

**Merrimack School Board Budget Hearing
Merrimack School District
School Administrative District Unit #26
January 14, 2019 (Monday)
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room**

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

Absent: Student Representative Puzzo was excused from the meeting.

1. Call to Order

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Participation

Rosemary Rung of 25 Ministerial Drive approached the microphone to share that as a new state representative she is very committed to Merrimack and announced that going forward there will be a state representative at every school board meeting. She offered to be of assistance to any community member who would like to speak on upcoming bills.

4. Further Deliberation Regarding Merrimack High School Athletic Transportation

Chair Barnes invited Merrimack High School Athletic Director Mike Soucy to the table.

Chair Barnes asked if a citizen-petitioned warrant article to pay for a turf field were to pass, what the impacts would be on transportation for practices and games for those not using that facility.

Director Soucy responded that some of these practices are already covered with one-way transportation.

He asked if the district wants to provide two-way practice.

Board Member Schneider stated that the original question from the school board only related to games, not practices; and only games where Merrimack was considered the home team.

Board Member Guagliumi heard from parents' regarding their concerns about home vs. away games, no concerns about practices.

Chair Barnes asked why the cheerleaders do not practice at the Merrimack High School.

Director Soucy responded that they practice at a private facility in Londonderry that has more appropriate safety equipment.

Board Member Guagliumi shared that many parents also told her they do not need weekend transportation.

Director Soucy responded that Wednesday and Saturday ice hockey games should have consistent transportation. The players need to be at the ice rink an hour before the games.

Director Soucy distributed handouts to the board members to refer to as he spoke to its points. The transportation budget would change from \$64,000 to about \$38,000 as spring transportation would no longer be necessary. In preparing the budget he assumed all varsity home games would use the turf field.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that he does not see a field in place and operational by September 2019. If approved under a warrant article, the firms that do this work might not have openings.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the board has the authority to authorize Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell to get bids now in anticipation of the warrant article being approved.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that he could do this. It would require geo-tech testing, specifications and then bids. This could cost about \$20,000 and require about six weeks to complete.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell and Director Soucy spoke about how the field would be lined for multi-sport use.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the specifications are done now and the warrant article fails, can they be used in a two years when the field comes up on the Capital Improvement Plan and was told yes.

Vice Chair Schneider recommended that the board take action at this meeting to authorize the specifications to be ready if the warrant article passes.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to direct Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell to go out and procure a plan and specifications for a turf field, working with the Athletic Director to do all the proper decisions on the design and utilization so that a specification is in place well before the election.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Vice Chair Schneider asked about two new items that were not on the original list that totaled \$5,500.

Director Soucy responded that this was for skiing and can be taken off the list as this is already a part of the budget.

Chair Barnes noted that even if the transportation is budgeted for; due to the bus driver shortage, there might be problems getting drivers.

Discussion ensued on additional ways to provide transportation. They included asking parents to provide rides, hiring coach busses, and communicating with parents well ahead of time on transportation gaps.

Board Member Guagliumi suggested sitting down with the various parent groups to address their specific needs.

Vice Chair Schneider asked for board clarification on how to come up with a transportation budget figure.

Chair Barnes responded that only GPS (Souhegan Woods, Gymnastics Village, West Side Arena, Carmine Arena, Hampshire Dome, and Londonderry Cheer Gym) would continue to need transportation.

Board Member Guagliumi suggested that students be mandated to take the bus both ways except for specific situations.

Chair Barnes asked how many are on the golf team and was told there is now a varsity and junior varsity team. Sometimes they can use a van for transportation.

Vice Chair Schneider stated that by eliminating some of the transportation the budget total would be reduced to about \$31,000.

Chair Barnes thanked Director Soucy for his responses.

5. Additional Budget Hearing

Focus on Maintenance Department

Chair Barnes invited Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell and Director of Facilities Tom Touseau to the table.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell spoke about the evolution of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) since he was hired; and the collaboration that takes place with other town boards. Parts of the CIP extend outward thirty years.

The benefits of the partnership with Honeywell over the past twelve years were reviewed. The change-over to natural gas was also financially successful. The chiller on the high school roof has been replaced, high school switchgears were re-set, and looking ahead the high school windows and parking lot paving are long overdue for attention.

Director Touseau noted that bleachers, boilers, cameras, parking lots, and gym floors are also long overdue for upgrades.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell shared that the Homeland Security visit revealed very positive findings in regards to the use and positioning of cameras and secure doors.

- **Roofing Information**

Director Touseau began by noting the roofing leaks at the James Masticola Elementary School in 2008. The following year a section of the high school roof was in very serious need of repair. In 2011 the Reeds Ferry Elementary School roof became an emergency situation. It was discovered that 72% of the roofs were out of warranty and long-term plans for roofing were begun.

- **Building Infrastructure Planning**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell outlined the process for choosing companies for large projects and spoke about the many established business relationships the school district enjoys.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked for more information on the roofing samples that Director Touseau had with him.

Director Touseau responded that the samples were for a hot-process and a cold-process. He explained the pro's and cons of each and how they would be fastened to the building.

Vice Chair Schneider stressed that the choice of a high quality roof is the best financial choice long-term. He noted that in a few years all of the roofs will have been upgraded and there will be several years where no roofing funds will be needed. At that time a Capital Reserve Fund could be built up.

Vice Chair Schneider asked for information on an upcoming agenda item.

Director Touseau responded that the earliest you can get your bid in the better the pricing.

- **Cost to Fire Alarm System for Brentwood**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the district's fire alarm company did a walk-through and gave a price of \$15,000. This does not include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements such as railings.

6. Administration's Response to Board Queries Regarding Charter School Students from Merrimack Utilizing School District Services

Chair Barnes turned the microphone over to Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin provided responses to school board members' questions from the previous meeting.

He referred members to a handout from their packets. He noted that the number of students enrolled in charter schools has doubled over the last five years.

There are seven Merrimack High School students who attend charter schools and participate in athletics and one who participates in co-curricular activities. The five year average has been five to ten students participating in athletics and six to twelve participating in co-curricular activities.

There are two Merrimack Middle School students who attend charter schools who participate in athletics.

Chair Barnes stated that all students of the Merrimack School District, regardless of where they attend school, have their needs and extra-curricular activities addressed in the budget.

It was noted that over the past five years the number of charter schools Merrimack students attend has increased from three to ten.

7. Proposed Warrant Articles

Chair Barnes read aloud the warrant articles.

To the inhabitants of the School District in the Town of Merrimack, County of Hillsborough, New Hampshire, qualified to vote in School District affairs:

You are hereby notified to meet at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School in said District on Tuesday, March 5, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. for Session 1 (Deliberation), to discuss the matters to be voted on by official ballot; and to meet at the designated polling sites, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, Merrimack Middle School, or St. John Neumann Church on Tuesday, April 9, 2019, Session 2 (Voting) for the choice of School District officers elected by ballot and any other action required to be inserted on said official ballot. The polls for the election of school district officers and other action required to be inserted on said ballot will open on said date at 7:00 a.m. and will not close earlier than 7:00 p.m. to act upon the following subjects:

Article 1 *To elect all necessary school district officers for the ensuing year. (Vote by Ballot)*

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). (_____by the School Board Vote: _____).*

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept Article 2.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Article 3 *Shall the District approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association which calls for the following net changes in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year:*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated Amount</i>
<i>2019-2020</i>	<i>\$855,365</i>
<i>2020-2021</i>	<i>\$883,164</i>
<i>2021-2022</i>	<i>\$911,867</i>

and further raise and appropriate the sum of Eight Hundred Fifty-Five Thousand Three Hundred Sixty-Five (\$855,365) 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). (___by the School Board Vote___). (___ by the Budget Committee Vote:___).

Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to accept warrant Article 3.

It was noted by several board members that this is an effort to maintain competitive with neighboring districts.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

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). (___by the School Board Vote: ___).*

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to accept warrant Article 4.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Article 5 *(Special Warrant Article) Shall the District raise and appropriate an amount up to Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$200,000), said sum not to exceed Ten percent (10%) of the unencumbered surplus funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year 2018-2019 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). (___ by the School Board Vote: ___). (___ by the Budget Committee Vote: ___).*

Vice Chair Schneider asked administration how the amount of \$200,000 was decided upon.

Superintendent Chiafery looked at the past three years and decided that this amount would be prudent.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept warrant Article 5.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Article 6 *Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of Three Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand Seventy-Six Dollars (\$325,076) for the purpose of pavement and drainage reconstruction in the parking lot area off School Street at James Masticola Elementary School and James Masticola Upper Elementary School? (Majority vote required). (___ by the School Board Vote: ___). (___ by the Budget Committee Vote:___).*

Superintendent Chiafery stated that visuals that capture the problems when it rains are available for viewing. There is a design plan in place.

Board Member Schoenfeld moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to accept warrant Article 6.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

8. Proposed Options for Budget Cuts

Superintendent Chiafery began by praising the Leadership Team for their collaborative approach to this issue. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell and Director of Maintenance Touseau were very helpful in assisting them in their decisions.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell began by stating that the bid results for the roofing project came in around \$60,385 lower than estimated.

If a roof section of the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School (section "I") is put off, that would result in another savings of \$190,000.

Based on input from a group meeting, the state electrical engineer stated that the switchgear at the Merrimack High School should be replaced because there are issues with it; but not the one at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School since there have been no issues. This would result in removing \$100,000 from the maintenance budget.

Also in the maintenance budget would be a cut of \$12,375 for the sink bases and about \$50,000 in replacement furniture.

When added together, Option A would result in a reduction of \$411,584, putting the budget \$333 under the default budget.

Option B (delay the entire roof at MES and JMEUS and the switchgear at JMUES) would result in a reduction of \$755,805, putting the budget \$344,554 under default.

Vice Chair Schneider thanked the administration for the work to show the two options and asked what Director Touseau would advise on the roofing project.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that Director Touseau would prefer that the two sections be done because they are rubber roofs, and hold off on the roof over the main office.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if the board goes with Option B that some of the other items on the cut list be re-visited.

Vice Chair Schneider stated he would prefer Option A and cutting from the transportation budget.

Chair Barnes noted that there will be a decrease in bonded debt next year and re-visiting the cut list items.

Discussion ensued on the bonded debt and upcoming capital improvement projects.

Chair Barnes asked Superintendent Chiafery for a prioritized cut list.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to add back the items from the cut list to make our proposed operating budget approximately \$125,000 to \$175,000 below the proposed budget as it stands in the Option B cuts.

Vice Chair Schneider stated that he cannot support the motion until re goes back and re-checks the amounts and looks at the CIP.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Board Member Guagliumi to change her motion to ask administration to prioritize items on the cut list.

Board Member Guagliumi amended her motion (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to ask administration to prioritize the items on the cut list.

Superintendent Chiafery asked if there is a limit of \$175,000.

Board Member Guagliumi would prefer a prioritized list and that does not look at costs.

Superintendent Chiafery asked for a firm amount for transportation.

Vice Chair Schneider responded that he calculated the amount to be about \$30,886, a reduction of about \$33,000.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

9. 2019-2020 Default Budget Presentation

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated the default budget has been posted online along with 36 pages of additional information. Reductions in force must be taken out of the default budget and amount to \$150,000. A long list of additional items were presented to bring the default budget to \$77,787,568.

Board Member Guagliumi asked that the Option A and B cuts be posted with the default budget.

10. Board Discussion on Proposed 2019-2020 Budget

The budget will be voted on at the next meeting.

11. Public Comments on Agenda Items

State Representative Rung speaking as a private citizen noted that when she was on the school board years ago the pay was lower than surrounding districts. She noted the difference consisted of benefits and professional development.

As a state representative she addressed the transportation issue by referencing HB 400 which authorizes certain private vehicles being used to transport students.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.