

Merrimack School District/SAU 26
School Board Meeting
Preliminary Agenda
February 7, 2022
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room

Send public comments to: publiccomment@sau26.org. Comments must be received between the start of the meeting on February 7, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. and Agenda Item #12. Based on the volume of public comments received, the board chair will determine if all public comments can be read. If not, they will be incorporated into the meeting minutes.

6:30 P.M. NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack TV Training Classroom

- Staff Welfare

Cinda Guagliumi

PUBLIC MEETING

7:00 p.m. **1. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

7:05 p.m. **2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

7:20 p.m. **3. RECOGNITIONS**

7:25 p.m. **4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES**

- a. Superintendent Update
- b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update
- c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update
- d. School Board Update
- e. Student Representative Update

7:40 p.m. **5. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Health and Safety Task Force Update
- b. Board's Response to COVID Data
- c. Board's Response to 2022-23 Warrant Articles – Budget Committee Recommendations

Everett Olsen

Cinda Guagliumi

Matt Shevenell

8:00 p.m. **6. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Update on Concession Stand at Merrimack High School

Dr. Ralph Wolf

8:15 p.m. **7. POLICIES**

- a. Annual Review of Investment Policy (DFA)
- b. First Reading of Revised Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free Schools Policy (GBEC)
- c. First Reading of Employment References and Verification (Prohibiting the Aiding and Abetting of Sexual Abuse Prohibiting (GADA)

Matt Shevenell

Matt Shevenell

8:30 p.m. **8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Cinda Guagliumi

- a. December 6, 2021 Non-Public Minutes (9:00 p.m.)
- b. January 11, 2022 Public Minutes
- c. January 18, 2022 Public Minutes and Non-Public Minutes (6:30p.m.)

8:40 p.m. **9. CONSENT AGENDA**

Kimberly Yarlott

- a. Educator Nominations

8:45 p.m. **10. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS/GRANTS Under \$5,000**

Matt Shevenell

- a. Nancy A. Miller Trustee to MHS for \$2,500
- b. The Alex Bronchuk Memorial Foundation to MHS for \$3,000

8:50 p.m. **11. OTHER**

Cinda Guagliumi

- a. Committee Reports
- b. Correspondence
- c. Comments

9:00 p.m. **12. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

9:15 p.m. **13. ADJOURN to Non-Public Session (if needed)**

9:20 p.m. **NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack TV Training Classroom**

- Staff Welfare

Cinda Guagliumi

Merrimack School District School District Warrant

March 8, 2022 (Deliberation)
and April 12, 2022 (Voting)
STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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 Mastricola Upper Elementary School in said District on Tuesday, March 8, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. for Session 1 (Deliberation), to discuss the matters to be voted on by official ballot; and to meet at the designated polling sites, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, Merrimack Middle School, or St. John Neumann Church on Tuesday, April 12, 2022, 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: 4-0-0).

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:

Year	Estimated Amount
2022-2023	\$1,247,930

and further raise and appropriate the sum of One Million Two Hundred Forty Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Thirty Dollars (\$1,247,930) 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: 4-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote:11-0-0)).

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: 4-0-0).

ARTICLE 5 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 for a market adjustment added to base salary beginning in 2022-2023 to position the Merrimack Teachers Association at competitive rates in regards to surrounding districts in the amount of up to Nine Hundred Fifty Thousand dollars (\$950,000), said sum not to exceed Twenty Five Percent (25%) of the unencumbered surplus funds remaining at the end of fiscal year 2021-2022? (Majority vote required (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 4-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: 11-0-0).

NOTE: This Article represents a one-time salary adjustment to the scale for the fiscal year 2022-2023 and if approved will be imbedded into the salary schedule from 2022-2023 forward. It is not cumulative.

ARTICLE 6 (Special Warrant Article) Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of One Million Six Hundred Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$1,600,500) for the purpose of roof replacement at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 4-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: 11-0-0).

ARTICLE 7 Shall the District vote to authorize the School Board indefinitely, until specific rescission of such authority, to retain year-end unassigned general funds in any fiscal year, in an amount not to exceed 5% of the current fiscal year's net assessment, in accordance with RSA 198:4-b,II? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 4-0-0).

ARTICLE 8 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 \$83,439,166? (Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$ 83,174,461 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: 4-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: 12-0-0).

2021-2022 Default Budget

Approved MS 22 2021-2022 Budget	82,222,649.00
Retirement Incentive	74,908.00
Support Staff Salaries	138,590.51
Ins/Health/Dw	(426,465.00)
Unemp Comp/Dw	1,252.00
Work Comp Ins/Dw	24,119.00
Transportation	85,113.00
Utilities	175,183.26
Insurances/Prop & Liab/Dw	18,860.00
HVAC Lease	370,754.00
Debt Service/Interest	(18,416.00)
Special Services	504,708.00
Maintenance Contract	3,205.00
2022-2023 Default Budget	83,174,460.77

INVESTMENT

The School Board authorizes the School District Treasurer working in conjunction with the Superintendent and his/her designee and pursuant to RSA 197:23-a to invest the funds of the District subject to the following objectives and standards of care.

OBJECTIVES

The three objectives, in priority order, of investment activities shall be safety, liquidity, and yield.

1. Safety of principal is the foremost objective in this policy. Investments shall be undertaken in a manner that seeks to ensure the preservation of capital by mitigating credit and interest rate risk. This will be accomplished by limiting the type of the investments and institutions to those stipulated by statute and fully covered by FDIC insurance or collateral approved pursuant to state law.
2. Liquidity of the investment portfolio shall remain sufficient to meet all operating requirements that may be reasonably anticipated.
3. Yield. The investment portfolio shall be designed with the objective of attaining a market rate of return throughout budgetary and economic cycles, taking into account the investment risk constraints and liquidity needs. Return on investment is of secondary importance compared to the safety and liquidity objectives described above.

STANDARDS OF CARE

1. Prudence. The standard of prudence to be used by the District Treasurer and Superintendent or his/her designee involved in the investment process shall be the "prudent person" standard and shall be applied in the context of managing an overall portfolio. They are directed to use the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Recommended Practices and Policy Statements Related to Cash Management as a guide to the prudent investment of public funds.
2. Ethics and conflicts of interest. The School District Treasurer and Superintendent or his/her designee involved in the investment process shall refrain from personal business activity that could conflict with the proper execution and management of the investment program or that could impair their ability to make impartial decisions. Employees and Investment officials shall disclose any material interests in financial institutions with which they conduct business. They shall further disclose any personal financial institutions with which they conduct business. They shall further disclose any personal financial/investment positions that could be related to the performance of the investment portfolio. Employees and officials shall subordinate their personal investment transactions to those of the School District particularly with regard to the timing of purchases and sales.

**INVESTMENT
(continued)**

3. Internal Controls. The District Treasurer and Superintendent or his/her designee shall establish a system of internal controls which shall be documented in writing. The internal controls shall be reviewed by an independent auditor annually.

The School Board will review its investment policy annually.

Statutory References:

RSA 197:23-a, Treasurer's Duties
RSA 383:22, Public Deposit Investment Pool

1st Reading: March 17, 2008
2nd Review: April 7, 2008
Adoption: April 21, 2008
Reviewed: March 2, 2020
Reviewed: February 7, 2022

MERRIMACK SCHOOL BOARD POLICY**GBEC/ADB****DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE/DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS**

The School District will provide a drug-free workplace in accordance with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1988 and Amendments of 1989 and the Drug-Free workplace requirements for Federal contractors, 41 U.S.C. §701. In compliance with these requirements, the District will:

1. Notify all employees, in writing, that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of illicit drugs and alcohol is prohibited in the District's workplace and that any violation is subject to disciplinary action. Notification will be accomplished by distribution of this policy to all employees.
2. Provide a drug-free awareness program to inform employees about:
 - a. The dangers of illicit drugs in the workplace;
 - b. The District's policy of maintaining a drug-free workplace;
 - c. Available drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, and employee assistance and/or re-entry programs; and
 - d. The penalty/penalties that may be imposed on employees for drug and alcohol violations occurring in the workplace.
3. Notify employees that, as a condition of employment in the District, they will agree to and abide by the terms of the policy, and will notify the District of any drug statute conviction resulting from workplace conduct within five days of the conviction.
4. Establish the following as grounds for disciplinary action:
 - a. Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, no matter where consumed.
 - b. Having an unsealed container of alcohol or consuming alcohol on School property. (Any employee who finds any type of container of alcohol on School property should report it to the administration immediately.)
 - c. Possessing or distributing controlled substances on School property.
 - d. Consuming, possessing, or distributing alcohol or illegal drugs at official school functions not on school property.
5. Alert the local enforcement agency of suspected violations of the policy.
6. Take any of the following disciplinary actions (either alone or in combination) regarding an employee who is in violation of the policy:
 - a. Suspension
 - b. Termination of employment
 - c. Satisfactory participation in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state or local health or law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE/DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS
(continued)

7. Make a good faith effort to continue to maintain a drug-free workplace through implementation of all the provisions of this policy. In so doing, the District will conduct a biennial review of its programs to determine its effectiveness and to ensure that the disciplinary sanctions are consistently enforced and changes are implemented, if needed.

Legal References:

RSA 193-B, Drug Free School Zones
41 USC Section 701, Et seq., Drug-free workplace requirements for Federal contractors
Public Law 101-226, Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989

1st Reading: May 3, 2010
2nd Review: May 17, 2010
Adoption: June 8, 2010

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE/DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS**A. Drug-Free Workplace**

1. All District workplaces are drug- and alcohol-free. All employees and contracted personnel are prohibited from:
 - a. Unlawfully manufacturing, dispensing, distributing, possessing, using, or being under the influence of any controlled substance or drug while on or in the workplace, including employees possessing a "medical marijuana" card.
 - b. Distributing, consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol while on or in the workplace.
2. For purposes of this policy, a "controlled substance or drug" means and includes any controlled substance or drug defined in the Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. § 812(c), or New Hampshire Controlled Drug Act RSA 318-B.
3. For purposes of this policy, "workplace" shall mean the site for the performance of work, and will include at a minimum any District building or grounds owned or operated by the District, any school-owned vehicle, and any other school-approved vehicle used to transport students to and from school or school activities. It shall also include off-school property during any school-sponsored or school-approved activity, event or function such as a field trip or athletic event where students are under the jurisdiction, care or control of the District.
4. As a condition of employment, each employee and all contracted personnel will:
 - a. Abide by the terms of this policy respecting a drug- and alcohol-free workplace, including any administrative rules, regulations or procedures implementing this policy; and
 - b. Notify his or her supervisor of his or her conviction under any criminal drug statute, for a violation occurring on District premises or while performing work for the District, no later than five (5) days after such conviction.
5. In order to make employees aware of dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, the District will endeavor to:
 - a. Provide each employee with a copy of the District drug- and alcohol-free workplace policy;
 - b. Post notice of the District drug- and alcohol-free workplace policy in a place where other information for employees is posted;
 - c. Establish a drug-free awareness program to educate employees about the dangers of drug abuse and drug use in the work place, the specifics of this policy, including, the consequences for violating the policy, and any information about available drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, reentry, or other employee-assistance programs.

B. District Action Upon Violation of Policy

An employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action; up to and including termination of employment. Alternatively, the Board may require an employee to

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE/DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS

successfully complete an appropriate drug- or alcohol-abuse, employee-assistance rehabilitation program.

The Board will take disciplinary action with respect to an employee convicted of a drug offense in the workplace, within thirty (30) days of receiving notice of a conviction. Should District employees or contracted personnel be engaged in the performance of work under a federal contract or grant, or under a state contract or grant, the Superintendent will notify the appropriate state or federal agency from which the District receives contract or grant moneys of an employee/contracted personnel's conviction, within ten (10) days after receiving notice of the conviction.

The processes for disciplinary action shall be those provided generally to other misconduct for the employee/contractor personnel as may be found in applicable collective bargaining agreements, individual contracts, School Board policies, contractor agreements, and or governing law. Disciplinary action should be applied consistently and fairly with respect to employees of the District and/or contractor personnel as the case may be.

C. Drug-Free School Zone

Pursuant to New Hampshire's "Drug-Free School Zone" law (RSA Chapter 193-B), it is unlawful for any person to manufacture, sell prescribe administer, dispense, or possess with intent to sell, dispense or compound any controlled drug or its analog, within a "drug-free school zone". The Superintendent is directed to assure that the District is and remains in compliance with the requirements of RSA 193-B, I, and N.H. Ed. Part 316 with respect to establishment, mapping and signage of the drug-free zone around each school of the District.

D. Implementation and Review

- a. The Superintendent is directed to promulgate administrative procedures and rules necessary and appropriate to implement the provisions of this policy.
- b. In order to maintain a drug-free workplace, the Superintendent will perform a biennial review of the implementation of this policy. The review shall be designed to (i) determine and assure compliance with the notification requirements of section A.5.a, b and d; (ii) determine the effectiveness of programs established under paragraph A.5.c above; (iii) ensure that disciplinary sanctions are consistently and fairly enforced; and (iv) and identify any changes required, if any.

Legal References:

41 U.S.C. §101, et. Seq. - Drug-free workplace requirements for Federal contractors, and Federal grant recipients
RSA Chapter 193-B Drug Free School Zones
N.H. Admin. Code, Ed. Part 316

Policy Revision

1st Reading: May 3, 2010
2nd Review: May 17, 2010
Adoption: June 8, 2010

1st Reading: February 7, 2022
2nd Review:
Revised:

**EMPLOYMENT REFERENCES AND VERIFICATION
(PROHIBITING THE AIDING AND ABETTING OF SEXUAL ABUSE POLICY)**

The District shall act in good faith when providing employment references and verification of employment for current and former employees.

The School District, and its employees, contractors, and agents, are prohibited from providing a recommendation of employment, and/or from otherwise assisting any school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new position or other employment if he/she or the District has knowledge of, or probable cause to believe that the other employee, contractor, or agent ("alleged perpetrator") engaged in illegal sexual misconduct with a minor or student. This prohibition does not include the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files.

In addition, this prohibition does not apply if:

1. The information giving rise to probable cause has been properly reported to a law enforcement agency with jurisdiction;
2. The information giving rise to probable cause has been reported to any other authorities as required by local, state or federal law (for instance New Hampshire Division of Children, Youth and Families "DCYF"), and
3. At least one of the following conditions applies:
 - a. The matter has been officially closed;
 - b. The District officials have been notified by the prosecutor or police after an investigation that there is insufficient information for them to proceed;
 - c. The school employee, contractor, or agent has been charged with, and acquitted or otherwise exonerated; or
 - d. The case or investigation remains open and there have been no charges filed against or indictment of the school employee, contractor, or agent within four years of the date on which the information was reported to a law enforcement agency.

Legal References:

20 U.S.C. 7926(a) (§8546(a) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/Every Student Succeeds Act

1st Reading: February 2, 2022

2nd Review:

Adoption:

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
January 11, 2022**

Present: Chair Guagliumi, Board Member Hardy, Board Member Peters, and Board Member Barnes. Also present were Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Yarlott, and Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen.

Not Present: Vice Chair Rothhaus and Kaitlyn Vadney, Student Representative - Excused

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Guagliumi called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Guagliumi pointed out that the School Board would accept public comment via email and to do that members of the public could send emails to publiccomment@sau26.org.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Rebecca Statz, 11 Bradford Drive, addressed the Board and said she did not think the use of masks were working either way. She said she felt everyone on both sides of the mask issue deserved respect.

Ms. Lisa Mungovan, 14 Lamson Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

I see tonight that Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has now adopted the new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) quarantine guidance, to include schools as well. I hope that things will be addressed such as, these students must be masked (no opt-out for them) and that these students will be separated for lunch and snack when they unmask. I hope that this is addressed. I have one child attending preschool who still remains unvaccinated and vulnerable to the actions of others.

Ms. Kathy Komar, Belmont Drive, addressed the Board and said she felt her freedoms were being taken away by the decision made for the no opt-out option. She said people had the right to wear masks and get vaccinated if they chose but also said her right not to wear a mask or not get vaccinated was her right.

Mr. Bryan Townsend, 5 Merrymeeting Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

I want to thank you for amending the mask policy requiring masking in schools where over 5% of occupants are positive for Covid-19. Currently, 4 out of the 6 schools in Merrimack have surpassed that 5% threshold.

I am writing to ask you to keep the current policy, and add that the same 2-week masking mandate be imposed in individual classrooms where 5% of its occupants have tested positive.

I also ask that you not adopt the new CDC quarantine guidelines. With Covid-19 cases at an all-time high, it is not time to ease restriction. Thank you for considering the health and safety of our students and staff and your efforts in keeping school in person.

Ms. Sabrina Bebe, Wire Road, addressed the Board and said she felt the Merrimack School District needed to drop its mask policy. She said any parent that wanted to have their child vaccinated (5 years or older) had already done so.

Ms. Sheana DeBourke, Belmont Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

I am writing today to ask you to reconsider the previously implemented policy in which the opt-out for masks is removed when the school meets a 5% threshold. This is a completely arbitrary number rooted in absolutely no science. I understand the decision was made in an attempt to try and compromise with those who want masks mandatory and those who want the option. Those of us who want the option have already compromised when you made the decision to mandate the wearing of masks in hallways.

The spreadsheet for the tracking of schools' COVID data is extremely rudimentary, and is not clear about from where the data is coming. As noted last week during the School Board meeting, an error was made on the total occupants where the number increased by one every day, skewing the numbers. It is not clear on the Merrimack Middle School page how on January 3rd there are 13 new positive students, but on January 4th, the number of students positive is 12. Then on January 4th there are 3 new positive students. On January 5th there are 15 students positive, but with an additional 3 new positive students, I would think the number of students positive on January 6th would be 18, but it's listed as 17. Then 5 more new positive students on January 6th, but only 20 positive students were noted on January 7th on the spreadsheet.

How many clusters are there relating to schools? If you are going to remove the opt-out for masks, please base it off of something that at least makes some kind of sense.

It's time we stop making our children afraid that they are going to kill someone if they don't wear a mask. If someone is sick, they should stay home. If they are not sick, then there is no reason people should have to wait for a quarantine period or a negative test. If my child stays home from school because she has a stomachache one day, then feels better the next day, it is ludicrous for you to ask me to hunt around for a COVID test that may or may not be accurate, as the home tests have been known to give not only false negatives, but false positives. If a child feels well, he or she should be in school.

We also know full well that vaccines do not prevent the spread. So if vaccinated children can go to school after exposure to a household contact, then there is absolutely no reason that a non-vaccinated child has to stay home and quarantine. This guideline must change immediately. Please also note that the links on the school district nurses' page are also out of date as many of them did not work.

We are now almost 2 years into COVID, and the pandemic is over. This is an endemic disease now, and it should be treated like any other flu or cold. Stop the mental abuse of our children, forcing them to shoulder the burden of adult anxieties and fears.

102
103 **3. NEW BUSINESS**
104

105 a. Health and Safety Task Force Update
106

107 Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the Health and Safety Task Force had met late the
108 previous week after the New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services (NH DHHS)
109 released its guidance regarding quarantine guidelines and recommended actions. He said the
110 task force supported the NH DHHS revised guidelines. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen
111 said there was a recommended reduction in isolation and quarantine timeframe from ten days to
112 five days. He said the new guidelines would require that the nurse from each school contact
113 parents individually to clarify the date of return.
114

115 Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they also recommended that there be a grace period
116 for all children who were fully vaccinated; those who had two doses of the vaccine but not the
117 booster. He suggested the grace period for those children to receive the booster be extended to
118 approximately February 25, 2022.
119

120 Board Member Hardy clarified that if a child had Covid they would be home for five days, but if
121 the child were then symptom-free, and had a negative test they still recommended the use of a
122 mask for an additional five days.
123

124 Chair Guagliumi noted that she felt it was very important that the district did not create a database
125 of who was masked and who was not and that it remained confidentially within the medical
126 records. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied nothing would be done that would identify
127 a child and it would all be kept confidential.
128

129 b. Capital Improvement Plan Discussion
130

131 Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said he would like to pull the line item in the
132 amount of \$300,000 for the Merrimack Middle School Phase II off of the CIP as more work needed
133 to be done prior to giving the Board a number that would ensure the usability of the entire field
134 including the lower softball field.
135

136 **MOTION:** Board Member Barnes made a motion to take the Merrimack Middle School field repair
137 from fiscal year 2022 – 2023 to fiscal year 2023 – 2024. Board Member Peters seconded the
138 motion.
139

140 **The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**
141

142 Board Member Barnes, referring to the O’Gara Drive and new sidewalk was listed for \$552,625
143 in the CIP. She asked how much it would cost to pave the parking lot (dirt lot). Assistant
144 Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied it would be \$92,800 which would bring the total to
145 \$645,425.
146

147 **MOTION:** Board Member Barnes made a motion to increase the O’Gara Drive/new sidewalk
148 project to \$645,425. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.
149

150 **The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**
151

152 **MOTION:** Board Member Barnes made a motion to adopt the Capital Improvement Plan as
153 amended. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.
154

155 **The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**
156

c. Approval of 2022 – 2023 School District Budget

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to add \$1,600,500 to the repair/maintenance account #100-4600-62-8451-08 to be used for roofing at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. Chair Guagliumi seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Board Member Barnes said the Maintenance Department had gone before the Board and said she felt the facilities would be at risk if the work was not done.

Chair Guagliumi said she agreed 100% because if it were to be in a Warrant Article then “no meant no” and they would not be able to find any money to do the repairs. She said she felt it should be added to the operating budget.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he had some concern with adding the amount to the operating budget in terms of having to cut monies elsewhere. He asked if there were any alternatives. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied if it went on a Warrant Article and the residents voted it down then “no meant no” and there would be no other way to use any funds with which to do the repairs. He also said if it were to become part of the operating budget it would be an issue because it would be so much over the default budget.

Chair Guagliumi asked if it was on a Warrant Article and it failed if they could appeal it. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied they would likely have to petition the Superior Court to have a special meeting.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said if it was presented as a health and safety issue it could be a compelling case to stand alone on a Warrant Article.

Board Member Peters said she felt it would be easier to explain the critical need for the roof if it were a Warrant Article.

Board Member Hardy said she agreed that it should be a Warrant Article.

Chair Guagliumi said she felt there would be more transparency if it were a Warrant Article.

Board Member Barnes said the recourse process would be extremely involved. She asked if there were \$1.6 million in the budget that could be moved. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied there was not.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said if the budget failed, the governing body (the School Board) could have one meeting to take up a revised operating budget and there would be another election.

The motion failed 1 – 3 – 0. (Nay – Chair Guagliumi, Board Member Hardy, and Board Member Peters)

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to move \$645,425 in the Capital Improvement Plan from fiscal year 2022 – 2023 to fiscal year 2023 – 2024. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to adopt the Capital Improvement Plan as amended again. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

Board Member Peters expressed concern with the way the co-curriculars were being funded at the three elementary schools. She said she felt it was creating an inequity especially for those students who were not able to stay. She asked if there were volunteer positions available.

Board Member Hardy said she felt leaving the item in would make it more likely for the co-curriculars to happen.

Board Member Peters said she was not opposed to leaving the \$2,000 supply line in but wanted to remove the \$5,000 in stipends for teachers; hoping that there would be more volunteers.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott suggested that the item be put off by a year so more research could be done and they could also look at other funding sources.

Board Member Barnes said she would be more inclined to not cut the item from the budget.

Board Member Peters said it was important to note that the summer learning would be extended again and felt it was critical to keep that going. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that the extended year programming had taken on an entirely new perspective for a greater number of students for a greater number of reasons.

d. Approval of 2022 – 2023 School District Budget

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to accept the proposed budget in the amount of \$83,439,156.21 for the school year of 2022 – 2023. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

e. Warrant Article Discussion

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reviewed the proposed Warrant Articles as summarized below:

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 or personal or real property which may become available during the fiscal year. (Majority vote required)

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept Warrant Article 2 as presented. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

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.

2022 – 2023: Estimated Amount of \$1,247,930

and further, to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,247,930 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)

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to accept Warrant Article 3 as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

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)

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to accept Warrant Article 4 as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

Article 5 – 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 year fiscal year for a market adjustment added to the base salary beginning in 2022 – 2023 to position the Merrimack Teachers Association at competitive rates in regards to surrounding districts in the amount of up to \$950,000, said sum not-to-exceed 75% of the unencumbered surplus funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year 2021 – 2022. (Majority Vote Required)

(Note: This Article represents a one-time salary adjustment to the scale for the fiscal year 2022 – 2023, and if approved, will be embedded into the salary schedule from 2022 – 2023 forward. It is not cumulative.)

Board Member Barnes stated she wanted to adjust the percentage to a sum not-to-exceed 25% of the unencumbered surplus funds. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated he would be comfortable with 25%.

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to accept Warrant Article 5 with the adjustment that the sum shall not-to-exceed 25%. Chair Guagliumi seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

Article 6 – (Special Warrant Article) Shall the district raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,600,500 for the purpose of roof replacement at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School (Majority Vote Required)

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve Article 6 as presented. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

Article 7 – Shall the Merrimack School District vote to raise and appropriate a sum of \$200,000 for the purpose to raze the building known as the former Brentwood School (a.k.a., the Red building) and to return the site back to a usable condition with appropriate fill, compaction, and spread gravel to all future use for school purposes. (Majority Vote Required)

The School Board collectively agreed any work/demolition of the building should be put on hold until there was a clearer picture of the entire project.

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to strike Warrant Article 7 from the ballot. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

Article 8 – To see if the school district will vote to authorize, indefinitely until rescinded, to retain year-end unassigned general funds in an amount not-to-exceed in any fiscal year, 5% of the current fiscal year's net assessment, in accordance with RSA 198:4-b, II (Majority Vote Required)

Note: The amount for the 2022 – 2023 year is based on the 2021 – 2022 net assessment of \$53,653,240 of which 5% would be \$2,682,662 to the extent that you have that in surplus.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that he felt having such a fund was a very important mechanism for maintaining fiscal and operational stability.

Board Member Barnes stated she felt now the law had changed and was in their favor it was an exceptionally good idea.

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to accept Article 8 as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Board Member Peters clarified that future Boards could choose to give back the surplus to the taxpayers at any time.

Chair Guagliumi noted future Boards could create a Warrant Article to rescind it.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

Article 9 – 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 for therein, totaling \$83,439,156. Should this Article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$82,222,649 (Note: the correct number is \$83,174,461) 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)

MOTION: Vice Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept Article 9 as presented. Board Member Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

f. Request for Board Authority to Correspond to Gary Daniel Regarding HB 478

Chair Guagliumi asked the Board to give her the authority to communicate, on behalf of the Board, for the purpose of trying to recoup approximately \$130,000 on behalf of the school district. She said several years ago they had spent the money on a water filtration system, but with the intent to recoup the money.

Board Member Barnes stated she would like there to be a consideration for recurring future costs, i.e. filters, and maintenance. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said it was reasonable to estimate spending \$5,000 per year for three or four years but then it would spike to \$25,000 per year due to cartridge replacements.

Board Member Peters said the Bill was a bipartisan Bill by the Merrimack contingency and former and state representatives fought very hard for it. She too said she felt they deserved to get every penny spent back.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to allow Cinda Guagliumi to advocate for the Merrimack School District to recoup the funds spent on the water filtration system related to House Bill 478, and any future costs related to maintenance or repair of that system due to the fault of other people. Board Member Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

g. Other

Board Member Barnes stated she had previously asked if the Board could explore the option of a Warrant Article to allow the new home of the Merrimack Historical Society to be under the ownership of the town. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied the request was forwarded to legal and they were awaiting a response.

Board Member Peters said her daughter was a teacher in another state and made more money as a second-year teacher than what Merrimack paid their teachers. She said she felt it was very important to recruit and retain the best of the best. She also said it was important in a year where they had received extra surplus to make the salary correction.

On behalf of Vice Chair Rothhaus, Chair Guagliumi read the following into the record:

- \$8 million was received which offset the tax rate and there may be \$3 million given this year that would create a \$5 million deficit. Every member of the Board answers to our community and our constituents. We all believe in the work before us. We needed to figure out how to decrease spending while maintaining high-quality education. It comes down to how we use our resources and this should be the focus for the July 2022 goals meeting.

There was a \$25 million cut to state aid and this will impact the budget. We should discuss the most recent report on the Commission to study school funding. Public schools are being challenged.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Educator and Administrator Nominations

- Ms. Ofelia El Fakih, One-year Grade 5 Teacher, Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Ms. Nichole O'Brien, Interim Assistant Principal, Merrimack Middle School

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

425
426 **5. PUBLIC COMMENTS**
427

428 Ms. Erin Haney, 32 Mallard Point, addressed the Board and asked if her child who was not
429 vaccinated, was exposed to someone (with Covid) in class if that meant the child had to stay
430 home for five days. She said it sounded like the vaccinated children did not have to stay home
431 for the five days but the unvaccinated children did. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied
432 the information would be on the district's website the following day.
433

434 Ms. Haney said she felt that parents were going to start lying as to whether or not Covid was in
435 their household just because they did not want their child to be out of school for ten days. She
436 also said she felt the district would not be hitting the 5% number if the numbers were not skewed.
437

438 Ms. Michelle Karakaedos, Swift Lane (Board Member Barnes read allowed the following email
439 into the record)
440

441 My youngest daughter attends Thornton's Ferry School and today they no longer had the opt-out
442 option due to numbers over 5%. I explained to her yesterday this would occur and she was very
443 upset, in tears, and worried. Today she expressed her concerns to her teacher, and after school,
444 she was very upset with her day because of wearing masks. She said she no longer wants to go
445 to school, she had a stomach ache, and a headache. Masking children most certainly affects their
446 physical and mental health. I am a school counselor at another district and I'm strapped at work
447 due to staff out with Covid. I now need to figure out what to do because I refuse to have my child
448 hate school because of this experience, but more importantly force her to feel anxious and sick.
449 I'm now going to be one less staff member in my facility and my child will not be in school during
450 this time. I will take the day to decide what to do. Financially I would be working to provide her an
451 unmasked private education or decide to homeschool. I'm really struggling as a mother and
452 educational professional. Everyone who has wanted to be vaccinated has had the chance so why
453 now? Why still continue this craziness at the risk of our children's health? If your vaccine and
454 masking did what they all said, we wouldn't need to continue this facade. I will continue to stand
455 up for our children here in Merrimack regardless of what we decide to do, but she will not be
456 attending while masking is mandated. Parents who are struggling with the same things I am,
457 reach out as I may start my own program to fight against this abuse. I have been in and out of
458 private and public care since 2007. I am horrified how political this has become, and how our
459 children's safety is no longer the number 1 priority. Call me radical I don't care; my kids health
460 and safety are always number 1! Thank you for hearing my voice, I hope you will consider what's
461 best for this next generation as it's up to us to lead with ethical considerations not with the funds
462 given to push a mask agenda.
463

464 Ms. Rebecca Statz, 11 Bradford Drive, said perhaps parents who chose to be less than
465 forthcoming with information, not only might parents not be willing to share information, she had
466 seen/heard people saying "I know I have Covid" without actually taking a test. She requested if
467 a student was absent from school that both vaccinated and unvaccinated children provide a
468 negative Covid test if symptomatic.
469

470 Ms. Tiffney Trant, South Baboosic Lake Road (Board Member Barnes read allowed the following
471 email into the record)
472

473 There needs to be clarification regarding close contact, the way it was explained was very
474 confusing.
475

476 If an unvaccinated student is in close contact with a positive student, does that mean they
477 quarantine for 5 days and then wear a mask for an additional 5 days?
478

Also, can you please clarify why vaccinated kids don't have to stay home but unvaccinated kids do?

Ms. Kathy Komar, Belmont Drive, addressed the Board, referring to Warrant Article 5, asked if the district were going to be taking money out of the surplus to give the teachers an increase in pay why were they not taking the \$1.6 out of there to pay for the roof at Thorntons Ferry.

Ms. Naomi Halter, 10 Everest Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

Thank you for the care and consideration with which you approached the discussion of the Thornton's Ferry roof replacement tonight.

It's clear that it was a tough decision, and I appreciate both your concern for the wellbeing of our children, and also your efforts to be transparent to the voters and taxpayers of Merrimack.

Ms. Jennifer Jobin, Merrymeeting Drive (Board Member Barnes read allowed the following email into the record)

Thank you for your efforts to come up with a creative way to bring teacher compensation up to a competitive level by proposing the use of surplus funds in a warrant article. It is an especially important year to ensure that we can retain and attract quality teachers.

Ms. Rachel Paepke, 67 Tinker Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

I wanted to take the time to thank everyone for the thoughtful budget discussions over the past few weeks, as well as for providing additional transparency around many budget line items. Regarding the discussion around the TFS roofing repairs and where this expense should be included in the 22-23 budget or warrant article, I think that one important data point to include in any budget documentation is the range of costs the district may incur should this expense not pass as proposed and the roof fails in the 22-23 school year. I would assume that if this becomes an emergency situation to repair the roof, that the cost to remedy it in a reactive way would more than likely come at a higher cost due to additional damage or health/safety issues compared to the 22-23 proposed cost. I believe this additional data may help the taxpayers make an informed decision when considering this expense as either a warrant article or in the operating budget.

Thank you also for taking steps to bring the compensation for our teachers up to a more competitive level. It is important to take these steps to retain and attract our highly qualified educators.

Ms. Joanne Grobecker, 27 Craig Drive (Board Member Barnes read the following email into the record)

Thank you for your efforts to keep teacher pay competitive so we can attract and retain quality teachers.

At approximately 9:15 p.m. Board Member Barnes made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack High School – Cafeteria
January 18, 2022**

6:30 p.m. – Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack High School Main Office Conference Room

• **Student Welfare**

Present: Chair Guagliumi, Vice Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Hardy, Board Member Peters, and Board Member Barnes and Student Representative Vadney. Also present were Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Yarlott, and Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Guagliumi called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Guagliumi pointed out that the School Board would accept public comment via email and to do that members of the public could send emails to publiccomment@sau26.org.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Matt Clement, 65 Patten Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

As you know, the numbers of positive COVID are rising with the Omicron variant and the hospitals are being overwhelmed with patients. That is the reason we started the remote school and masking in the beginning.....to lower the curve and reduce the burden on the ER and ICU's. We are now seeing that play out even worse than last year. I see that several Merrimack schools are over 5% and have been required to use masks to try and reduce the spread. My own kids have both had emails that someone in each of their classes has tested positive and exposed my child. My kids have told me that several students in their classes have opted out so this makes me nervous. I think we should continue to require masks while the school is over 5% and not cave to pressure that "the pandemic is over". It is not over and to stop attempting to prevent the spread only serves to further strain our hospitals and health care system.

Do NOT roll back the measures put in place and if anything strengthens them to protect our children.

I also did support the idea of hooking up the video system in the classrooms so that children remote with COVID or absent could still at least watch the lessons. I get that to try and teach both would be hard but I don't think we're asking for that, but rather to simply turn on the camera and let it stream or record the normal lesson. That should not be that much more effort. Not every lesson will work well but at least there might be SOME value in watching it and not falling farther behind. We owe it to our kids to do whatever it takes to ensure their success. We invested in the technology and we are foolish to not use it to any degree we can.

49 Ms. Lindsay Thibeault, 19 Pleasant Street (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email
50 into the record)
51

52 I wanted to start by saying, I know this subject is tiring to continue. I'm tired. I know all of you are
53 tired. But I will never be tired enough to not fight for my kids. Honestly, I just want you guys to be
54 able to focus on the education of our kids, something that has been put on the back burner for
55 two years, and to then allow us as parents to now decide how to best protect our children. During
56 one of the meetings in November, when the 5% rule was implemented regarding masking, it was
57 brought up that by the end of January/early February all kids 5 and up will have had the chance
58 to be fully vaccinated. The school board then discussed that at that point, the masks should go to
59 optional from there on out. I am asking for that to be put on the table and voted on. The CDC has
60 even updated their guidance to say that cloth masks are ineffective. So why are we continuing
61 this charade at our kids expense? When is our end date? When can you all refocus your attention
62 on education? We have the tools we need to move forward. There is no reason why it should be
63 treated differently than the flu. The flu is actually more detrimental to children, yet has no mandate
64 surrounding it. I could have one child home with the flu, while my other child can go to school. I
65 could have one child home with Covid and my perfectly healthy other child is being forced to stay
66 home and not receive an education. This has to stop. I understand following the guidance of
67 DHHS or the CDC but at some point I think it's important to use our own brains and decide whether
68 some of these rules just don't make sense. To allow a vaccinated child to go to school with Covid
69 in their household, and force an unvaccinated child to stay home is literally mind-boggling to me.
70 BOTH can get Covid and spread Covid so why on earth are we treating them any differently? Dr.
71 Fauci said, and I quote "what we learned, that's new is, that when you look at the level of virus in
72 the nasopharynx, of people who are vaccinated, it's really quite high and equivalent to the level
73 of virus in the nasopharynx of unvaccinated people who are infected." So again, I ask, why are
74 we separating vaccinated vs. unvaccinated? Why are we treating healthy kids like unhealthy kids?
75 Why are we keeping kids out of school and parents home, away from their jobs and unable to
76 provide for their families? When are we going to stop sacrificing SO MUCH for this one virus?
77 Education, mental health, social activities, sports, jobs, family...At what point do we allow parents
78 to make judgements just as we would for any other illness? Our educators, nurses, and
79 administrators are spending way too much time away from what they meant to be doing focusing
80 on something that is the job of a parent. We need to refocus. Test scores are plummeting, children
81 are struggling. My daughter who has already had Covid, is being forced to wear a mask, and feels
82 like she's suffocating all day when her mask is doing absolutely nothing for her or anyone else
83 because she has natural immunity. It's a façade, just to make people feel safer when in reality
84 they are not in fact safer. When are we going to recognize natural immunity and encourage
85 healthy living vs. suppressing our immune systems further with these masks? I am asking, again
86 for some things to be reconsidered here. This morning, my 5-year old, who is dealing with anxiety
87 was crying at the bus stop...do you know what I had to do? Put a mask on her face. Something
88 needs to change.
89

90 Ms. Sheana DeBourke, Belmont Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into
91 the record)
92

93 I am writing tonight to ask what data you used when you created the current mask policy. Two
94 weeks seems like an extremely arbitrary number, which only continues to hurt our children. As of
95 today, the high school has been well under 5% for 6 days, JMUS 6 days, TFS 6 days, and
96 Mastricola Elementary 8 days. Is it really necessary to continue to force innocent children to wear
97 a mask for hours a day, against the wishes of parents? What power gives you the right to force
98 my child to wear a medical device, regardless of whether it's in the halls or in the classrooms?
99 When do you decide to use that power to force other medical devices on my child? Where is the
100 off-ramp with masks and quarantining?

How does it make any sense to quarantine a child, who is not vaccinated, if exposed to a household contact, but not a child who is "up-to-date" with vaccination? It is well known that someone who is vaccinated can still catch and spread COVID-19. Even getting a booster has little to no effect on catching, and therefore spreading, COVID, especially OMICRON. If you cared so much about the spread of COVID, you would continue to quarantine everyone who is exposed to a household contact. But it seems we are just continuing on the course of making illogical decisions. Kids can take their masks off to eat, when they are sitting with each other for a period of time, but not passing each other in the hallway. Again, it just doesn't make sense. But why don't we continue with the virtue signaling to make people feel better?

Also, how does it make sense to require residents to wear masks inside the high school for the school board meeting when we can opt our children out of wearing them while inside the high school. Again... arbitrary rules.

Thank you all for your time, and I look forward to your answers regarding the data that led to the mask policy.

Ms. Sara Locke, Cota Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

I would love to assume that the data speaks for itself, but unfortunately, I am well aware that the presence at this evening's meeting will be loud, present "alternative facts," and make the same data-averse statements as we have all heard at meetings past.

The state is averaging 2,700 new cases of Covid daily.

Test positivity in NH is now 22.2% — more than a 10 point increase over the worst peak previously.

All of our schools have teetered on the 5% threshold since Christmas break, and 4 out of 6 are currently under mask mandates.

Our hospitals are strained and healthcare providers are very literally begging us to help them help us, because they're running out of both hands and beds.

These are facts that are not open to interpretation or opinion. It is inexcusable to argue in favor of any action that would contribute to worsening this crisis. At minimum, our current plans for targeted mandatory masking need to stay in place. To do better, the opt-out at all schools should be revoked for a minimum period until this crisis subsides.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were none.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen the leadership had discussed how best to recognize some of the great things that were going on in the school system. He said the team came up with the idea of having a website where parents and others could make positive comments about the staff.

He also said they currently had over fifty very positive comments from parents and community members.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared some of the other things they were working on the district's vision that would ultimately lead to a strategic plan.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the School Safety Committee and had redrafted the crisis management plan and were reviewing their processes and procedures. He added that the current student handbooks were being reviewed by legal counsel to make sure they were in compliance with any federal and state statutes. He also said they were looking at administrative evaluation instruments and were in the process of reviewing a draft of such document. Further, Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they were reviewing the student discipline policy and had met with the Labor Council and General Civil Rights Counsel and he would present the Board with a draft of that policy in the near future.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they were also looking at updating existing job descriptions, creating job descriptions, and making sure they were in ADA compliance. He also said they were looking at the school calendars so they were more consistent with the calendars in the CTE so no student would miss school.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott commented at the last school board meeting it was said there was concern surrounding student's readiness for the mid-terms. She said the leadership teams met and they had a very comprehensive outline for parents/students/teachers about what the teacher would do if a student had missed a lot of school, what the student needed to do, and what the parent needed to do. She said she would put the list on the website as well as on Facebook.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott said they were looking at a software package that could house their curriculum and update their curriculum.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the automation and publication of the curriculum online was going to be a major step forward in terms of getting things out to the public and the staff.

d. School Board Update

There were no new updates.

e. School Representative Update

Student Representative Vadney said the high school juniors were having a fundraiser with Chipotle on Tuesday, January 25th from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Health and Safety Task Force Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the antigen and PCR test positivity rate over seven days for Merrimack was about 32% which was about ten times what it was several months ago.

He said on a positive note, all of their schools were under the 5% benchmark. He said he wanted to use a two-week trend before he changed anything regarding the mask policy.

b. Board's Response to COVID Data and Recommendation

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said his recommendation was to continue with the current mask policy for the month of February including opting out but with the provision that if any school reached a 5% positivity rate or more they would go back to mandatory masking until there was a two-week consecutive period of under 5%.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to continue with the current mask policy for the month of February. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Board Member Peters said she was hopeful, according to the experts, that they would start to see a decrease in cases but she felt it was not the right time to make changes to the policy.

Board Member Barnes said she wanted to make it clear that the Board was basing their decisions based on the data and not based on a certain date.

Chair Guagliumi stated she agreed with keeping the policy where it was to keep students and teachers in school.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

c. Proposal for Visioning Task Force – Next Steps

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott said the purpose of the community visioning process was to engage with a broad range of stakeholders in Merrimack to develop a common understanding of the vision for learning for the Merrimack schools, the values, priorities, opportunities, and challenges. She said the work would support district and school staff to plan for the future and lay the foundation for launching a strategic planning process. She said the first phase would include making sure persons on the task force would be updated on common trends, work on the vision (Vision of a Learner from pre-K through grade 12) from April to June of 2022.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott recommended Bill Wilmot to be the potential facilitator. She said Mr. Wilmot worked with the schools helping to implement Universal Design for Learning Program (UDL) and worked for the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST).

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to accept the proposal for Visioning Task Force as presented. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Substitute Pay Rates

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen proposed that the district increase the rate for substitute teachers to remain competitive. He said the overall increase would be approximately \$30,000 and he said he felt the budget could absorb the cost given the fact that there had been a surplus in the substitute account over the last two to three years.

Board Member Barnes said the proposed rate of \$100.00 would just put them on par with surrounding communities. She said she felt the rate should be \$125.00 for substitute teachers, and \$250 for nurses. (per day)

Board Member Hardy said she felt it was critical to have people who were familiar with the schools and the curriculum. She said she was in support of the proposed changes.

Board Member Barnes said she also felt the building-based floater needed to be moved up to \$150.00.

Vice Chair Rothhaus said although she agreed with the proposed rate increase, she felt the district needed to take a look at the resources they did have.

Board Member Barnes said the district needed to do some work in the future to recruit and retain substitute teachers.

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to accept the proposed substitute pay scale for the balance of 2021 – 2022, with the following adjustments:

Full day substitute:	\$125.00
Half day substitute:	\$ 62.50
Building-based floating substitute:	\$150.00
Nurse:	\$250.00

Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

b. Other

There was no other new business.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. November 18, 2022, Non-Public Minutes (9:34 p.m.) & January 11, 2022, Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the November 18, 2022, and January 11, 2020, non-public minutes as presented. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

b. January 3, 2022, Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the January 3, 2022, public minutes as amended. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

Edits:

Page 3 – Further discussion was needed regarding putting the Thorntons Ferry Roof in a Warrant Article in that it would provide some transparency to the public. – Chair Guagliumi

Page 1 – “Chair Barnes” was changed to “Board Member Barnes” – Board Member Barnes

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

c. January 4, 2022, Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the January 4, 2022, minutes as presented. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Nominations

- Mr. Mitchell Bull – One-year Language Arts Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Ms. Elyse Komitzsky – One-year Special Education Teacher, JMES

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

9. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

There were no reports to share.

b. Correspondence

Chair Guagliumi said the Board received one correspondence from a Merrimack resident expressing concerns surrounding CRT (Critical Race Theory). She said she also received a few emails regarding masking versus not masking.

c. Comments

There were no comments made.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Cindy Parente, Shady Lane (Board Member Barnes read allowed the following email into the record)

I want to thank the Board members for the incredible amount of time and professionalism they give to our town.

I am writing in support of our mask policy. Thank you for your consistency in trying to keep our students, teachers, staff, and community safe and healthy.

Ms. Becky Statz, 11 Bradford Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

Let's just drop the masks please. Masks do not make a difference in transmission, and neither do vaccines. Many places in Europe have now recognized that masks produce measurable IQ and social deficits in children, and therefore, have dropped them. At this point, we are doing more harm than good and instilling fear in our children. Let's give our children the gift of their childhood

back please. Covid is endemic, it will never be leaving. Time to forswear fear tactics and get back to living.

Forgive my forgetfulness, but with all due respect, statistics and numbers used in these meetings should ONLY be those which pertain to the town of Merrimack. 3,000 cases for the day is pertinent to the state, not to our schools or town. Of approximately 12,000 residents, if we had a new infection rate of 3,000 per day, THAT would be cause for panic and health and safety considerations. Thank God we are not there. Let's compare apples to apples please.

Jamie Gibson, Island Drive (Board Member Barnes read the following email into the record)

I'm going to try to keep this short before you make any major decision. Please consider, that we're coming up to the two-year mark on Covid and we need to move from trying to "prevent exposure" to "living with it". There are vaccines for all school-aged children (if the parent deems it necessary), boosters, masks, delivery services and even a free Charter School in town requiring masks on those children. With all these options for someone to feel safe, Merrimack Public School should compromise and leave it up to the parents. It's no longer a preventable situation, we need to just live with it.

With that said, it's time to move past all these mandates and move forward to bringing our community together in a positive way. The only way we can do that is to compromise. The compromise of letting people/parents live how they want to live. Please consider removing any type of mandate and leave it up to the parents, the ones who know their own child best.

Ms. Jennifer Jobin, Merrymeeting Drive (Board Member Barnes read the following email into the record)

I'm concerned with the way that parents were chosen for the task force. With such an important mission, it may have been a better choice to have this made public so that interested parents with diverse backgrounds could have applied.

Ms. Karen Brown, Four Winds Road (Board Member Barnes read the following email into the record)

Thank you for continuing to serve our community. It has been informative watching recent School Board meetings as you discuss the 2022 – 2023 district budget. For anyone watching or attending it has become clear that Thorntons Ferry urgently needs a new roof. I fully support increasing the rate of pay for substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, and nurses. Taking a creative approach is critical in attracting and retaining substitutes for the remainder of the school year and beyond. School districts in other areas have created an innovative approach to staff their schools during the Omicron surge. These districts offer a premium for mid-term substitutes. Mid-term substitutes commit to working four or five consecutive days. In return, they receive a rate between the day rate and the long-term rate. It creates continuity for the children in the event their teacher or specialist, or paraprofessional is in quarantine. It also lessens the pressure on school district personnel by streamlining the process. One substitute is easier to find and manage than four or five.

At approximately 8:00 p.m. Board Member Barnes made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

Merrimack School District
Gifts and Grants Acceptance Form

Name of Recipient:

Merrimack High School
School Name

Name of Donor:

Nancy A Miller Trustee
Name

19 Duck Pond Lane
Street Address

Merrimack, NH 03045
Town/City State Zip Code

Amount of Gift or Grant: \$2,500.00 **Date of Receipt of Gift or Grant:** 1-8-20

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. **Describe the purpose of gift/grant:**

Uniform purchased and license equipment for players

2. **Describe any specific restrictions or requirements attached to gift/grant:**

None

3. **Describe any recurring costs associated with the gift/grant:**

None

I, Al J. Bergeron do hereby determine that it is in the best interest of the Merrimack School District to accept such gift or grant and hereby request the acceptance of the gift/grant by the Merrimack School Board.

Al J. Bergeron
Signature
Principal/Director

1/17/2022
Date

Published in the _____ on _____
Date

Presented to Merrimack School Board (Public Hearing) _____
Date

Accepted by Merrimack School Board on _____
Date

By a vote of ____ - ____ - ____.

All Gifts and Grants to the Merrimack School District are to be accepted in accordance with RSA 198:20b and Warrant Article II of the 1991 Annual Merrimack School District Meeting.

Merrimack School District
Gifts and Grants Acceptance Form

Name of Recipient: Merrimack High School
School Name

Name of Donor: The Alec Bronchuk Memorial Foundation
Name

154 Camp Sargent Road
Street Address

Merrimack NH 03054
Town/City State Zip Code

Amount of Gift or Grant: \$3,000.00 Date of Receipt of Gift or Grant: _____

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. Describe the purpose of gift/grant:

Uniform purchases and lacrosse equipment for players

2. Describe any specific restrictions or requirements attached to gift/grant:

None

3. Describe any recurring costs associated with the gift/grant:

None

I, Al J. Bergeron do hereby determine that it is in the best interest of the Merrimack School District to accept such gift or grant and hereby request the acceptance of the gift/grant by the Merrimack School Board.

Al J. Bergeron 1/17/2022
Signature Date
Principal/Director

Published in the _____ on _____
Date

Presented to Merrimack School Board (Public Hearing) _____
Date

Accepted by Merrimack School Board on _____
Date

By a vote of ____ - ____ - ____.

All Gifts and Grants to the Merrimack School District are to be accepted in accordance with RSA 198:20b and Warrant Article II of the 1991 Annual Merrimack School District Meeting.