

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room  
November 4, 2019**

**6:00 P.M. – NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) & (c) – in Training Classroom**

- **Staff Welfare**
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**7:00 P.M. – PUBLIC SESSION**

**Present:** Chair Barnes, Board Members Schoenfeld, Nunez, and Schneider. Also in attendance were Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio, Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, and Student Representative Johanna Koroma.

**Excused:** Vice Chair Guagliumi

**1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Public Participation**

Ms. Sue Ellen O'Brien, of 26 Jessica Drive, addressed the Board and said she was present to listen to the discussion surrounding the parking issues, specifically at the high school. She said she had some concerns about safety issues.

Mr. Barry Wandell, of 73 Bean Road, also expressed that he was present to listen to the discussion regarding the parking issues.

**3. Supports for Students with Disabilities at Merrimack High School: Section 504**

Chair Barnes invited Ms. Sharon Putney, Principal, as well as Ms. Christina Connor, 504 Coordinator, both from Merrimack High School.

Ms. Connor stated 504 Plans helped students with disabilities with their futures by providing access to education as adequately as they provided it to students without disabilities.

Ms. Connor said to qualify for a 504, students had to have a physical or mental disability and required documentation from a physician or therapist. She further said it had to be determined if it substantially limited one or more of their life activities.

Ms. Connor clarified Section 504 was not special education and was not for students who did not have an impairment that substantially limited a life activity.

Ms. Connor shared that her role as 504 Coordinator had grown over the years, noting she currently worked five days per week, facilitated all of the 504 meetings, and worked very closely with the students, the parents, and the teams to make sure everyone was aware of what the accommodations were. She said she attended all of the transition meetings for the eighth grade who were moving up and made sure the students and the parents knew there would be someone at the high school who would be there for them.

Ms. Connor stated there were currently 179 students who had 504 Plans, which was the same number there were in 2014 – 2015; noting the number went up and down over the years but overall the number was growing. She pointed out there was a 30% increase in mental health referrals, she said anxiety and depression were becoming overwhelming for some students.

Ms. Connor said she felt the mental health initiatives in elementary school was amazing and would prove to be very helpful.

Chair Barnes asked if there were Board Members who had questions or comments.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked Ms. Connor what the biggest difference was since her days had been increased to five. Ms. Connor replied she had to do the necessary follow-up with the students.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. Putney what she saw as the long-term strategy for the 504 Plans. Ms. Putney replied she felt the more they could try to figure out how to meet the needs of all of the students, the better off the students would be, not only with academic support but mental health support and guidance support. Mr. Connor added that she felt it was important to “catch” the kids young and early enough so they did not drop out.

Chair Barnes asked Ms. Connor to add a little bit of context surrounding what a 504 Plan was. Ms. Connor replied if there was a concern they would meet to determine if a 504 Plan was needed and obtain the associated medical documentation necessary. She explained a 504 Plan could be temporary, as in the case where a student might have a concussion that would not last forever.

Board Member Schneider stated there was a process that had to be followed to obtain a 504 Plan which included a joint decision between the parents, the school and a medical professional or therapist. Board Member Schneider asked if there was funding available that would pay for a therapist to do evaluations. Ms. Connor replied in most cases when meeting for a possible 504 Plan the student was already in counseling or working with their doctor on something. She said she was not aware of any funding but she could assist with connecting the students with the appropriate professionals.

Board Member Nunez commented she felt 504 Plans were a work in progress and all of the schools in the District worked very hard to transition the students from one building to another.

#### **4. Parking at Merrimack High School**

Mr. Peter Bergeron and Mr. Richard Zampieri, Assistant Principals joined Ms. Sharon Putney, Principal, from the Merrimack High School.

Mr. Zampieri addressed the Board and read aloud from a Student/Parent handbook from 2002-2003 as summarized below:

*Student parking stickers will be sold to seniors and then to juniors, as spaces are available and a lottery system will be used when necessary.*

*As noted, for those who violate the parking privileges, at first you get a ticket with a fine and then you get a boot with a fine and other violations may result in towing or suspension and a loss of parking privileges.*

Mr. Zampieri noted the District no longer places boots on cars. He said after reaching a peak enrollment of approximately 1,688 students a few years prior, enrollments had declined. He said at that time most of the parking spaces were going to seniors with only a few left over for juniors. He said as enrollments declined more juniors received available spots and access to the lottery. He further said it got to a point where they were even able to allow a few sophomores to gain permits.

Mr. Zampieri stated there were no parking permits available for sophomores in 2018-2019, pointing out 164 seniors applied with the juniors taking the remainder of the spots through the lottery system. He further stated in the present year there were over 200 seniors who asked for permits with the remainder going to juniors. He said 165 juniors applied for a permit and 24 of them did not get spots.

Mr. Zampieri stated seniors were able to buy their permits beginning on the first day their identifications were given over the summer, pointing out this year it was August 19<sup>th</sup> and they then had three weeks (until September 9<sup>th</sup>) to buy their permits. He said the juniors had at least until September 20<sup>th</sup> to get their permits and on September 23<sup>rd</sup> they started giving out tickets. He further said there were a number of juniors who were unable to get their permits so an additional lottery was drawn and all 332 spots were filled.

Mr. Zampieri explained the communication process included a letter which was sent out over the summer, it was published on the school's website and parking information was included in the Parent/Student handbook. He said additionally, this year they sent out a letter to all of the juniors who owed more than \$50.00 whether it was for books or I.D.'s or parking fees and informed them their amount due would have to be settled prior to being able to purchase a permit. He also said parking updates were sent out through School Messenger which informed the community of the progress of the lottery.

Mr. Zampieri commented there could be many reasons why there were empty spots in the lots. He said seniors and some juniors were given the privilege of arriving late or leaving early based on their credits and progress towards graduation or perhaps there were medical conditions. He also said another reason might be absenteeism and some students did not have access to a vehicle every day.

Superintendent McLaughlin asked what the cost of a parking permit was and where the money went. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied the current cost of a parking permit was \$50.00 and it was to cover the cost of the parking lot attendant, adding the salary for that position was approximately \$20,000. He noted the parking lot attendant was not meant to have a tax impact.

Superintendent McLaughlin also commented the question had come up with regard to the number of available parking spots versus the number of students who wanted them. He said he felt it was worth mentioning that more parking at the high school would be beneficial and one of the things the District was proposing on the Capital Improvement Plan was to have a study done to discuss a Merrimack High School SAU (School Administration Unit) office campus re-design which would theoretically include the addition of more parking for students.

Chair Barnes commented she felt parking was important to look at as the forecast indicated an uptick in enrollments.

Chair Barnes asked, on behalf of Vice Chair Guagliumi, asked if lines would be painted as it may be causing space issues. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied striping in the lot would be done as it was currently laid out.

Chair Barnes asked if lines were going to be painted if they could be painted in such a way that it could add a few more spaces. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied he could look into it.

Chair Barnes stated Vice Chair Guagliumi's last question was if sophomores were currently parking in the lots. Mr. Zampieri replied they had not provided permits to sophomores.

Board Member Schneider asked if given the observations there was an opportunity to roll the dice a little bit in that there was always going to be "X" number of spots and on any given day there would be a certain number of spots that would not be used. Mr. Zampieri replied that scenario had been considered but one of the reasons they had not gone in that direction was there were years they received phone calls from the people who had purchased a permit and there was no spot for their son or daughter to park.

Board Member Schneider asked if there was ever a time when the parking lot was full with valid permitted vehicles. Mr. Zampieri replied there were times the lots were full of valid permitted vehicles.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated he was happy to have an open dialogue regarding the parking situation and was not closed off to any possibility.

Board Member Schoenfeld commented she would not be a fan of "overbooking the flight" situation. Board Member Schoenfeld asked what the responsibilities of the parking attendant were. Mr. Zampieri replied two parking attendants checked for valid permits and also checked to see if students were using a different vehicle on any given day so they did not get a ticket.

Board Member Schneider asked if a list was retained of repeat offenders and what type of action was taken. Mr. Zampieri replied in that instance they would inform the students' parents of the matter and encouraged the student to find an alternate place to park.

Chair Barnes asked what safety concerns Ms. Putney had been made aware of regarding the way the non-permitted parking spots had created. Ms. Putney replied she had spoken to a few parents who were concerned about students parking in the dirt lot. She further replied there were new protocols put in place which would require an escort for all students walking to the dirt parking lot. She added students would be allowed to take their phones with them if they were walking to the dirt parking lot.

Chair Barnes stated the fine for a parking ticket was \$50.00 and asked what the value was in charging someone more than they would get ticketed for in Manchester. Mr. Zampieri replied the fee was intended to be a deterrent.

Chair Barnes asked if there were any exceptions made if the student/family had a financial hardship. Mr. Zampieri replied the student had a choice of doing community service instead of paying the fine, such as working at the food pantry or an animal shelter.

Chair Barnes asked where the money collected from the fines was going. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied the fees paid for the permits and the fines went back to the general fund.

Chair Barnes suggested putting the money received from the permits and fines into a fund for pavement rather than the general fund. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied there would have to be a Warrant Article to deposit or withdraw money out of a capital reserve fund unless it was set up as a revolving fund or an expendable trust.

Chair Barnes asked how much money the district usually received per year in fines. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied parking permits and fines together were approximately \$20,000 per year.

Board Member Schneider pointed out the money collected for fines was approximately \$3,400 to \$3,500 per year.

##### **5. Memorandum of Agreement Regarding the Madeline Bennet Sewer Line**

Chair Barnes stated at the last School Board meeting, Mr. Tom Koenig, Chair, Town Council, asked why the Board had decided not to sign a document regarding the Madeline Bennet Sewer line. She explained the School Board held a special meeting on August 26<sup>th</sup> at which they discussed conditions that needed to be met for them to feel comfortable with providing an easement to the town for the sewer line. She further said it was going to directly impact the Merrimack Middle School and its operation.

Chair Barnes also said the School Board learned that they only had a temporary Certificate of Occupancy which was something the School District did not want to continue to operate under.

Chair Barnes commented the Town's Attorney had sent the School Board documentation after the August 26<sup>th</sup> meeting that did not address their concerns. She further commented that the School Board's Attorney suggested they amend one item in the motion which was that they "conceded they would not take the sewer line until the end of the project and at the end of the project they would expect a permanent Certificate of Occupancy."

Chair Barnes stated the town had reviewed the last draft and provided a Memorandum of Agreement that met those expectations.

Board Member Schoenfeld made a motion (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to sign the Memorandum of Agreement between the Town of Merrimack and the Merrimack School District regarding the Madeline Bennett sewer line.

Board Member Schneider pointed out that the item was not on the original agenda and he had not seen the updated document. He said while he was in support of it, he requested in the future, when they had such documents to vote on that the School Board see the updated documents prior to being asked to vote on them.

**The motion passed 4-0-0.**

## **6. Presentation of the Capital Improvement Plan**

Superintendent McLaughlin commented he had met with the Planning and Building Committee on October 28<sup>th</sup> where the Capital Improvement Plan was presented.

### **Roofing**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell addressed the proposed roofing projects for the James Mastricola Elementary School, the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, and the Merrimack High Schools through the year 2025-2026.

### **Master Plan Study – Redesign**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated a new item on the Capital Improvement Plan was the line item for Master Plan Study which included the Merrimack High School, the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, the James Mastricola Elementary School and, the Central Office in the year 2020-2021.

Board Member Schneider asked how long it would take to get an actual plan once the study was completed. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied the goal would be to have something with a cost associated with it in 2021.

Superintendent McLaughlin pointed out, however, that it would not be a good idea to rush the issue just for the purposes of getting it to the voters in 2021 and if the plan was not ready they would have to wait until it was.

### **SAU Campus Redesign**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, referring to the SAU Construction/Campus Redesign, stated the implementation of the plan would be in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 and would likely include a new SAU (School Administration Unit) Central Office building at a location to be determined and at a value which was also to be determined.

### **Bleacher Upgrade**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the bleachers in the Smith Gym was moved to the year 2020-2021 by the School District's Planning and Building Committee. He noted the bleachers at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School in the APR (All Purpose Room) were scheduled for replacement in the year 2021-2022.

### **Gym Floor Replacement**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented all other School District's APR (All Purpose Room) floors were made from VCT (Vinyl Composition Tiles) and they lasted for a very long time. He suggested the VCT flooring might be a better option as opposed to a wood floor in the APR at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School.

Board Member Schneider commented that changing the floor from wood to VCT could have a significant impact with regard to the amount of athletic activity which occurred in the room.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted the Merrimack High School gym was scheduled to be replaced in 2023-2024.

Mr. Tom Touseau, Director, Maintenance Department, addressed the Board and stated the gym floor at the Merrimack High School was the original flooring from 1977. He further stated the gym floor at the high school, as well as the gym floor at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, needed to be replaced.

### **Boilers**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the boilers at the James Mastricola Elementary School were replaced over the summer which cost \$400,000. He further stated they were hoping to replace four units at the high school and two units at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School but spreading the projects out to the latter part of 2024, 2025, and 2026.



### **Window Replacement**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the window replacements at the Merrimack High School would be split up into two years. He pointed out an abatement had to be done as they would likely find some asbestos in the calking of the windows.

Superintendent McLaughlin clarified there was currently no active asbestos issues in the School District.

Mr. Touseau also commented the plan was to replace additional windows at the Merrimack High School in 2023-2024.

### **Merrimack High School Turf Field**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the administration did not originally have the turf field on the Capital Improvement Plan but the School District's Planning and Building Committee put it on for the year 2022-2023.

Board Member Nunez asked why the turf field would not be done sooner than 2022-2023. Superintendent McLaughlin replied one of the reasons was if the School Board chose to approve a phase-in of the campus redesign it would be in the same year. He further said he felt the idea was to place the turf field on the Capital Improvement Plan as a reflection of their commitment to the project.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated it was not his recommendation to keep the turf field in the year 2022-2023 but felt it should be placed further out. He also said the biggest issue from his perspective was to try to balance large ticket items in any given year.

Chair Barnes stated the \$1.2 million added to the year 2022-2023 would put the Capital Improvement Plan total for that year at \$2,239,988 and the second to last payment for the Merrimack Middle School would put the Capital Improvement Plan plus bonded debt at \$3,061,488 which was a jump of a half of million dollars and it would affect the tax rate.

Board Member Schoenfeld commented when the subject of the turf field first came up there was a lot conversation about fundraising and it possibly being funded in part, by the community. She asked why it landed in the School District's budget. Superintendent McLaughlin replied it was not originally what the School District prepared to present to the School Board, largely because there were lots of conversations surrounding funding sources, noting they were still valid conversations.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked if it made more sense to represent the School District's most likely expenditures as opposed to the whole cost because it put a huge "blip" in the bottom total which was not representative of the way the intent was to fund it.

Board Member Nunez stated the turf field was something she was a huge fan of having. She further stated she would like to see a plan put together for the turf field that made sense from all points. She added she would rather see more thought be put into the installation of a turf field rather than placing it in the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) in a random year.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell explained that the Capital Improvement Plan illustrated the date the asset was planned on being acquired and what the gross cost of the asset was. He said a turf field was not equal to an expenditure plan. He said if they did it via Warrant Article it would start off by stating what the gross cost of the field was and then it could say "X" amount to be raised by contributions, donations, and pledges and "X" amount by general taxation.

Chair Barnes suggested that there needed to be a PowerPoint presentation that explained exactly how the proposed turf field would be paid for and why it was needed.

### **Lighting Retrofit**


Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated it had been twelve years since there was a lighting retrofit where they changed out a lot of the fluorescent lighting fixtures to newer, more energy-efficient fixtures. He said LED's (light-emitting diodes) were coming to the forefront and the District wanted to phase them in starting at the James Masticola Elementary School and the James Masticola Upper Elementary School. He further said the cost for the project would likely be received by November 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Capital Improvement Plan  
Capital Expenditure Summary Form  
Merrimack School District**

Presented to School Board 11/04/2019

Description	Replace Addition	Priority	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Roofing	Replace	Necessary	MES/JMUES \$ 655,805	TFS \$ 1,195,701	MES/JMUES \$ 1,039,988	MES/JMUES \$ 765,328	MES/JMUES \$ 477,090	MHS \$ 1,046,436
Master Plan Study - Redesign	Replace	Necessary	MHS, JMUES, MES, Central Office \$ 100,000					
SAU Const./ Campus Redesign	Replace	Necessary		TBD	TBD			
Bleacher Upgrade	Replace	Necessary	Bleachers in Smith Gym \$ 105,000	JMUES Bleachers APR \$ 60,000				
Gym Floor Replacement	Replace	Necessary		JMUES APR \$ 135,000 VCT or WOOD ?		MHS GYM \$ 195,000		
Boilers	Replace	Necessary					MHS (4) Units \$ 500,000	MUES (2) Units \$ 300,000
Window Replacement	Replace	Necessary	MHS - Outside \$ 265,000	MHS - Courtyard \$ 265,000		MHS \$ 316,500		
MHS Turf Field					\$ 1,200,000			
Lighting Retrofit	Replace	Necessary		MES/MUES Lighting - LED's TBD 11/18/19				
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 1,125,805</b>	<b>\$ 1,655,701</b>	<b>\$ 2,239,988</b>	<b>\$ 1,276,828</b>	<b>\$ 977,090</b>	<b>\$ 1,346,436</b>

- MAINT = Maintenance Building
- MHS = Merrimack High School
- MMS = Merrimack Middle School
- MUES = Masticola Upper Elementary School
- MES = Masticola Elementary School
- RFS = Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- TFS = Thomtons Ferry Elementary School

 Added or Moved by the Planning and Building Committee

Ventilation Study Refinement District-Wide  
to be Studied for Potential Phase-in

**7. Guaranteed Maximum Rate for 2020-2021**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that every year the School District received a guaranteed maximum rate for both health insurance and dental insurance by the New Hampshire Health Insurance Trust which was where the School District purchased their insurance. He further stated it was a not-to-exceed figure and it was used for budgeting purposes. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell shared that the guaranteed maximum health insurance rate increase was 8.4%, and dental was 3.9%.

## **8. Unfunded Mandates and Budget Impact**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated one of the more recent unfunded mandates was that the State of New Hampshire used to fund the Driver's Education program at approximately \$500.00 per student. He noted the parent's cost was approximately \$125.00 but parents currently had to pay the full cost.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell also said a new law had passed which required the School District to supply feminine hygiene products in every bathroom in the high school, the middle school, and perhaps even the upper elementary school. He pointed out that it was an unanticipated expense.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that the Department of Revenue Administration to have an estimate of about \$20,000 to \$30,000 in Medicaid funds while in the past it had been approximately \$400,000 to \$500,000. He also pointed out that special education aid and building aid was going down steadily as well.

## **9. Second Review of Distribution and Display of Information of School's Policy**

Superintendent McLaughlin read aloud a portion of the policy regarding the Distribution and Display of Information at Schools which included an edit for clarification.

(Edits are highlighted in yellow)

*"Requests to display or distribute materials **originating outside the Merrimack School District** must be submitted to the SAU office, which will approve the request and forward the material to the applicable school(s) for display or distribution. Organizations wishing to distribute materials must supply a sufficient number of copies."*

Chair Barnes stated the item would have its third reading at the next School Board and would also be on the Consent Agenda.

## **10. School Board Budget Message**

Chair Barnes stated the item would be tabled until the next School Board meeting.

## **11. Approval of October 21, 2019 Minutes**

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to approve the meeting minutes from October 21, 2019.

**The motion passed 4-0-0.**

## 12. Other

### a) Correspondence

Chair Barnes commented at the last School Board meeting there was correspondence which she had since received a copy of and responded to the e-mail and it was addressed.

### b) Comments

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio informed the School Board, regarding Universal Design for Learning Program (UDL) that all six schools and the administrative team was going through a process called Instructional Rounds which was an opportunity for them, as teams, to coach each other on the UDL framework and how to apply all of the concepts of Universal Design for Learning Program.

Superintendent McLaughlin read aloud from a prepared statement as summarized below:

*Everyone associated with education in this community; educators, administrators, custodians, food service personnel, bus drivers, contracted service providers, office staff, and coaches must be held to the very highest standards when it comes to the work they do with students in this District. The principle applies equally to all staff and volunteers. Students must always be our number one priority. When an investigation regarding the conduct of personnel is undertaken, it must be conducted in private. This point cannot be overstated. Whether the matter at hand involves one person or multiple people, the most important to be preserved is any personnel matter, beyond fairness to all sides is the privacy rights of those involved. This is never more important than in matters involving students, who should never, under any circumstances, be subject to any kind of public speculation that questions the credibility of any claim they may make. Likewise, for any staff member who should not be subject to any kind of public speculation that either exaggerates or diminishes the facts of the matter under investigation. For these reasons, we have not nor will we now publicly discuss the specific circumstances which led to a change in the football coaching staff for the remainder of this season. The fact that this matter has become public is a function of those who have made it so and the resulting discourse has only served to inflame an already challenging situation for all of those involved. It is always easy to speculate but such speculation usually leads to inaccurate or incorrect assumptions, such as the case now. It would certainly be easier to share information publicly that would clarify the reason for certain actions and put to rest the harmful and hurtful speculations but for the legitimate interest of those involved, it is right and fair not to.*

*I close by reminding all parties that the interest of all students remains this School District's chief objective.*

**13. New Business**

There was no new business.

**14. Committee Reports**

Board Member Schneider stated the Planning and Building Committee had met about one week prior and they were presented with the Capital Improvement Plan.

Board Member Schneider also stated the SERESC (Southeastern Regional Education Service Center) monthly Board of Directors meeting was held that day the new Program Director gave a presentation.

**15. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Mr. Wandell addressed the Board and stated he felt the turf field was very important for the School District to have and suggested a "Go Fund Me" page might be helpful.

Mr. Wandell commented that he appreciated the conversation regarding parking and Ms. Putney's attention to the issues.

**16. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:55 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to adjourn.

The motion passed 4-0-0.