

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
November 21, 2016
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

Present: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider, Board Members Guagliumi, Thompson and Schoenfeld, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell and Student Representative Sernik.

Absent: Superintendent Chiafery

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Planning and Building Committee's Response to School Board Charge

Chair Barnes invited Rich Hendricks, Chair of the Planning and Building Committee to the table.

Mr. Hendricks was in attendance to provide to the board information about artificial turf fields that surrounding school districts have implemented, funded and maintained. This is in response to a Charge from the school board as it relates to a Capital Improvement Plan item.

The Planning and Building Committee reached out unsuccessfully to the NHIAA. They were able to gather data directly from area athletic directors and found additional information from various public records.

The districts that provided information are Manchester West, Souhegan, Bedford, Oyster River, Exeter and Laconia. The average cost of a turf field was between \$800,000.00 and \$900,000.00.

Currently, the Merrimack High School field requires chemicals to maintain it. These require funds and manpower and the chemicals eventually wash down into the Souhegan River.

Funding and donations varied with Souhegan's funding coming from a single private donation for \$500,000.00 contingent upon the rest being raised by private fundraising. The funds needed to be raised within a stated timeframe. This was done successfully and about 18 months later the field was ready and in use.

Laconia received a \$250,000.00 donation from the Bank of Laconia and the other \$750,000.00 came from private donations.

Oyster River's funding was 25% donations and 75% taxpayer funding. Funds the community received from a lawsuit in the amount of \$400,000.00 were put into the project and are part of the 75% of taxpayer funding.

All of these fundraisers required a dedicated fundraising committee for this purpose. The money collected went into a fundraising account that was separate from any town funds.

A variety of fundraising ideas included the ability to donate by directly accessing the district website, levels for giving that gave the donor a name on a plaque a brick or wall, scoreboards, pavers, stairs, wall of fame, and press box sponsorships.

Amherst has a dedicated 501-c3 for fundraising needs.

In Laconia, an article was put in the local paper naming all of the givers to their project.

Other uses for the fields involve Sunday morning youth football and drum and bugle programs. Organizations within some communities were not charged for field usage.

Bedford charges \$100.00 for every two hours of use during the day and \$200.00 for night use. Reservations can be made five to six months in advance through the town Parks and Recreation Department.

Soccer teams do not use the fields.

All of the athletic directors preferred turf fields to grass fields. The maintenance costs are also much lower for turf fields.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if Mr. Hendrick's had come across any negative's or community concerns about turf fields.

Mr. Hendricks referred to an article he had come across in an Amherst newspaper. At a community meeting of about 75 people, only one person spoke out against the turf field. A member of the fundraising committee whose background is in occupational and environmental chemical exposures spoke on the safety of turf fields. The biggest concern is that turf fields absorb the heat from the sun and can get hot in summer months.

Student Representative Sernik asked if Merrimack already has a fundraising committee in place.

Chair Barnes responded that the community would need to create a 501-c3 and then ask the town to vote to accept it in order to fundraise. It would be outside of any governmental body.

Board Member Thompson thanked Mr. Hendricks and his team for the information.

Chair Barnes noted that a turf field would not be bondable and Mr. Hendricks thought that instead the turf field would be a perfect example of a Capital Improvement Project as the fields have an estimated 9-11 year life.

Board Member Thompson asked if naming rights were given for a specific period of time or unlimited.

Mr. Hendricks responded that he saw nothing that mentioned any limits on the naming rights.

Vice Chair Schneider brought up the PEPSI sponsored scoreboards in Merrimack and asked for the history on them.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the scoreboards were given and installed for free by PEPSI with the stipulation that only PEPSI products be sold in the school district. This was a ten year deal and the town is now in year five of the contract. Two years into the contract another scoreboard was installed at James Masticola Upper Elementary School and the contract has been extended to twelve years.

4. District Communications Committee: Review Draft of Parent Survey

Chair Barnes invited to the table Nancy Rose, chair of the new committee. She noted that board members Guagliumi and Thompson are also members of the committee.

Communications Committee Chair Rose spoke about the early beginnings of the committee. To date the committee has created a community survey to assess the current communication capability of the district. The survey will go on the school website after the Thanksgiving holiday. The committee is looking for feedback in order to design short and long term goals.

Board Members Thompson and Guagliumi thanked the initial committee members for their work in getting the survey compiled and ready for the full committee's review.

Vice Chair Schneider asked how the survey would disseminated.

Ms. Rose responded that the survey will be available on the school website and in paper form if requested.

Chair Barnes asked if it was known what percentage of parents have email and cell phones on file with the district.

Ms. Rose and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell agreed that a School Messenger alert would reach everyone via cell phone. There is variance in email contact information across schools and grade levels. Email could be used as a follow up mechanism.

Chair Barnes noted that some school districts have a dedicated Communications Director and that she would be interested in seeing a job description for this position. The job description might reveal other duties that Merrimack might consider for the future.

5. Update on Special Education

a) Determination Letter and Results

Director of Special Education Fabrizio began his presentation by sharing the results of the federal "report card" for the Merrimack School District. On all of the indicators the district received a perfect score of zero. He reviewed the indicators and the score results. All of the existing grants are also in perfect compliance.

b) Preschool Outcomes Measurement Data

Director Fabrizio noted that in the past five years the pre-school program has grown from one school to all three elementary schools; growing from to 60-120 students.

The pre-school outcomes measurement (POMS) is a federal requirement to determine the effectiveness of preschool education. It measures a child's present level of performance and progress during their time in the program. The TS Gold measurement tool was used to assess the data.

The Merrimack School District scored significantly higher than the target and the actual state goals.

c) Highlight Specific 2017-2018 Budget Items

Director Fabrizio spoke about several items of concern; the bus contract, extended day activities, extra-curricular activities, and split system air conditioner units.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell spoke about the existing bus contract. It was a five year contract and has saved the district over \$200,000.00 in each year of the past five years. The new bids are coming in now and the expected increase is at about seven percent.

Chair Barnes asked if one of the bidders was the company that now provides the regular busing and was told yes and that the bidding and contracting for the regular and special education busing needs are kept separate. Regular routes are more clear cut and in district.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if cost sharing efforts would still be made and was told yes. Director Fabrizio noted that the contracts are all worded differently and that he and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell review the bids together.

The district owns two vans that are used to transport students in the "Get Set" program. The vans have over 100,000 miles on them and are in need of replacement.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted the importance of the "Get Set" program and that the vans were a budgeted item when they were purchased about ten years ago.

Board Member Thompson asked if there has been any thought about reaching out to the businesses involved in the program to fund the van replacement.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that they have not been approached and they do already provide a service by putting their own resources into the program.

Chair Barnes asked if the vans are handicapped equipped or standard vans.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that one van is a Dodge Caravan and one is a Ford ten-passenger van and both cost about the same amount.

Director of Special Services Fabrizio noted the “Dear Colleague” letter that the district received from the United States Department of Education that outlines Free and Appropriate Education and the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

A PowerPoint presentation highlighted several important areas of note in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In brief it states that “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance”

Director of Special Services Fabrizio shared that past activities include Unified Volleyball, track, drum line and Quiz Bowl. The cost of all of the co-curricular programs K-12 is budgeted at \$50,000.00.

Chair Barnes had observed students involved in the high school band and Color Guard at an away game and saw this as a positive experience for the students.

Board Member Guagliumi asked for examples of elementary school opportunities.

Director of Special Services Fabrizio responded that they range from ski trips to an after school art program, a morning walking club, chess club and Lego League. The opportunities grow as students move through the school system.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that this law is similar in concept to the Americans with Disabilities law requiring architectural and design standards such as ramps and easier access.

The final item for review was the split air conditioners five year plan. Due to this item being cut in a past budget, the amount proposed for the 2017-2018 budget increased from \$30,000.00 to \$45,000.00. The air conditioners are required in order to comply with IEP’s and 504 plans. The use of portable units requires heavy maintenance and they are not completely efficient.

Chair Barnes asked for the life span of a split unit.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the units are tied into the maintenance contract with Honeywell and that the life is estimated to be about 15 years per unit.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if the district would be able to get a better price by purchasing more at once.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the savings would be small.

Director of Special Services Fabrizio commented that the sooner the units are tied into the Honeywell maintenance contract the better for the district.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin commented that during his time in the district there has been a marked increase in student and staff 504 plans in regards to cooling. This is a federal

compliance issue and the short term solution in order to demonstrate compliance was to purchase air conditioners at a local store. They are supposed to be a temporary solution.

Chair Barnes added that the noise issue can create additional problems.

6. Second Review of New School Board Policy

• Service Animals

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin addressed the policy and the concerns raised at the previous school board meeting. In preparation for this meeting he had met with Barrett Christina, counsel for the New Hampshire School Boards Association.

Attorney Christina cited the first sentence found under “Service Animal Defined” and the sentence under “Access to the School Buildings and Grounds” as validation that the policy applies to all persons accessing school property.

Vice Chair Schneider reiterated his concern that the language be consistent within the policy. Some of the language is general and some is specific.

The issue of proof of shots and vaccinations was also raised.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin shared that Attorney Christina had stated that the policy as it is written applies in all circumstances. There are no exceptions not noted in the policy.

Vice Chair Schneider referred to the section later in the policy that applies to animals for employees. He expressed the concern that the policy be generic where it needs to be and specific where it needs to be.

Chair Barnes asked if under the policy the district retains the rights to require proof of immunizations and vaccinations of animals from visitors to the campus.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if an immunization card could be required. She thought a card might minimize the delivery of potentially sensitive information.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin will seek clarification on two points:

1. If a certification card can be required and that it contain immunizations, vaccinations and other relevant information such as what the dog has been trained to perform.
2. Can the language on page two in the top paragraph be changed from “...student or employees...” to “...individuals...”
3. Can access to the buildings be denied if documentation cannot be produced?

7. Approval of November 7, 2016 Minutes

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to accept the minutes of the November 7, 2016 meeting.

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 7, line 305, change the sentence to say “Should the board consider if an animal owner be required to provide a card so as to minimize the delivery of potentially sensitive information.”
- Page 7, line 311, delete the sentence “Superintendent Chiafery responded that the policy will be used as a guide.” Add the sentence “Superintendent Chiafery responded the building administrators will have discretion and that it shouldn’t be included in the policy. It should not be so tight that it cannot be administered.”

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

8. Acceptance of Gifts/Grants Under \$5,000.00

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell presented the following gifts:

A gift to the James Masticola Upper Elementary School from the Watson Scholarship Town of Merrimack in the amount of \$900.00 to be used for the Lego League Teams.

A gift to the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School from the Barnes and Noble Bookstore in Nashua in the amount of \$159.52 to be used to purchase reading texts. This was an event in which principals and assistant principals dressed up and read stories to children at the bookstore.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to accept the gifts with gratitude.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

9. Other

a) Correspondence

Board Member Thompson had received correspondence from a constituent asking what the school district was doing in regards to the PFOA issue.

b) Comments

There were no comments.

10. New Business

There was no new business.

11. Committee Reports

Chair Barnes had attended the Grater Woods sub-committee meeting on Tuesday, November 15th. They discussed improved signage, including maps and brochure rubrics. The outdoor classroom is

about twelve years old and the sub-committee is looking at ways to suggest how to revitalize the area.

Chair Barnes had attended the New Hampshire School Boards Association Board of Directors meeting. The petition resolution that the Merrimack School Board submitted passed unanimously without edits or adjustments. The issue of state supported all-day kindergarten was discussed. To date almost half of the school districts in the state offer all-day kindergarten.

Vice Chair Schneider asked how the all-day kindergartens are funded and was told that it is done through the districts.

12. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

The motion passed 5-0-0.