

Approved 6/16/16

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Town Hall Meeting Room  
May 2, 2016  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**Present:** Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider, Board Members Guagliumi, Powell and Thompson, Superintendent Chiafery and Student Representative Marcus. Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell were excused from the meeting.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**3. Focus on James Mastricola Elementary School**

Chair Barnes invited to the table Principal Emilie Carter, Assistant Principal Michelle Romein and School Counselor Kate Harrington.

Principal Carter opened her remarks by noting that August Academy set the district focus on inquiry and how to integrate it into the classrooms. The James Mastricola Elementary School (JMES) universal theme of positive behavior intervention support (PBIS) expanded on this idea. Over the summer at Camp Carter the PBIS team looked at the past year's data as well as district initiatives and came up with the a focus theme of "What do you want your mark to be?" The book "The Dot", by Peter Reynolds was chosen as the school book due to its message of celebrating creativity, courage and collaboration. It was read to all of the students at the opening day assembly.

School Counselor Kate Harrington explained the book and how it was connected to the big three school ideas of safety, respect and responsibility. She then showed a video of a skit teachers and students presented to reinforce these concepts. Students then shared how they would leave their mark on school with written examples that were shared with others.

Grade 4 educator Mrs. Ortega showed examples of student learning that included problem solving and collaboration. Students Kishan Sreenivasan and Eko Cronon-Susseault then explained the trial and error strategies they employed in the construction of their robots, named Dash and Daisy. Perseverance was the key.

Grade 3 educator Mrs. Hitchcock was joined by students Colby Piper and Vivia Couser to explain bridge construction. Colby explained the different geometric shapes they tried until they settled on the triangle shape. The tools that were available to them were gumdrops and toothpicks. Vivia then presented the problem of "Sammy" and asked the School Board to use

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the materials that had been provided to them prior to the meeting to get Sammy into the life boat. Sammy the gummy worm needed to be rescued by means of a swizzle stick and two paper clips. School Board members bravely attempted this rescue.

Grade 2 educator Mrs. Croteau shared how grade 2 teachers met to see how their standards could be met in integrated cross curriculum units. Lessons were then designed to address skills through differentiated instruction with a shared goal for all students.

Merrimack High School Science teacher Mr. James Davis and his student Senior Neel Dhanaraj then came to the table to speak about the independent study experience they brought to the JMES students.

Mr. Davis provided some background on his prior experiences working with elementary students and how this segued to his suggesting it when Neel approached him about an independent study. They approached Principal Carter who enthusiastically embraced the plan and then had high praise for the results.

Neel began his presentation by stating that he wanted to bring his passion for science to the elementary students. He and Mr. Davis explored the elementary science curriculum and looked for areas that Neel could address. He taught constellations by completing a cardboard planetarium that Mr. Davis had begun and wowed the third graders. Neel thought this would be more exciting and engaging than lecturing.

Neel then taught the second graders about magnets by building several lab stations for students to explore.

Fourth graders learned about energy from Neel. He spent an entire weekend building a Rube Goldberg machine for students to work with, then allowed the students to find the missing components and complete the machine.

The last group Neel taught were the first graders. He taught life cycles, after a night time excursion into a swamp to collect frog eggs for the lesson. He used the eggs to teach all of the life cycle stages.

Neel summed up his experience by commenting that if he has encouraged at least a few students to become interested in science then he has successfully left his mark.

Board Member Powell asked Neel what mark the experience had left on him. Neel responded that he will never take elementary school teachers for granted again. Their work is really challenging. He reflected that elementary school teachers were the ones who set him on his track to science.

Principal Carter thanked both Mr. Davis and Neel and hoped the program would continue next year.

First grade teacher Mrs. O'Neil shared that at a national conference she had attended over the summer her team was tasked with the creation of robots that would pick up pencils. Her take-

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away from this experience was that “fail” was defined as “first attempt in learning.” She incorporated this into the STEAM projects in her classroom.

Mrs. O’Neil’s student Viviana Tafelski explained and demonstrated her colored flowers and the how her group used specific materials to pollinate a flower with strawberry jam.

Student Benjamin Goldstein talked about the intervention extension activities he learned using the game JENGA, paper clip chains and the importance of working together to avoid mistakes.

Kindergarten teacher Kim Bolduc and students Mollie Goodman and Joey Choiniere shared how they used iPad’s to assist in the learning process. Thanks to the Parents and Teachers Together (PATT) there are now three iPad’s in each of the two kindergarten classrooms. The iPad’s are used by students to practice handwriting, phonetic skills, and to listen to Scholastic News as they read along with the print version. Joey demonstrated a spelling application and a video clip from an on-line magazine. Mollie demonstrated an application that teaches vocabulary in context, reinforced with video clips.

Board Member Thompson asked how many iPad’s are in the school.

Principal Carter responded that in addition to the six iPad’s in the kindergarten, the PATT donated \$10,000 which was used to purchase 25 more iPad’s and cases.

Examples of how students were good community members were second grade student Jackson Meehan and his mother who organized a holiday Food Drive, fourth grade kindness elves who sang at the Senior Citizen Adult Learning Center and the Police Station, first graders who collected diapers and other necessities for young children at Marguerite’s Place. The entire student body was invited to participate in the Giving Tree and students were very thoughtful in the gifts they chose to share. Five families benefited from this generosity.

Principal Carter summed up by sharing that every morning at the end of the announcements the student body recites “When we are safe, respectful and responsible, we are all living a big dream and what do you want your mark to be.”

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The School Board Members individually commented positively on the presentation and thanked the staff and students for their work.

Chair Barnes praised the students and thanked everyone for coming.

#### **4. Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Results**

Merrimack Safeguard Chair Debbie Woelflein and Lisa Vasquez, the Substance Misuse Coordinator of the Greater Nashua Region, were invited to the table to share the results of the annual survey.

Ms. Vasquez began by providing the history of the survey and reading from a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention bulletin.

*“The YRBS was developed in 1990 to monitor health risk behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the*

United States. These behaviors, often established during childhood and early adolescence, include:

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence
- Sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Tobacco use
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Inadequate physical activity

The YRBS was designed to:

- Determine the prevalence of health risk behaviors
- Assess whether health risk behaviors increase, decrease, or stay the same over time.
- Examine the co-occurrence of health risk behaviors
- Provide comparable data among subpopulations of youth
- Monitor progress toward achieving the Healthy People objectives and other program indicators”

Ms. Woelflein then read the results of the survey highlighting the major successes and concerns for Merrimack High School. Spanning the years 2007 to 2015:

- 30-day alcohol use was improving with a downward trend
- 30-day binge drinking was up for freshmen and juniors
- 30-day prescription drug use was up for freshmen
- 30-day marijuana use showed an upward trend for seniors and freshmen
- Parents have clear standards for behavior was down for juniors
- Used heroin one or more times was up for freshmen
- 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade risk behaviors
  1. Concerns around depression have steadily increased over the last few years.
  2. Relationship violence has also increased since 2011.
  3. Decreases in the risk areas of forced sex, using alcohol before sex and riding in a vehicle driven by someone who has been drinking
- Considering suicide past 12 months showed an upward trend in all grades
- Attempted suicide past 12 months was consistent but troubling
- Bullied on school property 2009-2015
  1. Instances of bullying on school property have remained fairly steady on average with 25.75% reporting
  2. Instances of bullying among freshmen has decreased (2009-29.9% to 2015-27%).

Board Member Thompson asked if cyber bullying is including in the survey questions. Ms. Vasquez will gather that information and forward it to the School Board.

Student Representative Marcus was very concerned about the rise in depression and hopelessness and the high rates of rape. He would like to see more outlets available to students who feel depressed and thought the rape issue might be addressed more through the health curriculum.

Ms. Woelflein responded by reminding the members of the Merrimack Safeguard A-OK campaign and that the rape question also included students pressured into doing something they did not want to do that might not result in rape.

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Student Representative Marcus responded that he thought the focus should be on the issue of lack of consent.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that initiatives undertaken in the past several months by the Merrimack Safeguard Team have addressed many of the survey concerns and the initial feedback is promising.

Board Member Guagliumi asked about suicide and where the Merrimack School District stands regionally and nationally. She also asked about available resources to deal with this topic.

Board Member Thompson expressed concern about the data and asked about the parent piece.

Ms. Vasquez referred to a parent presentation she has given in other districts and that stated that she would be available to bring it to the Merrimack School District. She stressed the importance of early intervention in obtaining successful outcomes.

Chair Barnes suggested that bullying could be addressed at Challenge Day.

Ms. Vasquez then showed a PowerPoint that compared the Merrimack School District with the Greater Nashua region and the state of New Hampshire. The results are:

- The number and % of students who tried marijuana before age 13: all around 6%
- The number and % of students who currently use marijuana: slightly higher than state (25.8%/22.2%)
- The number and % of students who currently use Rx drugs without a doctor's Rx: downward but still higher than the State (8.5%/6.8%), and highest in grade twelve.
- The number and % of students who don't perceive of moderate/great risk from taking a Rx drug without a doctor's Rx: (15% overall) males engage in riskier behavior
- The number and % of students who don't perceive of parental wrongness of taking Rx drugs without doctor's Rx: highest in grade twelve.
- The number and % of students who ever used heroin: downward in tenth and eleventh grades but overall higher than the State (3.2%/2.4%).
- The number and % of students who were offered, sold, or given drugs on school property: downward but higher than the State (21.3%/16.5%).

Board Member Powell asked how many schools participated in the survey and was told that the information will be forwarded to the School Board by Ms. Vasquez.

Chair Barnes asked if the marijuana question included legalized cannabis and was told yes and that that is why there was a slight increase in the percentage of users.

Board Member Thompson asked to see other schools data and canine usage.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she had recently received this information and that it is being shared tonight and then in two or four weeks will be re-visited to address the issues and discuss resources and other options to combat the problems.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that in regard to the canine usage the Merrimack School District is respectful of student sensibilities and the culture of mutual respect and trust.

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Board Member Guagliumi appreciated seeing data before solutions are developed.

Ms. Vasquez stressed to the School Board that if a canine is to be brought into the schools that a policy be in place beforehand.

Ms. Woelflein commented that Merrimack Safeguard is a community initiative and that the public is welcome to attend the meetings that are held at the St. James Church on the first Thursday of every month from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if this data could be put on the school website.

Chair Barnes thanked the presenters for the eye-opening presentation.

##### **5. Outcome from PFOA Water Studies at School Sites**

Chair Barnes invited Dennis Francour of RPF Environmental and Tom Touseau, Director of Facilities for the Merrimack School District to the table.

Mr. Touseau shared that water samples were taken from the kitchen areas in all of the schools.

Mr. Francour stated that his company has been assisting schools with testing since 1991. His company took samples of the water at the six schools and submitted them to Nelson Analytical Lab with the highest results showing at Reeds Ferry Elementary School. All of the schools results were well below the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services level at 100 parts per trillion and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) level at 400 parts per trillion.

Vice Chair Schneider asked why there is any variance when all of the town water is mixed. There was no clear response.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the PFOA's might be found in many other areas.

Mr. Francour noted that firefighter foam used near the Manchester airport and Pease Air Force base could pose concerns to water supplies in those areas.

Board Member Powell asked if any type of filter exists that might be used to eliminate or decrease the PFOA's and was told it could be looked into.

Board Member Thompson thanked the Board for being proactive on this issue and asked what the plan is going forward.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the next step would be to have someone from the Merrimack Village District attend a School Board meeting and concurrently look into water treatment. Tonight was the first step; to present the data and establish a starting point.

Vice Chair Schneider agreed with Superintendent Chiafery and stressed the importance of having all of the data before taking any steps.

Concerns were raised about soil safety, specifically inhaling, ingesting and gardening.

Mr. Touseau commented that RPF and St. Gobain both conducted tests and that two sets of results will be forthcoming. St. Gobain's testing was overseen by the State of New Hampshire.

Chair Barnes on behalf of the School Board appreciated the information.

## **6. Approval of April 18, 2016 Minutes**

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

Chair Barnes requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 3, line 149 delete “Pantene Beautiful Lengths ...”
- Page 4, line 153 add “The hair will go to the Pantene Beautiful Lengths organization that collects the hair and uses it to make wigs for cancer patients.”

Board Member Thompson requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 9, line 410 change “...PROA...” to “...PFOA...”
- Page 9, line 445 change “...5-0-0.” To “...3-0-0.”

The motion passed 3-0-2. Board Members Powell and Thompson abstained.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

## **7. Consent Agenda**

Superintendent Chiafery presented the following for consent:

### **a) Educator Nomination**

Andrew Gallagher, Social Studies Teacher at Merrimack High School

### **b) Educator Retirement/Resignation**

Judith Brown, English Teacher at Merrimack High School

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the consent agenda as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

## **8. Board Approval of Default Budget**

Superintendent Chiafery opened her remarks by sharing that the Striker Booster Club at the Merrimack High School voted to fund the purchase of soccer nets and goals at a cost of \$3,500.00.

On the issue of instituting a volleyball program at the Merrimack Middle School; Merrimack would be unable to enter a competitive team because the Tri-County league schedule has already been set. The only option would be for Principal Caragher to call around and try to schedule scrimmage games with other schools.

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Vice Chair Schneider and Board Member Guagliumi who both wanted to fund the implementation of a middle school program, agreed to accept the decision to delay their support until the next budget cycle; with additional support from Board Member Powell.

Student Representative Marcus reiterated his comments from a prior meeting that the revisiting the co-curricular transportation funding should be considered in future years, and funds moved to other areas as needed.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Powell) to approve the default budget.

The motion passed 4-0-1. New Board Member Thompson abstained.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.

### **9. Preparation for Joint Meeting of School Board and Town Council Regarding Polling Sites**

Chair Barnes shared that Town Council Chair Nancy Harrington had reached out recently to the School Board to discuss polling sites for future elections. A joint meeting of the Town Council and the School Board is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Meeting Room. One of the goals is to find long-term consistent solutions to better serve the electorate.

Chair Barnes framed the discussion points that the School Board will need to consider for this meeting and they included school open/closure dates, number and location of polling sites, and consideration of the actual voting dates.

Superintendent Chiafery added that Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup> is the gubernatorial primary and school is currently scheduled for that day.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that the School Board will enter the talks with a cooperative and collaborative mindset keeping in mind that the teacher contract for the next three years has already been signed and the teacher workshops are scheduled for August. Closing school on election days will prolong the school year.

Chair Barnes noted that tonight was to set the joint meeting date and to provide Superintendent Chiafery with possible information that she could take back to the Leadership Team in order for her to prepare for the joint meeting.

Board Member Powell stated that since the calendar for next year is already set, that he does not want any more days off added to it.

Board Member Guagliumi added that college visits and vacation plans could be impacted by late decision making. She noted one of her major concerns is traffic patterns and student safety if school is in session during voting.

Discussion continued and was summed up by Chair Barnes statement to wait for feedback from Superintendent Chiafery once she has the opportunity to meet with the leadership team.

Superintendent Chiafery also shared that Police Chief Doyle has valuable input on this issue.

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Superintendent Chiafery shared that the sole purpose of the joint meeting is to discuss polling places. Merrimack needs to have a decision made on polling locations to submit to the Secretary of State for approval by August 13<sup>th</sup> in order to be prepared for the September election.

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to offer to the town Merrimack High School, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School and Merrimack Middle School as additional sites for the November election.

Vice Chair Schneider warned that this could confuse voters if there is not continuity of voting sites and suggested waiting for the Superintendent to provide feedback from the schools.

Board Member Powell rescinded his motion.

#### **10. Discussion Regarding Two Proposed Board Committees: Communication and Policy**

Chair Barnes presented the specifics on both potential assignments and why they have been recommended.

The members discussed the proposals and decided to move forward with a committee for Communications but not for Policy.

Vice Chair Schneider recommended that the members of the Communications Committee be comprised of a School Board member, district administrator and members from the community.

Chair Barnes asked the members to submit their top five committee choices to her before June 9<sup>th</sup>.

#### **11. Other**

##### **a) Correspondence**

Chair Barnes received an email thanking the School Board for moving the agenda items around at the previous meeting to accommodate the students in the audience.

She received emails also in regards to the National Day of Prayer scheduled for Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at the Abby Griffin Park and another email in regards to the default budget.

##### **b) Comments**

Vice Chair Schneider asked if the February 5<sup>th</sup> snow day has extended this year's school year and Superintendent Chiafery responded yes and that the last day of school is June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Board Member Thompson thanked all of the voters who voted for him.

#### **12. New Business**

Board Member Powell asked that there be a discussion in the future in regards to moving the April election back to March to allow more time for budget and contract talks. In the meantime he will look into why the change had been made.

### **13. Committee Reports**

Student Representative Marcus shared that the First Robotics Team finished in the top 1.5% in the World Championships in St. Louis, Missouri. The team was consistently in first place until the final round, when a minor technical glitch occurred.

Student Representative Marcus shared that today was college signing day and the tradition is for students to wear their college gear. He will be attending the College of the Holy Cross.

Vice Chair Schneider attended the April 7<sup>th</sup> Merrimack Safeguard meeting where they discussed the opening of the Marijuana Dispensary and other issues.

Vice Chair Schneider shared that the Wellness Committee will meet on Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Barnes shared that the Grater Woods sub-committee met on April 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss trail work and new signage.

Chair Barnes plans to attend the National Association of School Boards on Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> along with Superintendent Chiafery and Board Member Thompson.

### **14. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments.

### **15. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

Board Member Powell moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to adjourn the meeting at 11:03 p.m.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Student Representative Marcus voted In Favor.