

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
Monday, September 17, 2018**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Present: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider, Board Members Schoenfeld and Nunez. Also in attendance were Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

Board Member Guagliumi and Student Representative Puzzo were excused from the meeting.

1. Call to Order/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

There was none.

3. Recognition of Merrimack Hawks Cheerleading Organization – Shannon Rand, Stefanie Binette, Julia Matte, Kyle Fournier, Summer Krug and Marisa Matte

Ms. Shannon Rand, Vice President, Merrimack Hawks, addressed the Board and thanked them for their time. She said she was excited to share some of the successes regarding their new, non-profit organization. She further said the organization consisted of 57 cheerleaders, eight board members, eleven coaches and four cheer helpers. Ms. Rand stated that the moms and dads created the board to show it was not just about cheer but being a community helper. She said they had done eight community events and five of those were in the schools, noting that they helped with Earth Day, the ice cream social, the Reeds Ferry flower garden and a book donation. She also said they provided four backpacks full of school supplies for Thorntons Ferry and Reeds Ferry Elementary Schools.

Ms. Kylie Fournier, addressed the Board and stated that she was 12 years old and in the seventh grade at the Merrimack Middle School. She said she had never volunteered prior

to joining the Hawks but always wanted to and volunteering had taught her that she could make a difference in her community.

Ms. Summer Krug, addressed the Board and stated that she was 10 years old and was a fifth grader at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and one of her favorite things being part of the Hawks was that they did a lot of nice community projects. She said one of her favorites was cleaning up at the Reeds Ferry Elementary School.

Ms. Julia Matte, addressed the Board and said she was a junior coach for one of the Hawks teams. She said she fell in love with cheer when she was in fourth grade and her love of it had blossomed over the past eight years, especially since helping with the younger teams. She said cheer taught her sportsmanship, teamwork, community, risk taking and goal setting and she wanted to instill those lessons into the young athletes that she worked with. Ms. Matte said that it was important to devote her time to helping the community. She also said that the Hawks encouraged team members to do well in academics.

Ms. Marisa Matte, addressed the Board and said she was a Merrimack Hawks cheerleader. She said she loved cheering because it taught her a lot about sportsmanship and being a good teammate. She further said two years prior, the team earned the opportunity to compete for the National Title at Disney and they had the same goal this year. She said she was very proud to be a Merrimack Hawks cheerleader.

Ms. Rand asked the Board to let them know if there were anything within the school community that they could help with. She thanked the Board very much for their recognition.

Chair Barnes stated that she appreciated what the Hawks did for the schools and presented them with a Certificate of Appreciation.

4. Update on Implementation of Elementary Math Program – Helen Fitzgerald and Marsha McGill

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin recognized Ms. Marsha McGill, Principal, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, Ms. Helen Fitzgerald, Technology Coordinator, Ms. Michelle Romein, Principal, James Mastricola Elementary School and Ms. Alice Donohoe, Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School. He said Ms. McGill was also Chair of the Math Curriculum Committee as well as the Adoption Committee and had been for a number of years.

Ms. McGill, addressed the Board and stated that they were two years into the new math program and they had more training at the August Academy. She said the training was separated into four training sessions, one for kindergarten through grade two teachers, one for grade three through grade five teachers, one for grade six and grade seven and eighth grade through the high school grades for Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II. She further said that some of the key points were to help teachers understand the importance of teaching math with understanding, encourage students to persevere and develop reasoning and understanding.

Ms. Helen Fitzgerald, addressed the Board and stated that their training session included all of the teachers being asked to solve a math problem. She said many of the teachers came up with different answers but they collaborated and shared their answers, much as the students would do, noting in the end, there was no correct answer but an exercise in building confidence.

Ms. Alice Donohoe, addressed the Board and stated that she attended the training for grades three through five. She said she got some very positive feedback from many of the teachers from those grades and the presenter was very informative and patient. Ms. Donohoe said the Sherry Rosswaag, Math Facilitator, from the Reeds Ferry Elementary School had sent her some notes which she summarized as follows:

- The training was very teacher driven planned around the needs of new and second year teachers of the Envision Program.
- It started off as a complete overview of a lesson and all of the components including solve and share, visual learning, guided practice, independent practice and differentiated center time.
- Teachers were given suggested timeframes for each section, shown where they could access them on-line and how to move from one on-line section to another with ease.
- The teachers were shown additional tools including games, math tools and functions for parents and students to use at home.
- They discussed a wide variety of ways the teachers could assess their student math skills.

She said the notes from Sherry Rosswaag, Math Facilitator, also indicated that teachers worked hard the past year to learn about the different components and they now knew they could make changes regarding the teaching aspects of the program.

Ms. Fitzgerald commented that they were also trained in assigning on-line assessments within the program.

Ms. Michelle Romein, addressed the Board and stated that she attended the kindergarten through second grade training and the excitement was unprecedented when they were

working with the kindergarten teachers realizing they would have full days to implement the math program. She said the focus of that group was about how to make the program work for them and each child. She also said the teachers dug into the components they had already been working with in order to differentiate more whether it was in the activities the students were practicing, the assessments or the homework practice. Ms. Romein said they also did a lot of work with the intervention students.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that they were trying to introduce dimensional problem solving and understanding into their practices. He noted that there was a difference between knowing and understanding, meaning that you could know math facts but not understand anything about the principles of mathematics which could be applied to problem solving. Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin commented that he felt the teachers had embraced the additional challenge.

Board Member Schoenfeld said at one of the previous presentations it was mentioned that some of the materials in grade one had a reading level which was a little bit tricky to deal with. She asked if that subject was explored in the training and if it was helpful. Ms. Romein replied they did discuss it during training to the extent that it was something that all of the first grade teachers had noticed. She said they talked about ways to work with and around the reading level as it was somewhat difficult for the kids starting and they shared different strategies with each other. She further said it was something that they were still working on.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated whenever there was a change in programs; the first thing taxpayers asked was if the change was working. He said there was a belief that the former program was not effective, especially in the younger grades. He asked at what point they would know whether or not the new program was more effective. Ms. McGill replied that currently, they were not seeing scores because it was only the second year but they were seeing students embrace the conversation and they felt a little bit more comfortable.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell asked if there had been any feedback from parents. Ms. McGill replied that she had not heard anything about it being awful.

Board Member Nunez thanked them for all of their hard work. She said as a parent of three children, the shift from Everyday Math to Envision was quite challenging. She said there was so much involved in the word problems themselves and that forced the kids to work outside of their comfort zone. Board Member Nunez asked if they were still discussing finding more challenges.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin commented that the implementation of the curriculum was driving everything. He further said one of the big reasons the curriculum was chosen was because it aligned well with the standards and teachers were

recognizing the challenge of trying to utilize the newly adopted program in the service of the curriculum rather than having no curriculum and doing only what the book told them to do.

Ms. Romein commented that as educators they looked at the instruction provided daily and then took some sort of assessment. She said they were using assessments within the program but they also had standardized assessments, for example, Star Testing and they also participated in statewide testing. She further said she thought it was too early to say the program did not do well in "X"; however, the teachers were looking at the data from program or non-program assessments and were identifying areas of need across the grade levels. Ms. Romein stated that while she thought it was too early to say exactly what would be a weakness with Envisions, they were consistently looking at where there were weaknesses and gaps relative to the standards and instruction in all subject areas.

Ms. Fitzgerald stated that the students were becoming great at problem solving and explaining their answers. She further stated that she felt the problem solving challenges was the opportunity for growth that they were seeing.

Chair Barnes asked if there were questions or comments. There was none.

5. Information Regarding the Second Merrimack School District/Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Cohort – Dr. Mark McLaughlin

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that several years ago, they collaborated with Southern New Hampshire University to have their first cohort and at the time, Merrimack was one of the first districts in the state to have that type of partnership with SNHU. He said the first group graduated several years ago and in the interim SNHU did some restructuring which took a few years. He said they had just started their second cohort.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin said they currently had 23 participants who were in the midst of choosing one of three paths, a Master's Degree in Curriculum, a Master's Degree in Administration or a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study. He further said they had completed a course over the summer and had not yet differentiated. He pointed out that the total number of credits was 36, which typically took 2 ½ years but, it depended on the speed at which the cohort chose to move.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that the courses cost \$675 per three credits. He said it created a tremendous opportunity and they were very grateful to SNHU for providing the incredible offer to the teachers. He also said the professional development funds provided to teachers were also used to defray some of the cost.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin said that SNHU was entirely responsible for hiring and training the instructors but the classes would be taught in Merrimack.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin said it was great to work with the staff at SNHU and they were very responsive. He further said that at the completion of the cohort they would have produced nearly 50 educators with master's degrees.

Chair Barnes asked if there were questions or comments. There was none.

6. Outcome from Department of Education Rehearing Relative to Mr. Bevill's Complaint Regarding School District's Homework Protocol – Marge Chiafery

Superintendent Chiafery stated that on Thursday, September 13th, Mark McLaughlin herself and Attorney Dean Eggert attended the State Board of Education meeting and one of the items on the agenda was the request from Mr. Bevill to have a rehearing of the homework protocol. She said Mr. Bevill had submitted additional material to the Board of Education and they in turn, also submitted additional material for review. She further said it was interesting in the sense that when the agenda item was opened, the only person who spoke was Chairman Cline and he basically asked for a motion. She said a Board member moved to deny the request for a rehearing, it was seconded; and the Board unanimously agreed to deny the request.

Superintendent Chiafery said the next step would entail a written rendering with the outcome which would be available within a week or two. She further said at that point, Mr. Bevill would have 30 days to determine whether or not he wanted to take an additional step. Superintendent Chiafery noted that Attorney Eggert advised them that they would not know an outcome until the end of October. She commented that they felt gratified because nothing had changed from the outcome of the first hearing. Superintendent Chiafery said the homework protocol for the district currently remained in place.

7. Approval of September 4, 2018, Minutes

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to accept the minutes from the September 4, 2018.

Chair Barnes asked the members of the Board if there were any emendations to the minutes before them. There was none.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

8. Consent Agenda – Dr. Mark McLaughlin

a. Educator Nominations

Ms. Paula Child, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School

Ms. Shannon Sweeney, Math Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept the Consent Agenda as read.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

9. Other

a. Correspondence

Chair Barnes stated that she was in receipt of a letter from Mr. Don Chisolm, President of the MTA, requesting that they go into bargaining in the fall as they were in the last year of their agreement. She said the plan was to proceed with that.

Chair Barnes said she was in receipt of a letter from a constituent who shared feedback regarding staff. She indicated that she guided the constituent back to the district to obtain resolution.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that the Board was also in receipt of correspondence from a constituent who asked for information in support of the \$1.1 million evaluation for the Brentwood building that the school district had recently purchased.

b. Comments

Vice Chair Schneider stated that if people still had questions about the Brentwood building, they should review the recording of the last meeting which was held on September 4, 2018. He said he wanted to be sure that people knew they were looking at both short-term and long-term uses for the building.

Board Member Nunez asked if someone had questions with regard to the short-term use, where would they go to have that discussion. Chair Barnes replied questions should be addressed to school administration.

Superintendent Chiafery replied that their intention was to come back on October 1st and speak to the Board regarding utilization of the building. She said the administration would

welcome thoughts from constituents and questions should be directed to Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that they made arrangements for the fire department to walk the Brentwood building on the following Wednesday at 1:00 p.m.

Chair Barnes asked if there were further comments. There was none.

10. New Business

Chair Barnes reminded the Board that on Thursday, September 20th they would have a joint meeting with Town Council in the Matthew Thornton Room. She said the agenda, summarized below, has been posted:

- Item 1: School Resource Officer Discussion
- Item 2: Merrimack Skateboard Park
- Item 3: Cable Television Franchise Renewal
- Item 4: Upcoming Budget Considerations
- Item 5: Athletic Field Discussion

Chair Barnes mentioned, with regard to the joint meeting, that they had provided the minutes from the November 14, 2017, meeting, as they hosted it. She further mentioned that Town Council would provide the scribe for the September 20th meeting.

Chair Barnes commented that they were looking to have individual Board member budget messages for the October 1st meeting. She said they wanted to have a combined Board message to the administration and staff who was formulating the budget regarding what they were looking for in their operating budget for the next fiscal school year.

11. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Schneider stated that the week prior they had the monthly SERESC Board of Director's meeting. He further stated that both Superintendent Chiafery and he were members of the Board of Director's. Vice Chair Schneider commented that one of the things they discussed at the meeting was surrounding some of the innovation they were trying to do in terms of new programs. He said they talked about existing programs and how they were trying to expand them, where their challenges were and also looked at areas that might be needed by the district and where there might be an opportunity to do a better or more inexpensive job.

12. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There was none.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

14. Adjournment

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Chair Barnes) to adjourn.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.