

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Monday, December 21, 2020**

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**Present:** Vice Chair Barnes, Board Members Schneider, Rothhaus, and Hardy. Also present were Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio.

**Excused:** Chair Guagliumi

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

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

Vice Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Public Comments**

Vice Chair Barnes public comments could be sent to [publiccomment@sau26.org](mailto:publiccomment@sau26.org) or by going to sau26.org where a meeting link was provided. She said all comments would be read and written into the record but noted the name and address of the speaker had to be provided.

There were no public comments.

**3. Response to Board Inquiry Regarding CO2 Levels in District Classrooms**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell explained that because some of the buildings in the District were exhaust-only, it raised the CO2 levels in those classrooms. He further explained there was not enough room in the buildings to install ductwork. It necessitates the installation of individual units which were called “unit ventilators.”

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the School Board had asked him if the situation was COVID related and he said he felt it was in that the E section at the high school had higher than normal CO2 levels. He said thirteen years prior 27 unit ventilators were installed at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School.

Mr. Jim Lucy, Senior Business Consultant, Honeywell, addressed the School Board and introduced Mr. Bob Marcotte, Mechanical Engineer, also from Honeywell. He said approximately three years prior Honeywell performed a comprehensive audit of the buildings which included looking at mechanical ventilation upgrades at the Masticola complex. He also said they found some areas in the high school that had high CO2 levels.

Mr. Marcotte said ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers) was the organization that created the standards which were adopted by all municipalities throughout the country for determining proper ventilation in buildings. He said ASHRAE determined that a CO2 level that was 700 parts per million higher than what the outdoor air CO2 was a good target for indoor ventilation rates. He said if the CO2 was high then it was an indicator that the other undesirable containments were getting high as well.

Mr. Marcotte said they took readings in seven of the eleven classrooms that were part of the \$400,000 budget that was given to Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell for consideration to be placed on a Warrant Article. He said the CO2 in the rooms ranged from 1,482 to 2,700. He added the variable to those numbers included the amount of people in each room, but noted there were some health impacts if there were higher levels. Mr. Marcotte said the minimum desired number with outside air CO2 of 450 would be south of 1,150 in a classroom space.

Mr. Marcotte said a District the size of Merrimack could be done within a 12 to 18-month construction timeframe. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted if the project was bonded there would be up to five years to spend the money and the project could span over multiple fiscal years.

#### **4. Formal Hearing on Elementary School Budgets**

Ms. Michelle Romein stated the proposed budgets were built around the District's focus on personnel, technology, safety, and maintenance, with a continued focus on high academic achievement and the social and emotional well-being of the students. She added the proposed budgets also reflected the need to be fiscally responsible.

Ms. Romein pointed out that all three elementary schools were presenting proposed budgets that had a decreased bottom line from the 2020 – 2021 school year. Those present on the call via Zoom were:

##### **James Mastricola Elementary School**

Ms. Michelle Romein, Principal, James Mastricola Elementary School  
Ms. Alisha Hansen-Proulx, Assistant Principal

##### **Reeds Ferry Elementary School**

Ms. Kim Yarlott, Principal, Reeds Ferry Elementary School  
Ms. Bonnie Painchaud, Assistant Principal

##### **Thorntons Ferry Elementary School**

Ms. Julie DeLuca, Principal, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School  
Ms. Michaela Champlin, Assistant Principal

Ms. Romein read aloud prepared questions from School Board members and answers as summarized below:

##### **Question (James Mastricola Elementary School)**

In the guidance text line, there was an \$8,000/\$9,000 expenditure in 2019 – 2020 which was to perhaps purchase SEL kits (Social & Emotional Learning) and are we budgeting for this, and do we have enough of the materials?

##### **Answer**

The original purchase in the 2019 – 2020 budget was the purchase of the Second Step Program and there were no recurring costs with the program as they were not consumables for the students. If they needed additional kits for classrooms they were funded through a District account.

**Question (All Elementary Schools)**

With the projected increase of enrollments over the next five years why are we decreasing the furniture replacement budget as we will need incremental items annually in addition to what needs to be replaced? Also, the nature of these items seems to address Universal Design for Learning Program (UDL) methodology of accommodating an environment conducive to different learners. Also, some will be helpful for SEL (Social & Emotional Learning) like comfortable floor chairs and coping environments.

**Answer**

In an effort to be fiscally responsible this year we level-funded our proposed furniture line from the 2020 – 2021 school year. Each year we look to provide furniture for the enrollment that we have that year. This may vary depending on the need to add additional classrooms.

**Question (James Mastricola Elementary School)**

Why is there such a large drop in the James Mastricola Elementary School Math/Text account?

**Answer**

Most of the math materials, including the workbooks and digital licenses, were bought on a six-year cycle. Since our math program is used for kindergarten through grade 7 these resources are purchased at the District level. Items in our math/text account are for items for new classroom setups or specific curriculum materials. The reduction at James Mastricola Elementary School from the budgeted to expended came from the fact that we budgeted for additional classroom materials, however, when working across the District with the other buildings we were able to move resources across the District resulting in us not having to expend that line item.

**Question (James Mastricola Upper Elementary School)**

What is the difference between the math/text accounts and the math/supply accounts?

**Answer**

The math/text accounts are used to purchase teacher and student texts that are used year over year to support instruction in that particular subject area. The math/supply accounts are used to purchase consumable materials and manipulatives.

**Question (Thorntons Ferry Elementary School)**

Please provide the methodology by which we are putting 25-26 students in grades 3 and 4 classrooms at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. I recall the standard being 20-22. I am assuming one teacher per grade would need to be added and would bring the student-teacher ratio in the 20-21 range. That said it was the most aggressively growing school population as discussed in last year's budget review. Based on future enrollments there will be incremental enrollments in these grades in upcoming years, though the data does not indicate where within the District those increases may settle.

**Answer**

We strive to ensure that we have equitable class sizes across the three lower elementary schools. We did add some teachers last year to address the enrollment numbers that were projected. Each year we look at whether or not we need to reallocate some teachers within the building to make sure we have optimal and equitable numbers.

**Question (Reeds Ferry Elementary School & Thorntons Ferry Elementary School)**

The line items (100-410-51-8531-12 & 100-2410-51-8531-13) for telephones was significantly underfunded. Was this due to the pandemic?

**Answer**

It was due to COVID. It was a combination of very, very slow billing and very little utilizing since the buildings were shut down in early March.

**Question (Thorntons Ferry Elementary School)**

The line item for Instructional Repairs (100-1118-18-8430-13) was over expended in 2019 – 2020. What happened and are we sure we have enough to cover it in the 2021 – 2022 budget?

**Answer**

There was a typo, it should not be listed as \$23,000, it should have been \$13,442.16.

**Question (All Elementary Schools)**

Referencing line item for Instructional Repairs 100.1118.8430. If we are supporting more instructional devices with the equipment we purchased to support the pandemic-driven remote learning, why are you not addressing the repair of these devices that will be in the hands of students with additional budget dollars?

**Answer**

The title on some of the accounts (instructional equipment repairs & non-instructional equipment repairs) did not adequately explain what they were. The line item is for the leasing and the on-going maintenance for every copy machine, printer, and scanner in the District.

**5. Formal Hearing on the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School**

Ms. Marsha McGill, Principal, and Dr. Nicole Rheault, Assistant Principal were present on the call via Zoom.

Ms. McGill stated that the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School proposed budget for the 2021 – 2022 school year reflected District priorities in the areas of technology, safety, maintenance, and personnel, as well a high academic achievement and social and emotional well-being. She said the proposed budget reflected level-funding but that line item adjustments had been made to reflect the resources needed for the 2021 – 2022 school year.

**Question (James Mastricola Upper Elementary School)**

I noticed supplies and text budgets are not all the same year-over-year, only by a couple of hundred dollars here and there. This seems different than the other schools. Is it related to the per-unit cost of items changing?

**Answer**

The supply accounts can change. It could be a per-unit cost per item. Sometimes they go up and sometimes they go down. Our supply accounts are oftentimes controlled by the number of students that we have.

**6. Formal Hearing on the Food Service Budget**

Mr. Dave Dziki, Food Service Director, was present on the call via Zoom. He said the funds requested in the proposed budget were associated with operating the food service in all six schools within the District. He added that the Merrimack School District was part of the New Hampshire Buying Group which helped with the purchasing of food and paper products.

Mr. Dziki said he would like to purchase a couple of food warmers for the James Mastricola Elementary School and for the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. He also said he would like to purchase some storage racks for the USDA freezer.

**Question (Districtwide)**

The food and milk account were under expended in 2019 – 2020. Was this because of the pandemic?

**Answer**

Yes, it was because the District only operated until March 13, 2020. He said even though they provided food remotely but it was not as much as if they had all of the students in school.

**Question (Districtwide)**

In response to the replacing of twenty-year-old equipment, what other equipment do you see coming to end-of-life in coming budgets? Are any of these items no longer supported; no parts or service companies available any longer?

**Answer**

I don't anticipate that because we do have a very good preventative maintenance program.

**Question (Districtwide)**

Are there any programs that were born from the pandemic that you would want to be able to continue such as the delivery of food to remote students (REAL - Remote Education Academy for Learning) Program) or breakfasts when you were able to offer them? If so, what would be needed from the Board to assist?

**Answer**

I think we can use those programs again in anticipation of having to shut down at any time. It might be difficult to continue any of those programs especially if we had to utilize the buses.

**7. Confirm School Board Budget Hearing Dates**

January 4, 2021 – Regular Meeting of the School Board - Technology, Library Media, Maintenance, and the Merrimack Middle School

January 5, 2021 - Special Meeting of the School Board – Student Services, Merrimack High School, and the District budget.

January 12, 2021 – Possible School Board budget discussion/work session.

January 14, 2021 – School Board budget discussion/work session.

January 19, 2021 – Regular Meeting of the School Board – Could be used for an additional discussion/work session.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated the final approval of the budget could be as early as January 14<sup>th</sup> or as late as January 19<sup>th</sup>.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted Warrant Articles, and collective bargaining agreements were due on February 9<sup>th</sup>.

**8. Response to Board Inquiry Regarding Possible Bond Issue for Ventilation Project**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell shared a spreadsheet with the Board and referred to the column title CIP Ventilation where they started with a figure of \$400,000 and then stretched it out over ten years. He added he factored in a 3% inflation rate every year which totaled \$4,585,000 over the ten years. He said the Bond Ventilation Schedule was from the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank and they were using an interest rate of 1.5% for a ten-year bond. He added if a bond was issued there would be a 1.5% savings for a total of \$4.4 million including interest and principal versus \$4,585,000.

**9. First Reading of New Policy**

Superintendent McLaughlin read the policy into the record.

- Commitment to Religious Neutrality (ACD)

The Board understands that administration and staff must recognize students' First Amendment religious rights, subject to reasonable rules and regulations. The Board further recognizes that the United States Constitution's First Amendment imposes two equally important obligations on public schools. First, schools must not forbid students acting on their own from expressing their personal religious views or beliefs. Second, schools may not endorse religious activity or doctrine and school employees may not coerce participation in religious activity. The Board will act to give students the same rights to engage in religious activity and discussion, as they have to engage in other comparable activity. Generally, this means that students may pray in a non-disruptive manner during the school

day when they are not engaged in school activity and instruction, subject to the same rules as apply to other speech. All students should respect the individual religious choices and activities of other students.

Legal References: New Hampshire Constitution, Part I, Art. 5; 20 U.S.C. 7904 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001); RSA 189:1-b, Freedom of Assembly, Freedom of Religion

First Reading: December 21, 2020

## **10. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- December 2, 2020

Board Member Schneider made a motion (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2020, meeting as presented.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.**

- December 4, 2020

Board Member Hardy made a motion (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2020, meeting as presented.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.**

- December 7, 2020

Board Member Hardy made a motion (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2020, meeting as presented.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.**

## **11. Consent Agenda**

- Approval of Policy
  - Procedural Safeguards Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Disability (ACE)

Board Member Schneider made a motion (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.**

## **12. Other**

- a. Correspondence

Ms. Hardy commented that she received an email from a parent who asked about the District's Travel Policy.

Board Member Schneider commented that he received a message from a constituent regarding remote instruction and he referred the constituent to Chair Guagliumi.

b. Comments

Vice Chair Barnes commented that Merrimack T.V. would broadcast the James Masticola Upper Elementary School holiday recital on Tuesday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio commented that Ms. Fern Seiden, System of Care and Learning Support Coordinator, along with the SOCAL (System of Care and Learning Support) team had just received a \$50,000 grant from the Department of Education called the “Promising Futures Grant” and work mindfulness, student support, and regulation would be done at the upper elementary school, the middle school, and executive functioning skills at the high school.

**13. New Business**

Board Member Rothhaus stated that the Town of Merrimack was turning 275 years-old and the schools would be involved in celebrating the milestone.

**14. Committee Reports**

Board Member Hardy stated that the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee had met to discuss how to spend \$3,000 from HealthTrust. She said in the past gift cards were not able to be utilized because the money was mixed in with taxpayer money but that situation had been rectified and they were now able to do so.

Board Member Schneider stated while the Budget Committee had not recently met they were working behind the scenes to begin their budget process in January.

Vice Chair Barnes said the Professional Development Committee met on December 10<sup>th</sup> and they discussed the recertification process for those teachers who were in the process of doing so. She said they also discussed the IPDP’s (Individual Professional Development Plans). She added that Mr. Nancy Rose provided a technology report. Vice Chair Barnes noted that they also reviewed the revisions to the master plan, and some special projects from the Reeds Ferry Elementary School, James Masticola Upper Elementary School, and the Merrimack Middle School.

Vice Chair Barnes also stated she attended the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting on December 16<sup>th</sup> where an Eagle Scout presented a project regarding the installation of a “Ga-Ga Ball” ball pit at Wasserman Park.

**15. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments.

At approximately 9:10 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to adjourn.

**The motion passed 3 – 0 – 1 by a roll call vote.**

(Vote Counted as Abstained – Board Member Rothhaus as her screen froze on Zoom.)