

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Town Hall Meeting Room  
August 15, 2016  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

**Present:** Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider, Board Member Guagliumi, Board Member Thompson, Board Member Schoenfeld, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

Chair Barnes closed public participation.

**3. PFOA Update**

Chair Barnes invited Merrimack Village District (MVD) Commissioner Lon Woods, MVD District Superintendent Ron Minor, Jamie Emery of Emery & Garrett Groundwater Resources and Mike Metcalf of Underwood Engineers to the table.

Mr. Woods provided responses to questions that had had been supplied by board members prior to the school board meeting.

Board Member Thompson's questions and the responses are as follows:

Question #1: Has the MVD decided the level of PFOA's/PFOS' that will be acceptable in the Merrimack drinking water, or are they looking to use the recommended level of 70 ppt set by the government as the standard? If this decision hasn't been made is the board discussing it?

Response from Mr. Woods: The MVD is bound to deliver water dictated by EPA Cleanwater standards and also by the NH Department of Environmental Services. Yes, they use the 70 ppt recommended level.

The latest test results are below 20 ppt.

Question #2: Please provide copies of any formal communications (non emails) to the State or St. Gobain to Superintendent Chiafery. Please exclude any test results.

Response from Mr. Woods: yes

Question #3: What is the breakdown of PFOA and PFOS in the test results from July 14.

Response from Mr. Minor: The July 14, 2016 results in regards to PFOA's are as follows: MVD well #2/16 ppt, MVD well #3/20 ppt, MVD wells #4 and #5 not sampled, MVD well #7/28 ppt, MVD well # 8/22 ppt, and after treatment the combined level for wells #7 and #8 was 23 ppt. PFOS were non-detectable across the board.

Mr. Minor then shared the results of the latest testing results. MVD well #2/8 ppt, MVD well #3/13 ppt, MVD wells #4 and #5 were not sampled, MVD well #7/19 ppt, MVD well #8/12 ppt and after treatment the combined levels for wells #7 and #8/14 ppt. PFOS were non-detectable across the board.

Vice Chair Schneider's questions and the responses are as follows:

Question # 1: How does the MVD determine what levels of contaminants are acceptable in the water it delivers to customers? Is it always based on the State DES limits? If not, what's the process you follow to determine the acceptable level?

Vice Chair Schneider determined that this question had been answered satisfactorily by a response to Board Member Thompson's similar question.

Question #2: If MVD customers believe that the level you've determined is not acceptable, how does the MVD react to concerns that yours customers raise? Is there a process where the customers can petition to have the board of directors authorize a change to the previously determined limits?

Response from Mr. Woods: This action would come in the form of a warrant article that would then be considered by the commissioners. The voters would then vote on the warrant article. Solutions would involve funding.

Question #3: For large commercial water customers (such as manufacturing sites), do you ever work with them to provide treatment to control water contaminants beyond what you'd provide to a residential customer? (either on your end or on the customer's end).

Mr. Woods responded that all large customers are required to have backflow devices installed on their water lines to help prevent contamination to other customers. MVD inspects the larger users bi-annually and smaller users annually. The MVD has no enforcement authority with its customers, but expects users are using best management practices.

Question #4: In previous discussions (with the SB or in public forums), you have discussed how the water is mixed across wells, but that the mix percentage of a contaminant may not be consistent across the entire district (such as focused flow from one well to a certain part of town to offset volume/pressure needs.) In that scenario, how do you guarantee that every faucet in town has a consistent and predictable level of contaminants in their water? Does your long-term plan call for treatment at each well, or in centralized "mixed" areas, should you need to address a contamination issue?

Vice Chair Schneider amended this question upon hearing the latest test results to ask what might be causing the lower readings.

Mr. Woods responded that at this time no water is being brought into the MVD from Pennichuck. Water was brought in during the flushing period. The lower readings are primarily a result of wells #4 and #5 being locked down.

Chair Barnes read aloud the results of PFOA testing at the various schools. They are as follows:

- Merrimack High School 14 ppt
- Merrimack Middle School 11 ppt
- James Mastricola Elementary School 13 ppt
- Reed Ferry Elementary School 14 ppt
- Thorntons Ferry Elementary School 15 ppt
- James Mastricola Upper Elementary School 14 ppt

Chair Barnes had submitted the following questions:

Question #1: Since the PFOA issue has surfaced in Merrimack, what has the MVD done to address the levels of contaminants in the water supply in Merrimack—of which all school facilities are users?

Response from Mr. Woods: No specific treatment has been done aside from turning off wells #4 and #5. Due to the dry summer large amounts of water have been used from all the remaining wells.

Question #2: What is your long-term plan for water testing (how often, what elements are you testing?)

Response from Mr. Woods: Bi-weekly testing will continue for PFOA's as the budget permits. NH DES mandates the testing schedules. Results of the testing are published on the DES website which is updated regularly.

Question #3: What are your goals for removing any toxins detected from testing?

Chair Barnes removed this question as she reasoned it had been addressed.

Question #4: What filtration systems are available for the MVD to implement? Are they being considered?

The MVD has begun to explore the options and the preferred system is a granular activated carbon system. An initial treatment will be for wells #3, #4 and #5.

Chair Barnes requested that the MVD share their board decisions with the School Board.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the State currently requires PFOA testing as one of the seven toxins on its list. She would like to know what the results are in other areas in the state.

Mr. Woods responded that it is currently only suggested to test for PFOA. He was informed at a recent meeting that he had attended that the Pennichuck water test results were 3 ppt. Mr. Woods noted that PFOA's are in almost all testing recently. PFOA's are found in most household items but the MVD is only looking at PFOA's in water.

Mr. Minor responded that the NH DES sent out a letter to all water systems in the state requesting voluntary sharing of test results. This information is on their website.

Board Member Thompson asked if the MVD board operates under the guidelines of their charter in providing clean water to its customers.

Mr. Woods responded that the MVD operates under the two regulating agencies he had previously named.

Mr. Thompson followed up by then suggesting that customers seeking any changes would submit a warrant article or a signature petition.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that the dissipation rate appears to be faster than anticipated and asked why this might be.

Mr. Woods responded that the testing has only been going on for about 100 days and that the MVD is monitoring the results closely. A variety of possible reasons have been discussed. Funding is also a factor when presenting reasons to spend money.

Vice Chair Schneider stressed the importance of pro-active communication so that the school board, rate payers and voters are able to make well informed decisions.

Jamie Emery, President of Emery & Garrett Groundwater shared that his company has worked with the MVD for over 23 years. He noted that the EPA standard is based on a person drinking two liters of water for 70 years and then developing cancer as the accepted industry standard. Voluntarily lowering the acceptability standards could result in costly expenditures. He suggested that it is too soon to adopt lower standards because not enough data exists at this point. He stressed that blood sample data has yet to be included in the larger human test results.

Board Member Thompson asked that the MVD post links to additional information on their website.

#### **4. Board's Educational Needs Relative to PFOA's**

Board Member Thompson asked how the school board might become more educated on the medical implications to the community based on the 70 ppt of PFOA's. His concern is based on his own recent research into PFOA's and some of the negative impacts on human health. He would like the board to accept the 70 ppt or less after more education on the issue.

Chair Barnes requested the prior speakers to share any information or website links they are aware of with the Superintendent's Office.

Mr. Emery shared that PFOA's are found in our mattresses, carpets, clothing and more. He noted that while there is a clean water act there is no clean clothing act or clean food act. PFOA's have been produced since the 1940's.

Chair Barnes thanked the presenters for their attendance and the information they provided to the board.

Further discussion among the board members focused on how to proceed on the agenda item.

Board member Thompson wanted the board to take action and asked if this would require him to make a motion.

Chair Barnes recommended gathering more information.

Vice Chair Schneider clarified the issue by asking if the request is to have the board looking at PFOA's in the drinking water and taking a stance on it, or is the request to holistically look for PFOA's in other things, or is it something else.

Board Member Thompson expressed his concern that the board take some sort of action on what is an acceptable level of PFOA's. This concern is based on his own research on PFOA's. He asked what the board needs to know in order to take action.

Chair Barnes commented that it would be premature to take any action at this time. Test results at this time are far below acceptable EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) standards.

Board Member Schoenfeld saw the issue as a community concern much like air pollution.

Vice Chair Schneider compared the PFOA issue to a past issue the town confronted in the form of lime disease and ticks. He suggested that the board research some pre-selected sources and then discuss what they learned from them before taking any stance on the issue.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that no motion is needed at this time and that the board would be better served by bringing in experts to speak to the board members and asked for board member input on potential future medical guests.

Board Member Thompson would like to hear more from other resource persons.

Superintendent Chiafery also reminded the board of the enormity of the costs involved with water filtration and treatment systems, some of which would require a structure to house the system.

Board Member Schoenfeld expressed concern about the unknown quantities of PFOA's in carpets and the school environments as a whole.

Assistant Superintendent for Business responded that the fire retardant tag is required on all fabric items in schools by the fire marshal. No carpets have been tested for PFOA's.

Board Member Thompson thanked the board for taking his agenda item and coming to a conclusion that would move the issue forward.

## **5. Review of Notice to Parents/Guardians Regarding Use of Online Accounts and Media**

Director of Library Media and Technology Nancy Rose came to the table to present a first draft of a notice to parents and guardians regarding the use of online accounts and media. She referred to a copy of the notice that had been included in board members packets prior to the meeting.

Board Member Schneider expressed concern over the consequences to students if parents decide to give their written consent for their student to any of the technologies listed on the form. He

suggested a frequently asked questions (FAQ's) on the district website to provide more details to parents and to avoid calls to the superintendent's office.

Superintendent Chiafery shared that in other districts that faced this situation the teachers phoned the reluctant parents to discuss the form and answer questions. This resulted in the parents gaining a clearer understanding and then deciding to sign the form.

Board Member Guagliumi suggested embedding a link to the school website that provided a brief synopsis of the technology tools and in which classes they are used.

Board Member Thompson agreed with members Schneider and Guagliumi.

Chair Barnes suggested that there be a technology night similar to math night as an opportunity for parents to learn more about the technology tools their children use in school.

Chair Barnes also appreciated that the notice be an opt-out option.

Vice Chair Schneider asked that the form be amended to include a line that included a link to the school district website for more information.

Chair Barnes stated that the form include information about how students online security and privacy is handled would also be beneficial to parents.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that Director Rose will amend the form and move forward with it.

## **6. Further Discussion Regarding the Proposed District Communications Committee**

Director Rose began by sharing her proposal for the make-up of the communications committee based on board members discussions from the previous school board meeting.

The communications committee will be comprised of school board members Guagliumi and Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum McLaughlin, Director of Special Services Fabrizio, Director of Technology and Library Services Rose (Chair), one elementary school administrator, one secondary school administrator, District Webmaster Merrifield, six teachers-one per school, six parent representatives (one per school) and one community-at-large member.

Director Rose then suggested that a school board recommended steering committee be comprised of the Chair, one school board member, district webmaster, one parent, one teacher and one administrator. She recommended this new group meet soon to create a game plan by looking at the current state of communication in the district, short-term goals, long-term goals, a vision and how to monitor the results of the committee's work.

The steering committee would also need direction as to if it would require a budget for the hiring of consultants and if a formal plan needed to be crafted.

Board Member Thompson shared that he knows of an individual who has a background in this area and who would be willing to educate the group on how to define its purpose and how to operate.

Board Member Thompson expressed concern over the large size of the proposed committee and suggested lowering the number of teachers and parents to three each.

Chair Barnes noted that because the school parent groups all operate differently that there be a representative from each school.

Director Rose suggested that once the steering committee is formed and work is spread out among the members that the larger group size would be valuable.

Director Rose noted that the steering committee parent and teacher representatives need to be added so that the group may begin its work.

Chair Barnes noted that the communications committee goal is to convene in September and that the September 6, 2016 agenda include a plan to identify a member-at-large. The school parent groups will be tasked with recommending a member from each school, and administrators will recommend teacher representatives.

Chair Barnes stated that those interested in the member-at-large position send a letter of interest to the school board at [shannon.barnes@sau26.org](mailto:shannon.barnes@sau26.org). The position will be open from August 15-19, 2016. Deliberations will commence at the September 6, 2016 for any and all candidates. At the September 19<sup>th</sup> meeting the candidate will be chosen.

## **7. Request to Increase Part-Time World Language Teaching Position to Full-Time at Merrimack High School**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Merrimack High School Assistant Principal Zampieri presented a proposal to the board to increase a part-time language teaching position to full-time. This is based on the retirement of a part-time teacher and the increase of student requests for Latin classes.

Vice Chair Schneider asked for clarification on the monetary change to the school district budget by this change.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the actual additional cost to the district would be about \$12,000.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to approve the change of the part-time Latin language teacher full-time Latin teacher which would increase the amount of that person's salary and benefits by \$33,605.02 and at the same time we remove the district's right to hire against the open requisition for the part-time Spanish teacher.

The motion carried as presented 5-0-0.

## **8. Leveling of Classes at Merrimack High School**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin framed the purpose of this presentation as a two-fold goal of clarifying some of the important components of the honor's program process and refinements to the communication plan; and the goals of the comprehensive program, the supports to learners in these classes and a post-communication plan to parents.

English Educator Carolyn Johnson and Social Studies Chair Rob Huckins spoke about the specifics of the honor's program process and the refinements being made to the parent communication piece of the process. Educator Johnson stated that for the 2016-2017 academic year there will be a meeting with parents of those students who applied and were not accepted into the honor's program and devise strategies that would help to move them into the program.

Educator Johnson shared that last year her class of 33 honor students resulted in only 18 moving on to sophomore honors English.

Social Studies Chair Huckins added that the process remains unchanged from previous years.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin expressed his appreciation to the honors program educators to agreeing to the plan to meet with parents of those students still interested in admittance into the honor's program.

Assistant Principal Zampieri spoke about the response to instruction, via the implementation of a co-teaching pilot program consisting of a special educator working in a core level class. Results showed success for all learners. This resulting in the creation of comprehensive classes. Additional supports include learning labs for all struggling students.

Board Member Thompson asked if the same teachers read all of the writing pieces.

Educator Johnson responded that one educator reads the essay and scores it on the back. A second educator reads the essay and scores it on the front. The second educator then adds the two scores together.

Board Member Guagliumi commented on the appeals process.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that nothing has changed in regards to the honors program process, what is different is that now parents will be included in the dialogue.

Board Member Guagliumi stated that she is still concerned that those on the cusp of the honors program get additional academic assistance.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that it is better for a student to move up into the honors program than to move down. He continued on to note that there are many opportunities for students outside of the honors program.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if more honors classes should be offered to meet student demand.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the number who apply to the honors programs does not equal the number who are qualified. The comprehensive program is a better solution.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that it appears that the honors program appears to be a bit of a mystery and that partnering with parents earlier in the process should alleviate some of the mystery.

Chair Barnes asked for specifics on what extensions will be offered for those on the cusp of the honors program.



Educator Johnson responded that early formal and informal observations and assessments will suggest to teachers which students should move into honors programs.

Social Studies Chair Huckins responded that the comprehensive program is a building wide initiative and agreed that early assessments will inform educators teaching extensions.

Chair Barnes recommended that when meeting with parents that the specific reasons the student did not get into the honors program be shared so that a plan can be made for the student.

Board Member Thompson asked if consideration has been given to teaching the honors program class in the summer to give on the cusp students a second chance the opportunity to gain admittance to the honors program or to try an honors class before they decide if they want to participate in the fall.

## **9. Second Review of New Board Policy**

### **• Board Officers**

Superintendent Chiafery shared the changes to the policy that were requested by the school board members at the July 18, 2016 meeting.

The changes are: Under Chair: delete the second sentence that reads “The chair will have the right to vote on all matters before the board.” Add at the bottom: Chair and Vice-Chair: Board officers retain the right to vote on all matters before the board.”

Chair Barnes asked that the policy go on the consent agenda for the next meeting unless she hears otherwise from a board member in the interim.

## **10. District Curriculum Update**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin updated the board on the ongoing work of the various academic departments.

He stated that the guiding force of all curriculum work is response to instruction (RTI) and that all curriculum is driven by assessments. Understanding by Design (UBD) is the linchpin and combines skills, content and the big idea. More information allows for a better perspective, or teaching beyond the skill.

Dr. McLaughlin explained that every curriculum committee is comprised of K-12 teachers to create continuity. All curriculum is based on the college and career ready standards which is the marriage of content and application.

This past year a K-12 Math Committee was formed and they immediately developed a curriculum template, identified and developed key vocabulary in order to form a glossary of common language, and have begun work that will enable them to form a scope and sequence.

The Science Curriculum Committee developed and field tested life science, physical science and earth science strands for grades K-8. Teacher feedback has informed further refinements to these science standards. Next year the high school science competencies will be fully integrated into

the K-12 curriculum and the finalized K-12 document will be presented for school board approval next summer.

Grade level teams and English Language Arts (ELA) coordinators have researched literacy on grades K-6 to discover creative ways to present a unified tier one instruction across the district. In the Fall a new tool called “Linking Meaning” will be introduced to students across the district.

The Physical Education Curriculum Committee has been meeting and already completed two of the three Understanding by Design (UBD) stages for the first four standards. This year they will complete stage three which are the learning activities.

The Health Curriculum Committee has completed enduring understandings for each unit and most of the standards. They continue to work on developing assessments and are in discussions on how the physical education standards inform the health curriculum.

## **11. Approval of the July 18, 2016 Minutes**

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

Vice Chair Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2, line 72: change “...Nashua...” to “...Portsmouth...”
- Page 11, line 479: Delete the sentence “This issue also involves the MVD.”
- Page 11, line 482: change the word “...action...” to “...option...”

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following change to the minutes:

- Page 6, line 247: change sentence to read “Board Member Guagliumi asked about district technology priorities.”

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

## **12. Acceptance of Gifts/Grants under \$5,000**

Assistant Superintendent for Business presented two gifts for the board’s acceptance.

The first gift is from Barbara and Charles Trudeau to the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School in the amount of \$1,000. This gift is in recognition of being a recipient of the New Hampshire Elementary School of Excellence Award.

The second gift is from the McDonald’s Corporation to the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School in the amount of \$2,000. This grant is in recognition of being awarded the New Hampshire Elementary School of the Year.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to accept the gifts with gratitude.

The motion carried as presented 5-0-0.

### **13. Consent Agenda**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following for consent:

#### **a) Educator Nominations**

Christine Blain, Art Teacher, Merrimack Middle School  
Kelly Marble, Grade 4 Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School

#### **b) Educator Resignations**

Angela Aubin, Grade 4 Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School  
Audra Saunders, Art Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

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

The motion carried as presented 5-0-0.

Board Member Thompson asked if resigning teachers were debriefed.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that there is an exit interview process conducted by the Director of Human Resources.

### **14. Other**

#### **a) Correspondence**

Chair Barnes shared that the board received correspondence from a constituent regarding the parent role regarding online communications between teachers and the students.

Board Member Thompson was contacted via phone, email and through direct contact, from several individuals in regards to the PFOA's and one individual reached out expressing interest in the communications committee.

#### **b) Comments**

Superintendent Chiafery reminded the board members that the next school board meeting will take place on a Tuesday, due to the Labor Day holiday. It is scheduled for Tuesday, September 6, 2016. There will also be a change of venue.

Chair Barnes requested that the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School be researched as a first choice.

The second option will be the James Mastricola Elementary School.

### **15. New Business**

There was no new business.

## **16. Committee Reports**

Vice Chair Schneider reported that there is a new pastor at the St. James Congregational Church resulting in a room change or new location altogether for Merrimack Safeguard meetings. At this meeting there was a long follow-up discussion on the canine school assemblies held in June, discussion on the prime alternative treatment center tour, and the notification to the public that the next drug take-back day is scheduled for October 22<sup>th</sup> at the Merrimack Police Station.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell attended the August 12<sup>th</sup> Town Center Committee meeting. A representative of the Department of Public Works will attend the August 18<sup>th</sup> Town Council meeting to request permission to apply for a grant for the purpose of putting a sidewalk on Woodbury Road. This a part of the Town Center Committee's focus on building sidewalks.

## **17. Public Comments**

Mr. James Bollengier an organizer representing the Merrimack Water Contamination Action Group, spoke about PFOA's. He shared some of his group's work and then addressed some of the comments he had heard at the meeting.

His committee sent a petition with 171 signatures to the Town Council addressing the health issues associated with PFOA's. He contends that the Merrimack water has been contaminated since 1984 when ChemFab, later bought out by St. Gobain began its business in Merrimack.

At 6:30 p.m. on August 25<sup>th</sup> an expert will speak at the Merrimack Town Hall in the Matthew Thornton Room. This will be under the auspices of a Nashua law firm looking to inform the public of the health issues of PFC contamination. The law firm is involved in possible litigation involving the citizens in the communities of Merrimack, Nashua and Litchfield.

Mr. Bollengier stated that the MVD is only looking at technical solutions and not the health issues. He shared the Merrimack Town Council's statement to the MVD that their communication to the public through their website is poor. His request for documentation under the right to know act has gone unanswered to date.

Mr. Bollengier recommended the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) website for up-to-date documentation on the human effects of PFC's. His organization is concerned that the state epidemiologist Dr. Chen, is downplaying the human health issues. Dr. Chen's comments are that all the testing to date has been based on animal testing.

Mr. Bollengier invited the board members to join the organization's meet-up website. He expressed his frustration with the MVD's response. He stated that the MVD has no charter and that they operate under Chapter 52 of a Village District. His questions to the MVD in regards to how they make business decisions and their budget process remain unanswered.

Mr. Bollengier's final comment was that PFOA's only enter the human body by ingestion, which focuses the contamination issue on the water supply.

Mr. Terry Anderson of 5 Craig Drive spoke also as a member of Mr. Bollengier's organization. He reminded the school board members that the school district is the largest consumer of MVD water.

He noted that while PFOA's cannot be eliminated from fire retardant items, they can be eliminated from the water. The PFOA count in the water in Merrimack is four to five times higher than that in Nashua.

He recommended that school board push the Department of Environmental Services to continue soil testing and that they create a standard for PFOA's and push for more comprehensive blood testing.

**18. Manifest**

The board signed the manifest.

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 p.m.

The motion passed 5-0-0.