

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District
School Administrative Unit #26
June 20, 2018
Merrimack Town Hall – Memorial Room
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

Student Representative Puzzo was excused from the meeting.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Interview Candidates for School Board Member Vacancy

Chair Barnes outlined the process. Candidates will introduce themselves and then respond to questions posed by board members. Candidates will then be provided an opportunity to ask their own questions.

The first candidate is Jason Brodsky, originally from Long Island and employed by BAE Systems as a Program Manager. He has two young children currently in the Merrimack School System and involved in Merrimack Youth Association (MYA).

Board Member Guagliumi asked Mr. Brodsky what school board items have been of most interest to him.

Mr. Brodsky responded that kindergarten, water filtration, and the new math program were of particular interest to him.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Mr. Brodsky what he sees as the most important issue facing the school district at this time.

Mr. Brodsky responded that maintaining the small community identity is most important as the town grows.

Chair Barnes asked Mr. Brodsky what he feels the school board's goal should be to deliver public education.

Mr. Brodsky responded that all students of all backgrounds should be provided the same opportunity to realize their output.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked Mr. Brodsky what he sees as the greatest challenges facing public education in general at the moment.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he sees challenges in regard to standardized testing and understanding how to measure performance accurately.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Mr. Brodsky what he might find most challenging as a school board member.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he sees challenges in balancing the budget with the needs of salaries and facilities.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Mr. Brodsky if he is familiar with the situation surrounding the SAU/SPED building.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he recently read the engineering report and sees options going forward.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Mr. Brodsky how he would convince the town to move forward on this project.

Mr. Brodsky responded that his approach would be to roll it into the capital plan to reduce the tax impact and give people a chance to see it over several voting cycles.

Chair Barnes asked Mr. Brodsky how he would handle a constituent complaint.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he would bring it to the board for discussion, mindful of the possible need for discretion.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Mr. Brodsky if he has the ability to take on the extra assignments held by school board members.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he would make the effort to accommodate mid-day meetings.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Mr. Brodsky his thoughts as a parent on the school calendar, blizzard bags, snow days, and beginning and end of the school year.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he would take another look at how educational time is tracked.

Chair Barnes asked Mr. Brodsky what he would like to see changed in the school district.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he would like to see more transparency, especially in the area of assessment.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Mr. Brodsky for one thought on how to improve communication within the district.

Mr. Brodsky suggested consulting with legal counsel on how better to use social media.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Mr. Brodsky his view of the relationship between the school board and the town council today and what changes he would like to see.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he sees some barriers, such as with the Merrimack Village District (MVD) in regards to the water problems.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked Mr. Brodsky his sense of the relationship between the school board and the district administration.

Mr. Brodsky responded that he sees that the two work closely and would like to see this continue.

Mr. Brodsky asked if the new school board position would assume the previous member's committee assignments.

Chair Barnes responded that initially the new member would assume the prior member's assignments. This allows for continuity. The board can adapt when needed.

Mr. Brodsky asked what the administration is looking for in a candidate.

Superintendent Chiafery appreciated hearing Mr. Brodsky state the importance of a close working relationship between the school board and the administration. She spoke about the strategic plan and the logic model.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell added that there is a serious level of rigor that goes into the work of the school board.

Mr. Brodsky reiterated his passion for the community and appreciated the board's consideration.

Chair Barnes invited candidate Nicole LaPorte to the table.

Ms. LaPorte grew up in Londonderry and has lived in Merrimack for the past five years. She has a Master's Degree in Finance and Accounting and currently is a corporate controller for New Hampshire Mutual Bank Corporation. She has four children currently in the Merrimack school system.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Ms. LaPorte where she would be the greatest asset to the school board.

Mr. LaPorte responded that she would bring a different perspective and strong skill set to the board.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Ms. LaPorte what she sees as the most important issue the school board will be facing.

Ms. LaPorte responded that the human resources are being pulled in many directions, such as in the area of mental health.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. LaPorte what she feels is a school board goal to deliver a public education.

Ms. LaPorte responded that measurement needs to stay current and use funds as widely as possible to provide components that once were provided at home.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked Ms. LaPorte to draw parallels between her past work with non-profits and what similar challenges they and the school district both face.

Ms. LaPorte responded that funding and resources are both stressed.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Ms. LaPorte what she sees might be the most challenging for her as a school board member.

Ms. LaPorte responded that her concern is that she might not yet know enough.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Ms. LaPorte how she would approach the budget.

Ms. LaPorte responded that her approach is to look at how to get more bang for the buck, maybe by consolidating in some areas.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. LaPorte how she would handle a constituent complaint.

Ms. LaPorte responded that she would bring it to the table for the entire school board.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Ms. LaPorte about her ability to serve on daytime committees.

Ms. LaPorte responded that she has the ability to work from home and has a flexible schedule.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Ms. LaPorte her thoughts as a parent on the school calendar, blizzard bags, snow days, and beginning and end of the school year.

Ms. LaPorte responded that she likes the existing school calendar and has heard complaints from other communities about blizzard bags.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. LaPorte what she would like to see changed in the school district.

Ms. LaPorte responded that she would like better communication to better understand what her children are experiencing.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked Ms. LaPorte her understanding of the purpose of public schools.

Ms. LaPorte responded that it would be a disadvantage to children to rely exclusively on the home to provide education.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Ms. LaPorte one way she thinks communication might be improved in the school district.

Ms. LaPorte responded she utilizes Team Snap for her children's sports and she would like to see technology better utilized.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Ms. LaPorte if she has a viewpoint of the relationship between the School Board and the Town Council.

Ms. LaPorte responded that she is not familiar of the status of the relationship.

Chair Barnes asked if the chatter on social media is a legitimate source for information to assist you in your roll on the school board.

Ms. LaPorte responded that while it might be interesting to hear it, it should not be used to guide decisions.

Ms. LaPorte asked board members what their weekly time commitment is.

Chair Barnes responded that there will be extra time spent on understanding the RSA's and committee assignments and to expect the time commitment to increase during budget season.

Board Member Guagliumi advised Ms. LaPorte that a new member should expect to spend about 10 hours a week on school board business.

Ms. LaPorte thanked the board for their consideration.

Chair Barnes invited Ms. Brandi Nunez to the table.

Ms. Nunez has lived in Merrimack for about thirteen years and has three children in the school system, two of whom are in special education. She works in Sales and Marketing and has a degree in Communications. She has coached in MYA and been involved on the town budget committee.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Ms. Nunez about her experience on the budget committee.

Ms. Nunez responded that seeing how budget decisions are made and the impact on day-to-day school life were of concern to her. She would like to see more pro-active decisions made.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Ms. Nunez her thoughts on the board's actions to date in regards to the SAU/SPED building.

Ms. Nunez responded that initially she struggled with this decision. Her concern was this not be a short-term solution to the problem. In voting to purchase the Brentwood property she hoped that the building would be torn down and a new building put up in its place.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. Nunez what she sees is the school board's goal to deliver public education.

Ms. Nunez responded that she feels strongly that school needs to be a safe environment that provides a quality education.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked Ms. Nunez to explain what she sees as a quality education.

Ms. Nunez responded that a quality education is when a child is reached and able to understand to the best of their ability. This differs for each child.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Ms. Nunez what she thinks would be the biggest challenge for her as a school board member.

Ms. Nunez responded that her biggest challenge would be absorbing as much information as fast as she could.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Ms. Nunez what she sees as the most important issue facing the school district.

Ms. Nunez responded the most important issue is safety.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. Nunez what she would do if a constituent or parent came to her with a complaint.

Ms. Nunez responded that her initial desire is to validate the concern and advise the person to the appropriate party. This might not be the school board.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Ms. Nunez about her ability to take on committee work.

Ms. Nunez responded that her schedule is flexible and this would not be a problem.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Ms. Nunez her thoughts as a parent on the school calendar, blizzard bags, snow days, and beginning and end of the school year.

Ms. Nunez responded that this is an area she does not yet feel educated on the issue. She personally likes the calendar, but has not had experience with blizzard bags.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. Nunez what she would like to see changed in the school district.

Ms. Nunez responded that communication is very important.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Ms. Nunez her view of the relationship between the School Board and the Town Council.

Ms. Nunez responded that constant collaboration and communication are important to keep a healthy relationship.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. Nunez if she thinks chatter on social media is a legitimate source for information to assist her in her role on the school board.

Ms. Nunez responded that legitimate concerns should be channeled through more appropriate venues.

Ms. Nunez had no questions for the board. She thanked them for their time.

Chair Barnes moved to the selection process.

All of the school board members thanked the candidates for coming forward and encouraged them to find ways to get involved.

Chair Barnes asked for nominations from the board.

Board Member Schoenfeld moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to nominate Jason Brodsky.

The motion failed 1-3-0 with Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider and Board Member Guagliumi voting in opposition.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to nominate Brandi Nunez to the board. Ms. Nunez's experience on the budget committee was influential.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

3. Appoint Candidate to Fill School Board Member Position

Brandi Nunez was welcomed to the School Board and sworn in by the School District Clerk Patricia Heinrich at the conclusion of the vote.

4. Consent Agenda

- Approval of Advanced Course Work/Advanced Placement Courses Policy
- Dual and Concurrent Enrollment Agreement Between Community College System of New Hampshire and Merrimack School District

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.