

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District
School Administrative Unit #26
April 17, 2017
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room**

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

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

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. School Board Reorganization

Chair Barnes noted that the recent election requires that the School Board Chair and Vice Chair be re-nominated and elected.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to nominate Shannon Barnes to serve another year as chair of the school board.

Chair Barnes accepted the nomination.

The motion carried 5-0-0.

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Chair Barnes) to nominate Andy Schneider to serve another year as vice-chair of the school board.

The motion carried 5-0-0.

Chair Barnes welcomed back Board Members Guagliumi and Schoenfeld to the board.

3. Commitment to Board Code of Ethics

Chair Barnes asked members to sign the school board code of ethics.

Members then took turns reading aloud the code of ethics.

***Merrimack School Board
Code of Ethics***

As a member of the Merrimack School Board, I shall promote the best interests of the District by adhering to the following ethical standards, and affix my signature to the same:

Trustworthy in Responsibilities

- ❖ *I will always remember that my first and greatest concern will be the educational welfare of the students in the Merrimack School District.*
- ❖ *I will be accountable to the public by accurately representing District policies, programs, priorities, and progress.*
- ❖ *I will be responsive to the community by seeking its involvement in District affairs and by communicating its priorities and concerns.*
- ❖ *I will work to ensure prudent and accountable use of District resources and never lose sight of the fiscal responsibility owed to the taxpayers of the District.*
- ❖ *I will make no personal promise to take private action that may compromise my performance or my responsibilities or those of my fellow Board members.*
- ❖ *I will avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest, and refrain from using my board position for personal or partisan gain.*

Honor in Conduct

- ❖ *I will be honest, fair, just, and impartial in all my decisions and actions.*
- ❖ *I will encourage and respect open dialogue and listen with an open mind while working for consensus.*
- ❖ *I will respect the majority decision as the decision of the Board.*

Integrity of Character

- ❖ *I will consistently uphold all applicable laws, rules, policies, and District procedures.*
- ❖ *I will not disclose information that is confidential by law or that will undermine the District.*

Commitment to Service

- ❖ *I will focus my attention on fulfilling the Board's responsibilities of goal setting, policymaking, and evaluation.*
- ❖ *I will diligently prepare for and attend Board meetings.*
- ❖ *I will avoid personal involvement in activities the Board has delegated to the Superintendent.*
- ❖ *I will inform myself about relevant educational issues.*

4. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

5. Focus on Student Voice at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

Assistant Principal Julie DeLuca and educators and students shared testimonials on the value of the school community's work on empowering student voice.

Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Behavioral Specialist Mrs. Etchells, Counselor Mrs. Seiden and School Nurse Mrs. McMahan led the presentation by outlining the journey since 2002 with a

PowerPoint demonstration. It started with the hiring of the behavior specialist, and grew to include an outlining of school-wide expectations, interventions, creating a culture of helpers, and bullying prevention, to the establishment of a mental health committee in 2015. As noted by Assistant Principal DeLuca in her opening, there is no finish line or completion date. This work is ongoing.

The progress of this work to empower students was mapped to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Specific examples were presented of how Thorntons Ferry Elementary School meets these needs and assists students in moving up in the hierarchy. The goal at the top tier of self-actualization is reached when a student is ready to learn.

One of the major initiatives that has had high success is the "Second Step Program" that was piloted in grade one two years ago and is now in grades kindergarten through grade three. It will be implemented in grade four next year.

This researched based, sequenced, social emotional learning program is taught by classroom teachers and teaches coping skills that assist students with preparing themselves for learning.

Teachers and students took turns giving testimonials on the positive impacts of student empowerment through the "Second Step Program".

The audience was inspired and entertained by the testimonials from students Kyle Tessier, Tyler Allen, Jade Caldwell and Allison McMahon.

Vice Chair Schneider spoke as a parent and school board member when he cited his strong appreciation for this important work. He noted the evolution of the understanding of social and emotional needs and the resources now available for students.

Board Member Thompson stated his assumption that this work leads to less disruptions in the classrooms.

Chair Barnes commended the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School community for building on their notoriety of being chosen last year as the top elementary school in New Hampshire.

6. Focus on Contributions Made to School by Parent Teacher Groups

Superintendent Chiafery invited all of the representatives to the table. She noted the value of the hard work of the parent groups to the school system and asked that each school share some of the things they are working on for their school.

Parent Faculty Association (PFA) President Rebecca Mimms and Treasurer Shannon Rand of Reeds Ferry Elementary shared that the average annual budget is about \$30,000.00. Examples of how the funds are used include the artist in residence program, the musician in residence program, visiting authors, fun day, playground upgrades, a new popcorn machine, snowshoes for the snowshoe club, math superstars, butterfly garden maintenance, \$80 to each teacher,

document cameras, and mimeo machines for each classroom. A future goal will be a projection screen for the gymnasium.

Parents and Teachers of Thorntons Ferry (PTTF) President Gianne Cruz of Thorntons Ferry Elementary School shared that the annual budget is about \$35,000.00. Examples of how the funds are used include upgrading the upper playground (\$40,000), upgrading technology (21 iPads, 1 per classroom), learning center furniture, Second Step Program and Wonder Workshop.

Parent Faculty Association (PFA) Vice President Lorna Gonzalez of the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School shared that the annual budget is about \$23,000.00. Examples of how the funds are used include the artist in residence program, musician in residence program, author visits, teachers allowance, Project Safeguard for grade six, Lone Rangers for grade five, Lego League, war and re-enactment, Destination Imagination, birthday books, the mosaic in the foyer, All Purpose Room sound system, an art display case, the Jaguar Jamboree field day and an ice cream social. A future goal is to purchase security blinds and large screen TV in the library.

Parent Teacher Group (PTG) Co-President Damian Gunter of the Merrimack Middle School shared that since 2013 the school has held a no fundraiser fundraiser. These limited funds of about \$6,000.00 with about one third of the parents participating, have been used to upgrade school technology thru a crowd funding site called Event Bright. Other uses for the funds include the purchase of document cameras, transportation to Washington DC for the eighth grade trip, teacher breakfasts, teacher appreciation, the theatre program, arts, Stem activities and robotics.

Parents and Teachers Together (PATT) Program Coordinator Valerie Brodsky from the James Mastricola Elementary School shared that the annual budget is about \$23,000.00. Examples of how the funds are used include the Tiger Theater, Top Secret Science for grades three and four, the New Hampshire Audubon Society, Steve Blount's silly songs, author visits, artist in residence program, musician in residence program, enrichment for specialist teachers and regular educators, start-up packages for teachers, dinners during parent/teacher conferences, teacher appreciation, Battle of the Books, Grade Four year-end celebration and baseball day, Grade Three recorders, Math Superstars, and field day. Twenty five iPads and cases were purchased in 2015. Future plans are to continue to increase technology spending. Money is raised through the Fall and Spring Book Fairs, Ice Cream Social, Charleston wrap catalog, Square One Art, Texas Roadhouse Rules, Breakfast with Santa, Family Movie Night, and the Color Run.

Superintendent Chiafery expressed her sincere appreciation for all of the parents' hard work and effort to bring these contributions forward for the good of the children and the schools.

Board Member Thompson stated the importance of highlighting this work so that the community can be made aware of the positive impact to the overall budget as well as the many volunteer hours given to the community.

Vice Chair Schneider commented on how much gets done with the limited amount of funds. He suggested tapping into these groups for ideas and assistance with the development of a turf field for the district.

Board Member Schoenfeld observed that unless one has students in the schools, that this work can easily go unnoticed and was grateful for this presentation.

Chair Barnes noted her past personal involvement in the various parent groups and the monetary value to the district. She expressed appreciation for all of the valuable work and the projects it funds.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell echoed the sentiments of the board of the long-term impact these parent groups have on the district.

7. Report from the Planning and Building Committee: Focus on Athletic Fields

Chair Barnes invited Rich Hendricks to the table to report on a Charge given by the School Board in regards to several specific potential sites for a turf field.

Mr. Hendricks referred to handouts he had provided to each member. He reviewed all of the sites and stated that the only feasible site for a lacrosse sized field is on land between Thorntons Ferry Elementary School and Continental Boulevard.

Vice Chair Schneider noted his role as the school board liaison on the Planning and Building Committee. He agreed with the evaluation of field feasibility and noted that the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School parking lot could be utilized for parking.

Board Member Thompson noted his role as a member of the Parks and Recreation Committee and stated that they are also looking for new sites for fields. He noted that if the two ball fields at the Reeds Ferry Elementary School are re-graded they could then be used as a soccer field.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that these fields on Lyons Road are under agreement with the town of Merrimack and any changes need to go through an approval process.

Board Member Thompson asked about the possibility of a land swap of the forty acres of Timmons property. Mr. Hendricks deemed this land too steep for building fields.

Chair Barnes asked if the nature trails utilized by the Wellness Committee would be eliminated if a field was put in at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School and was told yes.

Discussion ensued among the members and Mr. Hendricks as to the feasibility of some of the discounted locations.

Board Member Thompson expressed interest on having the School Board work with the Town Council on the issue of future recreational fields.

Chair Barnes will contact the Town Council once their board is re-organized with a request for a joint meeting to discuss several mutually beneficial topics.

8. Approval of Letter of Disposition Regarding O’Gara Tennis Courts from School Board to Town Council

Chair Barnes read the revised draft into the record.

April 18, 2017

*Nancy Harrington
Chair
Merrimack Town Council
6 Baboosic Lake Road
Merrimack, NH 03054*

Dear Nancy,

At our meeting on April 3, 2017, the Merrimack School voted to not renew our agreement with the Town of Merrimack to manage recreational facilities on our property on O’Gara Drive. With this vote, we are requesting that the Town of Merrimack return all of the property to us as level ground (no remnants of former usage) by the expiration date of the current agreement which falls on June 30, 2018. The areas in question include the tennis courts (including fences and lights), basketball court, skate park, and ice rink areas. Since the tennis courts are no longer operational, we appreciate and encourage this area be addressed as soon as possible.

We would be satisfied with the property being returned as level ground, and do not need the ground to be grass seeded, as we will better keep options for future use open if we did not have to uproot new grass.

We thank you for the many years of partnership regarding this site and look forward to working with you in the future on projects of mutual benefit.

Sincerely,

*Shannon M. Barnes
Chair Merrimack School Board*

After brief observations by several members it was decided that some minor changes would be made to the letter. The intent of the letter would not change.

Board Member Guagliumi expressed concern with having the land returned ungrassed and possibly sitting unused for a long period of time.

Board Member Thompson suggested that the area be used for temporary parking for the softball field.

Chair Barnes noted that by next April the board will have a clearer picture of the budget and the potential use of the land.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell and Vice Chair Schneider discussed the issue of having the land returned graveled versus in the condition in which it was received.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to make the needed changes and then send the letter to the town council.

The motion carried 5-0-0.

9. Actual Health Insurance Rate for 2017-2018

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell informed the board that the guaranteed maximum rate (GMR) that was used to calculate the budget was 9%.

The actual rate has been determined to be 3.7%.

The estimated savings is about \$100,000.00.

Vice Chair Schneider asked when open enrollment begins and was told it begins in May. He would like the options to be made available to the board and the community at large.

10. Approval of School Board Minutes

• April 3, 2017 Public Minutes

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

The motion carried 5-0-0.

• April 5, 2017 Non-Public Minutes

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

The motion carried 4-0-1. Board Member Thompson abstained.

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

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell presented a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Bull to the Merrimack High School in the amount of \$1,000.00. The proceeds will be used to support the efforts of the U.S. First Robotics Team.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept the gift with gratitude.

The motion carried 5-0-0.

12. Consent Agenda

- **Educator Resignations/Retirements**

Michelle O'Neil, Mastricola Elementary School, Grade 4 Educator

Jacque Heaton, Merrimack Middle School, Special Educator

Wayne Stuck, Merrimack High School, Social Studies Educator

Cheryl A. Jameson-White, James Mastricola Elementary School, Special Educator

- **Educator Nominations for 2017-2018**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted the sizeable list of nominations.

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

The motion carried 5-0-0.

13. School Board Committee Assignments

Chair Barnes referred to the list of current assignments and asked members to state their preferences for next school year's assignments and to let her know before the next meeting.

14. Other

a) Correspondence

Superintendent Chiafery referred to a copy of a letter that she had received from the New Hampshire Retirement System noting their appreciation for the assistance they had received from Director of Human Resources Linda Hastings and payroll specialist Sarah Fell during the audit.

Chair Barnes stated that the entire board had received communication from a constituent with questions about the mental health presentation and that all of the questions have been addressed.

Board Member Thompson had received correspondence in regards to the end of school calendar and the water problem issues in the schools.

Board Member Thompson also received correspondence from the students he interacted with during the Enterprise City program.

b) Comments

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted that he had responded to factual errors in a news story based on the presentation on mental health at the previous school board meeting. He anticipates a follow up article that would more accurately address the issues of mental health across the state.

15. New Business

There was no new business.

16. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Schneider noted that the Wellness Committee meeting was postponed.

Vice Chair Schneider had attended the Planning and Building Committee meeting and in addition to the earlier topic of fields they discussed the SAU/SPED building(s) options.

Vice Chair Schneider had attended the SERESC Board of Directors meeting and learned that on May 1st there will be an important meeting.

Board Member Thompson attended the Professional Development Committee meeting. He thanked the teachers for the countless extra hours they put in to further their professional development.

Board Member Thompson attended the Communications Committee meeting and noted the progress of the committee.

Board Member Guagliumi attended the Merrimack Safeguard Committee meeting and noted that there is always need for new members.

17. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

18. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest at 9:15 p.m.

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion carried 5-0-0.