

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall - Matthew Thornton Room
April 5, 2021**

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

PUBLIC HEARING TO ACCEPT/EXPEND GIFTS/GRANTS OVER \$5,000

At approximately 6:45 p.m. Chair Guagliumi opened the public hearing to accept/expend gifts/grants over \$5,000.

- Gift of \$7,000 from Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

Ms. Julie DeLuca, Principal, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School explained the gift would be used to create a peer-to-peer reflective practice model to develop an understanding of trauma-informed, social-emotional learning approaches for educators.

Chair Guagliumi asked if there were members of the public who had questions or comments. There were none.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to accept the gift of \$7,000 from the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors with the Board's sincere gratitude.

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

Chair Guagliumi closed the public hearing at 7:00 p.m.

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 read the following email into the record as summarized below:

Mr. Christopher Ortega, 12 Olde Road

I am writing to you tonight on a non-agenda item. I am a former two-term School Board member and have had the pleasure of serving with a few of you. I thank you all for your service to the School District. However, on this, his last night as a School Board member, I would like to specifically acknowledge the service and contributions of Board Member Andy Schneider from the perspective of someone who understands first-hand the sacrifices the service entails.

Andy and I started our service together in 2007 as the first members of the School District Budget Committee which was established after the revised Town Charter abolished its combined Town Budget Committee. We served together there for a three-year term at which point I got elected to the School Board. Andy continued on the Budget Committee for a couple of more years serving as its Chair. He then joined the School Board and has served for three full terms (nine more years).

As you all know, especially after this past year, there are many decisions to be made that come before the Board that are not clear-cut and are certain to make an equal number of constituents dissatisfied as those who are pleased. There have been many times in our service together that Andy and I did not see eye-to-eye on an issue, however, we were always able to disagree agreeably. Andy's dedication came not from self-interest, his children have long been out of high school but for the love of Merrimack and a commitment to a high-quality public education, accountability, and pragmatic fiscal budgeting. This, in my opinion, is public service in the truest sense of the words.

The professional boxer and activist Muhammad Ali once said "service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth." Andy, thank you and congratulations on your service to Merrimack. After fourteen years your rent is paid in full and then some. Best wishes to you.

4. Merrimack Education Reimagined: Setting the Stage for Innovation Comprehensive Center Network, The Department of Education and Merrimack's Team

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio introduced members of the team:

Mr. Bill Morris, Coordinator REAL Program
Ms. Heather Barker, Director of Student Services
Ms. Kim Yarlott, Principal, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
Ms. Fern Seiden, Coordinator of Social and Emotional Learning
Ms. Nancy Rose, Director of Technology and Library Media Services
Mr. Bill Wilmot, UDL Implementation Specialist
Ms. Jessica Griffin, Project Consultant, American Institution of Research (Not in Attendance)

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio stated the Merrimack School District was committed to providing excellence in education through innovative practice and the District was positioned to leverage the community's pandemic experience to accelerate and re-

envision education building on the foundation of innovation by developing a community-based strategic plan.

Ms. Rose said in response to COVID the REAL Academy was established, models were established for hybrid instruction, they pivoted to a fully remote period of time, back to hybrid, to concurrent, and in-person learning. She said student services were identified and delivered at a point of need. She added that curriculum and instruction were redesigned across the board to make things work in a very new and strange environment.

Mr. Bill Wilmot from Implementation Specialist Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), commented he had worked with the Merrimack School District for the past three years and currently there were seven Universal Design for Learning Program (UDL) teams as well as a District-level team.

Mr. Wilmot said it was important to use this time to reflect on the past year and learn from it to improve the curriculum moving forward.

The next steps included:

- Build Community and School Board Commitment to the Process
- Gather a Voice from all Stakeholders
- Leverage Expertise from Educators, Outside Agencies (CC Network, Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), etc.
- Develop and Implement Data Systems to Measure Projects Against Goals

Board Member Rothhaus stated she felt the concentration should be data-driven, results-driven, and evidence-based.

Board Member Schneider commented he was very supportive.

Board Member Hardy commented she was happy there was recognition that they could not go back and undo the experience of the past year.

Vice Chair Barnes commented she felt it was a great presentation that showed all of the work the District had already done as well as what work needed to be done in the future.

5. Update Regarding Governor's Order

Superintendent McLaughlin stated regarding the Governor's Order, there was absolutely no consultation with any group that had any responsibility for education in the State of New Hampshire which he felt was very unfortunate.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated the School Board had already elected to have grades 5 and 6 begin in-person learning on April 19th with grades 7 through 12 to begin on May 3rd. He said the

Governor's Order meant they had to get more things done in a shorter amount of time due to the sudden announcement.

Superintendent McLaughlin said there were many questions that still remained unanswered that needed to be answered and he would keep the Board and the community updated.

Board Member Schneider stated the Board needed to make a decision as to whether or not the District would open on April 19th or the staggered opening dates previously decided. Superintendent McLaughlin replied Commissioner Edelblut made it very clear that the Governor's Order superseded any School Board action and waivers would be far and few between.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if parents wanted their children to be at home and learn concurrently if that model met the standards of the state.

Board Member Hardy stated the fully remote option was still available under the Governor's Order.

Chair Guagliumi requested Superintendent McLaughlin to send a communication to parents explaining that full in-person school would resume on April 19, 2021 (with the full remote option remaining) and that the District provide updates as they received them.

6. Donation of Masks from Walmart

Superintendent McLaughlin shared that Walmart had donated 40,000 masks to the Merrimack School District and said they were all very grateful.

7. District Travel Policy (EBCVT)

Board Member Schneider commented that he felt the travel guidance for students and staff should be the same as the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Bureau of Infectious Disease Control. Information regarding the requirements could be found by visiting their website at:

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/employee-travel-guidance.pdf>

Board Member Hardy moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) that the Merrimack School District follow the New Hampshire COVID-19 Travel Guidance.

Discussion:

Vice Chair Barnes stated that she wanted the Board to own the decision being made regarding the travel policy and take responsibility for the outcome as well as the risks that were being taken.

The motion passed 4 – 1 – 0 by a roll call vote. (Nay – Vice Chair Barnes)

Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to rescind the current travel policy.

The motion passed 4 – 1 – 0 by a roll call vote. (Nay – Vice Chair Barnes)

8. Review of 2021 – 2022 School Calendar Options

Superintendent McLaughlin explained the Board had three options of which to pick for the 2021 – 2022 School Calendar.

1. Start date of September 9, 2021/End date of June 21, 2022
2. Start date of September 1, 2021/End date of June 17, 2022 (No August Academy)
3. Start date of September 7, 2021/End date of June 21, 2022

Board Member Rothhaus commented she liked option #2 which kept the observance of the holy days of Rosh Hashanah.

Board Member Schneider pointed out that most of the parents indicated they wanted to start school after Labor Day.

Chair Guagliumi commented she preferred option #1 because there would not be a start/stop and it would still observe Rosh Hashanah.

Vice Chair Barnes suggested starting school for the students on September 9th and have the teacher workshop days on September 7th and 8th but excusing any staff who wished to celebrate the holy days of Rosh Hashanah.

Board Member Hardy commented she liked option #2.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Chair Guagliumi) to begin teacher preparation on September 1, 2021, conclude teacher preparation on September 8th, recognizing staff who celebrated Rosh Hashanah would have a religious waiver, the first day of school to begin on September 9, 2021, and the last day of school to be June 21, 2021.

The motion passed 3 – 2 – 0 by a roll call vote. (Nay – Board Member Schneider, and Board Member Rothhaus)

9. Approval of March 15, 2021 Minutes

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2021, meeting as amended.

Discussion:

Line #38 – “thank you to this Mom of four” was changed to “thank you from this Mom of four.” – Chair Guagliumi

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

10. Consent Agenda

Educator Resignations

- Ms. Nancy Hobbs, Technology Education Integrator – Merrimack Middle School
- Mr. Peter Thompson, Grade 6 Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Ms. Michelle Laramie, Preschool Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Dr. Mark McLaughlin, Superintendent of Schools

Educator Retirements

- Ms. Susan Bosiak, Art Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Ms. Sara Clough, Health & Physical Education, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Cynthia Cronin, Gifted & Talented Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Linda Dimakis, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Linda Gendreau, Preschool Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Elizabeth Lefebvre, Special Ed Coordinator, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Mr. Mark Merrifield, Technology Coordinator, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Wendy Packard, Math Teacher, Merrimack High School

Remote Instruction Plan for Inclement Weather

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

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

11. Other

a. Correspondence

Board Member Hardy commented she had spoken with a parent over the phone regarding the Return to School Plan and she also received an email from a parent regarding a student representative for the School Board.

Chair Guagliumi noted there were a variety of communications sent to the entire School Board regarding travel guidance, and the transition of going back to full-time.

b. Comments

Chair Guagliumi read aloud a letter from the School Board regarding Superintendent McLaughlin's resignation as summarized below:

Tonight the Merrimack School Board accepted the resignation of Superintendent (Dr.) Mark McLaughlin effective June 30, 2021. We are indebted to Dr. McLaughlin for his twelve years of service to the Merrimack School District, both as our Superintendent and prior to that, as our

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. Mark will leave Merrimack a better place through his dedication and work advancing the delivery of education for our students and through his leadership of total District operations in his current role.

During the pandemic, he worked tirelessly many nights and weekends to keep the District moving forward. We are appreciative of all of his efforts.

We wish Dr. McLaughlin the very best in his future endeavors and respect his decision to step away from his role in our District. I know many of you will have questions about the replacement process. The Board will communicate this information to the community in the near future. Please feel free to reach out to the Board or me if you have any questions. My email address is cinda.guagliumi@sau26.org.

Superintendent McLaughlin thanked the Board for their action in granting his request to resign from his position as Superintendent and for concluding their contractual obligations to each other as of June 30, 2021.

After twelve years of service in Merrimack, the time is right for me now to focus on new opportunities, different challenges, and on what is best for me and my family.

The educators and administrators of the Merrimack School District are among the best anywhere. It has been a true honor to work with so many of them through the many challenges public education has faced in recent years. Their willingness to grow and evolve as professionals and reflect on their practice for continuous improvement has been an inspiration to me throughout my time in the Merrimack School District. I will always be grateful to them and humbled by them for their service. I will do all I can to support our teachers, administrators, and most importantly, our students, in the remaining months of the school year. I look forward to providing guidance on a smooth transition.

Board Member Schneider thanked Superintendent McLaughlin for both of his roles during his time at the Merrimack School District.

Board Member Schneider also thanked the voters, the administration, and the School Board members for being partners and working together over the past nine years.

Vice Chair Barnes thanked Board Member Schneider for his service.

Board Member Hardy thanked Board Member Schneider for his service. She also thanked Dr. McLaughlin for his work and recognized that the challenges of the past year were far outside the scope of anything he could have possibly been prepared for and knew the students were always first and foremost in his mind.

12. New Business

Board Member Hardy asked what the status was on the student representative being a part of the School Board. Superintendent McLaughlin replied he had spoken with Mrs. Putney and there was a recent election that resulted in a student being chosen. He said he would follow up at the next meeting.

13. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Barnes stated that the Parks & Recreation Committee had met on March 17. On Saturday, April 10th the Spring Community Clean-Up Day would be tied into the 275th Anniversary Celebration.

Vice Chair Barnes also stated that there were approximately one dozen events were planned surrounding the 275th Anniversary Celebration and more information could be found by going to MerrimackNH.gov/275th or on the Facebook page.

Vice Chair Barnes said the Town would continue "Movie Night" and more information could be found on the website. She added the library would hold "Moonlight Trails and Tales" beginning on Friday, April 23rd and Friday, May 21st.

Vice Chair Barnes noted that the New Hampshire School Board's Association Board of Directors met.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Ms. Maureen MacGregor, 3 Harwich Court

I would implore the School Board as Merrimack transitions to full-time, face-to-face school days to reinforce the mask policy. I refer you to the Merrimack School Mask Policy. Unfortunately, COVID cases are on the rise with new variants coming out and it is crucial that the Board help to support both parents and teachers to enforce compliance as this is not consistently being done within the classroom. Additionally, please help to enforce proper mask-wearing as we transition from 6 feet to 3 feet of social distancing.

At approximately 9:30 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded Vice Chair Barnes) 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 9:30 p.m. Vice-Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board member Hardy) to adjourn the public meeting.