

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District
School Administrative Unit #26
April 3, 2017
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room**

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

Absent: Student Representative Sernik was excused from the meeting.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

Lifelong Merrimack parent Shannon Rand of One Blair Road asked how the district is addressing snow days. She expressed interest in how the school board might shorten the school year and still be in compliance with state rules.

3. Third Quarter Curriculum Review: Focus on Non-Academic Supports to Enhance Student Learning

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin began the presentation by expanding on his prior updates to the school board that focused on core content. He explained the status of the work by the committees from the different content areas.

Tonight's focus is on the overarching importance of the mental health of students. The work of the District Mental Health Committee and the District Health Curriculum Team utilized national health standards to create conditions where students are ready to learn.

Additionally the two groups have taken the extra step of adopting the goal of reducing risk to student readiness.

The emerging Health Curriculum will focus on the four core skills of advocacy, self-management, accessing good information by using a variety of sources and pro-active decision making.

Students will be taught the health content as in any other content area in context to the core skills.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin introduced Director of Special Services Fabrizio and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Assistant Principal DeLuca to provide updates to the board on the work of the District Mental Health Committee.

Director Fabrizio spoke about the broader work of the committee. The three essential questions that guide the work of the committee are:

1. What is the depth and the scope of the mental health needs in the Merrimack students and what are the strengths and weaknesses in the systems of care that are available to them as we exist?
2. How can we blend district committees and state efforts to promote a broader communications evidence based practice that supports the mental health needs of all students?
3. What are the features of an interconnected and systemic framework of care and learning supports that will integrate mental health supports within the Merrimack School District?

Responses to these questions and data collection results along with regional planning has allowed the committee to understand the breadth of need and to then ask the state for specific supports.

Assistant Principal DeLuca then shared this year's goal of improving the emotional social mental health of all students. This was precipitated by an awareness campaign targeted to all school personnel in the schools. Staff meetings at each school have emphasized the six components in the "System of Care" model.

Outside speakers have presented to staff on brain trauma and other mental health topics.

Sub-committees were formed in the areas of outreach, transitions and professional development.

Board Member Schoenfeld commended the presenters on the caliber of their work on such a complex issue.

Vice Chair Schneider suggested that Merrimack Safeguard be added to the list of community partners.

Board Member Guagliumi noted that when they last appeared before the board there was mention of support for all students rather than being in a reactionary mode. She asked what the status of this goal was.

Assistant Principal DeLuca responded that this is still a work in progress. Most schools are still working on social emotional instruction with the first step the awareness on the part of all staff. They are working towards support for all students.

Board Member Guagliumi commented that the work of this committee is extremely valuable and asked that the board be kept informed of any needs they have that the school board might attend to.

Board Member Thompson thanked the presenters for their work within the district and with schools outside of the district.

Chair Barnes spoke about the area of transitions. She noted the difference between transitioning from one district school to another district school from that of students new to the district. She asked what other districts are doing.

Director of Special Services Fabrizio responded that the meetings are valuable sharing opportunities.

Assistant Principal DeLuca noted that Merrimack School District's work is often seen as a model for other districts. She thanked the board for their support in creating a purposeful approach in designing a system of care. This is the most significant difference between the Merrimack School District and other districts.

Chair Barnes asked if there are plans to measure outcomes from the skills that are being applied in the classrooms in the area of mental health.

Assistant Principal DeLuca responded that academic data on "at risk" students is showing that there is a high correlation between academic failure and social, emotional and behavioral challenges in their lives.

Director of Special Services Fabrizio added that the new comprehensive courses being offered at the high school are showing very positive results.

Board Member Thompson asked if empowerment of students not considered "at risk" is a part of the curriculum.

Assistant Principal DeLuca responded that the notion that "everybody is a helper" begins in the elementary schools and has become part of school culture.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin added that when speaking about student empowerment the language used in the district is "student voice."

Board Member Guagliumi asked if August Academy will include topics in this area and was told yes.

4. Initial Discussion Regarding Repurposing the O'Gara Tennis Courts

Chair Barnes referred to an e-mail she had received from Town Council Chair Nancy Harrington in regards to the O'Gara Drive property as the current agreement expires July 1, 2018. The property houses the tennis courts, basketball courts, ice rink, skateboard park and parking lot.

The New Hampshire Parks has asked the town of Merrimack's intentions.

It has been suggested by prior school board members that the site might be used as the new site of the consolidated SAU/SPED Offices.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reported that the amount of land and space needed to re-locate the offices is sizeable. The current lighting would need to be removed and the rest of the property would be returned to its natural state.

Board Member Thompson asked if the original agreement states how the property needs to be returned at the end of 2018.

Vice Chair Schneider responded that the lease states the land needs to be returned in the status in which it was received unless the school board asks that certain aspects be left intact. Grant money was used to construct the property.

A previous school board had decided not to renew the lease to the town for this property. It is now time to decide how the land should be returned to the school board.

Chair Barnes noted that there is ample time for the town to decide which of the existing services it will want to continue to offer to the community.

Vice Chair Schneider noted that there are two dimensions to this issue: what the town is obligated to continue to offer while the lease is in place and what happens afterwards. He noted that the town was in breach of the agreement when they allowed the tennis courts to go into disrepair. Their two options were to reconstruct or remove them. If the tennis courts were removed the town was under the obligation to find another location in the town to serve as a recreation area for the tennis courts.

Chair Barnes noted that the purpose for this meeting was to bring new school board members up to date on the prior history of the lease and to create a draft letter to go to the Town Council of the School Board's expectations in regard to the lease. A draft letter would be reviewed at the next school board meeting and then finalized for the May 1, 2017 meeting. This would give the Town thirteen months advance notice.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if the letter would request that the Town take action on the tennis courts immediately because there is an existing breach of contract.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that in the spirit of cooperation that it might serve better to give the ultimate vision for the property and then to see what is doable in steps. She agreed that it is not to stay in its current condition as it continues to deteriorate.

Superintendent Chiafery suggested that the board might want to look back at the minutes of the last joint meeting between the school board and the town council and review what was discussed and decided on the surrendering of the lease.

Board Member Thompson asked if a motion was needed addressing the content of the formal letter to the Town Council.

Superintendent Chiafery reiterated Chair Barnes earlier comment that tonight was to bring all of the board members up to date on the email and she then noted that some action needs to be taken as soon as possible.

She suggested that a motion be made at the next meeting once the board has the minutes from the joint meeting to review.

Board Member Thompson asked for a point of order on which should happen first. Should the board make a recommendation first or should the draft letter be written and presented first.

Discussion ensued among the members.

Chair Barnes stated that she would like to have the pulse of the board on how to proceed. The prior board made a decision that was never formalized. She wanted the current board to be represented moving forward.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that the prior board stated that the tennis courts needed to be taken care of and then the rest of the land returned as it was at the end of lease.

In addition there was a charge to the Planning and Building Committee to investigate putting the proposed consolidated SAU/SPED building on the property.

Vice Chair Schneider asked that the board decide if they agree with these actions of the prior board before a draft letter is created.

Board Member Guagliumi noted that there was an earlier supposition that the land was assumed to be all ledge and unbuildable and the quote to put in new tennis courts assumed this in their cost projection.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that when the high school track was being installed an inspection of the area discounted this theory.

Board Member Thompson's position was to have the land returned to the school board as a clean slate.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that if the consolidated SAU/SPED Offices are to be built on this site then there needs to be a clean slate of land.

Board Member Thompson made a motion (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) that the land be returned to the school board as a clean slate.

Vice Chair Schneider asked that the motion be amended to authorize the Town to do the work on the tennis courts immediately.

Board Member Thompson amended his motion (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to allow the Town to take action that they consider necessary between now and the end of the lease and we request that the property be returned to its natural state no later than the end of the lease.

Chair Barnes noted that the land is under the control of the Town until June 30, 2018 and it is up to the town to decide on a timetable for making the necessary changes.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if returning the land to its natural state included planting grass.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that grass is not expected to be planted.

Vice Chair Schneider raised the possibility that if in the future a proposed consolidated SAU/SPED building is not approved by the town, then the issue of what to do with the land will need to be re-visited.

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

Chair Barnes will give a courtesy call to Town Council Chair Harrington as to the motion made at this meeting.

5. Proposed Last Day of School Based on Instructional Hours Due to Snow Day Impacts

Superintendent Chiafery opened by noting that the last day of school is still a tentative date. She then noted that the make-up days shown on the calendar are there for a reason. The state Department of Education's expectation is that districts will operate within this time frame.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin began by noting that the make-up days are required to be built into the calendar and they must be used first.

The only group without enough hours is the morning kindergarten. This will be resolved by the creation of three full days of kindergarten transition days. Both existing morning and afternoon kindergarten classes will attend these three days. These days will be used to provide students access to and understanding of the first grade curriculum.

Because the state allows the option of counting instructional hours instead of days the tentative last day of school is June 21, 2017.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reminded the board that waivers are granted in unusual circumstances. Snow days are already planned for in the calendar. Additionally the idea of adding minutes to each of the remaining days involves teaching and bussing contracts.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the three kindergarten transitional days is for both a.m. and p.m. classes and was told yes.

Board Member Thompson voiced his continued interest in a discussion on adding time to the school day. He would like to see the topic as an agenda item.

Vice Chair Schneider agreed and would like a renewed discussion among the board members on instructional hours.

Board Member Guagliumi noted that the connection between the work of the Mental Health Committee and the transition idea for kindergarten.

Chair Barnes noted the challenge of deciding on a firm last day of school based on recent weather. Most recently were the issues of not yet having in place a state Commissioner of Education from whom to seek guidance from, and the later in the school year storms.

She also noted that the current model in use in the Merrimack School District is a robust instructional design that goes above the minimum to allow for a safety net when the district is faced with a situation such as it is this year. To move to a different model would have extended this school year by several days.

Board Member Thompson asked Chair Barnes to put the topic of looking at instructional hours on an upcoming agenda. He would like a discussion on extending the school day and what the challenges would be.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that the topic will not be on the next agenda due to the upcoming school presentations that are always scheduled in the Spring.

Board Member Thompson responded that it does not need to be on the next agenda but that he just wants it on public record that it will be discussed. He does not expect any changes to next year's school calendar.

Board Member Guagliumi asked that the information from the Amherst school system visit be resurrected and made available prior to the discussion.

6. Approval of March 20, 2017 Minutes

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to accept the minutes of the March 6, 2017 meeting.

Board Member Thompson requested the following changes:

Page 2, line 86: Change 2917 to 2017.

Page 4, line 144: Board Member Thompson noted that his request for a discussion in regards to adding more time to the school calendar was not recorded in the minutes. He asked that it be added to the minutes.

The motion passed as amended 4-0-1. Chair Barnes abstained.

7. Acceptance of Gifts and Grants under \$5,000

- **HealthTrust to Merrimack School District for \$100**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell presented a gift from the HealthTrust, Inc. to the Merrimack School District in the amount of \$100.00. The gift was received by the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee (HCCC) for high participation on the web portal challenge and will be used for expenses related to communication with retirees regarding healthcare cost containment efforts.

Board Member Schoenfeld moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to accept the gift.

The motion carried 5-0-0.

8. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the consent agenda to the board.

- **Approval of Elected/Appointed School District Officials Policy**
- **Approval of Cynthia Hess's Request to Administer Surveys to Upper Elementary Students for a Doctoral Study**
- **Resignation/Retirements**

Resignations:

- Andrew Gallagher, Merrimack High School, Social Studies Educator

Retirements:

- Cynthia Baker, Merrimack High School, Librarian
- Karen H. Bonin, James Mastricola Elementary School, Grade 1 Educator
- Kenneth Dugal, Merrimack High School, Choral Music Educator
- Maureen A. Newton, Merrimack High School, English Educator
- Peter Petrigno, Merrimack High School, Social Studies Educator
- Sharon Silva, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, Librarian
- Emilie Carter, James Mastricola Elementary School, Principal

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to accept the consent agenda as read and expressed his personal appreciation to the longtime educators and administrators for their dedicated service to the district.

The motion carried 5-0-0.

9. Other

a) Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

b) Comments

Board Member Guagliumi commented that she had attended the presentation by retired Chief Justice Broderick. She was impressed with him and would like to see him return and speak again.

Chair Barnes agreed and would like to see him return to speak to students.

Board Member Thompson thanked the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for allowing him to participate in the Enterprise City interview process.

Chair Barnes commented that Round One of the Granite State Challenge was an exciting comeback by the Merrimack High School Team of which School Board Representative Sernik is the team captain.

Board Member Schoenfeld also enjoyed her experience as an interviewer for Enterprise City.

Board Member Guagliumi added her appreciation and noted that eighth grader Aiden Hanning was a national champion in wrestling.

10. New Business

There was no new business.

11. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Schneider reported that the Planning and Building Committee has tried to meet been unable to reach a quorum. They do plan to come before the school board to report on the Charge on athletic fields.

12. Public Comments

Merrimack parent Shannon Rand returned to the table to thank the board and the administration for their diligence in looking into the school calendar options when deciding on a tentative last day of school.

13. Manifest

The board signed the manifest at 8:42 p.m.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion carried 5-0-0.