

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District  
School Administrative Unit #26  
Monday, February 5, 2018  
Merrimack Town Hall - Mathew 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 Puzzo.

**PUBLIC HEARING TO ACCEPT/EXPEND GIFTS/GRANTS \$5,000 and Over**

- **Parents and Teachers Together (PATT) to James Masticola Elementary School for \$19,000**

Chair Barnes invited school administrators and guests to the table.

James Masticola Elementary School Principal Michelle Romein noted some of the fundraisers that were undertaken and how the funds would be dispersed.

Fundraisers include selling wrapping paper, Texas Roadhouse rolls, spirit wear, book fairs, fitness fundraisers and the Merrimack Color Run.

Proceeds will be used to support and enhance the technology needs in the school. The new Envisions math program, coding with Dot and Dash, online research, literacy centers and viewing educational videos that tie in with science and social studies programs will benefit from the additional technology.

Chair Barnes asked the group to stay for the public session to answer any potential questions before the vote.

Chair Barnes closed the public hearing and noted that there would be a five minute recess before the public session began.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Public Participation**

Beth Grady of 15 Parker Drive spoke in favor of full day kindergarten. She spoke as a parent and a former kindergarten teacher, now teaching 1<sup>st</sup> grade in another district.

Rachel Ricker of 12 Merrill Road thanked the board for putting a water filtration system in the budget for the 2018-2019 school year.

She then spoke on the issue of full-day kindergarten. She asked if the district had considered offering both options; full and half-day kindergarten. She noted that Bedford does this and thought it might be a good solution for Merrimack.

Katharine Hodge of 44 Belmont Drive thanked the board for being pro-active in asking for the water filtration system for the schools. She noted that all of the existing studies were conducted on adult males, not on children.

### **3. Board's Response to Acceptance and Expenditure of Gifts/Grants \$5,000 and Over**

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the gift of \$19,000 from the PATT group at James Masticola Elementary School and expend it based on the spreadsheet provided to the school board.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Board members thanked the PATT members for their generosity of time.

### **4. Information and Testimony Regarding the Utilization of Blizzard Bags to Make Up Snow Days**

Superintendent Chiafery invited Director of Student Services John Fabrizio and NHDOE Division Director Heather Gage to the table. She prefaced their presentation by sharing that each year when the calendar is in development, the administration looks at various ways to make up days. One option that has arisen is the use of "blizzard bags."

Ms. Gage shared handouts with board members and then began by noting that the term "blizzard bags" is not one used formally by the NHDOE.

She cited ED 306.18(a)(7), School Year. A school district may submit a plan to the commissioner that will allow schools to conduct instruction remotely for up to 5 days per year when the school has been closed due to inclement weather or other emergency. The plan shall include procedures for participation by all students. Academic work shall be equivalent in effort and rigor to typical classroom work. There shall be an assessment of all student work for the day. At least 80 percent of students shall participate for the day to count as a school day. (3/26/14) From this came the term "blizzard bags."

The "Blizzard Bag" Lesson Checklist handout laid out the procedure to be followed in order to implement this plan. A second handout listed schools with approved "blizzard bag" plans. The third handout is the technical advisory for school districts.

The checklist reminders are as follows:

- a. The plan must be submitted in advance by the public school district or non-public school. The plan must be approved by the Commissioner prior to implementation. This cannot be implemented retroactively. The maximum number of days to use "blizzard bags" is five days.*

- b. Days used to “pilot” the program may not be counted as school days unless approved by the Commissioner.*
- c. These procedures are intended for days when school is closed unexpectedly. They are not for implementation on days when school was scheduled to be closed. These plans cannot be used for professional development days.*
- d. The plan may not be used to make-up lost days when school was scheduled to be closed. While most districts use this plan for snow days, they are also allowed for other types of emergency closings.*
- e. Teachers must be available and must participate on the days when the plan is implemented. Teacher participation may not be limited to simply grading student work after the fact. All teachers that are in front of students must be available and have access to the internet. They must also understand the difference between teaching in front of a classroom and teaching on-line. The NHDOE will look for the professional development opportunities that are made available to teachers in order to accomplish this.*
- f. The Department expects an interactive internet based process with supplementary paper materials used only be those students who do not have internet access. This should not be seen by students or staff as just more homework. Options for students without internet access must be made available.*

The NHDOE welcomes community feedback via a form on their website.

The “blizzard bag” plan request checklist requires the following:

- The results of the student survey indicating how many have internet access.*
- Documentation that teachers have remote access to conduct lessons on-line.*
- Plan and time-line to train teachers to conduct class via the internet.*
- The internet address where the on-line lessons are to be provided.*
- The process by which student and staff participation will be monitored.*
- A sample of at least one on-line lesson.*
- A sample of at least one lesson for students without internet access.*
- Explanation of the process to notify staff and students that school is cancelled and the on-line lessons will be used.*
- Explanation of the assessment process.*
- Updated school attendance policy which explains that failure to complete work on days when internet instruction has been directed will result in the student being recorded as absent for the day.*

Board Member Guagliumi asked how a power outage would impact the 80% participation requirement.

Ms. Gage responded that it would be incumbent on properly prepared substitute teachers to carry out the lesson.

Board Member Guagliumi asked what lessons were learned from the districts that have implemented this plan already.

Ms. Gage responded that some anecdotal comments she has heard are the challenges in some homes with only one computer, districts that tend to lose power during inclement weather and the initial challenges during the implementation phase.

Board Member Guagliumi asked what community feedback looks like.

Ms. Gage responded that it is often done through a community survey.

Vice Chair Schneider asked how it is announced that it is a “blizzard bag” day.

Ms. Gage responded that the call from the Superintendent’s Office can make this announcement. The bags are prepared ahead of time. There are strategies that can be shared from other districts.

Director Fabrizio added that the school district in which he resides does inform the students that it is an on-line learning day.

Vice Chair Schneider asked how this impacts students who are at day care instead of at home.

Ms. Gage noted that this is a challenge and should be addressed in a community survey.

Board Member Thompson asked if the NHDOE has asked participating districts about the success rate.

Ms. Gage responded that there is no real good data available yet.

Director Fabrizio added that his home district allows students five days to turn in their work and that this is a significant part of their high success rate.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that of the eleven participating districts only three have over one thousand students. She asked if there is data on districts that were approved for “blizzard bags” and then opted out.

Ms. Gage responded that most of those who discontinue to use “blizzard bags” just do not go for re-approval. She has no data on the reasons why.

Board Member Guagliumi asked that the handouts be made available online.

Board Member Thompson asked about potential costs to the district to enable teachers to create webinars and/or if there would be added burdens to the district technology personnel.

Director Fabrizio commented that there are challenges for a household with multiple students trying to stream content to multiple devices. He noted that there are pros and cons to students trying to learn on their own in this format, especially for students with special needs.

Board Member Thompson asked how many students do the work on the actual day of the school closing and what the burden is to the teachers.

Ms. Gage responded that many of the questions posed lead her to considering surveying those districts already participating in this.

Chair Barnes read aloud the list of participating schools and noted the small enrollments. She noted that tracking and reporting would be a significant challenge for the Merrimack School District.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked about school-based services for special needs students during closings. Are these made up when the students return to school?

Director Fabrizio responded that even during a regular school day service providers might be unavailable and sessions are made up at other times.

Board Member Thompson asked if this discussion can be continued at a future meeting to discuss feedback on questions that were asked tonight. A future conversation should also include a review of the plan request checklist from the first handout.

Vice Chair Schneider suggested inviting an administrator from one of the participating districts to the future meeting to respond to the board's concerns.

Board Member Guagliumi asked when the reporting back to the state must be done. Would this be subject to any audits or is everything handled through the original request?

Ms. Gage responded that the original request asks for the processes and about every three to five years there is a site visit that looks at compliance. Nothing needs to be sent to the state.

Chair Barnes thanked both participants for their time.

## **5. 2016-2017 Parent Involvement in Special Education Survey Results**

Chair Barnes invited Director of Student Services Fabrizio to share the results of the recent survey.

Director Fabrizio opened by noting that once again the district received a perfect score of zero.

He thanked the school board for the continued support that results in this achievement.

The mean scale score in Merrimack for pre-school was 652. The mean scaled score in 2014-2015 was 552. The state of New Hampshire considers a score of 600 or above to be exceptional.

The mean scale score in Merrimack for school age was 579. The mean scaled score in 2014-2015 was 554.

Chair Barnes thanked Director Fabrizio for his hard work.

**6. Board’s Response to Draft Warrant Articles on the 2018 Warrant**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell read aloud each of the proposed warrant articles.

Warrant Article 1: To elect all necessary school district officers for the ensuing year. (Vote by ballot)

Warrant Article 2: Shall the Merrimack School Board be authorized to accept on behalf of the District, without further action by the voters, gifts, legacies and devises of personal or real property which may become available to the District during the fiscal year? (Majority vote required.)

Board Member Schoenfeld asked if this warrant article must be voted on each year and was told yes.

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Warrant Article 3: Shall the district approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Merrimack School Board and the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association which calls for the following net increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year:

Year	Estimated Amount
2018-2019	\$245,594
2019-2020	\$249,883
2020-2021	\$262,199

and further raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Forty-Five Thousand Five Hundred Ninety-Four Dollars (\$245,594) for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at the current staffing levels? (Majority vote required.)

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that this article is a three year contract that includes a 3% per year salary increase, all FICA, Medicare, NH retirement and a one percent healthcare concession that is as follows:

Year	Healthcare Change
2018-2019	90/10
2019-2020	89/11
2020-2021	88/12

This represents a savings for the district of about \$150,000 over three years. This includes an increase in term life insurance from a death benefit of \$7,500 to \$25,000 for all those covered by the contract. It includes an additional five working days for administrative assistants.

Chair Barnes added that this affects 309 employees at a cost of \$800 per employee. There will also be a lesser cost health care Site of Service (SOS) plan that will be offered for additional savings.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if this information will go into the voter's guide.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that this and more details will be made available.

Vice Chair Schneider stated that the warrant article shows three years to show the exposure.

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Warrant Article 4: Shall the District, if Article 3 is defeated, authorize the School Board to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 3 cost items only? (Majority vote required.)

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Warrant Article 5: (Special Warrant Article) Shall the District raise and appropriate an amount up to One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$150,000), said sum not to exceed Ten percent (10%) of the unencumbered surplus funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year 2017-2018 and to transfer that amount to the School District Repair Capital Reserve Fund, previously established for the purpose of providing unanticipated and/or emergency repairs to all school district facilities? (Majority vote required.)

It was noted that recent past events including Hurricane Sandy, the bleachers and the bat infestation have combined to seriously deplete the fund.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to accept the warrant article as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Warrant Article 6: Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Fourteen Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty-Six Dollars (\$214,826) for the purpose of re-pavement construction at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School to include the bus loop in front of the school and the lower parking lot? (Majority vote required.)

Board Member Thompson shared that he visited the site earlier in the day and witnessed the deterioration.

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Warrant Article 7: Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$275,000) for the purpose of purchasing one certain tract or parcel of land of approximately .680 acres more or less with the building thereon known as 1 Brentwood Drive, Merrimack, New Hampshire as described in the Town of Merrimack Assessing Records as Parcel ID 005D-4 00013 000000 currently owned by the Southeastern Regional Educational Service Center? (Majority vote required.)

Vice Chair Schneider noted that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. This building, the Brentwood School, is called the red house and is located on the high school campus. It is currently owned by SERESC and rented by the Nashua School District until the end of June 2018. SERESC as an entity is divesting itself of owning property.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept the warrant article as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Warrant Article 8: Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of Eight Hundred Seventy-Eight Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$878,450) to implement Full-Day Public Kindergarten in the three elementary school, such sum to include (\$808,901) in additional salaries and benefits, and (\$69,549) for the original equipping of additional public kindergarten classrooms? (Majority vote required.)

***Note: If adopted, the cost of salaries and associated benefits will be included in the operating budget in future years.***

Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the warrant article as presented.

Chair Barnes stated that there would be increase revenue to the district of \$1,100 per student for free full-day kindergarten. This is lost if a fee-based option is implemented.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell added that the state allows all of the full day kindergarten students to be included in the average daily membership (ADM) upon which state aid is based. Any tuition must be noted and reduces the state aid.

Board Member Guagliumi asked that a description of this be put in the voter's guide.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if a notation to this can be added to the warrant article and was told no.



Vice Chair Schneider stated that the \$1,100 is in addition to the \$1,800 already received from the state. This is a guaranteed minimum. The approval of KENO brings the added potential of additional funds to all participating districts. Communities that charge tuition are not eligible for the \$1,100 based on state statutes.

Board Member Schoenfeld sees free full-day kindergarten as an ethical point.

Board Member Thompson noted some of the earlier points made in support of full-day kindergarten. They include impacts on home valuations, companies looking to re-locate, parity with surrounding communities, equal access for all students, rigor, student readiness and societal impacts.

Student Representative Puzzo asked why the district began with half-day kindergarten.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that at the time the community was not ready to embrace the concept of full-day kindergarten.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that at the time half-day kindergarten was implemented there was a state grant for kindergarten construction that was over one million dollars. This money paid for the construction of new classrooms and replacement classrooms. This was put towards the building of the new middle school.

Vice Chair Schneider added that there has been creative work done to show that there are no other infrastructure costs necessary in order to implement full-day kindergarten at the three elementary schools.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Warrant Article 9: Shall the District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$74,811,416? (Should this article be defeated, the operating budget shall be \$75,153,005 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the District or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only?) (Majority vote required.)

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to accept the warrant article as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Chair Barnes to review the budget process going forward and to put the information on this process on the district website.

The budget committee meeting dates are posted on the district website. The next formal presentation will be on Thursday, March 8, 2018. Voting will take place on Tuesday, April 10, 2018 at the three designated polling stations.

Vice Chair Schneider asked that the school board have the opportunity to review the voter's guide before it is mailed out to the public.

## **7. The Naming of the Gifted and Talented Program**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted Board Member Guagliumi's earlier question on the naming of the gifted and talented program. He spoke on the journey the district has taken in this regard. The revised ESSA has a specific federal definition:

*Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.*

The Merrimack School District bases its Gifted and Talented programming on the Renzulli framework and research conducted by the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth.

The Merrimack School District program, the Gateway Program, has evolved and changed significantly and a name change was deemed appropriate in order to note the new model. It is currently called the Gifted and Talented Program.

Board Member Guagliumi noted that her concern was about the name change and her concern around labeling students.

Chair Barnes noted that the name change was in connection with budgetary discussions.

## **8. Approval of Funding Requests from the Public School Infrastructure Committee**

Superintendent Chiafery opened with a reference to a newspaper article that detailed a new state budget item for building aid.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell explained the process and plan necessary in order to file a grant request.

To date the district has been approved for \$38,186 for security cameras.

The bat infestation remediation project has been approved for \$180,000. This represents about 30% of the cost which is the maximum available under this grant.

Superintendent Chiafery referred board members to letters she had provided to them in their packets. She noted the good fortune to the district with the timing of this funding.

## **9. Review Requests to Conduct Surveys at Merrimack Middle School**

- **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) for Grade 8**
- **National Survey of Science and Mathematics Education (NSSME)**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin began by noting that there have been an unusually high number of requests to conduct surveys at Merrimack Middle School.

He explained the specifics of the surveys and how they have been adjusted at the state level to be in compliance with state law. No non-academic questions are allowed.

Due to the timing of the new science curriculum, the NSSME would be difficult for teachers to answer and thus there would be little value to participating at this time.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin supports district participation in the TIMMS. There would be no need for parent approval.

Board Member Thompson asked what types of data the district receives back.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the data is only national data.

Board Member Thompson expressed concerns about some of the language in the questions.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the 2018 survey will be very different from the 2015 version due to the requirements in the state law.

Board Member Guagliumi proposed that the TIMMS survey be moved to the consent agenda for the next meeting.

Chair Barnes noted the board was in agreement to move the TIMMS to consent.

## **10. Approval of January 9, 2018 Minutes and January 16, 2018 Minutes**

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to accept the January 9, 2018 minutes.

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 2, lines 80, 83, 86: change the language “Board Member Barnes...” to “Chair Barnes...”
- Page 3, line 99: insert “...Schneider...” after “Vice Chair...”

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

Board Member Schoenfeld moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to accept the January 16, 2018 minutes.

Student Representative Puzzo requested the following change to the minutes:

- Under the attendance for those present change “...Sernik” to “...Puzzo”

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following change to the minutes:

- Review the prior meeting's tape and insert the comments made by Vice Chair Schneider in regards to the multiple earlier discussions on kindergarten.

Board Member Thompson requested the following change to the minutes:

- Review the prior meeting's tape and insert his comments on the multiple earlier discussions on kindergarten.

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

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

- **Nord Family Fund to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for \$600**
- **Nord Family Fund to Reeds Ferry Elementary School for \$200**
- **Anonymous Donor to Food Service for \$119**
- **BAE Systems to Merrimack High School for \$3,000**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell presented the following gifts/grants to the district.

Thorntons Ferry Elementary School received a gift in the amount of \$600 from the Nord Family Fund. The proceeds will be used for the Merrimack Early Education Program.

Reeds Ferry Elementary School received a gift in the amount of \$200 from the Nord Family Fund. The proceeds will be used for the Merrimack Early Education Program.

The Food Services Department received an anonymous gift in the amount of \$119 to be used for food services for students in need.

The Merrimack High School received a gift in the amount of \$3,000 from the BAE Systems. The proceeds will be used to support the Chop Shop 166 program.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept the gifts/grants as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

### **12. Consent Agenda**

- **Educator Resignation/Retirement**

Connor Phelps, Social Studies Teacher, Merrimack High School  
Ken Johnson, Principal, Merrimack High School

- **Administrator Nomination**

Sharon Putney, Principal-Elect, Merrimack High School

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the consent agenda to the board.

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

### **13. Other**

#### **a) Correspondence**

Board Member Thompson had a discussion with a resident about the new apartments to be built near the theaters and outlet mall; and the potential impact on the school district. He asked if this might be a future agenda item.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that it might be advisable to ask Community Development Director Tim Thompson to attend a meeting when this is discussed.

Board Member Guagliumi received an email from a parent about full-day kindergarten.

Board Member Schoenfeld received several emails in favor of putting full-day kindergarten out as a warrant article.

Chair Barnes and Vice Chair Schneider both received correspondence in regards to grading and grade recovery. Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin provided the individuals with a thorough rendering on the process and how classroom expectations are communicated to students.

Board Member Thompson received correspondence in regards to the budget process.

#### **b) Comments**

Superintendent Chiafery referred board members to information she had provided them in their packets. It is attached to the warrant articles and outlines where full-day kindergarten is currently offered in New Hampshire.

The information compiled from the NH DOE NH Principals' Listserv revealed that 150 towns offer full day kindergarten, 6 towns offer full-day tuition based kindergarten, 10 towns are considering full day kindergarten, and 16 towns offer half-day or less kindergarten.

She noted that Principal Romein made numerous phone calls to get this information posted and her work was lauded by the board.

**14. New Business**

There was no new business.

**15. Committee Reports**

Chair Barnes attended the Grater Woods sub-committee meeting on January 30<sup>th</sup>. An Eagle Scout is considering the building of an outlook over the Beaver Pond that is off of the school loop trail.

Board Member Schoenfeld noted that the Budget Committee continues to meet. One item of discussion was the reduction of the line items for student tutoring.

Vice Chair Schneider attended the SERESC meeting on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Attorney Peahl spoke about the new by-laws to be created as SERESC moves forward.

**16. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Rachel Ricker of 12 Merrill Road spoke on three agenda items.

In regards to the blizzard bags, she does not think it would work due to the size and socio-economics of the district.

Warrant Article 7 needs more background to reach the voters.

She would like to have a better understanding on meeting protocols and when she can ask questions and provide input. What is allowed at a deliberative session?

Chair Barnes stated that she is always available to answer questions outside of the meetings.

**17. Manifest**

The board signed the manifest.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 p.m.

The motion passed 5-0-0.