



Joint Town Council and School Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 14, 2016, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Harrington called the joint meeting of the Town Council and School Board to order at 7:00 p.m. Present at the meeting were Councilor Boyd, Councilor Dwyer, Councilor Flood, Councilor Vaillancourt, School Board Chairman Shannon Barnes, School Board Vice Chairman, Andy Schneider, School Board Members Cinda Guagliumi, Davis Powell, and Michael Thompson, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel, and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali. Vice Chairman Rothhaus and Councilor Koenig were excused.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Harrington led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Comments from the Press and Public - None

Items of Discussion

1. Polling Location Discussion

Submitted by Town Council Chairman Nancy Harrington

Town Council and School Board to discuss the potential polling locations for upcoming elections.

Chairman Harrington stated the Town Council is responsible for municipal elections. During the last election, with a single polling place established, a great deal of difficulty was experienced. As a result, the Council requested various departments gather information and provide data to be considered when discussing how to avoid similar difficulties in the future. The data provided was shared with the School Board. Included with the data was a historical perspective on elections conducted from 2000 to 2016, e.g., type of election, voter turnout.

On June 10th the Town Council conducted its Annual Retreat/Worksession during which a discussion ensued around possible polling locations. The Council reviewed all of the data, and requested the School Board consider allowing use of the James Masticola Upper Elementary School (JMUES) and the Middle School as polling locations. The Town has also requested and received permission to utilize Saint John Neumann.

Chairman Harrington informed the viewing audience no formal decisions would be made at this time. The intent of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the School Board to pose questions to the Council and the Council to question the kind of resources that would be necessary in order for the request to be accommodated.

School Board Chairman Barnes stated, after receiving the request, she spoke with the School Administration, specifically with regard to the Middle School. When it comes to the JMUES, with such a long history of use there are no particular concerns. There was the need for consideration of the logistics associated with the use of the Middle School. Time between the request and this meeting allowed for a meeting with the Middle School leadership, the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and the Superintendent's Office.

1 Marge Chiafery, Superintendent, stated she, Mark Doyle, Chief, Merrimack Police Department, Lynn
2 Christensen, Town Moderator, Diane Trippett, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Brenda DuLong, Deputy
3 Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Adam Caragher, Principal, Middle School, Matt Shevenell, Assistant
4 Superintendent for Business, and Tom Touseau, Director, Maintenance met to discuss the issue. The
5 group spent over an hour just looking at the site to determine all of the factors that need to be
6 considered if using the facility as a polling location. They went into the meeting with an open mind,
7 and in the end, determined there isn't anything that they could not make work and that there is almost a
8 need to go through the process to test it out.

9
10 Superintendent Chiafery stated the most critical partners in such an endeavor are the Police. There is a
11 need for their presence not only for traffic flow, but also within the building as school would be in
12 session. The All Purpose Room is believed to be the best location for polling in the building as it can
13 be accessed from a parking lot, and therefore be kept separate from the rest of the building. Use of that
14 room for polling would result in lunches being produced there and delivered to another part of the
15 building. That is an adjustment that also occurs at the JMUES when that facility is utilized for
16 elections. Experience gained at the JMUES will be helpful when implementing that at the Middle
17 School.

18
19 The group discussed how the room would be configured to best accommodate voting. Superintendent
20 Chiafery requested Chief Doyle and Assistant Superintendent Shevenell weigh in on traffic flow, e.g.,
21 parent pick-up and drop-off.

22
23 Assistant Superintendent Shevenell stated one of the things that has really made elections at the
24 JMUES successful over the years has been the availability of auxiliary parking; the Legion has been
25 gracious enough to allow staff to park there thus opening up the church parking lot for voters. None of
26 the other schools have that luxury. However, in reviewing the Middle School, Bishop Field could be
27 cleared out and maintained for staff parking. Shuttle buses would be used to transport staff back and
28 forth.

29
30 There is the need for Police presence particularly to regulate outside traffic and then to secure the
31 building from the inside. Chief Doyle provided diagrams depicting the a.m. and p.m. drop-off flows.
32 He remarked it is believed more important to accommodate the traffic flow as opposed to keeping it
33 the same and trying to manipulate it. The reason being as you pull into the Middle School and
34 immediately turn to the right where the voter parking would be, that lot will be vacant because all of
35 the faculty and staff will have parked at Bishop Field. That first parking lot on the right would be the
36 main voter parking location.

37
38 They wanted to push the traffic in one way and have it exit out the same direction; travel westerly in
39 the back of the school around to the west end of the school, and then back down and exit out the front
40 of the school. That eliminates any crossover that would have occurred if the traffic pattern had been
41 left the same. Because of the number of Police Officers that would be present at the school, they will
42 be able to communicate at both ends of the school to allow each officer to understand available
43 parking.

44
45 Buses will flow around to the back of the school and then make their drop-off at the west end of the
46 school. There is an entrance at the far west end of the school and a number of parking spaces at the
47 west end of the school that will be vacant. Buses will pull in there, drop off, kids will enter the west
48 end of the school, and then the buses will exit through the front of the school and back out onto
49 Madeline Bennett Drive. Parent drop off will run similarly; they will follow the same bus route in.

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1 Voters will be able to pull in and park. There will be an officer stationed at the main entrance to the
2 school All Purpose Room/Café, he/she will be available to stop vehicles and help people cross. There
3 will also be an officer at the immediate turn on the right hand side of the entrance into the voter
4 parking area. There will be an officer at the west end of the school as well to monitor the bus drop off
5 and help buses move back out into the flow of traffic.
6

7 Chief Doyle remarked the expectation is that in the a.m. there would be a considerable waiting line.
8 There will be plenty of police presence to ensure pedestrian safety.
9

10 Town Manager Cabanel remarked it is important to remember the intent would be to utilize three
11 polling locations for every election.
12

13 Councilor Vaillancourt questioned if there would be two-way traffic going around the school in the
14 afternoon, and was told that is correct. She pointed out that visitors/parents have a tendency to park
15 near the front doors, which is something that cannot be allowed to occur.
16

17 Assistant Superintendent Shevenell stated his recollection the group reached consensus that in the
18 afternoon the buses would be kept against the building, and any cars that would have to leave would be
19 on the outside to avoid children crossing in front of cars to get to the buses. He stated his belief it
20 would be best for the same traffic pattern to be utilized for all elections.
21

22 Chairman Harrington commented it is likely each citizen will receive a postcard indicating which
23 polling place to utilize. At the Middle School, a special note could be added identifying the times of
24 drop off and pick up to make people aware of times when traffic will be heaviest. Assistant
25 Superintendent Shevenell suggested, prior to the election, he may want to send notification to parents
26 requesting they minimize the drop-off, e.g., if possible have child take the bus.
27

28 School Board Vice Chairman, Andy Schneider, commented of all of the schools, the Middle School
29 parking lot is probably the most fragmented. There is the entrance on the end where voters would be,
30 which is sort of a squared off parking lot, but there are not a ton of spaces there. In the diagram
31 provided it indicates using the lot across the street from the entrance, which will have people dodging
32 traffic going across, the spaces down by where the buses will drop at the far end of the building, and
33 the spaces in the upper field by the Grater Woods trails. He stated concern with the distance voters
34 would have to walk; particularly in times of inclement weather.
35

36 School Board Member Powell was pleased with being able to see the plan on paper. He stated he feels
37 comfortable with the plan that has been laid out. He echoed the concerns about the fragmented
38 parking. He questioned if there was discussion of a delayed opening to minimize the early day rush,
39 and was told there was not. Superintendent Chiafery stated her preference to handle the first election
40 as has been described, and work on any changes once it is known where they may be needed. School
41 Board Member Powell questioned how afterschool activities would be addressed. Superintendent
42 Chiafery responded once the governing bodies come to a decision, the Administration can talk to the
43 tri-county league and request an away game on a given date. However, that has to be able to be done
44 with some advance notice.
45

1 School Board Member Powell commented when the High School was made available care had to be
2 taken with the gymnasium floors, and questioned if there are similar concerns with either of the other
3 two locations being proposed. Superintendent Chiafery responded there are none. The thing they are
4 most concerned about is the gym floor because of the expense of maintaining that. But for the All
5 Purpose Room there is no concern.
6

7 School Board Member Powell commented on the kitchen, and asked if the meals for the satellite
8 school would be able to be provided with the proposed setup. Assistant Superintendent Shevenell
9 stated he spoke with David Dziki, Director, Food Services. He would have to have some assistance
10 with getting the vans out to make the deliveries to the satellite school. As far as lunch being served, it
11 would be delivered to the classrooms. With the two doors in the back of the kitchen, they wouldn't
12 have to go out into the voting area to push the food out.
13

14 School Board Chairman Barnes stated her belief what is being discussed for the Middle School is to
15 have roughly 5,000 registered voters assigned to that facility. Moderator Christensen responded there
16 would be somewhere in the 6,000 - 7,000 range. School Board Chairman Barnes commented looking
17 at the data for the September State primaries it runs upwards of 20%. Were there a 25% turnout, it
18 would result in perhaps 1,500 voters in total for the day at that facility. She noted school would be
19 closed during the November election. With an expectation of 80% turnout, there would be approx.
20 4,500 coming to that location on that day.
21

22 Moderator Christensen commented it doesn't matter if you have everybody going through a very large
23 site or smaller numbers going through three smaller sites, during times of larger elections, any site is
24 going to be busy. School Board Chairman Barnes remarked when looking at a 12-hour voting cycle,
25 4,000 voters at the site on a day when teachers and students are not present would be more palatable.
26

27 Councilor Boyd asked for clarification buses arrive at the Middle School between 7:00 – 7:20 a.m. and
28 in the afternoon there is a 2:00 p.m. release and a 4:00 p.m. late bus. Assistant Superintendent
29 Shevenell stated that to be correct.
30

31 Councilor Boyd questioned if a Police Officer would be deployed at the southwest and southeasterly
32 side of the site to accommodate the a.m. traffic for people that might want to use the overflow parking
33 where buses would be dropping off kids, and likewise in the p.m. Chief Doyle stated there would be
34 two at that particular location; one at the corner where the buses come up and make the right where the
35 voters will come up in the morning and make that right. There will also be an officer at that location in
36 the afternoon. The officer would have to hold a few vehicles in queue to make sure that not everybody
37 that is going to pick up will be queued up in front of the school at the same time. There will also be an
38 officer at the far west end. He/she will be there to monitor the traffic and allow the cross traffic not to
39 get into each other's way. There is plenty of room to accommodate the free flow of traffic in both
40 directions.
41

42 Councilor Boyd questioned if it would be fair to presume parking would not be permitted on Madeline
43 Bennett Drive. Chief Doyle stated that to be correct. He added in the afternoon buses queue up on
44 Madeline Bennett Drive. It is still wide enough to accommodate traffic going past the buses as well as
45 emergency vehicles.
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1 School Board Member Schneider commented anyone who has had a child at the Middle School knows
2 that when you have activities outside of the norm occurring, parents use Madeline Bennett Drive as the
3 short-cut to do what they need to do and then do a U-turn in the middle of the road. He commented his
4 question was answered with the Chief's statement that no parking would be enforced on that road
5 during elections. Chief Doyle stated that to be correct. He added there will be an officer at the
6 intersection of McQuestion Road and Baboosic Lake Road, there will be an officer and/or a volunteer
7 in the parking lot at Bishop Field, and an officer inside the venue at the All Purpose Room. Currently,
8 they are looking at a total of 8 officers onsite during school hours. There will be less during the
9 General Election and after school hours.

10
11 School Board Member Thompson commented he feels comfortable with the information that has been
12 provided, and expressed appreciation for the thorough review that has occurred. He questioned ADA
13 compliance at the Middle School. Moderator Christensen responded that was reviewed, and there are
14 no issues.

15
16 School Board Member Guagliumi stated she is comfortable with the information provided, and
17 expressed her gratitude for the work that has been done. She stated particular appreciation for the
18 increased police presence. She questioned pedestrian traffic. Moderator Christensen stated there to be
19 one door to the All Purpose Room from the parking lot. It is that door only that would be used for both
20 entering and exiting. None of the doors into the corridors would be used except for by election
21 workers headed to one of the restrooms. There will be police presence there to ensure the individual is
22 an election worker and the restroom is the destination. School Board Member Guagliumi suggested
23 the use of an electronic sign indicating where voters should enter. Moderator Christensen stated there
24 to be voting signs that are used at all locations.

25
26 School Board Vice Chairman, Schneider remarked in the past, the Moderator has stated concern with
27 separate entrances and exits and places for queueing to occur. He remarked even at the JMUES there
28 has been a separate entrance and exit. He questioned the challenges of a single entrance/exit.
29 Moderator Christensen responded people are just going to have to be polite. There is no other
30 alternative if you are not using any of the corridors in the school, which she would not find acceptable.
31 Same day registration will be pushed to the far end of the room so that there is room to queue in the
32 line. If it rains on Election Day, voters should remember to bring their umbrellas.

33
34 School Board Member Guagliumi asked if students are dropped off early for band and chorus.
35 Superintendent Chiafery responded the group was solely focused on the September 13th election,
36 although it is understood the desire would be for all elections. During the September election band and
37 chorus would not be an issue. That is something that will have to be considered for future elections.

38
39 Councilor Vaillancourt expressed gratitude to all parties for working together to make this work for the
40 citizenry. She commented there is no perfect solution. She is pleased to see a solution that does not
41 require the closing of schools. She stated her belief using the Middle School will be a stretch, and
42 there will be some glitches. She added the point about fragmented parking is a good one, but it is one
43 of the only locations with the option of auxiliary parking.

44
45 Superintendent Chiafery commented one of the things Moderator Christensen offered up as she talked
46 with Principal Caragher was engaging the 8th grade students. The students study American History.
47 She stated she would be pleased to speak with the students about the process, and that there might be
48 some students who would be able to participate. She remarked she sees that as a benefit that came
49 about through conversation.

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Councilor Boyd spoke of voter access to the All Purpose Room. Moderator Christensen stated there to be one entrance to the All Purpose Room from the outside. Councilor Boyd stated his understanding only one classroom would be involved were voters to exit out to the corridors, make a left, and exit out onto the street through those doors. Moderator Christensen stated there to be several classrooms. Councilor Boyd questioned the opportunity for the Administration to consider relocating classes for that particular day to provide for improved pedestrian flow. Moderator Christensen stated her opinion that would be asking more of the school than is reasonable, and she believes the one entrance/exit can be accommodated.

Chairman Harrington restated a decision is not being reached at this time, and that is something that could be reviewed. Councilor Boyd responded he simply wished to add that to the conversation. Moderator Christensen noted that was specifically discussed, and eliminated as a possibility. School Board Member Powell stated agreement with Councilor Boyd, and requested a second look be taken. He stated his belief there is a set of crash doors at the bottom of the stairwell. That might provide for a circular flow if voters were to enter through the All Purpose Room and exiting out the crash doors on the front of the building, and into the parking lot.

Superintendent Chiafery remarked at the time the group was discussing the issue, the desire was to avoid any co-mingling of students. The Music Room is in that particular area as is Family & Consumer Science and Tech Ed. The doors alluded to are on the front of the building, but visitors would have to come out into the hallway. The way they looked at furniture placement in the room was to create a natural barrier with some of the election equipment, etc. School Board Member Powell remarked he had forgotten about the second door for the Family & Consumer Science classroom. Superintendent Chiafery stated another look can be taken, but to give the impression that it is immediately doable might not be in everyone's best interest.

School Board Vice Chairman Schneider commented hearing all of the discussion and understanding the group has considered every conceivable issue, he has no trouble supporting this for the September election. He has his doubts about the General Election, even with the schools all closed. He commented that will be the real test; with all schools closed and three polling locations.

Chairman Harrington commented she does not believe anyone should perceive this as an easy solution and one that will not have difficulties. There will be difficulties. This is a Town that is going to have traffic issues, particularly in November. There needs to be an understanding that there will be pivotal times where traffic will be increased. Voters should do their best to avoid those times if possible.

Councilor Dwyer commented for anyone asking themselves why the Middle School, it was really about the geography of the Town. It is important to separate the locations. He spoke of the traffic congestion, on any given day, between the Common Man Restaurant and the Library during the hours of 4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. It is a long ride on D.W. Highway and Route 3. With the General Election and the possibility of 15,000 voters, the desire was to break that up evenly between the locations.

Chairman Harrington remarked how it is broken up is up to the Town Moderator and Town Clerk. Two and a half months' time is needed for the voter checklists to be revised. Once that is determined, there is also the need to notify the citizenry. She noted that to be one of the reasons she would request the School Board reach a decision as soon as possible.

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1 School Board Chairman Barnes noted the item is on the School Board's agenda for its June 20th
2 meeting. Moderator Christensen requested if a decision could not be made during this meeting that
3 one is made as quickly as possible.

4
5 Councilor Dwyer spoke of absentee ballots, and stated he would stress that at every meeting from now
6 until the election, and may go on local television to stress that as well. He suggested there to be no
7 reason why there could not be an increase of 10-15% of absentee ballots. Town Clerk/Tax Collector
8 Trippett cautioned there are limited reasons why a voter could obtain an absentee ballot, and that a
9 ballot can be challenged and not counted. Councilor Dwyer stated he would meet with her to discuss
10 that further. Moderator Christensen stated, at the last Presidential Election, absentee ballots were still
11 being processed at 10:00 p.m. She requested citizens be cautious and judicious about requesting an
12 absentee ballot.

13
14 School Board Vice Chairman Schneider remarked there are probably people at home wondering why
15 the Reeds Ferry School is not being considered, and stated one of the reasons to be there is no entrance
16 available to the building while school is in session to allow this sort of scenario to occur.

17
18 Moderator Christensen added parking at either of the Ferry schools is a bigger challenge than at the
19 Middle School. At the Middle School you have a flow through, e.g., vehicle traffic comes in one way,
20 if there isn't parking, it continues to the next lot, to the next lot, and the exit. Moderator Christensen
21 stated her belief the ability to isolate voters from the students is the biggest reason for using the Middle
22 School. School Board Vice Chairman Schneider stated agreement.

23
24 Councilor Boyd noted under RSA 657:7, to satisfy the requirements for an absentee ballot voters need
25 to; be absent from the town or city where registered, cannot appear in public because of observance of
26 a religious commitment, are unable to vote in person by reason of a physical disability or are unable to
27 appear at the polls at any time during polling hours because an employment obligation requires you to
28 remain physically at work or to be in transit to or from work from the time the polls open until after the
29 polls close.

30
31 Chairman Harrington questioned on what basis the assignments would be distributed. Moderator
32 Christensen stated that would be based on the capacity of the various rooms that would be used; will
33 not be an equal distribution of voters. She added there was mention of using Saint John Neumann, and
34 that might not necessarily be true. She spoke of a conversation with Merrimack Valley Baptist
35 Church. They have agreed and are thrilled that the Town would like to use their facility for the
36 November election. They have also discussed the Presidential Primary. They have said they are
37 willing to cancel school. They have a phenomenal facility; good entrance, good ADA access, etc. She
38 suggested the Merrimack Valley Baptist location be used for the November and the Presidential
39 Primary and Saint John Neumann's for the other smaller elections.

40
41 School Board Chairman Barnes stated the decision of the School Board will be relayed to Chairman
42 Harrington, via email, the evening of June 20th.

1
2 **2. Other**

3 Submitted by Town Council Chairman Nancy Harrington

4
5 Chairman Harrington remarked, in the past, the Town Council and School Board have had discussions
6 of the tennis courts on O’Gara Drive and the Council’s decision not to replace them. The Town has
7 been waiting for a letter from the State of New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic
8 Development, Division of Parks and Recreation, declaring the tennis courts obsolete so that some
9 action could be taken. That letter has been received.

10
11 Although the tennis courts cannot be used by the School District until after July 30, 2018, the Town
12 can take action to improve the site. At this time, the Town Council is in need of official notification
13 from the School Board as to what the board would like to see occur on that site, e.g., take down the
14 fence, replace pavement with grass, etc.

15
16 School Board Chairman Barnes responded the School Board recently charged its Planning & Building
17 Committee with objectives that included discussion of an engineering study on that site as a way of
18 identifying possible uses, e.g., what is appropriate, the needs of the District, etc. The intent of the
19 School Board is to have an engineer visit the site and be able to provide input to the Planning &
20 Building Committee. The committee has a deadline for completing its work, which will allow the
21 School Board to respond to the Council with a reasoned and well thought out expectation of what they
22 wish the property to be used for long term.

23
24 Chairman Harrington questioned if the Council is required to take a position on the School Board
25 having an engineering study completed. Town Manager Cabanel stated her belief that would not be
26 necessary.

27
28 *Chairman Harrington questioned if any member of the Council had objection to the School Board*
29 *arranging to have an engineering study completed. No objection was stated.*

30
31 School Board Member Thompson questioned if the tennis courts are in use, and was informed they are
32 not. School Board Chairman Barnes stated with the engineering study the Board will understand the
33 potential uses for the property. She commented the Board would not look to the Council to come up
34 with a beautification plan in the 23rd month, but they also would not want to move forward with tasks
35 such as removal of the footings of the electrical poles without understanding what the long-term plans
36 are. Although they don’t like the look of it either, they want to ensure a plan is in place before moving
37 forward.

38
39 **Comments from the Press** - None

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41 **Comments from the Public** - None

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43 **Comments from the Council**

44
45 Chairman Harrington thanked the School Board for working with the Council on these matters.

46
47 **Comments from the School Board**

Approved: November 14, 2017

1 School Board Member Powell echoed Chairman Harrington’s sentiment, and added he is pleased the
2 two boards and staff have been able to come together to resolve the issue. He stated his hope this is the
3 genesis of very productive joint interactions between the two boards in the future.

4

5 School Board Chairman Barnes stated agreement. She remarked there is a good deal the two boards
6 have in common, and there is a lot they can accomplish together.

7

8 **Adjourn**

9

10 **MOTION made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by School Board Member Powell to adjourn**
11 **the meeting. MOTION CARRIED 10-0-0**

12

13 *The June 14, 2016 joint meeting of the Town Council and School Board was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.*

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Submitted by Dawn MacMillan