

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
December 19, 2016
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

Absent: Board Member Thompson and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Recipient of the Joseph Middlemiss' Big Heart Foundation "Buddy Bench Gift Program"

Chair Barnes invited school administrators and parent Jennifer Hutchinson and her son, third grader Michael to the table. Guidance Counselor Fern Seiden began the presentation by explaining the program concept. The "buddy bench" is meant to go on school playgrounds. It is a place for students to sit if they are feeling lonely or looking for someone new to play with. She noted the coincidence of the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School mascot Buddy and the "buddy bench" which is from the Joseph Middlemiss' Big Heart Foundation.

The "buddy bench" is painted blue with both the school and the foundation logos and mascot picture prominently displayed.

Mrs. Hutchinson spoke about the Joseph Middlemiss', a young boy who passed away from an enlarged heart. The "buddy bench" is one piece of the foundation's work.

Michael read aloud from a paper he wrote for tonight's meeting. He emphasized the school's nice, kind, respectful and safe environment. He wrote that if he saw someone sitting there he would ask if they were okay and if they wanted to play.

Guidance Counselor Seiden stated that this will be another tool on the playground for the PBIS Team. It will complement the school culture by defining the behavioral expectations of safety, respect and responsibility.

Students will also learn empathy and compassion concepts through the "buddy bench."

Principal Bellemare shared the initial comments and input from the student council about the location of the bench.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that the concept of a buddy bench could be carried across all of the grades and schools and thanked all involved in bringing it to the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

Board Member Guagliumi agreed and complimented Michael and his mother their leadership role.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept the “buddy bench.”

The motion carried 4-0-0.

Chair Barnes noted that Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is riding high as the New Hampshire Elementary School of the Year and that tonight was an excellent example of collaboration with parents to bring even more improvements every day.

4. Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Fire Fighter for the Day Visit

Principal Bellemare was joined at the table by Assistant Fire Chief Brian Borneman, Yahaira Duque and her daughter Emily.

Assistant Fire Chief Borneman began by sharing the purpose of the coloring contest. It was designed as a way to get the home fire safety message out to as many households as possible. Out of almost 400 contest entrants, Emily Duque was the first of four winners. She was picked up at school by the fire truck and was an honorary fire fighter for the day.

After meeting the fire chief and getting a badge, Emily and her father ate lunch with the firefighters and were then driven back to her school.

Emily wrote a brief story about her experience that day and shared it with the board members.

Chair Barnes complimented Emily and also the fire department.

5. Formal Hearing on Food Service Budget for 2017-2018

Food Services Director presented the budget and highlighted certain items, such as a dispensing units for the high school, a table top unit for the James Masticola Elementary School, and replacement carts for different schools.

Food Services Director Dziki responded to the two questions he had received from the school board.

Chair Barnes had submitted the question: “Are there any major replacements we need to consider for future budgets (heating units, coolers, etc.) because they are approaching their end of life? We want to have an idea of what we have to plan for (along the lines of furniture replacement plans in schools)?

Director Dziki responded that about ten years ago a high school freezer unit was replaced. When requesting funds for replacement of large ticket items he takes advice from the equipment specialists and repairmen.

There are also surplus funds available for emergencies.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question: “The expended amount vs the budgeted amount for the previous budget cycle differs by nearly \$100K (with expended less than anticipated). Is there background as to why this was so much less? Lower cost of goods or reduced purchasing of lunch/snacks by students? If the former, do we expect the trend to continue for lower costs? And if the latter, do we have a plan to increase participation of students buying goods?

Director Dziki responded that over the course of the last five years several things have developed. The Merrimack School District joined the buying collaborative, resulting in considerable savings. The ala carte snack sales have been consistent over the past few years.

Student Representative Sernik asked for the amount of the emergency fund.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the surplus fund stands at about \$100,000.00.

6. Formal Hearing on Maintenance Budget for 2017-2018

Maintenance Director Touseau and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell were invited to the table.

Director Touseau began his presentation by highlighting the big ticket items in the proposed budget. They are:

1. The HVAC unit on the roof of the Merrimack High School (\$539,827)
2. Patching the bus loop in front of the Merrimack High School (\$38,000)
3. Patching the bus loop and front entrance of Merrimack High School (\$234,174)
4. Replacement of sidewalk at the Merrimack Middle School (\$98,660)
5. Repair of the sidewalk at the Merrimack High School (\$55,000)
6. Eight roof portions at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell gave a slide show, which has been posted to the district website while Director Touseau addressed school board members’ previously submitted questions.

The asbestos removal at the Merrimack High School is budgeted at \$265,000.00. The Family and Consumer Science Room cabinets and countertops are in need of replacement and should be replaced (\$45,000) while the asbestos beneath them is removed.

Vice Chair Schneider submitted the question: “In the area of Maintenance/Grounds supplies, it lists the MHS Track as one of the items being covered, and the budgeted amount is the same as last year. Does the existence of the new track result in any possible savings for track-related items in this budget item? Was not sure whether track repairs or other items were captured here or not.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that on page 10 of the maintenance budget the track is noted as a supply item. The track comes into play on page 4 at the bottom of the page under “Maintenance Ground Repairs.”

In 2015-2016 the School Board put \$15,000 more into the budget to repair the track to get through the year. The amount went back down to its regular amount the next year. Last year’s amount had already been reduced.

Vice Chair Schneider submitted the questions: “Not so much a question but a request. We’re getting some pushback in regards to the cost of the two sidewalk repair projects. Matt showed a video of the middle school sidewalk issues. Can we make some pictures available of that as well as the high school sidewalk areas to show at the budget review and also as part of our voter education effort on the budget? And also denote in a map (school layout) exactly which areas of the sidewalks are being repaired/replaced?”

This was accomplished with the slide-show presentation.

Vice Chair Schneider submitted the question: “For this and all other Natural Gas budget items. The budgeted amount last year vs. the expended last year was dramatically different, largely due to the warm winter. The budgeted amount for this coming year was less than the past year. Obviously you plan for a cold winter, but is the reduction in budgeted amount due to lower natural gas costs, or some other factor? (such as you’re now getting a better idea of the run-rate of natural gas in these buildings vs. previous fuel consumption)

Director Touseau responded that the lower natural gas costs over the last two years was averaged to budget for the next budget.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell added that budgeting for utilities is challenging.

Board Member Thompson submitted the question: “How were the energy budgets calculated? Can we get further details on the electric and gas budget line items please?”

Director Touseau responded that water and sewer were calculated by the highest amount expended over the past two years, utilities and gas was averaged over the past two years, oil was the highest expended line in the last two years. The electricity is more complicated because three of the schools are metered together.

We have no control over delivery costs. The rates vary.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell added that the district uses the services of a utilities broker and this has resulted in over \$100,000.00 in savings over the past year.

Vice Chair Schneider made a follow-up comment about natural gas. He is interested in seeing the future savings when the conversion is completed.

Chair Barnes submitted the question: "MES Cafeteria tables are listed on the cut list (\$46,000). What does this do to your replacement plan for tables district-wide? Please also share the condition of the tables we are keeping."

Director Touseau responded that the tables are repaired annually and they do still function safely at this time. They can last another year.

Board Member Guagliumi asked for the age of the chairs and was told they are over 20 years old.

Chair Barnes submitted the question: "RFS Basketball Hoops on cut list (\$20,000). What is the condition of this equipment? Marge, can we approach the parent teacher group to see if they can assist with this?"

Director Touseau responded that some of the equipment is bent and rusted. Some of them can be bent back into shape but they do need to be replaced.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the installment cost needs to be factored in and that she would like to see the project done well.

The parent teacher groups used to be interested in playground upgrades but that the trend now is to fund technology.

Chair Barnes submitted the question: "0.5 Maintenance position (grounds). Would this position be sustainable if we convert to artificial turf fields?"

Director Touseau responded that there is more than enough work for a full-time position and that an artificial turf would lessen the need but not eliminate the need for an additional part-time position.

Chair Barnes submitted the question: "\$38,000 in bus loop paving at MHS. This looks to be the maintenance should the warrant article not pass for paving (which will be put out to vote at a cost of \$234,174). I want to be sure this is clarified in case there is a question of why there is bus loop paving in the budget."

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that this is correct.

Director Touseau addressed the issue of roof warranties and noted that completing the roofing project at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School would bring the district into better warranty status.

Discussion ensued among the board members and administration on merging the asbestos removal with the replacement of cabinets and countertops in the Family and Consumer Science room.

Superintendent Chiafery asked the board members to forward additional questions to her so that Director Touseau would have time to investigate them and provide informed responses.

Board Member Guagliumi complimented Director Touseau on his budget presentation. She then asked about camera maintenance and camera placement now and in the future.

Director Touseau responded that all of the buildings have exterior cameras. The high school hallways are entirely covered, the middle school hallways are partially covered, the middle school cafeteria is covered, and the other schools have one camera focused on who is entering the building.

Expenditures include additional cameras in the middle school hallways and camera maintenance contract. Part of the contract is an annual cleaning and inspection of each camera.

Board Member Guagliumi asked how often anyone goes back and looks at the tape on any of the cameras.

Director Touseau responded that at the high school they are reviewed daily and at the middle school less often.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that the cameras do help to deter vandalism.

Superintendent Chiafery asked Board Member Guagliumi to ask this question of the high school and middle school administrators. The tapes are a valuable tool in dealing with disciplinary cases.

Director Touseau noted that as the cameras are replaced the quality of the images improves.

Chair Barnes noted that Director Touseau would be back on January 10th to respond to final questions from the school board in regards to the budget.

7. Dissemination of Proposed New Hampshire School Board (NHSBA) Resolutions

Chair Barnes referred to the list of resolutions board members had received in their packets that were mailed out prior to tonight's meeting. They will be voted on at the NHSBA delegate assembly meeting scheduled for January 21, 2017.

Board Member Schoenfeld will attend as the Merrimack School District delegate. The resolutions will be discussed at the next school board meeting.

Questions may be emailed to Chair Barnes before the meeting.

8. Approval of December 5, 2016 Minutes

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the minutes.

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following change to the minutes: page 5, line 237-238: change the end of the sentence to read "...some amount as a warrant article."

The motion passed as amended 4-0-0.

9. Acceptance of Gifts/Grants Under \$5,000

A gift in the amount of \$450.00 was given to the James Masticola Upper Elementary School by parent Michael Thompson. The proceeds are to be used to purchase a table tennis table.

A gift in the amount of \$400.00 was given to the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School by Shaw's Supermarket. The proceeds are to be used as to improve the community relations account.

Board Member Guagliumi moved to accept the gifts as presented with gratitude.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

10. Consent Agenda

• Approval of Service Animals Policy

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept the consent agenda around the service animals' policy as it has been reviewed the past two meetings.

The motion carried 4-0-0.

11. Other

a) Correspondence

Vice Chair Schneider had received an email from a constituent about a new organization in the state that covers school board topics. He will share this information with the board members.

b) Comments

Superintendent Chiafery reminded the public that school will be in session on January 2, 2017 and that a notice will go home to remind parents.

Superintendent Chiafery spoke about the additional budget page that she included as a revised page 7 for the budget book. She read the page aloud.

12. New Business

There was no new business.

13. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Schneider and Board Member Guagliumi had attended the December 8th Merrimack Safeguard meeting. They learned that Merrimack Safeguard will be sponsoring a Community Forum on January 19th at the John D. O'Leary Center. There was also discussion on future programming.

Chair Barnes attended the Cost Containment Committee meeting on December 7th. A wellness day for staff has been planned for January 19th. At the meeting there was a review of guaranteed maximum rates for insurance.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

15. Manifest

The board signed the manifest.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting and move to non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) (b) (c).

The motion passed 4-0-0.