

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
September 21, 2020  
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room**

**PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES**

PRESENT: Chair Guagliumi, Vice Chair Barnes, Board members Schneider and Rothhaus. Also present were Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio via a conference call, and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Guagliumi called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. followed by the pledge of allegiance.

**2. Public Participation Instructions**

There was no public participation.

**3. Project Based Learning K-6 in the Merrimack School District**

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Fabrizio explained that the essential learning competencies will be used to create projects and curriculum. Reeds Ferry Elementary School has been practicing Project Based Learning for a couple of years. Work is underway to expand the Project Based Learning to grades kindergarten through grade six.

Principal Yarlott explained it is important that students in grades K-6 have meaningful and relevant learning experiences and opportunities with a certain level of independence during remote instruction.

She explained August Academy work prior to 2016 helped Reeds Ferry Elementary School staff explore Project Based Learning with the intent of adding STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Math); STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math); project based learning; design thinking and inquiry into instruction. This effort became known as Integrated Practices (IP).

Cathy Cibotti a kindergarten teacher explained the following reasons for designing Integrated Practices.

- There was a need to delve more deeply into social studies and science content and teach our writing curriculum.
- IP days enable teachers to create lessons and activities that integrate multiple subject areas, including the arts.
- IP practices reflect the principals of UDL (Universal Design for Learning).
- IP addresses the principles of student voice and choice and provides the opportunity for students to take ownership of their learning.

Kate Merva a fourth grade teacher described how Integrated Practices was incorporated into a ten-day schedule.

Stacy Papp, kindergarten teacher explained the process for creating an essential question.

The educators described a variety of lessons that demonstrated Integrated Practices.

#### **4. Surplus from the 2019-2020 School Year to Reduce the 2020-2021 Tax Rate**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell report an average surplus is between \$3 Million and \$3.2 Million. The surplus from the 2019-2020 school year is expected to be \$4.7 Million and will be reflected on the December tax bill. Surplus details will be reviewed at a future School Board meeting.

#### **5. School Reopening Update: The First Two Weeks and Looking Ahead**

Superintendent McLaughlin noted we are only nine days into the school year. He plans to provide the Board with details pertaining to remote instruction, hybrid instruction and the effective use of flex days at a future meeting.

Superintendent McLaughlin noted the metric that will be used to determine a change of course would consist of several factors not just data. Other considerations might be the emotional readiness of the community and the availability of staff to teach in school.

Superintendent McLaughlin reported the anticipation of obtaining additional bandwidth, access to hardware, purchase and deployment of hotspots and the purchase of additional Chromebooks contributed to Merrimack School District's ability to accommodate remote learning.

Superintendent McLaughlin recognized families experienced challenges with remote learning last spring. He acknowledged that the use of multiple platforms contributed to difficulties with remote learning. A Task Force determined that Canvas was the best platform for the District to utilize across all grade levels. An additional benefit of using Canvas is that it is supported by the Department of Education and is available at no cost to the District. The District will be migrating to Canvas soon.

Superintendent McLaughlin reported that the Chromebook distribution plan is nearing the goal of one device per family.

Principals and Task Force members refined essential learning competencies in prekindergarten through grade twelve. The essential learning competencies provide students and families with a better understanding of what students are expected to do, especially on remote days.

Superintendent McLaughlin informed the board that all staff are required to complete a daily On-Site Work Attestation Form. He read aloud the questions on the On-Site Work Attestation Form. Depending on a person's answer to a question, they could be instructed to stay home. He reported twenty-five teachers have required substitute coverage as a result of their answers to the On-Site Work Attestation Form questions. He explained if a person is experiencing a COVID-19 symptom they are instructed to stay home, get tested for COVID-19 or obtain a note from their doctor explaining that their symptom(s) are related to an existing health condition.

Absence of childcare due to a daycare not allowing a child to attend due to COVID-19 symptoms is an absence that that District is obligated to honor. The district retained fifteen substitutes to work exclusively for the Merrimack School District. The substitutes are utilized daily to covering staff absences. Principals and Assistant Principals have also covered classes due to staff absences. Five

substitute nurses were hired to exclusively support the nurses. A sixth substitute nurse will be hired soon resulting in two nurses at each school.

Superintendent McLaughlin noted his concerns are an outbreak, the ability to have enough staff to cover classes and the challenge of entering cold and flu season.

Board Member Rothhaus asked if the District would offer flu shots to employees this year.

Superintendent McLaughlin responded the flu shot schedule has been canceled for this year.

Board Member Schneider asked Superintendent McLaughlin to share his methodology to centralize or distribute information to the community (parents, students, staff) of various changes and updates. He cited the decision to use Canvas as the new platform as one example.

Superintendent McLaughlin noted information, misinformation and changing information can change often be challenging to maintain.

Superintendent McLaughlin noted that it was his practice in the spring and summer months to announce the most significant information and changes through the Superintendent. Other communication methods are Facebook, PowerSchool Messenger and the District's web site. Communication will begin to be decentralized through principals and administrative teams.

Board Member Schneider asked Superintendent McLaughlin to share at a future meeting how information will be communicated and where answers can be found.

## **6. Third Review and Approval of Temporary Emergency Policy: Travel Guidance for Students and Staff**

Superintendent McLaughlin presented the Temporary Emergency Policy: Travel Guidance for Students and Staff for a third review. He noted the third review includes Board Member Schneider's request to include the definition of essential travel as defined in the Department of Health and Human Services Universal Guidance.

Superintendent McLaughlin consulted with legal counsel about expanding the definition of essential travel to possibly include travel to visit a college. The legal opinion was not to expand upon the definition of essential travel as defined in the Universal Guidance.

Also added was the citation of the Department of Health and Human Services Universal Guidance.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adopt the Temporary Emergency Policy: Travel Guidance for Students and Staff as presented.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

## **7. Second Review of Indoor Air Quality Policy (EBBD) – Cinda Guagliumi**

Superintendent McLaughlin presented the Indoor Air Quality Policy for a second review.

Approved 10-5-2020

The Indoor Air Quality Policy will appear under Consent Agenda on October 5, 2020 unless Chair Guagliumi receives a request from a Board member that it appear as a separate agenda item.

## **8. Open School Board Vacancy Interview Date**

Chair Guagliumi announced that the School Board would meet on Monday, September 28 at 7:00 p.m. at Merrimack High School in the cafeteria for the purpose of interviewing eight candidates for the one School Board vacancy. The meeting space will allow for the public to attend and to social distance. The School Board is expected to deliberate and select the final candidate. The new school board members will attend the October 5, 2020 after being sworn in by School District Clerk Pat Heinrich. The meeting will be recorded and broadcast the following day

Carol Bunis, Paul Goodridge, Jenna Hardy, Tinique Lenderman, Mackenzie Murphy, Jenny Poisson, Pat Tenden and Wolfram Von Shoen submitted letters of interest to apply for the vacancy as a result of Brandi Nunez's resignation.

## **9. Consent Agenda**

### a) Educator Resignation

Assistant Superintendent Fabrizio announced the following educator resignation.

Craig Merrifield, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

### b) Educator Nomination

Assistant Superintendent Fabrizio announced the following educator nomination.

Emily Bedard, Special Education Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to accept the consent agenda as read.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

## **10. Other**

### a) Correspondence

Chair Guagliumi noted all board members received an email from a parent of a student in the band expressing dissatisfaction over the fact the parents of band students are not able to attend home games.

Vice Chair Barnes added she is a parent of a band student. Parents received notification from Principal Putney that a maximum of four immediate family members can attend the home game on Friday.

Chair Guagliumi noted all board members received correspondence from a parent expressing concern over remote offered courses compared to hybrid offered courses and the availability of honors courses.

Chair Guagliumi received correspondence concerning varsity bass fishing.

b) Comments

There were no comments to report.

**11. New Business**

There was no new business to report.

**12. Committee Reports**

Vice Chair Barnes attended a Parks and Recreation Committee meeting on September 16. Upgrades to the Parks and Recreation office facilities are being made in order to meet IDEA requirements. The Watson Park fence project and Wasserman Park projects were discussed.

Vice Chair Barnes reported that she attended a Regional National School Board Association meeting on September 18. Elections were held. She was elected to be an alternate representative.

Vice Chair Barnes reported that the NHSBA continues to address the Resolutions.

Vice Chair Barnes reported she was asked to testify before the Joint Education Committee on school operations and the impact of COVID-19.

Chair Guagliumi noted the Committee Assignments will be address at the October 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**13. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments, inclusive of emails and forms.

**14. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest

At 8:49 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.