

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District
School Administrative Unit #26
January 7, 2019
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

Present: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider, Board Members Guagliumi, and Nunez, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell and Student Representative Puzzo.

Board Member Schoenfeld 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. Public Participation

Town resident Rich Gwinn of 10 Wire Road spoke about planning and money issues. He first questioned the cost of the roofing expenses. After checking with roofing contractors and others in the industry and web searches, he is of the opinion that the contractor, Garland, hired for the job is over-charging.

His next concern is over the request for two new boilers for the James Masticola Elementary School. Mr. Gwinn asserted that the boilers are often built into the building and cannot be removed. Instead a new construction project would be required at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Gwinn would like to see discussion on solar roofing.

His last concern is over what he sees as not enough planning for the peripheral areas that would abut a turf field and the extra costs that might result from this.

Mr. Gwinn suggested a three-year plan before moving forward on these projects.

3. Outcome to Inquiry Regarding Pooling School District Employees with Town Employees for Health Insurance Rates

Chair Barnes welcomed Health Benefits Coordinator Debie Clayton and Melissa Briggs, assistant Benefits Coordinator from HealthTrust.

Ms. Clayton opened with an explanation of the purpose of HealthTrust.

A proposal was made to combine the school district and town employees into a larger pool with the goal of a rate reduction. Currently, the school district rates are about 5% lower than those for the town.

Vice Chair Schneider stated that he originated this inquiry with the intent of learning what would be the most cost efficient for the taxpayers.

Ms. Clayton responded that combining both entities would most likely result in higher rates for the community.

Chair Barnes asked if there was a minimum time frame requirement to remain in a combined agreement.

Ms. Clayton responded that once a combined agreement is entered into it remains in effect for five years.

Board Member Guagliumi asked about other communities that are in combined entities.

Ms. Briggs responded that there are no recent combined groups. There are about twelve that have been in effect for a while.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if there are other benefits to combining both entities.

Ms. Clayton responded that by combining, a credible group would be formed because the combination would result in a group of over one thousand. Benefit choices would be independent but rates would be the same.

4. Explanation of the Fire Engineer's Report Regarding Brentwood

Chair Barnes welcomed Fire Captain John Manuelli to the table.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell provided background on actions taken that resulted in the report.

Fire Captain Manuelli stated that the building was originally a single family home built in 1963. It was sold to SERESC in 1979 to be used as a school for troubled children. Additions were built in 1986, 1997 and 1999. The size of the additions do not match current measurements, nor is there any paperwork to indicate that the Fire Marshall signed off on any of the work. The construction is built to a home standard, Class 5 (wood frame), not to the standards for a school. The sprinkler system is also inadequate for a school.

In 2014 SERESC vacated the building and the Nashua School District used the building until June 2018.

Most of the issues with the building are maintenance issues. The fire panel and alarms are no longer compliant and need upgrading due to planned obsolescence. In its current state it cannot

be used as a school. ADA issues and the sprinkler need to be addressed before the building could be used for another purpose.

Superintendent Chiafery asked if student clubs or after-school activities could use the building.

Fire Captain Manuelli will look into this possibility. His original statement was based on use as a school with classes all day.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the building could be used for adult classes or activities.

Fire Captain responded that any use as an assembly brings in the sprinkler issues.

Chair Barnes asked about one-on-one student testing.

Fire Captain Manuelli responded that this would constitute a business use and again brings in the sprinkler issue.

Vice Chair Schneider reminded all that the reason for purchasing Brentwood was to acquire the land. He would like to know the costs to shutter the building versus costs to use it for a year or two.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell spoke about the specifics of what would need to be done to de-commission the building.

Board Member Guagliumi asked about the costs of other options such as demolishing the building.

Vice Chair Schneider noted that the Planning and Building Committee will have the final say on what happens with the building.

5. Formal Hearing on James Mastricola Upper Elementary School Budget for 2019-20

Chair Barnes invited Principal Marsha McGill to the table.

Principal McGill had been provided with preliminary questions from board members prior to this meeting. She read aloud the questions and her responses.

Chair Barnes had submitted the question “(ALL) Field Trips: What out of pocket costs do students have for these outings? Are there funds available for those receiving free reduced lunch? Are those on free/reduced lunch expected to bring lunch from home?”

Principal McGill responded school trip costs range from five to ten dollars. All students attend field trips as which students are on free/reduced lunch is a confidential matter. During the school day, if staff are made aware that a student has no lunch, then one is provided to them.

Chair Barnes had submitted the question “Math Texts versus Math Materials: Knowing we just rolled out a new math curriculum, are the expenses in 100.1111.11.8642.18 truly for textbooks (such as unreturned or damaged) or are they for disposable materials that could also be accounted for in 100.111.11.8610.18? JMUES shows a refresh rate of 33% based on prior years’ budget/expenditures.”

Principal McGill responded the math/text account is used to purchase texts, teachers' editions, resource masters, diagnostic and intervention materials for grades 5 and 6, and special educators' texts. The math supplies account will be used for purchases such as individual white boards, markers, wipes, erasers, plastic sheet covers and graph paper.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question "Additional materials for 'social-emotional learning skills.' Across all elementary grades this new category exists, totaling over \$30K across all 4 buildings. Can administration (or the principals) provide details on what these items include, and how it will be integrated into the curriculum?"

Principal McGill responded the District Mental Health Committee's work in creating a System of Care is now at the point of being evaluated for implementation school-wide in September 2019 with a classroom-based social/emotional instructional program. Research supports the value to students of this program. Over the past four years there were grant funds for this start-up program. Going forward money will be needed to for classroom materials, professional development, and on-line access.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question "All schools-furniture upgrades-I realize that each school has an ongoing furniture upgrade set of line items. Can the schools help to let us understand how the listed items were chosen, and whether there are 'must replace' items in that list vs things that could be expended?"

Principal McGill responded the requests are prioritized based on teacher input.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted the question "In reference to budget line item 100-2122-29-8641-18 (Guidance/Text/MUES) page 11, \$6,707.00; Please explain this item and as why it relates to Grade 5 versus Grades 5 and 6?"

Principal McGill responded Grade 6 is not included in the social/emotional model for elementary students due to developmental differences. It will be addressed in the future when a model for upper grades is discussed.

Board Member Guagliumi asked for more information regarding "The Second Step" and "Panels".

It was agreed that this should be done after the budget season. Superintendent Chiafery and Vice Chair Schneider think February or March would be a good time for more information. The grant can also be discussed at that time.

Board Member Schoenfeld had submitted the question "In reference to budget line item 100-1111-11-8641-18; Math/Text/MUES: The total for this line item for teacher materials in mathematics has been substantially reduced from previous years. How has this savings been accomplished? Are there resources that will no longer be available /are no longer needed? (This question is mirrored in those to the elementary schools.)"

Principal McGill responded resources were purchased for six years. We are currently in year two.

Board Member Schoenfeld had submitted the question “In reference to budget line item 100-2122-29-8641-18; Guidance/Text/TFS: To help contextualize this expense for those who may not have seen/heard presentations to the Board on this topic in the past – please describe these materials and the ways they contribute to providing a safe and supportive learning environment. (This request is mirrored in those to the elementary schools.)”

Principal McGill responded these are kit based materials based on the five social/emotional skills and domains established by Castle. They are a one-time purchase.

Chair Barnes thanked Principal McGill for her responses.

6. Formal Hearing on Technology/Library Media Budget for 2019-2020

Chair Barnes invited Director of Technology/Library Media Nancy Rose to the table.

Director Rose had been provided with preliminary questions from board members prior to this meeting. She read aloud the questions and her responses.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.2222.36.8650.07; “Please review the systems to be purchased and their costs related to the device management/tracking software needed to maintain compliance with HB 1612’s amendment to RSA 189:66. Is this an unfunded mandate or will we receive state funding to offset these expenses? Will these costs be recurring?”

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-2222-36-8650-07 (Software & licensing/Library); “This line item increased by \$1.5K due to compliance with HB 1612 amendment to RSA 189.66. Please remind us of what this means and if there are any other foreseeable increases due to compliance.”

Director Rose responded to both of these questions. Per the amendment, which addresses student data privacy, the district must do more to track student use of websites and create a formal data governance plan which will begin with a security audit. There is no state or federal funding for this to be done. Every district must do this on their own. Filtering will cost about \$7,000.00 more. The full cost is still an unknown.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.2221.36.8531 (phone); “Why was the actual expenditure in 2017-2018 of what the prior year’s budget was and why will the lower rate not prevail in this year’s budget?”

Director Rose responded this account is averaged over several years. The VOIP continues to decline but a cell phone was purchased for the new technician.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question “Technology Budget (and MHS) -The technology budget has detailed line items about replacement/addition of computers in each building. But the MHS budget has a specifically called-out addition of 30 laptops w/cart for the math department –which I think were referenced in the technology budget as well. Can you help us understand where the line is drawn between Technology Budget items and those called out within a specific school?”

Director Rose responded when technology is identified as specific to a department's goals the item is placed in that budget. The specific use for the technology is identified.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-1148-48-8738-07 (Technology infrastructure Improvement); "Please tell us more about the sub-item of Expand and Update computers for \$172,170.00. I'm particularly interested in this it compares to recent years and expected trends for future years."

Director Rose responded the line item refers to lease amounts for additional and replacement computers for 2017-2019 and going forward it will include about \$30,000 for new devices for students and staff. As more devices are added, the need for bandwidth, technical support and teacher training will add to the costs.

Board Member Schoenfeld had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-2222-36-8650-07; (Software & Licensing/Library): "Please talk a little about how choices are made regarding which software, research databases, etc., will be licensed or purchased by the district. What is the selection process, who participates, and by whom are final decisions made? How are decisions made regarding whether to continue existing licenses?"

Director Rose responded this is a significant budget line. Fifty-two percent is for research database use and quality and is reviewed with the school and public librarians. Software that supports curriculum is evaluated collaboratively with department chairs and other staff members. These discussions also include the Student Services Department. About thirty percent of the budget is spent on firewalls and system and infrastructure software. About three percent is for utilities.

Chair Barnes asked Director Rose about her cut list.

Director Rose responded that one example was electronic books software. Over time the software morphed from library based to curriculum based.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Chair Barnes if there have been any conversations at NHSBA on the compliance issue.

Chair Barnes responded that the two seminars that were held were sold out. Director Rose attended one of these seminars.

Chair Barnes thanked Director Rose for her responses.

7. Formal Hearing on Student Services Budget for 2019-2020

Chair Barnes invited Director of Student Services John Fabrizio to the table.

Director Fabrizio had been provided with preliminary questions from board members prior to this meeting. He read aloud the questions and her responses.

Chair Barnes had submitted the questions “Please provide an overview on how these accounts are managed. How have we covered the accounts that are budgeted at \$500 and expended at \$1500-\$2000 due to actual expense?”

“What is the difference between “regular” and “salary” tutoring accounts?”

“We are spending \$40,000 for services provided to students at charter schools. How do we supervise this staff for our required compliance with IEPs? What operational strains does that place on your department resources?”

Director Fabrizio responded each tutoring account is handled individually. Student request forms are filled out and signed by the building principal. Director Fabrizio reviews the forms and makes the final decisions.

Accounts that fluctuate are carefully monitored by Director Fabrizio and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

Regular tutoring is for students without IEPs and salaried tutoring is for students with IEPs.

The funds supplied for charter schools are required by law. Staff are supervised outside of the district.

Vice Chair Schneider asked about transportation for students on IEP’s to charter schools.

Director Fabrizio bases the amount on averages. If needed he would tap into the transportation budget for the school level of the specific school.

In regards to the strain this puts on the operational resources, Director Fabrizio is always in conversations with these charter schools in addressing the challenges created by out of district placements. There are currently about seven Merrimack students in charter schools who have IEP’s.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-1207-41-8114-06; “Many of these items support children with IEPs for extracurricular support. Please tell me the type of general support that is provided for our students and why type of extracurricular activities are supported, i.e. sports, Destination Imagination...On a related vein, what type of support do we provide for extracurricular leaders that may not have specialized training in dealing with children, and specifically children that require IEP support; or should we earmark budget dollars for this type of support”

Director Fabrizio responded the NHDOE requires that programs offered after school shall make the necessary accommodations for participation by students on IEPs. There is a line item in the budget for specialized staff training to support these students.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if there is any training for secondary support staff brought in to assist special education students in these activities and was told this is not currently done. The IEP’s guide student activities.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-1207-41-8114-12 SEP/Paraeducator/Reeds Ferry School and other related items on page 2; “It looks like many of these related items have increased, or are trending an increase year over year of \$20K or more. Please tell me if the increases are related to headcount and/or salary increases and provide a little more information regarding these increases.”

Director Fabrizio responded these increases are due to the salary increases.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted the question “Please tell us about the air conditioning unit that’s on the cut list. Remind us if this is something that’s been cut on prior budgets.”

Director Fabrizio responded this item was on the cut list three years ago.

Board Member Schoenfeld had noted that Wediko is misspelled in the first column of the table on pg. 17.

Director Fabrizio provided some additional information to the board. He is guided by two major laws; FAPE (Free And Appropriate Education) and Least Restrictive Environment. The requirements are specifically detailed within each law.

Chair Barnes thanked Director Fabrizio for his responses.

8. Update on Proposed Plan for Switchgear Replacement at Merrimack High School

Chair Barnes invited Assistant Superintendent for Business Matt Shevenell to speak to this item.

The plan for the switchgear replacement at the Merrimack High School that was denied by the Merrimack Fire Department because of clearance issues. A follow-up meeting that involved the state inspector resulted in the plan’s approval. By taking away access to the back of the switchgear, the safety concerns were addressed.

The best plan would be to do the switchgear and the transformer at the same time. Already approved monies will be used to move this project forward.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if this combining of the projects will still need to drain the Emergency Funds.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that he would prefer to utilize the emergency funds and look to replace the money through a warrant article.

Discussion ensued on how to move forward and what monies would be available in the case of an emergency situation.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell would like access to these already approved funds in order to sign a contract for this work.

9. Review of Fourth Grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Mathematics and Reading Student Questionnaires (Surveys) and Parent Nonfiction Letters

Chair Barnes invited Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin to speak on this item.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin explained that schools are chosen at random by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and this year James Masticola Elementary School's fourth grades were selected to participate in both the mathematics and reading assessments.

The two components are the assessment which is administered by (NCES) personnel and a survey. The survey piece is an opt-in option for parents.

Letters will go out to parents this weeks. Student privacy will be maintained.

Board Member Nunez asked if parents will receive copies of the questions before they opt in and was told no.

Vice Chair Schneider noted that two letters are going home, one for the opt-in survey and one for the opt-out assessment.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin responded that the district has taken guidance from the NCES and that their preference is the two letters.

Board Member Nunez asked if a copy of the survey could be made available at the school for parents to view.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin responded that he will investigate the possibility.

10. Establishing the Date and Back-Up Date for the District Deliberative Session

Chair Barnes invited Superintendent Chiafery to speak to this item.

Superintendent Chiafery recommended that the Deliberative Session be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 with a back-up date of Thursday, March 7, 2019. Ash Wednesday is March 6th.

11. Approval of December 17, 2018 Minutes

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2018 meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

12. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin presented the consent agenda for approval.

- **Educator Nominations for 2018-2019**

Cassandra Earley, School Counselor, James Mastricola Elementary School
Paul Marshall, Science Teacher, Merrimack High School

- **Approval for Kristine Thibault to Conduct Educator Survey for Doctoral Study**

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

13. Other

a) Correspondence

Chair Barnes had received correspondence from a parent. She directed the parent to the principal at the child's school.

b) Comments

Vice Chair Schneider spoke about Mr. Gwinn's input during public participation. He noted that often the school board has addressed questions and concerns and asked if prior presentations are readily available for residents.

Chair Barnes clarified the purpose of public participation. She noted that school board members do not speak during this time nor are inaccuracies addressed.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell and Director of Facilities Touseau met with Mr. Gwinn for over three hours to discuss the roofing project and review all prior actions and the process undertaken on this project.

Vice Chair Schneider suggested that files be kept on the topics in addition to the meeting times.

Vice Chair Schneider reminded the board that all projects go out to bid.

Chair Barnes noted the recent passing of NHSBA retired member Ted Comstock.

14. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery shared that scribe Trish broke her wrist. In the interim her duties will be performed by the previous scribe Rose DeNucci.

Earlier today Superintendent Chiafery, Director Fabrizio and Assistant Principal DeLuca attended a NHDOE session in Concord on social/emotional learning. Merrimack and Laconia were highlighted on their work.

15. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

16. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

17. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest at 9:52 p.m.

At 10:00 p.m. Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to enter non-public session per RSA 91-A:3,II (c).

The motion passed 4-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 10:25 p.m. Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the public meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.