

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
Monday, December 3, 2018**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

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

Excused: Board Member Guagliumi

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

Mr. Richard Foote, 129 Indian Rock Road, addressed the Board and asked why the electronic bulletin board did not work. Chair Barnes replied public participation was for comments and not a question and answer period.

Mr. Rich Gwinn, 10 Wire Road, addressed the Board and stated that he was in support of the town installing a turf field. He said he was a coach in Merrimack ten years prior for the Lacrosse program and the fields were in pretty rough shape. He further said he owned winter turf maintenance equipment and took care of the turf field at Rivier College.

3. Request to Withdraw \$110,000 from Emergency Repair

Capital Reserve Fund for Replacement of a Switchgear at Merrimack High School
(Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell and Mr. Tom Touseau)

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that a number of years ago the School Board had created an Emergency Capital Reserve Repair Fund. He said the last time they used it was for the bat remediation effort at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School. He further said there was a switchgear at the high school which took power from the transformer and distributed it to most of the high school. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell pointed out that the unit was 41 years old. It recently tripped and was unable to be reset. He said Custom Electric came in and temporarily fixed the problem and advised it be replaced. The lead-time for purchasing a

new switchgear was three months. He pointed out if the switchgear failed there would be no electricity in the high school.

Mr. Touseau added the existing switchgear was from a manufacturer which no longer existed and they could not obtain replacement parts. He further said there were three other switchgears that needed to be replaced but the one before the Board was the priority as well as the largest.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented they would like to replace the unit over April vacation.

Chair Barnes asked what the price range was to replace the switchgear and also asked if there were efficiencies with newer technology.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied the quotes he received were between \$100,000 and \$109,000. He said they wanted to purchase a unit whose brand name was Square D.

Mr. Touseau noted that if the breaker needed to be reset again they would have to call a licensed electrician.

Board Member Nunez asked what the annual maintenance fees would be.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied there would not be a recurring cost. Mr. Touseau commented Square D would come in once per year and perform testing to make sure everything was working correctly.

Chair Barnes stated the School Board would put it on the Consent Agenda for the next meeting, date specific of December 17, 2018. She further said if there were any questions from Board members to e-mail Superintendent Chiafery and to please, copy her on the e-mail.

4. Boards Response to Capital Improvement Plan for 2019 - 2025

(Chair Barnes)

Chair Barnes stated that the School Board reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan at the last meeting. She further stated it was also reviewed by the Planning and Building Committee and asked if there were any members of the Board who had proposed changes to the Capital Improvement Plan.

Vice Chair Schneider stated that he would like to have more time to make comments because the proposed operating budget was not yet known. Vice Chair Schneider stated

that the Planning and Building Committee had modified the FY 20' – FY 21' line item for the Brentwood property to say Demo/Build. He said he felt it was a presumption that the Brentwood property would be demolished.

Vice Chair Schneider made a motion (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to change the description to "SAU Consolidation" with a cost of \$2.8 million to resolve it in 2020 - 2021.

Chair Barnes stated that she was in support of the motion. She further stated that the Capital Improvement Plan was designed to tell the taxpayers what the tax impacts would be on the large-scale projects. Chair Barnes noted that the Capital Improvement Plan housed the projects which were \$100,000 or more. She further noted that she felt the words Demo/Build was an insincere placeholder because it did not assign a number and did not provide an idea of what it could do to the tax rate.

Board Member Schoenfeld noted that the SAU consolidation would likely be in the Brentwood building, however the dollar amount was for a solution regardless of what it might be.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

Board Member Nunez stated that, with regard to the turf field, she wanted to understand the possibility of enhancing the existing field with the appropriate drainage and lighting versus spending \$1 million on the installation of a turf field. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied enhancing the fields would not allow for more utilization. He said the fields were pretty good at Masticola because everything underneath the top soil was sand which meant the drainage was good. He also said increased lighting would not increase the utilization.

Vice Chair Schneider commented the School Board had to work with the town on numerous fields because many of them were town owned and maintained. He further commented that he felt the intent of the field upgrade was the installation of the turf field.

Vice Chair Schneider said the placement of the turf field on the current Capital Improvement Plan posed a concern regarding where the responsibility for funding lay. He said he was concerned if there were a \$1 million Warrant Article which was to be funded strictly by taxation, it would not go through.

Chair Barnes said all interested parties had to consider that the petition Warrant Articles had to be presented by February 18th. She further said the Capital Improvement Plan was a guide and not a contract. Chair Barnes stated that funding \$1 million through sheer

taxation was a lot and it was not something which could be bonded. She said she thought the School Board should look at long-term strategies for the Capital Reserve Funds; things that would become savings accounts to be earmarked for specific expenditures which they knew would reoccur.

Chair Barnes commented that the Capital Improvement Plan and the bonded debt were what could create spikes in the tax rate. She said there were items like a boiler or an electrical panel that were not items they could defer and had to be in the operating budget. She further said there were other things that would still enable them to deliver a quality education and not have and those were the things which were vetted a little bit differently.

Chair Barnes said the total bonded debt in the Capital Improvement Plan for 2019 - 2020 was \$4,378,903; she noted that \$1 million of that amount would be for the turf field. She said the following year, in 2020 - 2021, not including the Brentwood building because they had just assigned a number to it, was \$2,903,952; in 2021 - 2022 it was \$2,633,064; in 2022 - 2023 it was \$2,086,828 and then down to \$1,859,000 in 2023 - 2024, and finally, in 2024 - 2025, it was \$1,346,463. She said eventually there would be a decline in the tax rate but a spike would be created before the decline. She commented that she felt the Board needed to be mindful of the impact to the taxpayers.

Board Member Schoenfeld stated that they had also received some good information on energy and infrastructure needs from Honeywell which would require further discussions. Chair Barnes replied that was correct.

Chair Barnes commented that the cost of the proposed field needed to be offset somehow and she was not sure there was enough time to achieve it.

Vice Chair Schneider said the Board might choose to leave the \$1 million field in the Capital Improvement Plan if they did not make any changes but there was work that needed to be done to make sure it was palatable to the voters. He said he felt there needed to be a joint effort between the Planning and Building Committee and the School Board, as well as Booster Clubs and the MYA (Merrimack Youth Association) as to what they could do in the next three months. He said he felt they needed to find a way to come up with half (\$500,000) of the \$1 million some other way.

Board Member Nunez commented that she felt the turf field should remain in 2019 - 2020 because she thought they could get the backing needed within three months. She further commented that if in February they did not have the necessary funds they could re-assess. Chair Barnes replied she was fine with keeping it in 2019 - 2020 but it would have to be put on a Warrant Article and it was going to take many interested parties to campaign it to a successful end. She said the proposed turf field would remain in 2019 - 2020.

Chair Barnes asked if there was anyone else who wished to make changes to the Capital Improvement Plan.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the Capital Improvement Plan indicated there were three boilers which needed to be replaced at the James Mastricola Elementary School and there were actually only two.

Superintendent Chiafery said there would also be sections of the roof replaced at the James Mastricola Elementary School in addition to the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School.

Chair Barnes asked if there were any other adjustments the Board wanted to make. There were none.

Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to approve the Capital Improvement Plan, as amended.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. Overview of Proposed 2019 – 2020 School District Budget

(Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin)

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the administration took the Board's message very seriously and tried to balance the needs of the district against fiscal prudence.

Superintendent Chiafery pointed out that one of the major things being faced with was the collective bargaining agreement with the Merrimack Teachers Association which was already underway.

Superintendent Chiafery said they had two Warrant Articles, with one pertaining to drainage and paving at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School as well the James Mastricola Elementary School. She said the total cost of the project came in at \$325,076.

Superintendent Chiafery said the School Board would be considering taking money from the Capital Reserve Fund in the near future. She commented that as hard as they tried to plan ahead, there was always something unplanned which came up and as such, the Capital Reserve Fund should be replenished.

Superintendent Chiafery pointed out that the budget book would have a cut list for many items from the maintenance department, student services as well as a few positions. She said they would discuss the proposed cuts as they went through the budget.

Superintendent Chiafery said it appeared their enrollments were stable. She said they worked with a demographic specialist from the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). The projection indicated there would be one additional student in pre-school, fifteen students at the elementary level (kindergarten through grade 4) twenty at the upper elementary level (grade 5 and grade 6) negative three students at the middle school and negative two students at the high school. She said there was an overall enrollment of thirty-one. She further said that full-day kindergarten had attracted 237 students. Superintendent Chiafery commented that the demographer did not think the district would go below 3,600 students over the next ten years.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that they looked at the student/teacher ratios and one of the most important things they did was to try to provide equity and balance across the three elementary schools. She further stated they looked at the ratios and also took budget constraints into consideration and with that in mind; they recommended to eliminate three teaching positions; one grade 4 position at the James Masticola Elementary School, one grade 4 position at the Reeds Ferry Elementary School and one grade 3 position at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. She pointed out that even with the proposed cuts, the ratio would still be 23:1 to 25:1.

Superintendent Chiafery said that even though they had taken on twenty plus students at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School, they did not feel there was a need to make any adjustments.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that there was already an agreement with the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association and with the administration so those salaries were put into the budget process because it would be the second year of a three-year agreement for both entities.

Superintendent Chiafery said there were major cost increases for employee benefits. She further said the guaranteed maximum rate for 2019 - 2020 was an increase of 13.7% for health coverage, which represented an increase of over \$1.5 million. Superintendent Chiafery commented the reason for that was there had been a number of catastrophic illnesses that year.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that dental coverage had increased for the first time in a few years by 2.3%, which represented \$110,000 more than what was budgeted for.

Superintendent Chiafery said lastly, in the employee benefit section, the employer contribution rate for professional staff to the New Hampshire Retirement System was 17.8% of salaries which was a 2.5% increase which represented approximately \$95,000.

Superintendent Chiafery pointed out four items under classroom instructional focus.

1. The assembly account was brought back because they wanted the full-day kindergarten students to have a special curriculum-based experience.
2. A guidance text account was created. The district Mental Health Curriculum Committee was looking at social/emotional classroom kits to teach skills to the children in grade K through grade 5.
3. All six schools had furniture replacement.
4. The re-design of the programming for the Family and Consumer Science as well as Technology Education at the middle school. She said they purchased modules for both programs in 2004 and had since been discontinued. She further said they would be ordering additional equipment in order to continue project-based learning.

Superintendent Chiafery stated there was approximately \$332,000 in the Capital Improvement Plan designated for technology purposes. She further stated that 1/5 of the account, approximately \$60,000 needed to be put towards the replacement of the storage area network. Superintendent Chiafery said the current device was nine years old and it needed to be replaced. She also said Ms. Nancy Rose, Director of Technology and Library Media, included a three-page addendum to her budget and she addressed everything pertaining to technology in the School Board's budget message.

Superintendent Chiafery said student services had gone up by 1.95% overall which was due to three things; the transportation contract, the wage increase for special education support staff and related services such as IEP's (Individual Education Plans).

Superintendent Chiafery commented the overall transportation for the school district had gone up by 3.5% and was part of a long-range contract. She also commented that a new line item was created based on parents' input regarding transporting athletes to practices, games and matches which were held off-site. Superintendent Chiafery said \$63,939 was allotted in the high school budget for that transportation.

Superintendent Chiafery said, referring to a portion of the maintenance line item, the roof project at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and the James Mastricola Elementary School was \$655,805 and would replace 21,155 square feet of roof.

Superintendent Chiafery also said the replacement of two boilers at the James Mastricola Elementary School was also part of the Capital Improvement Plan with an associated cost of \$350,000.

Superintendent Chiafery pointed out that not only did they need to replace a switchgear panel at the Merrimack High School but they also had to replace one at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School which was in the operating budget at a cost of \$100,000. She noted that there were a few other switchgear panels which needed to be replaced but they were all less \$100,000.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that a transformer had to be replaced at the Merrimack High School and the estimated cost was \$75,000.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that it was important to continue to provide security tools for all of the schools and they were proposing to add twenty additional cameras, both on the interior and exterior in designated areas among the four elementary schools.

Superintendent Chiafery said the administration was also asking to finish a project that had already started at the James Mastricola Elementary School to replace the eleven remaining cabinet bases and sinks.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that four new accounts were created for the utilities at the Brentwood property, water and sewer, propane gas, electricity and oil. She said they were also waiting for the Fire Engineer's report and expected to receive it in the latter part of December or early January.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the 2019 - 2020 proposed administrative budget was \$78,198,819 or a 2.11% increase. She said the 2018 - 2019 approved operating budget was \$76,581,286 with a differential of \$1,617,533. She further stated in addition to that, the default budget, which was required under RSA 40:30, was \$77,787,568 for 2019 - 2020. Superintendent Chiafery stated the proposed administrative budget for 2019 - 2020 was \$411,251 more than the default budget.

Chair Barnes commented that she was aware it was going to be a difficult year because of the New Hampshire Retirement System increases as well as the operational items that came up.

Superintendent Chiafery said one of the things the School Board had requested, as part of their budget message, was a communication plan. She said the administration was working on that and it would be presented to the Board at the December 17, 2018, meeting.

Vice Chair Schneider asked what presentations would be given on December 17th. Superintendent Chiafery replied the presentation would be Food Service and Maintenance.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that he was surprised the school district owned a transformer. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied they were surprised as well but they checked with Eversource and the district did own the transformer which needed to be replaced. He further replied that he would try to get additional information regarding the ownership of the transformer.

Board Member Nunez stated that one of the items she included in the Board's budget message was if they could look at adding School Resource Officers in the future. Superintendent Chiafery replied the grant for the School Resource Officer at the middle school was ending and the town indicated the position would be included in their budget. She further said it was not something the school would put in their budget but they would ask the town to consider it in the future.

Chair Barnes asked if there were further questions regarding the budget from members of the Board. There was none.

6. Decision from the State of New Hampshire Supreme Court Relative to Mr. Bevill's Appeal Regarding the School District's Homework Protocol

(Chair Barnes)

Chair Barnes read aloud from the State of New Hampshire Supreme Court's decision regarding Case #2018-0581, Appeal of Robert T. Bevill f/n/f D.B., the court on November 27, 2018, issued the following order: (Summarized as below:)

Appeal from an administration agency is **declined**.

The Supreme Court has discretion to decline an appeal from an administrative agency. No appeal, however, is **declined** except by unanimous vote of the court with at least three justices participating.

This matter was considered by each justice whose name appears below. If any justice who reviewed this case believed the appeal should have been accepted, this case would have been accepted and scheduled for briefing.

The motion for summary affirmance is therefore moot, as are the requests by Erin Chamberlain and Kristine Sawdey to participate in this appeal.

Lynn, C.J., and Hicks, Bassett, Hantz Marconi and Donovan, J.J., concurred.

7. Revised School Board Policy

- **Third Review of Tobacco Products Ban Use and Possession in and on School Facilities and Grounds**

(Superintendent Chiafery)

Superintendent Chiafery stated the high school administration recommended two additional items they felt should be included in the policy.

Page 2, Section D, Paragraph 2, Line 1

- Add to the parenthetical insert containing Athletic Director...
 - Director of maintenance and/or Assistant Superintendent of Business

It is important to add these administrators because they deal with vendors such as roofing contractors and HVAC Honeywell technicians.

In the same section

- Remove the word close and replace it with the word cease, as it is a better choice of words.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to waive the two-week rule and accept School Board Policy, ADC, as amended.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

8. Preparation for the New Hampshire School Board's Association (NHSBA) Delegate Assembly on January 26, 2019

(Chair Barnes)

Chair Barnes stated that the delegate was assigned to Board Member Schoenfeld and Board Member Guagliumi was the alternate. She asked if there were any resolutions that the Board did not want to accept from the Board of Directors, including any alternate language, which needed to be vetted to be able to give the delegates the willful intent of her Board to be able to represent them in Concord.

Chair Barnes announced that she would recuse herself from the conversation, as she would be running the meeting, as the President of the New Hampshire School Board's Association.

9. Approval of November 19, 2018, Minutes

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to approve the minutes from the November 19, 2018, minutes.

The motion passed 3-0-1. (Abstained – Nunez)

10. Consent Agenda

(Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin)

- Educator Resignation

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin noted that the following teacher had tendered her resignation.

Ms. Margaret Clement, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School.

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

11. Other

- a) Correspondence

Chair Barnes commented that the Board received four pieces of correspondence regarding interest to include the turf field as part of the budget.

Vice Chair Schneider said he had received correspondence from a paraprofessional at the middle school regarding some issues which were directed to Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin.

- b) Comments

There was none.

12. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery commented that she would have a schedule for the budget hearing dates at the December 17, 2018, meeting. She asked the Board to inform her what nights of the week would work best for them.

Chair Barnes stated if the Board had any questions regarding the items relating to Food Service and Maintenance Departments to send them via e-mail to Superintendent Chiafery no later than December 10th.

13. Committee Reports

Board Member Schoenfeld stated the Budget Committee had its first meeting and they began to schedule future dates.

Student Representative Puzzo commented that the holiday parade was cancelled but the band would be performing at the tree lighting. He further commented the Sophomore Semi was held and went off without a hitch.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Ms. Carrie Chiasson, 19 Powers Circle, addressed the Board and stated that she was available to assist in any way she could with regard to the proposed turf field.

Mr. Rich Gwinn, 10 Wire Road, addressed the Board and stated he felt that someone should look at the revenue that could be made from tournaments and renting out the field to assist with the cost of the proposed turf field. He said he felt the district could save some money on construction costs.

Ms. Jenna Hardy, 59 Peaslee Road, addressed the Board and thanked the Board for putting the proposed turf field on a Warrant Article.

Ms. Kristi Gallagher of 3 Independence Drive, addressed the Board and stated that there were a lot of people who would not understand the installation of a turf field because they did not have children in the school system and if they were going to ask them to contribute their tax money to the field they would have to paint a picture for them to ensure they understood the importance of the turf field. Ms. Gallagher stated that she was the President of the Merrimack High School Striker Club and they had money and were ready to put it towards renting the turf fields. She asked what she and others needed to do to help. Chair Barnes replied the Warrant Articles went out in the middle of February and if there were monies to be had, they needed to know what was available because if it went to the ballot with nothing to offset the \$1 million cost, it may have created a negative outcome.

Superintendent Chiafery indicated that the Planning and Building Committee was an Advisory Committee to the School Board. She said that group would probably be very interested in working with the parents in a collaborative effort regarding the turf field.

Mr. Kit Cargile, 9 Kingston Court, addressed the Board and stated that installing a turf field would provide the kids with more time on the field and having better facilities for the kids would benefit the community as well as the kids as they grew up in Merrimack.

Chair Barnes asked if there were other members of the public who wished to comment. There was none.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted the last date for the petition Warrant Articles was on February 12, 2019. He further noted the last day for the petition Bond Articles, over \$100,000, was on February 8th.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the last date for a budget hearing was February 9th.

15. Manifest

The Board members signed the manifest.

At 8:55 p.m. Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to enter a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) & (c).

The motion passed 4-0-0 by roll call vote.

At 9:32 p.m. Board member Nunez moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to adjourn the public session.

The motion passed 4-0-0.