

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Merrimack Town Hall - Matthew Thornton Room  
March 15, 2021**

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

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.

**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](mailto:publiccomment@sau26.org) or by going to [sau26.org](http://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 read aloud from correspondence received by the School Board as summarized below:

Ms. Barbara Sousa, 4 Griffin Street

I wanted to send a quick thank you for getting these kids back to school. Our big kids have really struggled being remote and being back in school has put the light back in their eyes. They are excited to be in the classroom. I know these decisions are hard to make and you will never make everyone happy so thank you from this mom of four.

Mr. Steve Miller, 42 Belmont Drive (E-mail received on February 19, 2021)

I applaud your narrow decision to transition to in-classroom instruction next month for certain grades. The school year is about halfway done. The State Department of Education advised me today that SAU 26 hasn't done any assessment tests for 2020. I'd like to know how we will know and where they stand until we do. If our kids are behind, don't we need to extend the school day and year, eliminate vacations to get caught up? Promoting our kids up a grade without completing the previous grade accomplishes nothing. The most recent tests taken in 2019, indicated our high school students were above the state average in English and slightly below in math. I doubt that's the case in 2021. The CDC just issued an advisory regarding COVID transmission. They show no higher risks in the classroom. Going forward, I'd like to see a plan to administer the tests and react to the results.

Ms. Cindy McLaughlin, 2 Cranston Circle

I am writing to have the School Board consider allowing outside groups to utilize the Merrimack High School track this summer. I have been a Merrimack taxpayer for over 23 years and I currently own a business (Reach your Peak Running, LLC) that would like to operate a youth running camp on weekday mornings for select weeks. I would like to utilize the Merrimack High School track to operate this camp in my own town, primarily serving our town's youth, ages 10 to 15. I do understand the state of society in which we live, however, many summer outdoor day camps are scheduled to occur, and our children need a safe place to be as well as an outlet for their physical energy. My morning running camps will provide this for a pivotal age group as well as teaching them about physical fitness and running as a sport.

I have inquired with facilities a couple of times and have been told that it can't be used by a camp outside of the group and may not be permissible this year. I would the School Board to comment as to why that is the case when the camp is outdoors, and it is still possible to maintain social distancing. How is this different than the Town's Parks & Recreation Department opening our soccer fields or softball fields to other outside groups? I am aware that other towns are opening their tracks to their taxpayers and other outside businesses, so I want to understand why Merrimack is holding back and/or if this loosening of a restriction has not been considered or prioritized. I hope my letter can bring attention to this and ultimately my camps can serve a need for the kids in our community right here in the Town of Merrimack. If the Board will not consider opening the track to outside groups or organizations at all this year, I will welcome a definitive response so I can pursue other venues in other towns. Thank you for your time.

Ms. Lisa Mungovan, 14 Lampson Drive

I wanted to address the School Board regarding quarantine guidelines of 14 days that are in place for students and staff who are traveling. I know that in the community there is a concern that 14 days is much too lengthy. Governor Chris Sununu has just announced that quarantine for travel is optional and in regard to the health and safety of staff and students, I would encourage the School Board to at least modify the 14-day quarantine to the recommendations given by the CDC to test and monitor for 7 days or quarantine for 10 days upon return from travel.

It is of the utmost importance to still recognize that we are not out of this pandemic yet, and we are still waiting for many in our community to be vaccinated, including teachers this month. Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

**4. Recognition of Community Support: Rotary Club of Merrimack, United Way of Greater Nashua, and Residents**

Superintendent McLaughlin shared that Mr. Mike Apfelberg, President of the United Way of Greater Nashua, and his organization had donated 6,000 K-95 masks to the Merrimack School District.

Superintendent McLaughlin also thanked Ms. Maureen Mooney from the Merrimack Rotary Club who provide approximately 1,000 cloth masks. Additionally, Superintendent McLaughlin thanked Ms. Wendy Thomas who was the coordinator of the hand-made mask project and Ms. Jessica Perez provided communicator masks.

## **5. Information Regarding Regional and State-Run Vaccination Clinics for School Employees**

Ms. Melissa Gagne, Human Resources Manager, stated Wednesday, March 17, 2021,

individuals in phase 2A (K-12 school staff, including substitutes) could sign up to schedule a vaccination at [www.vaccines.nh.gov](http://www.vaccines.nh.gov). She said appointments for phase 2A would begin on Monday, March 22, 2021.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if school bus drivers would be included. Ms. Gagne replied in the affirmative.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated he had received notification from the Public Health Network Services Coordinator for Greater Nashua's Public Health who informed him the clinic would be held from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup> in Merrimack. Details would follow within a few days.

## **6. 2021 – 2022 School Calendar: Review of Parent Survey Results**

Superintendent McLaughlin reviewed the survey results regarding the 2021 – 2022 School Calendar. With 1,255 responses, the results were summarized as follows:

1. Do you support having **NO SCHOOL** on Columbus Day (October 11, 2021)?

Yes – 739

No – 516

2. Do you support having **NO SCHOOL** the Wednesday before Thanksgiving (November 24, 2021)?

Yes – 1022

No – 233

3. Do you support having **NO SCHOOL** on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (January 17, 2022)?

Yes – 853

No – 402

4. Do you support having **NO SCHOOL** on President's Day (February 21, 2022)?

Note: February vacation next year is scheduled to begin the following week (February 28 – March 4, 2020)

Yes – 393

No – 862

5. With teacher workshops typically held prior to the first day of school, the first day of school next year would be September 7, 2021. Are you in support of continuing this scheduling structure?

Yes – 1084

No – 171



6. In the event of inclement weather, are you in favor of a/an: **NOTE: A traditional NO SCHOOL day must be "made up" at the end of the school year, extending the school year by the number of days canceled.**
- a. Traditional "snow day" with **NO SCHOOL**: 483
  - b. Pivot to Remote Learning: 558
  - c. Alternative (Blizzard Bag): 214
7. How many students do you have in the Merrimack School District?
- a. 1 – 546
  - b. 2 – 543
  - c. 3 – 137
  - d. 4 or more – 29
8. What levels of school are they in? (Choose all that apply)
- a. Elementary – 675
  - b. Upper Elementary – 343
  - c. Middle School – 323
  - d. High School – 455
9. Do you have internet access in your home?
- Yes – 1249  
No – 6

Chair Guagliumi pointed out that Rosh Hashanah would fall on September 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of 2021 and reminded the Board that the first day of school was scheduled for Tuesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Vice Chair Barnes commented the survey did not point out that in the event a "blizzard bag" was used and less than 80% of students completed the work in the blizzard bag the students would still have to make up the day.

## **7. Proposed Last Day of School**

Superintendent McLaughlin stated the proposed last day of school was Friday, June 11, 2021.

## **8. Proposal Concerning Remote Instruction in Inclement Weather**

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio, along with members of his team, review the Severe Weather Alternative Plan (SWAP) as summarized below:

- **A SWAP** day would occur when the internet and power may be a variable.
- The schedules with Zoom links would be posted when possible.
- Lessons would be posted online to be completed independently and asynchronously by students.
- Students would have a grace period to complete online assignments.

- Special Education/Support Service would be provided when possible.
- Flex Fridays would be available for students to connect with teachers, ask questions, and clarify assignments.
- **A SNOW DAY** would occur when power was intermittent.
- Schoolwork would not be assigned.
- Snow days would be made up at the end of the year.

#### **9. Board Review of District Travel Policy (EBCVT)**

Board Member Schneider suggested that the Board refer to the Department of Health and Human Services document for guidance as the policy was frequently changing.

Superintendent McLaughlin commented one option the Board could take was to rescind the current policy and direct the administration to follow the guidelines presented by the state. Board Member Schneider replied he felt the parents needed to have some type of guidelines surrounding travel. Chair Guagliumi indicated she agreed.

Board Member Rothhaus commented she felt they needed to either post that the District would follow the DHHS guidelines or keep updating the policy so that it remained current.

Vice Chair Barnes suggested the administration review the policy and put it on the next meeting's agenda.

Board Member Rothhaus moved to change the length of quarantine from 14 days to 10 days after travel as an interim step until the administration rewrote the travel policy based on current information.

**The motion failed due to the lack of a second.**

Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to change the current policy to a 10-day quarantine and individuals could test-out of the restriction in accordance with the current recommendations of the Department of Health and Human Services.

#### **Discussion:**

Vice Chair Barnes asked if Board Member Rothhaus could write out her recommendations on how the policy should read.

Board Member Hardy read aloud from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services as summarized as follows:

"Residents of New Hampshire need to self-quarantine for ten days following the last date of any high-risk travel. They have the option of ending their quarantine after day 7 by getting a test on days 6 to 7 of their quarantine. It has to be a molecular test. If the person is asymptomatic and the test is negative, then the person..."

Board Member Hardy stated it was her preference that the Merrimack School District align with the aforementioned motion.

Board Member Schneider recommended the policy should be changed from a 14-day to a 10-day interim step.

Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to change the 14-days to 10-days, in two places, the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph under employees, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph under students, with a review of the document in two weeks.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.**

#### **10. Future Considerations for Grades 5 through 12 Learning**

Vice Chair Barnes commented the earliest she felt there could be a full return to school would be on May 3, 2021.

Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) that the School Board direct the Superintendent to report back in a special meeting on March 30, 2021, on his plan to reopen kindergarten through grade 12 full-time in April.

#### **Discussion:**

Board Member Schneider commented he would like to see a plan for which brought grades 5 through 8 back full-time and also a separate plan for the high school.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated the Merrimack School District had worked very hard to not only make the students feel safe but the teachers as well.

Board Member Hardy stated while she understood the concerns there were area schools that were in school full-time quite successfully. She said she would agree with having a phased-in approach for grades K through 8.

Vice Chair Barnes commented she did not agree with asking the administration to have a plan by March 30, 2021.

**The motion passed 4 – 1 – 0 (Nay – Vice Chair Barnes).**

#### **11. Annual Review of Investment Policy (DFA)**

##### **INVESTMENT**

The School Board authorizes the School District Treasurer working in conjunction with the Superintendent and his/her designee and pursuant to RSA 197:23-a to invest the funds of the District subject to the following objectives and standards of care.

##### **OBJECTIVES**

The three objectives, in priority order, of investment activities shall be safety, liquidity, and yield.

1. Safety of principal is the foremost objective in this policy. Investments shall be undertaken in a manner that seeks to ensure the preservation of capital by mitigating credit and interest rate risk. This will be accomplished by limiting the type of investments and institutions to those

stipulated by statute and fully covered by FDIC insurance or collateral approved pursuant to state law.

2. Liquidity of the investment portfolio shall remain sufficient to meet all operating requirements that may be reasonably anticipated.
3. Yield. The investment portfolio shall be designed with the objective of attaining a market rate of return throughout budgetary and economic cycles, taking into account the investment risk constraints and liquidity needs. Return on investment is of secondary importance compared to the safety and liquidity objectives described above.

## **STANDARDS OF CARE**

1. Prudence. The standard of prudence to be used by the District Treasurer and Superintendent or his/her designee involved in the investment process shall be the "prudent person" standard and shall be applied in the context of managing an overall portfolio. They are directed to use the Government Finance Officers Association (FGOA) Recommended Practices and Policy Statements Related to Cash Management as a guide to the prudent investment of public funds.
2. Ethics and conflicts of interest. The School District Treasurer and Superintendent or his/her designee involved in the investment process shall refrain from personal business activity that could conflict with the proper execution and management of the investment program or that could impair their ability to make impartial decisions. Employees and Investment officials shall disclose any material interests in financial institutions with which they conduct business. They shall further disclose any personal financial institutions with which they conduct business. They shall further disclose any personal financial/investment positions that could be related to the performance of the investment portfolio. Employees and officials shall subordinate their personal investment transactions to those of the School District particularly with regard to the timing of purchases and sales.
3. Internal Controls. The District Treasurer and Superintendent of his/her designee shall establish a system of internal controls which shall be documented in writing. The internal controls shall be reviewed by an independent auditor annually.

The School Board will review its investment policy annually.

## **STATUTORY REFERENCES**

RSA 197:23-a, Treasurer's Duties  
RSA 383:22, Public Deposit Investment Pool

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: March 17, 2008  
2<sup>nd</sup> Review: April 7, 2008  
Adoption: April 21, 2008  
Reviewed: March 2, 2021

## **12. Approval of March 1, 2021, School Board Minutes**

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2021, meeting as presented.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.**

## **13. Other**

### **a. Correspondence**

Chair Guagliumi stated she had received correspondence regarding the first day of school and Rosh Hashanah being on the same day.

Chair Guagliumi also said she received correspondence regarding the quarantine guidelines, one person had written to her regarding a request for a Town Hall, and she received correspondence regarding the use of the fields during the summer.

Chair Guagliumi said she also received a comment regarding the survey which addressed the fact that question #8 did not have an option for MEEP (Merrimack Early Education Program) so the resident had to choose the kindergarten option.

### **b. Comments**

Chair Guagliumi commented she had an opportunity to watch the Lynn Lyons webinar called “Now What” and said she felt it was amazing and very worthwhile.

## **14. New Business**

Board Member Rothhaus said the 275<sup>th</sup> Committee approved the building of a covered bridge at Twin Bridges and the committee would meet with the principals of each school so the students could be involved.

Chair Guagliumi commented as there was an end in sight regarding COVID she did not want the District to go back to the way things were prior to the pandemic. She said she was hopeful that everyone could learn by what they had all been through and move forward as the “new normal.” She added that she and Superintendent McLaughlin had met a subject matter expert who worked with Districts around the state and would keep the Board informed.

## **15. Committee Reports**

Vice Chair Barnes noted that the Professional Development Committee met on March 11<sup>th</sup> and discussed technology updates and clarified course reimbursement processes. She said following the meeting, the state rubrics were attached to the draft Master Plan to guide the committee’s understanding of the updates of the Master Plan.

Board Member Hardy commented on March 9<sup>th</sup> the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee met and finalized the planning of raffling off of (\$25.00) gift cards with the HealthTrust money to staff around the District.



## **16. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Vice Chair Barnes read aloud from the following public comment:

Ms. Casey Keefe, 19 Miriam Road

I currently have two children in the Merrimack School District; one child at the Thorntons Ferry School and one child at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. It has been frustrating, to say the least that her interaction on remote days has been challenging for both the students in her class and the teacher. Her classroom still does not have one of the tripod video cameras that the District spent so much on and according to what I am hearing, there are no proper hookups in her classroom and her teacher has told her that particular classroom will not be able to use this video. Her teacher has been using Zoom and I feel for both the students and the teacher. The connection is not great, and the solution makes it nearly impossible for her teacher to teach and the students to be active learning participants. When she went to James Mastricola Upper Elementary School it was clearly stated at various times that James Mastricola Upper Elementary School is still an elementary school and the children will be treated as such. However, that has not been the case at all this year. I wish the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School students were treated the same as students at Thorntons Ferry, Reeds Ferry, and the James Mastricola Elementary School as these students are not as independent and responsible as children in the middle school and high school. Let alone, I'm sure my daughter's classroom is not the only one suffering from inappropriate hookups and/or equipment. I would ask that you consider the option for James Mastricola Upper Elementary School students to go back full-time and end their suffering and their teacher's suffering.

At approximately 9:05 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) 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 9:22 p.m. Board member Hardy moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn the public meeting.