

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall - Matthew Thornton Room
March 1, 2021**

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

Participating via Conference Call: Board Member Schneider

Chair Guagliumi stated the meeting proceedings would follow RSA 91-A:2 which stated that all parties must contemporaneously be able to hear and speak to each other and be audible to the public.

Board Member Schneider – Excused from in-person participation because of a personal as well as a work conflict.

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

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

Chair Guagliumi led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Guidelines for Public Participation for Remote Meeting

Chair Guagliumi stated public comments could be sent to 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. Public Participation

Vice Chair Barnes reported that there were no public comments.

4. Board's Review of Parent Survey for 2021 – 2022 School Calendar

Superintendent McLaughlin reviewed the proposed Parent Survey for the 2021 – 2022 School Calendar as summarized below:

1. Do you support having no school on Columbus Day - October 11, 2021?
2. Do you support having no school on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving - November 25, 2021?
3. Do you support having no school on Martin Luther King Jr. Day – January 17, 2022?

4. The current State of New Hampshire Department of Education's recommendation is for February vacation in 2022 to begin on February 28, 2022, and end on March 4, 2022, in order to avoid coinciding with the Massachusetts February vacation schedule, which is scheduled to begin on February 21, 2022, and end on February 25, 2022.

Do you support a February vacation schedule that begins on February 28, 2022, which the New Hampshire recommendation, or on February 21, 2022, which is the same as the Massachusetts vacation?

Discussion:

Chair Guagliumi suggested that with regard to #4, the question posed would not be whether or not a parent preferred vacation to begin on February 21st or February 28th but the Board would go with the State's recommendation of beginning vacation on February 28th.

Question #4 – Do you wish to have President's Day off the week before vacation?

5. With teacher workshops typically held prior to the first day of school, the first day of school next year would be on September 7, 2021. Are you in support of continuing this scheduling structure?
6. How many students do you have in the Merrimack School District?
7. What levels of school are they in?
8. Do you have Internet access in your home?

Chair Guagliumi asked if there were members of the Board who had questions or comments.

Board Member Schneider asked if the following year there were any type of a mix of remote and in-school if people would prefer to have a remote day from home versus a typical snow day. Superintendent McLaughlin replied he would add that questions to the survey and it could be further discussed at the next School Board meeting.

Board Member Rothhaus suggested that the first one or two snow days be true snow days but after they could look at remote learning on snow days subsequent to those day(s).

Vice Chair Barnes asked if a question should be added that asked parents if they planned on sending their children back to in-person learning or if they planned on keeping them remote in the next school year. Superintendent McLaughlin replied while that question had to be asked he felt it should be asked at a later date.

Chair Guagliumi commented there were some parents during the past year who had sought out alternative learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She said one parent had asked her if she could still be on the distribution list for any future surveys because she hoped her child could return to the Merrimack School District. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied they could create a separate list for that purpose.

5. Scheduling of 2021 Merrimack High School Graduation Date

Superintendent McLaughlin read aloud the following letter dated March 1, 2021, from Ms. Sharon Putney, Principal, Merrimack High School:

I am requesting that you set the graduation date for the Class of 2021 for Saturday, June 12, 2021. The Merrimack High School Administration requests that the ceremony begin at 10:00 a.m. unless we need to adjust the time due to the organization of graduation, given the physical distancing requirement amid the pandemic.

6. Approval of School Board Minutes

- January 4, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes

Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2021, non-public meeting.

The motion passed 4 – 1 – 0 by a roll call vote. (Nay – Board Member Rothhaus)

- February 1, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2021, non-public meeting as presented.

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

- February 15, 2021 – Public Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2021 meeting as presented.

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

- February 15, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2021 meeting as presented.

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

7. Acceptance of Gifts/Grants under \$5,000

- HealthTrust to Merrimack School District for \$3,000

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented the gift was accepted by the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee and would be used for worksite health and safety activities to benefit district employees.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to accept the gift in the amount of \$3,000 from HealthTrust with the School Board's sincere appreciation.

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

8. Other

- a. Correspondence

Chair Guagliumi commented that the Board had received several inquiries regarding the school calendar.

- b. Comments

Chair Guagliumi stated that the Deliberative Session was going to be held on March 2, 2021, at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and would begin at 7:00 p.m. She noted masks would be required.

9. New Business

Chair Guagliumi stated as they were moving forward with a light at the end of the tunnel regarding COVID she was looking forward to plans for remediation and extension learning.

10. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Barnes reported the Conservation Commission was meeting with the Grater Woods Subcommittee and they trying to reorganize after a break during COVID.

Vice Chair Barnes also reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee met on February 16th where they discussed funding for projects in the current year and reviewed the rental fee rates for fields and facilities. She added summer camp registrations continued and Camp Naticook was hiring for multiple positions.

Board Member Rothhaus stated the Merrimack 275th Anniversary Planning Committee was preparing to go before the Town Council and wanted to work with the schools to create different activities for school-aged children.

11. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Vice Chair Barnes read aloud from an email as summarized below:

Ms. Amanda Venezia, 2 Hamilton Court

I urge the Board to update their COVID quarantine guidelines for students and staff. These guidelines were originally drafted in August of 2020 and seven months later this Board continues to operate in a fear mindset according to outdated data and research. Your disregard for national CDC (Centers for Disease Control) guidelines and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services guidance is harming our community, specifically, my seven-year-old 2nd grader who is continually impacted emotionally, socially, and educationally. As an administrator for a

Londonderry School District, it has been especially difficult to see the inequity and loss to the Merrimack students. The Londonderry School District administrators worked diligently throughout the summer and put together a 46-page document that debuted on August 4th. This plan, which is emulated by several other districts extensively outlined our plan to welcome back all of our elementary and middle school students to in-person learning five days per week. I have never been prouder to work for Londonderry. As a Merrimack parent who is forced to pay for my child to be tutored three days per week, I am frustrated. As an essential worker who has been working in-person since March 16th, I am continually disheartened. In January, through updated research, the CDC decreased COVID required quarantine for travel infection and exposure to ten days. The New Hampshire DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) quickly followed suit. Why is the Merrimack School District not progressing and looking to mitigate the impact of learning on our students? Additionally, there have been revised state travel documents that all of you are failing to recognize. This is posing additional trauma upon students and staff. Our family had COVID and we were blessed with mild symptoms and asymptomatic children. Why do we continue to be held to your August 2020 guidelines? My child is not allowed to attend school due to travel. She is not quarantined. She can participate in any activity within this country and does not need to be homebound. She is not a risk to other students within the conservative 90-day period following her positive COVID test. The latest CDC studies are gauging immunity to be within nine and twelve months. She is suffering today and will be because you believe that you know better than the CDC and the New Hampshire DHHS. My child will return to school on 3/15/21, however, these guidelines must be updated to the current CDC recommendations and those who have been diagnosed with COVID or been vaccinated ought to be allowed to travel. The mental health and well-being of our staff and students have been dramatically affected by COVID and your lack of movement is prolonging the suffering. I invite the School Board to respond.

At approximately 7:45 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to go into a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c)

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

At approximately 8:55 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to adjourn the public meeting.

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