

Board Member Schneider then moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) to accept the consent agenda as read.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

Chairman Ortega noted the 43 years of service and thanked Mrs. Crook for her dedicated service.

5. Third Review of Proposed School Calendar for 2016-2017

Chairman Ortega noted his appreciation for the 940 parent responses to the parent survey which was put out on Survey Monkey through the School Messenger System.

Chairman Ortega read the survey questions and results.

Question #1 Do you support having no school on Columbus Day?
Yes: 56.38% No: 43.62%

Question #2 Do you support having no school on the day before Thanksgiving?
Yes: 72.55% No: 27.45%

Question #3 Do you support extending the Christmas holiday vacation to include no school on Monday, January 2, 2017?
No: 53.72% Yes: 46.28%

Question #4 Do you support having no school on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 16, 2017?
Yes: 50.32% No: 49.68%

Question #5 Do you support having no school on President's Day, February 20, 2017, recognizing that the following week is February vacation?
No: 75.4% Yes: 24.57%

Question #6 Teacher workshops that are held as a cluster of days at the beginning of the school year would delay the start 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: 63.40% No: 36.60%

In addition to the six questions a comment section garnered 500 comments.

Board Member Powell asked how many families are in the Merrimack School District and was told by Business Administrator Shevenell that it was about 2,000 to 2,500 families.

Board Member Powell then shared an observation he made from viewing the comments in regards to combining the February and April vacations.

Superintendent Chiafery agreed that it should be looked at and that it would come under long-range planning.

Vice Chair Barnes stated that this topic would necessitate a new parent survey.

Board Member Guagliumi noted that the survey was very positively received and she recommended conducting them in the future around the calendar and other topics. She agreed with other Board Members to change future surveys to allow for yes/no/neutral response options.

Board Member Schneider agreed that the survey data was very good and that thought should be given to using the survey approach proactively for next year's calendar planning. He also suggested a survey on the topic of teachable hours.

Board Member Guagliumi agreed with the idea to put the survey out earlier for planning purposes.

Student Representative Marcus appreciated the parent responses on the survey and advocated for keeping both the February and April vacations. Students take advantage of vacations to schedule college visits.

Chairman Ortega expressed appreciation for the parent responses in assisting the School Board in making data driven decisions.

Board Member Guagliumi requested that the responses be made available on the school website for public viewing.

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to accept the calendar as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

6. United States Senate Youth Program

Student Representative Marcus provided a comprehensive presentation to the School Board on his experience as one of the two New Hampshire delegates for the 54th Annual United States

Senate Youth Program which was held in Washington, D.C. from March 5-12, 2016 and sponsored and funded entirely by the Hearst Foundation.

Student Representative Marcus referred to copies of the program that had been provided to each Board Member in the packets that were mailed out to them before the meeting and also narrated a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted his experience.

The group stayed at the Mayflower Hotel the same week that Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau was also there and security was evident. Seventeen military mentors/chaperones assisted the delegates with getting to and from their destinations. These mentors come from all five branches of the military and they also had to apply for this program.

The first day began with a trip to Mount Vernon where they delegates visited George Washington's slave quarters. This enormous area was larger than most of the surrounding homes at the time. While on this visit they learned about President Washington's life as a political thinker and as a farmer.

Next was a trip to the NEWSEUM for a speech by the President and CEO of the NEWSEUM, Jeffrey Herbst. His speech attributed some of the reasons for the political divisiveness going on today to internet based algorithms that funnel pre-selected information to users based on past usage. He stressed the importance of critical thinking.

On Tuesday, the student delegates visited the United States Supreme Court. Their first speaker was Robert H. Henry, Former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit and now President of the Oklahoma City University. Judge Henry, himself a prior participant in the Senate Youth Program, spoke about judicial philosophies such as textualism, favored by the late Justice Scalia, and activism and broad interpretation, favored by Justice Ginsburg. Later in the week Judge Henry joined the delegates at a dance held in their honor.

Mid-morning the delegates visited the Kennedy Caucus Room and were greeted by Julie Adams, Secretary of the Senate and Elizabeth MacDonough, Parliamentarian of the Senate. Ms. Adams is responsible for the internal operations of the Senate, from Wi-Fi access to paper supplies. Ms. MacDonough's office is the Senate law firm. Her office is responsible for reading each bill and then deciding which committee should receive it. Both positions are appointments which are then confirmed by the Senate.

Ms. Adams advice to the delegates was "Remain humble, have a strong work ethic and be a team player." These virtues help people to succeed in Washington, D.C.

Ms. MacDonough spoke about the importance of women mentoring women in the Senate. This was later echoed by Justice Ginsburg and New Hampshire Senators Ayotte and Shahan.

The luncheon speaker was Betty Koed the Senate Historian. She opened her speech with remarks about leadership and natural leaders such as Daniel Webster of New Hampshire. She then spoke about the evolution of political parties in the United States and of a time when there used to be more conservative democrats and liberal republicans which producing an environment where much great work was accomplished.

One highlight of the week was the trip to the Supreme Court and a meeting with Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She spoke about the importance of personal connections and

provided a brief history of the first eight Justices. Previous practice had the Justices rooming together in a dormitory which created an environment of familiarity and friendship. There was less dissent during this time. While this is no longer the case the practice today is that the Justices upon entering the room shake each other's hands. This is Justice Ginsburg's favorite ritual. Her closest friend on the Supreme Court was the late Justice Scalia, the Justice she disagreed with most.

In regards to women's rights, Justice Ginsburg stated that in her opinion the Ledbetter Case that addressed equal pay for women that the Supreme Court voted down, was among the worst decisions of the Supreme Court, the worst being the Dred Scott decision in regards to slavery.

The evening stage was set with a performance by the Joint Armed Forces Color Guard, The Old Guard Fife & Drum Corps. This was followed by a speech by another alumnus of the Senate Youth Program, Colorado Senator Cory Gardner. Senator Gardner, one of this year's co-chairs, reflected on how his experiences in the program shaped his goal to pursue a career in politics. He also spoke about common-sense issues.

Student Representative Marcus took a moment to give credit to former student delegate Jakob Moser for all the photos in his PowerPoint presentation.

On Tuesday morning the delegates visited the NASA Goddard Spaceflight Center and were shown the mirrors for the James Webb telescope, scheduled to be launched in 2018. This will replace the Hubble satellite and look into the past to and learn how the universe began.

Arms to be used to re-fuel satellites and robots that would grab asteroids and bring them into earth's orbit are in development now. Future manned missions would then be able to mine the asteroids. There are no plans as yet on how to move the asteroids out of earth's orbit.

The biggest highlight of the week was the visit to the White House and the audience with President Obama who advised the delegates "Don't think about what you want to be, think about what you want to do." He advised the delegates to think more about how they might help people instead of just being in politics.

The dinner speaker was Hawaii Senator Mazie Hirono the other co-chair of this year's Senate Youth Program. She spoke about her own story as a Japanese immigrant and about women's issues. She told the delegates that "Those in power need to help those who have no power."

When political commentator Chris Matthews was unable to attend Wednesday's breakfast he recommended political analyst Jonathan Capehart as his replacement. His perspective on the role of the media dealt with the challenge of trying to avoid censoring the news.

Mid-morning on Wednesday the delegates visited Anderson House and were welcomed with a lecture by the Executive Director of the Society of Cincinnati, Jack Warren. The Society is the oldest patriotic organization in the country with its first president being George Washington. Mr. Warren spoke about the importance of the American Revolution which created the first republic.

At lunch Ambassador Peter Wittig of Germany spoke about coalitions and emphasized the importance of partnerships such as the university system in the United States and the vocational system in Germany, both of which are considered to be the best in the world.

Dinner was an opportunity to meet and speak with the New Hampshire Senators and make personal connections with them. Senator Ayotte shared how New Hampshire had shaped her and encouraged both delegates to stay and work in New Hampshire as adults, and Senator Shaheen spoke about her work on the heroin crisis in the Northeastern part of the country. Senator Shaheen also shared that once a month all of the women in the Senate gather and share dinner.

At the Thursday morning breakfast U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz spoke about sustainable energy research, and nuclear issues and how fundamental the U.S. government is to science funding.

After a mid-morning tour of the Thomas Jefferson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorials the delegates enjoyed lunch at the Hart Senate Office Building and heard from NASA Administrator Charles F. Bolden who spoke about the future possibility of humans on Mars by the 2030's. Mr. Bolden noted that he is of the generation of the moon and that the delegates are of the generation of Mars. Student Representative Marcus cited this as his favorite quote of the week.

His speech was immediately followed by one from Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander on the importance of local school boards. He also spoke about leadership and making principled decisions.

Friday began with C-SPAN Founder and Executive Director Brian Lamb interviewing members of the group during breakfast. Everyone was invited to speak about their experiences during the week. This will air on C-SPAN in April.

The delegates then headed to Arlington National Cemetery and heard from one of the soldiers who is a member of the honor guard for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He spoke about the major and minor gaffs that might cause removal from the honor guard and the commitment required of all members.

Luncheon speaker John Kirby, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs spoke about the United States leadership role in the world and took questions from the audience and provided frank responses.

The final dinner included a dance and ended early due to a scheduled 3:00 a.m. morning departure.

Student Representative Marcus concluded by stating that this was the greatest week of his life and that his culinary taste buds might have peaked.

Chairman Ortega expressed the extreme pride of all of the Board Members and that he could think of no better representative to send. He thanked Student Representative Marcus for the excellent presentation.

7. Development of a Charge for the Planning and Building Committee

Chairman Ortega opened the discussion by reminding the other members that the School District's lease with the Town of Merrimack for the O'Gara Drive property will expire in July 2018. The property currently houses the tennis courts which will be returning to green space, and still houses the basketball courts, skate park and ice rink. He would like to charge the

Planning and Building Committee with looking at the space as well as the needs of the district to come up with some suggestions as to how the three acre site might be used. He included as one possibility the concept raised previously by Board Member Schneider about the relocation of the Superintendent's offices to this site.

Vice Chair Barnes expressed concern about what is on the ground, such as ledge, on the site and recommended an engineering study to ascertain what appropriate options exist for building on the site.

Discussion ensued on whether an engineering study should be done before the Planning and Building Committee has an opportunity to study the site.

Issues and points raised were: ask Business Administrator Shevenell to get information on the costs of an engineering study, ask the Planning and Building Committee to begin now to work on coming up with feasible options for the site concurrent with an engineering study, an engineering study needs some preliminary information for possible usage, require the study be broad enough and flexible enough for alternative uses if the desired first use is deemed unacceptable, require the engineering study be such that the entire plot is understood as to what types of structures, fields, etc. can be erected, look at decommissioned ideas as options, look at existing options, if offices are to be moved, then how would that land be repurposed,

Chairman Ortega stated that all of this discussion will be shaped into a draft charge for the next meeting.

Board Member Powell asked the Board to consider a second charge to the Planning and Building Committee of investigating the viability of the licensing/sponsorship of fields.

Chairman Ortega and Vice Chair Barnes expressed concerns about what might constitute acceptable advertising in student centered areas. They would like research done into how other school districts' handle this and any policies they have in place.

Chairman Ortega requested that the Board consider a third charge to the Planning and Building Committee in regards to the decided lack of rectangular fields in the Merrimack. To build a new turf field costs about one million dollars and has a life of about ten to fifteen years.

The forty acre property on 277 Baboosic Lake Road and the thirteen acres on Continental Boulevard are possible locations for new fields. The acreage on Continental Boulevard is in the path of the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline project and has already been promised as a site for a proposed fire station.

Chairman Ortega asked if it would be desirable to have the Planning and Building Committee look at the feasibility of using one or both of these properties for the creation of rectangular fields.

Board Member Guagliumi agreed and asked that other district property such as the O'Gara property be included in the study.

Board Member Schneider suggested that a good activity would be to inventory all of the available land under the domain of the school district.

Chairman Ortega noted that there will be three potential charges to review at the April 4th meeting.

8. Board's Response to the Proposed Voter Information Guide

Superintendent Chiafery brought the Board's attention to the three documents being used in the formation of the mailing to all town residences. Copies of each were included in member's packets mailed out prior to the meeting. The three documents are; the proposed 2016 School District Summary of Warrant Articles, the 2015 School District's Summary of Warrant Articles in pamphlet form, and the Town of Merrimack's Voter Guide to the 2016 Official Ballot.

Superintendent Chiafery compared the pamphlet created and produced by the School Department which costs \$1,500.00 to the \$3,500.00 the town spends. The pamphlet has been used for the past thirteen years.

There are short-term and long-term options in regards to the mailing. The voter's guide must be mailed out by April 4, 2016. All of this information was presented to the Board for guidance on how to proceed this year and next.

Business Administrator Shevenell added that the pamphlet is printed in-house and costs are controlled. The ballot and insert would be done by an outside printer and there is no current information on what that would cost.

Board Member Schneider noted that he was one of the Board members who had requested more in-depth information on the voter's guide and noted that the pamphlet only contains a summary of the warrant article while the sample ballot provides the wording of the warrant article. The town's voter's guide also provides more detailed information than the pamphlet provided by the School Department. He suggested providing a link on the school district website on the pamphlet.

Board Member Powell suggested a pamphlet with a QR (quick response) code as well as the school district website to link to more information. He preferred the less expensive version.

Business Administrator Shevenell reminded the Board that the sample ballot and proposed budget are available for viewing now on the school website. He agreed that a pamphlet that directed people to the school district website would be helpful.

Vice Chair Barnes was in favor of doing away with the pamphlet altogether and to partner with the Town Council in the creation of a comprehensive guide.

Board Member Guagliumi agreed with the QR code, directing people to the school district website, and requested that Superintendent Chiafery reach out to the Town Manager to create a joint guide for next year. She was concerned about the frustration for voters with two guides and the duplicate costs involved.

Chairman Ortega summed up the Board's desire that this year a pamphlet that contained a QR code and appropriate links be sent out; and that for next year a combined mailing with the Town Council be created. He also noted that the voter's guide has remained unchanged for many years.

9. Request to Change the Title of the Business Administrator

Superintendent Chiafery requested that the title of Business Administrator be changed to Assistant Superintendent of Finance. She highlighted some of the projects that Business Administrator Shevenell led, partnered or saw crucial involvement in over the past sixteen years.

They include overseeing the construction of the Merrimack Middle School, the re-organization of the school district, negotiating contracts on behalf of the school district, negotiating security projects for the elementary schools, re-configuring of the parking lot at the Reeds Ferry Elementary School, overseeing the district's seamless conversion from oil to natural gas, proactive decisions in technological improvements and advancements such as on-line registration, and continued work with all department heads on various issues.

Business Administrator Shevenell will complete his Master's Degree in Education at Southern New Hampshire University in 2016. Additionally, Business Administrator Shevenell already represents the district when both Superintendent Chiafery and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin are away.

Superintendent Chiafery expressed her hope that this change be ready for the consent agenda for the April 4, 2016 School Board meeting.

Board Member Powell questioned the word Finance in the proposed new title. He asked if it captured all of the roles encompassed in the job description. He noted his prior experience working with Business Administrator Shevenell on large projects and the value Business Administrator Shevenell brings to the district.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she had checked with the New Hampshire Department of Education as to the acceptability of the title and also looked back at titles used previously in the Merrimack School District. The state response was to defer back to local school boards. In looking back at the history of the Merrimack School District Administration she discovered that several people previously held the title Assistant Superintendent of Finance and named them.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if this is a familiar title in the Department of Education and expressed concern that the title should reflect the appropriate credentials so as to afford Business Administrator Shevenell an appropriate peer group. She suggested the title Assistant Superintendent of Business.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the generic Assistant Superintendent is important and that she will further investigate additional options for the full title.

Board Member Schneider was in favor of the title change but agreed with Vice Chair Barnes on being diligent in selecting one that is appropriate.

Student Representative Marcus asked if the prior Assistant Superintendents of Finance had the same responsibilities and if so then to just keep that title.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that none of the predecessors had built a school or been involved with technology. The position has evolved.

Board Member Guagliumi acknowledged the quality and scope of work done by Business Administrator Shevenell and agreed that the title should evolve to reflect this.

Student Representative Marcus concurred with the Board that the title should change and that the word Finance does not encompass all of his roles.

Chairman Ortega also agreed and expressed his thanks to Business Administrator Shevenell for a job well done.

10. Other

a) Correspondence

Vice Chair Barnes received an email requesting information on the graduation date for 2016. She contacted Business Administrator Shevenell who quickly had the information put on the district website.

Board Member Guagliumi received correspondence on the school calendar and the parent survey. She received additional correspondence on how the questions were asked on the parent survey.

Chairman Ortega received correspondence that he had shared privately with the other Board members in regards to a personnel matter.

b) Comments

Student Representative Marcus expressed his gratitude to Mrs. Crook and noted that she was one of his favorite teachers. She is known as having the best homeroom in the school. He thanked her for all of her hard work and her commitment to the students.

11. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery requested a meeting with the School Board for Monday, April 11, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. with a location to be determined. The purpose of the meeting is in regards to staff welfare.

12. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Barnes shared a picture of the newly erected bridge in Grater Woods. The intended purpose of the bridge is to protect the wetlands and restrict unauthorized ATV (all terrain vehicle) usage.

Vice Chair Barnes attended the New Hampshire School Board Association Board of Directors meeting that was held the previous Wednesday. She referred to notes she had compiled for constituents, copies of which were distributed to the Board Members. The highlight was a meeting with the Congressional delegations which provided the opportunity to share concerns on important issues such as the Food Service requirements, the waste and the lack of flexibility. Additionally, student mental health issues were a topic that was impacting every school district.

Student Representative Marcus shared that the Merrimack High School Concert Band had attended the New Hampshire Music Educators Association Large Group Festival at Bow High School the previous Friday, where they received all A ratings.

Student Representative Marcus next spoke about Matt Spettel a student at Merrimack High School who had invented the ChemiCube, a device that can measure chemicals to a precision level that can only otherwise be achieved using medical technology costing tens of thousands of dollars. His ChemiCube costs \$300 to produce. Matt and his AP Chemistry lab partner Sarah Mason attended a New England regional competition where they placed second place overall and first place in the engineering category. They will proceed to the national competition which will be held in Arizona.

13. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

14. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:33 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.