

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District
School Administrative Unit #26
James Mastricola Elementary School - All Purpose Room
September 5, 2017 (Tuesday)
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Introduction of Student Representative to School Board

Chair Barnes introduced the new student representative Chris Puzzo to the school board.

Chris, a junior at Merrimack High School, shared that he enjoys band, robotics and writing for the student newspaper. A future ambition is to enter politics on the local and then federal levels.

4. Conversation with Architect about SAU/Special Services Office Options

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell introduced architect Paul Marinace to the table. Mr. Marinace's firm has done considerable business in the Merrimack School District. He was asked to provide schematics to the board that would assist the board in their decision on what direction to go in regards to new SAU/SPED Offices.

The Planning Board asked the School Board to consider multiple options for the new SAU/SPED offices. Mr. Marinace had provided members blueprints and general cost breakdowns for three different options.

- Option #1: 1-Story Addition to High School
8,800 sq. ft. + 2,100 sq. ft. basement = \$3,813,000
- Option #2: 2-Story Addition to High School
12,000 sq. ft. + 2,100 sq. ft. basement = \$4,650,000
- Option #3: Stand Alone on the O'Gara Site
8,200 sq. ft. + 2,100 sq. ft. basement = \$3,164,000

Mr. Marinace reviewed the plans and cost estimates. He highlighted several factors for consideration.

1. The cost of site work varies for the different buildings.
2. The footprint for the one-story addition versus the two-story addition is larger.
3. The high school site is a very valuable option for any future addition to the high school for classrooms.
4. The existing parking lot for the SAU would be lost.
5. Additions to the high school require separate entries and firewalls.
6. The two-story addition would require stairs and an elevator and would not align with the second floor of the high school.
7. The bus loop would be impacted by an addition during construction.
8. Choosing to build an addition to the high school would require that the SAU/SPED offices be relocated twice, adding to the cost.
9. All three plans were costed out as wood frame buildings.
10. There are unknowns as to tying into existing systems in the high school.
11. The estimated cost for brick veneer would be about \$200,000.00.
12. The two-story addition would utilize about 3,000 sq. ft. for corridors, stairs, and the elevator.
13. With the stand alone building there would be no need to build out utilities from the existing high school.

Board Member Guagliumi asked a question about parking and the response was that any addition to the high school would result in the loss of the existing SAU parking and possibly be recouped on the site of the existing SPED Offices.

Chair Barnes called a recess due to a medical emergency.

The board resumed and Board Member Guagliumi was excused for the rest of the meeting.

Chair Barnes asked if more handicapped parking might go into this spot and was told it was a possibility.

Board Member Thompson asked about the bus loop.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell added that plows and delivery trucks need to traverse the bus loop.

Vice Chair Schneider noted that the stand alone building is similar to the one that went to the voters two years ago and the cost was significantly less. He asked if the prior bid was not as comprehensive.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the earlier bid which was based on pre-fab materials, and rising costs over the past few years have attributed to the price difference.

Chair Barnes observed that this is a more comprehensive presentation because it includes site work and furniture.

Assistant Superintendent for Business shared that bond rate fluctuations would make the actual increase in bonding to be about \$22,000.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked what might be advantageous from a design perspective to putting an addition onto the high school.

Mr. Marinace responded that there is no advantage.

Board Member Thompson commented that since there can be no cross use of space there is no advantage to choosing to build an addition to the high school to house the SAU/SPED offices.

Chair Barnes thanked Mr. Marinace for the excellent presentation and how valuable it will be in guiding the board's decision.

Chair Barnes asked Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell to forward the presentation information to the Planning Board with a cover letter that would let them know that the issue was properly vetted.

Chair Barnes asked that the information also be put on the school's website.

5. Outcome from James Mastricola Upper Elementary Teachers' Participation at Honeywell Educators at Space Academy

Chair Barnes invited the parties to the table.

Science educators Ashley Meehan and Keith Tanner shared their experiences and the impacts to their teaching. Educator Tanner shared that in the opening remarks educators were told that they were teaching the generation that would be going to the planet Mars.

Educators were housed at the University of Alabama and bussed on old NASA busses to the Huntsville Space Academy and Museum. The experience lasted for two weeks alongside family and child camps.

Participants enjoyed two NASA experiences a day and two curriculum experiences a day. Homer Hickam the author of *Rocket Boys* was the opening speaker. They regularly interacted with current and previous astronauts who told them of the importance of teachers in guiding them towards their careers.

One outcome of their experience is to begin a STEM Club after school at the upper elementary school. Additionally each participant received a myriad of manuals and teaching materials to take back to their schools.

Educator Meehan presented a slide show of the two weeks and spoke about her team's design that was made into an actual mission patch and distributed to the sixteen members of their cohort. The outside represents the flags of every country in their cohort. Other components reflect the Orion mission, the moon as destination and the rocket to be used, the 37th mission, and a book as a base for the rocket.

Both educators were very grateful for the once in a lifetime experience and thanked the administration, school board and Honeywell for the opportunity

Honeywell representative Jim Lucy was instrumental in providing this opportunity for not one but two educators.

Chair Barnes thanked Mr. Lucy for this opportunity and for the many other past situations where his help was invaluable.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted that many of the themes raised in the presentation that go on in the district. He highlighted the school/business partnerships, taking risks and the power of teachers.

Chair Barnes noted the passion for science the educators exemplified and thanked them for their presentation.

6. Update on Summer Capital Improvement Projects

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell provided a synopsis of work done over the summer in regards to capital improvement projects.

He thanked the facilities directors and custodians for their hard work and dedication.

The high school received new paving for the bus loop and front of the building, a newly paved SAU parking lot, and a new front sidewalk with new granite curbing. Miller Engineering was hired to test the concrete. Money to seal the new sidewalks will be in this year's budget.

The HVAC upgrade and asbestos and cabinet removal in the Family and Consumer Science room was also done at the high school.

The roof at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School was completed with only 400 feet of side cap waiting to be installed.

The James Mastricola Upper Elementary School library is only awaiting a few pieces of furniture. This was funded by the Trustees of the Trust Funds.

The Merrimack Middle School sidewalk received new concrete and the existing granite curbing was re-installed.

Board Member Thompson asked if something could be done to disguise the rusty plates on the sidewalk.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that they are metal plates. He investigated other sites where they have been used and found this to be standard. The orange tinge is permanent.

Chair Barnes asked if there was any feedback yet on the air and sound quality in the cafeteria and study halls and was told not yet.

7. Review of 2017 August Academy

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin began by thanking the board for the continued support for this type of professional development.

The theme this year was “The Power of the Teacher.”

The introduction of the K-12 math program and the continuation of the social emotional health and well-being initiative were the focus of the days.

Elementary school keynote speaker Dr. Adam Saenz referenced his book “The Power of a Teacher” when recounting his youth and how two high school teachers impacted his life.

Secondary school keynote speaker Dr. Cassie Yackley spoke on understanding brain research as it relates to student learning.

Chair Barnes noted the robust agenda of the three days.

8. Request to Bargain a Successor Agreement for the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association

Chair Barnes noted that the district is in the third year of a three year agreement with MESSA. She and Board Member Schoenfeld will represent the School Board during negotiations. The current contract expires at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

9. New School Board Policy

• Health Education and Exemption from Instruction

Superintendent Chiafery read the proposed policy into the minutes.

Health Education and Exemption from Instruction

Consistent with Department of Education requirements, health and physical education, including instruction about parts of the body, reproduction, and related topics, will be included in the instructional program.

Instruction must be appropriate to grade level, course of study, and development of students and must occur in a systematic manner. The Superintendent will require that faculty members who

present this instruction receive continuing in-service training, which includes appropriate teaching strategies and techniques.

Parents/guardians will have the right to inspect health and physical instruction materials which will be made reasonably accessible to parents/guardians and others to the extent practicable.

Parents and legal guardians shall be notified by e-mail, other written means, website/social media postings or phone call, not less than two (2) weeks in advance of use of the curriculum course material to be used for instruction of human sexuality or human sexual education, that the material is available for inspection at the school. The notice will identify and provide contact information for the member of staff or faculty whom a parent or guardian should contact to arrange an opportunity to inspect the curriculum course material.

Parents/guardians who wish to review or inspect health and physical education materials may arrange a meeting with the Principal to review the materials.

Opt-Out Procedure and Form

Parents/guardians, or students over eighteen years of age, who do not want their child to participate in a particular unit of health or sex education instruction for religious reasons or religious objections, are allowed to have their child opt-out of such instruction.

Parents/guardians who wish to have their child opt-out of such instruction are required to complete the district opt-out form and state the particular unit of curriculum in which the student is not to participate. Any student who is exempted by request of the parent/guardian under this policy may be given an alternative assignment sufficient to meet state requirements for health education. The alternative assignment will be provided by the health or physical education teacher in conjunction with the Principal.

Parents/guardians who do not want their child to participate in a particular unit of health or physical education for religious reasons must complete a Health or Physical Education Opt-Out Form.

Opt-Out Forms are available from either the health education teacher or the Principal.

Opt-out requests must be submitted annually and are valid only for the school year in which they are submitted.

See also Merrimack School Board policy IGE, Exceptions to Use of Specific Course Materials.

Legal References:

- RSA 186:11, IX-c & IX-e Notice to Parents/Guardian Required
- NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.40, Health Education Program
- NH Code of Administrative Rules, section Ed 302.41, Physical Education Program
- RSA 186:11, IS-b, Health and Sex Education
- Appendix IHAM-R, Health or Physical Education Opt-Out Form

Board Member Thompson questioned the language in the first sentence of paragraph four to say "...e-mail, and other written means..."

Board Member Thompson requested that the policy be posted on the website when finished.

Board Member Thompson questioned the language in section two in the third paragraph stating that it appeared that students might be able to opt out of physical education for religious reasons.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the occasion could arise that a student might not be comfortable in a sports uniform if it shows more skin than the student is comfortable doing.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if the only opt-out reason is religious.

Superintendent Chiafery responded no; a parent could come forth with any reason. Parents/guardians would specify on the opt-out form what their reason is. In such a situation the teacher, and possibly the principal would sit with the parent/guardian and discuss the material that needs to be covered as a requirement of the New Hampshire Department of Education (NH-DOE). All parties would confer on how this would be done.

Board Member Schoenfeld questioned a language change in the first sentence of paragraph one in section two. She would like it to read "...Students over eighteen years of age or parents/guardians who do not want..."

Vice Chair Schneider questioned how the policy would be posted every year and how a parent would get the notification when the material is to be taught. His concern was how parents would be notified. Would it be all of the suggested methods or some other combination of them?

Superintendent Chiafery responded that when the Leadership Team meets they will review the policy and respond to the School Board's questions. She noted the importance of annual notification to parents/guardians so they have the opportunity to opt out if they choose.

Board Member Thompson requested adding that "...the policies, procedures and steps will be available on the website..." to the first sentence in the fourth paragraph in section one.

10. Approval of August 14, 2017 Minutes

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2017 meeting.

The motion passed as presented 4-0-0.

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

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell presented a gift from Barbara H. Wolf of Merrimack in the amount of \$500.00. The funds are to be used to purchase school supplies for

the 2017-2018 school year for the special education, art, music, library and computer science programs at Reeds Ferry Elementary School.

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept the gift as presented.

12. Consent Agenda

- a) Approval of Merrimack School District K-12 Science Curriculum**
- b) Approval of Name Change from Department of Special Services to Department of Student Services**
- c) Educator Nominations**

Abby Farnsworth, Merrimack High School, Math Teacher
Martha Mandeville, James Mastricola Elementary School, Special Education Teacher
Aimee Piccolo, Merrimack High School, Technology Education Teacher
Amanda Quigley, Special Education Teacher
Adam Vignault, Merrimack High School, Technology Education Teacher

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the consent agenda for approval.

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

13. Other

a) Correspondence

Vice Chair Schneider had received correspondence from constituents in regards to PFOA's and the location of the new bus parking location on the D. W. Highway.

Board Member Thompson had received correspondence from a constituent in regards to the PFOA's in the water.

b) Comments

Board Member Thompson commented that a statement made at the last meeting that the Bedford SAU office was attached to a school was inaccurate. The administration building is a separate building behind an elementary school. It is not common practice that administration buildings are attached to school buildings.

Superintendent Chiafery announced that athletic director Eric Sabean has resigned. Guidance counselor Michael Soucy will take over the position once a replacement for his position can be found. He has a background in athletics.

9. New Business

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin spoke on the issue of homework. He stated that the homework policy has not changed, but how it is graded has changed.

A discussion has begun on how to separate graded homework from the academic grade. An unclear academic record results when incorrect homework is accepted for a grade. Similarly is when a student who understands the material and does not turn in homework gets a failing grade.

The discussion will be split into two conversations; grades K-6 and grades 7-12. The goal is to separate the doing of homework for an academic grade from the habits of mind grade.

Board Member Thompson asked if homework that is turned in will be graded and returned.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that homework is as important to Merrimack as it has ever been. Homework only has value when a teacher reviews it for accuracy and grades it. Practice for the sake of practice will not be factored into an academic grade.

Board Member Thompson stated that he was still unclear on the difference on homework and practice.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that currently homework is considered practice.

Board Member Thompson expressed concern that students might perceive that they do not need to do their homework. He asked that teachers make it clear that the homework must be done.

Vice Chair Schneider requested that this be made an agenda item for a future meeting. He would like to have other educators invited into the conversation to speak on how homework is to be used if it is not going to be graded. Additionally, how the policy changes will be implemented and communicated to the parents. He would like to see how remediation will factor into the changes.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that nothing has changed about the place of homework and that when students do not do their homework it can impact their test grades. Students need to take ownership of their homework.

Vice Chair Schneider would also like the conversation to discuss the current value of homework, and the motivations for students to do it.

Board Member Schoenfeld supports having homework as an agenda item at a future meeting. She expressed concern that homework as busy work should become passé.

Board Member Thompson expressed agreement with Board Member Schoenfeld.

Chair Barnes commented that it is important that the correct information be put into policy and presented to parents and students. She noted that any feedback would be helpful to building leadership teams.

Chair Barnes suggested reviewing any changes after mid-term exams and teacher feedback be forwarded to the school board.

15. Committee Reports

Chair Barnes attended the Grater Woods sub-committee meeting on August 22nd. There will be another printing of large maps showing the entire school property of the middle school. Another trail is in development.

16. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

17. Manifest

The board signed the manifest.

At 9:26 p.m. Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

10. Committee Reports

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:26 p.m. Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to enter non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II, (c), (e).

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 5-0-0.

At 9:57 p.m. Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Schneider) to adjourn the meeting.