

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Monday, June 1, 2020  
Remote Meeting**

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Due to the state of emergency declared by Governor Sununu regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, and the subsequent Emergency Order #12, Chair Barnes determined that the physical presence of a quorum within the time required for School Board action was not reasonably practical, and therefore, the members of the School Board participated remotely.

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

**1. Call to Order/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 Guidelines for Remote Meeting**

Chair Barnes stated 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.

**3. Updated Information Regarding Merrimack High School Graduation**

Mr. Peter Bergeron, Assistant Principal, Merrimack High School stated graduation would start promptly at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, and from the time students arrived safety would be a major focus. He said all graduating seniors would be expected to wear a mask as well as each member of their family. He further said faculty, staff, administration, and other members of the community would have to practice social distancing and adhere to the policy of wearing a mask.

Mr. Bergeron commented that the Merrimack Fire and Police Departments would be present to ensure everyone followed the appropriate guidelines.

Mr. Bergeron said information would be distributed later in the week regarding any student who felt he/she did not want to participate in the graduation and would be offered an alternative.

Mr. Harley Hall, Social Studies Teacher provided an overview on how he anticipated graduation would go.

Board Member Schneider suggested perhaps having golf carts available for folks who might need them. He also suggested that people should not arrive too early and congregate in the parking lot.

Chair Barnes pointed out the website was updated regularly regarding graduation.

Vice Chair Guagliumi asked what would happen if it rained. Mr. Bergeron replied there was a rain date set for Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. He added if there was a thunderstorm then they would have to retreat to safety inside of the building and then restart the process when the conditions became safe.

Vice Chair Guagliumi asked if there would be hand sanitizer stations and a supply of masks people could use. Mr. Bergeron replied every graduate would be provided with a mask but the hope was that people would come with their own masks. He added they would have some extra masks on-hand but they had not talked about hand sanitizer stations.

Superintendent McLaughlin commented the seats would be sanitized in between the ceremonies and added they attempted to limit the amount of “touching.”

Vice Chair Guagliumi suggested there should be hand sanitizer stations available. She also asked if the administration would be shaking the hands of graduates when they received their diploma. Mr. Bergeron replied they would not shake hands. Vice Chair Guagliumi was pleased with that answer.

Mr. Hall commented Mrs. Putney would read the graduate’s name and there would be a neutral table in which the graduate would take their diploma from. He added there would be a professional photographer on the stage to take pictures. He said the students could take their masks off for the picture but would then put their masks back on before exiting the stage.

#### **4. Merrimack School District School Re-Opening Task Force**

Superintendent McLaughlin stated the safety of the students and staff was his number one goal. He said they currently had no word from the Governor or the Commissioner as to whether school would re-open in the fall or not.

Superintendent McLaughlin commented that the Merrimack School District initiated eight separate task forces as follows:

- a. Dual On-location/Remote Learning Task Force
  - Goal: Develop plans for any eventuality.
    - Led by Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction Fabrizio

Superintendent McLaughlin stated a survey would be sent out to the community which would gauge where they were in terms of their comfort level with sending students back to school, students learning remotely, as well as a hybrid system.

b. Infrastructure Task Force

- Goal: Identify those areas that need to be addressed in order to maximize student and staff safety when they were, at some point, back in the building.
  - Installation of safety dividers in school offices.
  - Whether or not there should be dividers between student's desks.
  - Installation of hand sanitizers.
  - Protocols for cleaning.
  - Led by Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell

c. Health and Hygiene Task Force

- Goal: To serve as advisory to Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.
  - Led by a nurse from the Merrimack School District

d. Transportation Task Force

- Goal: Determine the safest way to transport students.
  - Led by Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, the Director of Transportation, and representatives from STA (Student Transportation of America)

e. Student Wellness Task Force

- Goal: To address how students were dealing with the pandemic.

f. Special Education Task Force

- Led by Mrs. Barker

g. Food Service and Delivery

h. Professional Development Task Force

- Goal: To support the on-going need to support teachers in learning how to use remote learning platforms.

i. Athletics and Co-curricular Task Force

Superintendent McLaughlin stated he asked each task force to provide an initial report by June 30, 2020, noting they would need time to order equipment and prepare for implementation. Further, Superintendent McLaughlin stated the administration would report the initial report to the School Board at the July meeting.

Superintendent McLaughlin indicated that he would lead a focus group which would be comprised of parents that would serve as an advisory to, particularly, the Infrastructure Task Force and the Dual On-location/Remote Learning Task Force.

Vice Chair Guagliumi asked which task force would address emergency preparedness, specifically surrounding the pandemic. Superintendent McLaughlin replied it would fall under the purview of the Health and Hygiene Task Force.

Board Member Nunez commented she had serious concerns regarding the re-opening of schools with the threat of the virus. She said she was not sure they could create a system that would support testing kids unless everyone was tested every two weeks. She said one suggestion was to look at children who lived with their grandparents and were more susceptible to health challenges. Superintendent McLaughlin replied a final decision certainly had not yet been made. He further replied the Health and Hygiene Task Force would be critical in providing them guidance.

Board Member Schneider asked who would represent the task forces? Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio replied there would be at least one or two classroom teachers from every building, administrators from all levels, language arts coordinators, math facilitators, and four department heads on the Dual On-location/Remote Learning Task Force. He said the committee consisted of approximately 26 people.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated the Infrastructure Task Force would look at the buildings and the infrastructure as well as how to ensure social distancing in a school setting, knowing that one of the givens was that they could not populate the high school with 1,300 or 1,400 kids and ensure social distancing.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented the Infrastructure Task Force would be comprised of school principals, administrative assistants, Mr. Tom Touseau, Director of Maintenance, as well as other resources.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell pointed out everyone would have the ability to see what the other task forces were doing and talking about.

Ms. Koroma suggested that the focus groups should include a student representative. Superintendent McLaughlin replied he thought that was a great idea.

## **5. Discussion Concerning Extension of School Lunch Program through Summer 2020**

Superintendent McLaughlin commented it would cost approximately \$90,000 to continue the lunch program through the summer.

Superintendent McLaughlin said the district would be reimbursed a total of \$3.41 per lunch through the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Security, and Economy) Act for the time period of April 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>. Superintendent McLaughlin added he did not know if the district would be reimbursed for lunches provided over the summer.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked if food would be available from other sources. Superintendent McLaughlin replied he did not have an answer to that question but he welcomed others to partner with them.

Vice Chair Guagliumi suggested the School Board should speak with the Trustees for support. She also suggested setting up some campaign and donation plans to try to get some funding.

Board Member Nunez commented she would like to see the lunch program extended in support of the families who needed it even if it would not be funded.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reported just that day an individual came forward and asked if they could help. He added he would explore the possibility of help from other places.

Chair Barnes said she felt the lunch program needed to be extended through the end of summer and welcomed anything the district could put in place to make it easier to bring monies to the district, i.e. trustees, and businesses. Chair Barnes stated she felt the School Board needed to direct the administration to explore all funding all options to offset the cost associated with it but they were committed to doing it regardless. Superintendent McLaughlin replied that Chair Barnes provided an excellent summary and it would be very helpful to receive such a directive from the School Board.

Board Member Schoenfeld commented that she was in favor of funding the lunch program to the point where they were no more reimbursements but was concerned that they were not making any connections outside of the district. Chair Barnes replied as things started to open up in the state there might be a better chance of accessing people/businesses.

Chair Barnes stated the question before the School Board was to continue to fund the program and fund it with surplus funds or not. As a point of clarification, Board Member Schneider pointed out the current fiscal year was net neutral because they would be reimbursed for it and the decision before them was for July/August for the following year's budget which had not yet been passed.

Board Member Nunez commented she would be in favor of extending the lunch program regardless of the funding. Vice Chair Guagliumi stated she agreed with Board Member Nunez and she suggested pursuing funding.

Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to continue the school lunch program for the months of July and August and encouraged the administration to find funding from other resources to offset the cost.

**Discussion:**

Board Member Schoenfeld asked if language could be added stating that it would not set a precedent and was specific to the current emergency.

Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to continue the school lunch program for the months of July and August, in response to the pandemic crisis and encouraged the administration to find funding from other resources to offset the cost.

Board Member Schneider commented he would vote in the affirmative but noted he was frustrated that the School Board was in the position to do in the first place.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – by a roll call vote.**

**6. Financial Impacts of COVID-19 on School District Operations**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented there were some under-expenditures due to the COVID-19 virus. He explained, for instance, remote learning did not require substitute teachers and there was an under-expenditure of about \$170,000. He further explained there was also a \$26,000 savings in the athletic professional line item. He added there would be a fuel credit from STA (Student Transportation of America) and approximately \$100,000 was saved in copying, among other things, including a savings in the professional development line as well as the school supplies line. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said to date, there was an approximate \$500,000 in savings.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated the Merrimack School District was expecting \$397,000 from the State of New Hampshire but noted they had not yet received it. He said the district had spent a lot of money on technology as a result of COVID-19, which included Chromebooks, laptops, and other items that were needed to be successful with remote learning which totaled approximately \$44,000.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell also commented that the district reimbursed 24 high school students for their Disney trip that did not take place for a total of \$11,800. He added the hope was that Disney would send the district the \$11,800 in the fall.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said they also reimbursed students for the Washington, D.C. trip that never happened in the amount of \$7,300. He added the travel agency refunded 80% and the district was able to refund the balance to make the students whole.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated the total amount of expenditures on COVID-19 related items to date was \$76,856 but said there would be future expenditures that were not included in that amount.

## **7. Approval of Minutes**

- **May 18, 2020 – Public School Board Minutes**

Vice Chair Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to approve the May 18, 2020, public minutes as presented.

**The motion passed 5–0–0 by a roll call vote.**

## **8. Consent Agenda**

### Educator Nominations

- Ms. Amanda Woodward, Kindergarten Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Kerry Twomey, Special Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Emily Dion, First Grade Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Tania Isenberger, Guidance Counselor, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Kyleigh Pharris, Kindergarten Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Morgan Messina, Kindergarten Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Lauren Sorenson, Second Grade Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Mr. Stockton MacInnes, Behavior Specialist, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Amanda Baker, Kindergarten Teacher, James Masticola Elementary School
- Mr. Brett Wilson, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Kayla Lanagan, Behavior Specialist, James Masticola Upper Elementary School

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.**

## **10. Other**

### a) Correspondence

Chair Barnes commented she received five e-mails as summarized below:

- A parent who requested feedback regarding the School Board's graduation choice.
- A question regarding field use for the summer baseball programs.
- Received a phone call from Senator Shannon Chandley who wanted to find a way to recognize graduates of the Merrimack School District. Chair Barnes said she referred Senator Chandley to administration.

- A constituent made a comment about sports overspending and overbudgeting.
- A constituent asked about COVID-19 spending for 2020 – 2021

Board Member Schoenfeld commented she also received correspondence regarding field use for community youth sports.

b) Comments

Chair Barnes commented the Town of Merrimack's Fire Department had an interim fire chief, Matthew Duke, and said the School Board looked forward to further collaboration with him.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio announced to the School Board that Ms. Fern Seiden had been named the System of Care Coordinator.

**11. New Business**

There was no new business.

**12. Committee Reports**

Chair Barnes stated she joined a roundtable discussion with Senator Jeanne Shaheen along with approximately 15 other participants regarding social and emotional learning and how students would be engaged in learning again after the crisis.

Chair Barnes also stated she attended the New Hampshire School Board Association's Board of Directors meeting where they discussed the needs that the School Boards were going to have of the Association as they all entered a new learning environment.

Board Member Schneider asked if the town planned on having a Voter's Guide. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied he created one in draft form and he would forward it to the School Board.

**13. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Chair Barnes read aloud e-mails received from the public as noted below:

Ms. Christina Whitaker, 11 Pollard Road, asked if the graduation would be broadcasted.

Ms. Whitaker asked when the student speeches or other elements of the ceremony be delivered.

Chair Barnes reiterated that graduation updates could be found on the school district's website at sau26.org.



Ms. Cherri Roy, 106 Wire Road stated "I could be wrong but aren't there three archways/trellises; why not use them all and also, will the first group be the top ten? I want to thank everyone for their unbelievably hard work to make this happen. You are all amazing.

At 10:15 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to adjourn.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.**