

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District
School Administrative Unit #26
September 18, 2017
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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 Puzzo.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Presentation of New Hampshire Interscholastic Association (NHIAA) Division I Sportsmanship Award

Chair Barnes invited Merrimack High School Principal Johnson, Assistant Principal Bergeron, Athletic Director Elect Soucy and Jeff Collins, Executive Director of NHIAA to the table.

Mr. Collins, a former high school principal in Portsmouth, spoke of the significance of the green Sportsmanship Award banner to the district and the community as a whole. It embodies the best in sportsmanship. He officially passed the banner for the 2016-2017 school year to Principal Johnson.

Principal Johnson shared that this banner is the single most coveted award in the state of all principals. He credited outgoing Athletic Director Sabeau and Assistant Principal Bergeron for their enthusiasm in promoting the high school sporting events.

Mr. Collins also thanked the district for hosting last year's track meet of champions.

The four guests then unfurled the banner for the board to see.

Chair Barnes thanked the NHIAA for the honor.

4. Outcome from Use of Canine Unit at Merrimack High School in June

Chair Barnes invited Principal Johnson to remain and invited Captain Denise Roy and Captain Mike Dudash to join him at the table.

Principal Johnson thanked the board for recognizing that we are an educational institution. The students were educated before the canine was introduced into the schools.

Captain Roy provided a brief history of how the canine was introduced to the students. She also provided details about what a sweep by the canines involves. Six state police dogs were brought into the high school in May 2016. The school was in lockdown, parents had been made aware, and the results were communicated immediately afterward. No contraband was discovered.

Board Member Guagliumi noted that communication was great and she would like to see the program expanded to include the parking lot.

Board Member Thompson agreed with Board Member Guagliumi.

Vice Chair Schneider would also like to see the dugouts and other surrounding areas included in a future search.

Chair Barnes would like to see annual notification of an upcoming canine search, for the benefit of freshmen and their parents.

Principal Johnson and Captain Roy expressed their interest in continuing the program.

5. Information Regarding the Running Start Program at Merrimack High School

Chair Barnes invited former guidance department member Mr. Soucy to return to the table with Principal Johnson to speak about the program.

Mr. Soucy began by explaining the difference between the Running Start Program and dual enrollment. The Running Start Program is coordinated through Nashua Community College and Merrimack High School in English 12 and Marketing 2. This program provides the opportunity for college credit to students who complete the courses.

The dual enrollment program is coordinated through Southern New Hampshire University and the Merrimack High School Business department. Course offerings are Sports and Events Management and Accounting 3.

Courses charge a nominal fee of \$100.00.

Vice Chair Schneider asked about the qualifications of the teachers in the program and if there are any plans to expand the program.

Mr. Soucy responded that the teachers must have master's degrees. Teachers also record grades for both the high school and the Running Start program. They are also observed by the staff from the college.

Chair Barnes asked about the Chinese Mandarin program and was told it is also a dual enrollment program.

Chair Barnes asked how students make the decision to choose between the programs.

Mr. Soucy responded that the Running Start Program is very writing intensive.

Principal Johnson took a moment to compliment Mr. Soucy's accomplishments and expressed his full confidence as Mr. Soucy takes over the position of athletic director.

6. Homework Protocol Implementation

Chair Barnes invited Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin to the table.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin began his presentation by stating that the homework issue is district-wide. Discussions took place within the K-6 and 7-12 teachers.

Three questions were addressed.

1. What is the purpose of homework?
2. Are current practices achieving the intended purpose?
3. Could we improve?

This questioning led to the development of three core principles.

1. Principle One: Academic Integrity - Do grades accurately reflect performance?
2. Principle Two: Equity - Are homework practices consistently applied across the district? Is homework support equal for all students?
3. Principle Three: Personal Responsibility - Do incentives work? Do incentives teach responsibility? Do incentives lead to sustained practice?

It was noted that the homework policy and the homework protocol do have overlapping language. The purpose of the protocol is to make the policy come to life.

The three takeaways from this work are:

1. Homework is a tool to assist a student to practice skills and content.
2. Completion of homework is a student responsibility.
3. The development of homework, assignments consistent with district policy is a teacher's responsibility.

The ultimate goal is to have grades that accurately reflect a student's understanding of the material.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if homework is evaluated, even if not graded and was told yes. This is addressed in the existing homework policy.

Vice Chair Schneider asked where homework fits in regards to competency and knowledge of the material, especially when considering remediation.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that in a competency the various skill sets are broken down for grades.

Board Member Thompson questioned how the homework issue became such a hot issue on social media.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded he gave this much reflection and thought. One possibility could be the challenge of rolling out changes to policies.

Board Member Thompson stated that he would like to know how the teachers communicated the homework policy and protocols to students. He asked if parents should have been notified before students.

Chair Barnes commented that social media is probably not the best place to find answers to children's education. It is best to communicate directly with the teachers.

Chair Barnes would like to see feedback after midterms as to the impact of the homework policy.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked that students with Individual Education Plans (IEP's) be included appropriately.

Vice Chair Schneider recommended consistency with the posting of information so that parents can easily stay up to date. When the information is missing or unclear people tend to go to social media and messages become distorted.

Board Member Guagliumi was in favor of the protocol.

Chair Barnes asked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin to post his presentation on the district website.

7. Proposed Capital Improvement Plan from 2018-2024

Chair Barnes invited Superintendent Chiafery and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell to provide details on the capital improvement plan.

Superintendent Chiafery opened by reviewing the process for putting the plan together. The existing plan was reviewed and brought to the Planning and Building Committee. Two changes were made by that committee and they then approved the plan.

One item not on the plan is the building of a new SAU/SPED offices due to the uncertain nature of the location. A new SAU/SPED building is now under major discussion by the school board.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell read aloud the items on the list. They include roofing, paving/sidewalks, drainage, bleacher upgrades, field upgrades, window replacement, technology infrastructure upgrades, and bonded debt. The existing bonded debt will be paid off by 2023-2024.

Vice Chair Schneider clarified for voters that the bleachers on the list are in the Smith Gym not the all-purpose room.

Board Member Thompson asked if the turf field funding decision can be finalized by the school board in the near future.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that there were a large amount of capital improvement projects in 2016-2017.

Superintendent Chiafery asked the board to consider moving the bleachers all into 2018-2019 based on personal comments from a member of the Planning and Building Committee on her experiences.

Board Member Thompson asked for a full inventory of all of the bleachers and conduct a full safety audit.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell will check with Maintenance Director Tom Touseau.

8. New School Board Policy

- **Second Review of Health Education and Exemption from Instruction**

Superintendent Chiafery presented the policy to the Leadership Teams recently and she considers the policy to be a work in progress.

She referred to board members prior questions and the changes she has proposed to address them.

Board Member Guagliumi questioned why the first and third paragraphs in the opt-out procedure do not contain the language regarding students over eighteen years of age.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she took the language from the state statute. She will bring it to the town attorney.

Board Member Thompson asked if religious objections need to be specifically addressed.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that because it is in the law it needs to be stated.

Board Member Schoenfeld commented that the first two paragraphs under the opt-out section seem ambiguous. The words “want to” and “allowed” are confusing.

Chair Barnes stated that if the policy is ready it will be voted on at the next meeting.

9. Approval of September 5, 2017 Minutes

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to accept the minutes of the September 5, 2017 meeting.

Board Member Guagliumi asked for the following change to the minutes: Move lines 74-76 above line 70.

The motion carried as amended 3-0-1.

Board Member Thompson was excused temporarily.

10. Consent Agenda

• Educator Nominations

Michael Shaughnessy, Merrimack High School, Technology Education Teacher

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the consent agenda.

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

11. Other

a) Correspondence

Vice Chair Schneider had heard from constituents about the homework policy and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in the schools.

Board Member Thompson hear from constituents about the sale of technology in the schools, water testing, homework, and how extra credit is given.

Board Member Schoenfeld heard from constituents about the homework situation and summer homework for advanced placement high school courses.

Chair Barnes noted the importance of referring correspondence to the appropriate places.

Superintendent Chiafery asked, based on the PFOA correspondence, if she should move forward with testing of the water.

Board Member Thompson responded that the questions he is getting are about filtration systems for the water fountains.

Vice Chair Schneider stated that his recollection from a prior meeting was that testing would be done again in the fall.

Superintendent Chiafery will move forward with the testing of water.

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Chair Barnes) to ask the Superintendent's Office to test the water in the schools every three months until the issue is addressed in another means.

Board Member Guagliumi would prefer to wait until the next set of test results are in to decide on a test protocol.

Chair Barnes spoke about a joint town council and school board decision that could be considered.

Board Member Thompson would like to see the school board make a stand alone decision.

Vice Chair Schneider stated there are still several other options on the table to be considered and a motion now might be premature.

The motion failed 1-4-0.

b) Comments

Board Member Guagliumi made a motion (seconded by Chair Barnes) to authorize administration to send out a similar correspondence like we did last year regarding the use of the canine at the high school.

Board Member Thompson asked that the communication be general.

Vice Chair Schneider would like to see this as a future policy or procedure so that it becomes the norm. He does not see the need to formally approve of it every year.

Board Member Schoenfeld would like more information from other districts on which practice has better results.

Board Member Guagliumi would like the communication to use language such as campus to allow for a broader search.

The motion passed 4-1-0.

12. New Business

Chair Barnes stated that she is trying to coordinate a joint meeting with the town council in November and asked members to send her their open times and any agenda items.

Chair Barnes asked members to be prepared with budget messages for her at the next meeting.

Vice Chair Schneider asked that a discussion on the proposed SAU/SPED building be held after the budget meeting.

Superintendent Chiafery shared some of the future agenda items. They include energy efficiencies that include LED lighting, air circulation, and boilers.

13. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Schneider attended the SERESC meeting on September 11th. The Bedford building will close at the end of September. On January 1st they will move to another building on South River Road.

Vice Chair Schneider attended the Planning and Building Committee meeting on September 11th. They would like to see the school board take the lead on the decision and they will be supportive.

Superintendent Chiafery added that the Planning and Building Committee is very willing to meet together with the Planning Board to hear the architect's presentation.

Board Member Thompson had attended the Professional Development Committee and heard more about the My Learning Plan.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

15. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:32 p.m. Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to enter non-public session per RSA A 91-A: 3, II, (d).

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

At 10:01 p.m. Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to adjourn the public meeting.