

Merrimack School District Budget Committee
Minutes
July 21, 2020

Present: D. Coakley, L. French, J. Guagliumi, J. Hardy, C. Mower, M. Murphy, L. Peters, G. Savitch and School Board Liaison A. Schneider.

Excused: C. Lang

Absent: D. Illg

Vice Chair Mower called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed everyone and asked members to introduce themselves.

Approval of Prior Minutes

L. French made a MOTION to approve minutes from February 18, 2020. Second: M. Murphy. MOTION PASSED: 6 – 0 – 3. (D. Coakley, J. Hardy and L. Peters abstaining.)

Re-organization

G. Savitch made a MOTION to elect Charles Mower Chair of the Committee. Second: J. Guagliumi. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

C. Mower made a MOTION to elect Jordan Guagliumi Vice Chair of the Committee. Second: L. French. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

C. Mower told the Committee that, as Acting Chair since Stan Heinrich's death, he had taken great pains when planning this meeting to allow each member to participate safely and robustly. He thanked the Administration, staff and cable workers for their hard work in setting up a meeting for a group as large as the Budget Committee. He said the purpose of the Committee is to recommend a proposed budget which is both adequate for School District services and in the best interests of the community.

Member Comments

C. Mower asked if any member had any comments.

No one did.

Acceptance of Member Resignation

J. Guagliumi made a MOTION to accept the resignation of Amanda Hyde-Berger. Second: L. French. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

C. Mower thanked Ms. Hyde-Berger for her service to the Committee.

Process to Fill Vacant Seats

C. Mower called for a discussion about how to fill the open seats on the Committee.

J. Guagliumi asked how many seats were open and what has the Committee done in the past.

C. Mower said there were two open seats. He said that in the past, the Committee has advertised open seats in the newspapers, on the website and by word of mouth and requested letters of interest be sent to the School District office. Then the committee met to interview interested candidates and voted how to proceed. He read a draft press release to the Committee and suggested that the Committee could meet on August 11th to interview candidates and August 18th to vote on filling the seats.

L. Peters said she would like to see the seats filled.

J. Hardy said she agreed that the seats should be filled.

A. Schneider asked if the Committee would meet once or twice to fill the seat.

C. Mower said he thought two meetings was the prudent way to proceed.

J. Guagliumi made a MOTION to advertise the seats and meet on to interview candidates.
Second: M. Murphy. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

Next Meeting Date

C. Mower said the Committee would next meet on August 11th at 7 PM in the Middle School cafeteria to interview any candidates who submitted letters of interest. .

Other

- C. Mower reminded members that they needed to contact him if they were unable to attend a meeting.
- C. Mower told the members that each of them should be receiving all emails that are sent to the generic Budget Committee email address that is located on the School District website and that as chair, he would be responding to any email that was received.
- C. Mower said that members should not “reply all” to any email that is sent to the entire Committee because such a reply could be a violation of the Right to Know Law.
- C. Mower told the members that later in the fall, there will be a Committee Training. L. French asked if there was a tentative date for this training. C. Mower said training will probably be held in October.

Public Participation

C Mower asked if any members of the public present wanted to make any comments.

Jonathan O’Keefe (Pratt Lane) asked why the Committee needed to advertise and interview candidates for the open seats. He said he thought the Committee should look at the people who had already expressed interest in the Budget Committee by running in the recent election and receiving some voter support.

C. Mower told him that the process that the Committee is using is the protocol that the Committee has used in the past.

Mr. O’Keefe asked if there was precedent in appointing the next highest vote getter.

C. Mower responded that he didn't know of any such precedent.

Jason Brodsky (Lexi Circle) told the Committee that there is precedent to follow up with those folks who ran for the Budget Committee in the recent election and noted that these candidates did not have to go through an interview process in order to run on the ballot.

L. French said he had gone through the interview process when he was appointed to the Committee.

C. Mower reminded everyone that Public Participation is not an open dialogue between the public and the Committee.

A. Schneider said that both the School Board and the Town Council also use an interview process if it has to fill open seats. He said that people who had been on the ballot and were still interested needed to submit a letter of interest to be considered for the open seats.

J. Hardy said that candidates on the recent ballot received all kinds of questions and surveys that needed to be answered before the election.

C. Mower said that the Committee has just voted to hold a meeting to interview candidates. He said that some people may disagree with the process but the Committee has just adopted its protocol.

Peter Hinkle (Pineview Drive) asked if there was a threshold of votes that someone has to reach to be considered by the Committee.

C. Mower said there is no threshold of votes. He said that people who ran for a seat and did not win would not be given special attention and that anyone interested in being on the Committee has the same opportunity to submit a letter of interest.

Mr. Hinkle asked if the process the Committee was using to fill the seat was part of state law.

Pat Heilhecker (Meetinghouse Road) said she thought the decision of who is going to be on the Committee should be up to voters.

There were no more comments.

J. Guagliumi made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: G. Savitch. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

C. Mower adjourned the meeting at 7:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Heinrich