

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
June 7, 2021**

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

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

Chair Guagliumi asked if the Board had received any written communications via mail or email. Board Member Barnes read aloud from the following emails as summarized below:

Ms. Rachel Paepke, 67 Tinker Road

In lieu of not being able to attend tonight, I first would like to thank the Board for having Adam Rubin from 2Revolutions present at the May 17th School Board meeting. His presentation was an important piece of understanding what their company provides as a partner/consultant when working with school districts. I believe that Mr. Rubin said it himself that this process will require leadership and staff buy-in to energize the process of helping support moving toward the future of learning.

To that extent, I would ask should the Board vote to approve moving forward with hiring/partnering with 2Rev that they consider making his presentation, and other applicable information, easily accessible on the District website. As a parent with students in the District, I could easily navigate and find the 2Rev presentation on the MSD website, but it took a bit more work to find the video presentation via Merrimack TV. This most likely deterred some from watching, which would result in loss of key information. Having the May 17th 2Rev resources available on one website allows ease of use for all stakeholders.

Please also consider establishing communication regarding 2Rev with staff and leadership should the vote to move forward occur. I believe it would be beneficial to supply the educators and leadership teams with as much information that the board knows of at this time in order to start to

energize the process and capitalize on the buy-in that Mr. Rubin spoke of. It would be unfortunate if our district lost any of our talented educators/leaders because they did not have the pertinent information about 2Rev and felt they did not want to be part of a (now) unknown process. Collaboration with all stakeholders, to include the students, families, and community is key - but I believe that the educators and staff should receive information as soon as possible.

Again, I thank the Board for allowing Mr. Rubin to come present to the community during the May 17th School Board meeting. His presentation provided context to understanding what 2Rev's role would be, as well as a high-level look at what to expect should the Board approve partnering with this company.

4. Board's Final Decision on 2Revolution Contract

Board Member Hardy said she was excited about the possibility of partnering with 2Revolutions.

Board Member Peters said there were two main components to decide in the future; the community input and the teacher/faculty staff input.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to enter into a contract with 2Revolutions. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Board Member Barnes suggested adding the amount of the contract.

MOTION: Board Member Peters amended the motion to enter into a contract with 2Revolutions in an amount not-to-exceed \$76,000. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 1 (Abstained – Chair Guagliumi)

5. Update on REAL Parent Survey

Mr. Bill Morris, Coordinator, REAL (Remote Education Academy of Learning) reviewed the results of the latest survey sent out. He said teachers and parents who participated in the survey indicated they felt a barrier was removed.

Prior to beginning the PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Morris noted that every graphic in the presentation was created by one of Merrimack's National Honors Arts students from the high school.

Mr. Morris stated 61 professional staff participated which include classroom teachers, guidance staff, unified arts staff, and speech & language pathologists. He said in addition to that, they had 45 support staff who worked full-time with the students in the remote program for at least part of the year.

Mr. Morris said the previous September 733 students participated in the REAL Program, and there were currently 563 students still participating in the program.

Mr. Morris stated they received 821 responses to a recent survey which showed 39 students would like to learn remotely the following school year, noting that a large number of those students were those with identified needs.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio commented that the number of students interested in learning remotely was somewhat smaller than expected, however, the students who had requested remote learning for 2021 would be included in the classrooms through concurrent learning and added a full schedule would be offered. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio indicated that parents would have to make a commitment to that model for the entire semester, however, he noted things could change by the beginning of the school year. He said it was very important to support all learners.

Superintendent McLaughlin said the District had made a significant investment in technology to support remote/live learning and the question was whether or not the District would continue to leverage those resources to support innovation.

Board Member Barnes commented she thought keeping the REAL Program in place would accomplish a large goal, noting it would be helpful for students who were suspended. She said it may also be helpful for those who were home schooled.

Board Member Hardy commented she felt it was important to decrease the stress on the teachers who had to execute the concurrent learning.

Chair Guagliumi asked if the survey went out to the educators and teachers about the success or the challenges of concurrent learning. Superintendent McLaughlin replied the item would be addressed later in the meeting.

Vice Chair Rothhaus commented although she liked innovation she would be opposed to having teachers do concurrent learning. She added there were other options such as VLACS, and other online resources. Superintendent McLaughlin replied it was not "impossible" for concurrent teaching to work as it already had the past year. He reminded the Board that it was them who had insisted that they seek alternative ways to provide live instruction to students and they did that.

Board Member Peters commented she felt concurrent learning was exhausting. She said teachers would do it and give it 100% but they end up quitting. She said she felt a better idea in the event a student was absent for a day or more would be to record the classes. She also felt there should be an anonymous survey done on how teachers felt about concurrent learning. Board Member Peters said "cheating" while learning concurrently had become an increasing issue.

Student Representative Vadney said she felt it would be amazing to have the program available, especially for sick days.

6. History of Depot Street Property and Request for Lease

Mr. John Lastowka, President, Merrimack Historical Society, addressed the Board and said the reason he was present was because the Historical Society “needed a home.” He said the home they were currently located in was at 520 Post Road and was built in 1847 and it was becoming increasingly more difficult to host their meetings as it was old and very small.

Mr. Lastowka said he would like to have new software, new computers, and high-speed internet and he also said he had filed for multiple grants and already received one grant that would allow him to purchase Past Perfect Museum Software.

Mr. Lastowka noted the building could be placed on the Historic Register but some repairs had to be made first. He said once the existing building was placed on the Historic Register they could apply for grants.

Mr. Lastowka stated that the Historical Society was interested in leasing or renting School House #3 or the PTA Kindergarten Building.

Mr. Chuck Mower, Town Historian was also present and spoke in favor of the request.

Chair Guagliumi said the Board would not immediately vote on the request but asked Mr. Lastowka and Mr. Mower to work with Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell regarding the details.

Board Member Barnes commented that the proposed building (School House #3) was not vacant and they could also use it for students as it was built for students. She said they did not have appropriate student services facilities; noting the flood when the superstorm Sandy hit.

7. Annual Review of General Assurances

Superintendent McLaughlin read aloud from the first paragraph of the New Hampshire Department of Education FY 2022 General Assurances, Requirements, and Definitions for Participation in Federal Programs as stated below:

Subrecipients of any Federal grant funds provided through the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) must submit a signed copy of this document to the NHDOE Bureau of Federal Compliance prior to any formula grant application being deemed to be “substantially” approvable” or any discretionary grant receiving “final approval.” Once a formula grant is deemed to be in substantially approvable form, the subrecipient may begin to obligate funds which will be reimbursed upon final approval of the application by the NHDOE (34 CFR 708).

Superintendent McLaughlin said this was done every year and it required the Superintendent and the School Board Chair to initial each page, provide minutes of the meeting, and then be sent to the state which would allow them to continue to be a subrecipient for any federal grant provided by the NHDOE or other entities.

Vice Chair Rothhaus asked who oversaw all of the grants at the central office. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied he was charged with the keeping and the accounting of the grants.

MOTION: Vice Chair Rothhaus accept the General Assurances and give the Superintendent and the School Board Chair the authorization to sign the document. Board Member Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0

8. Update on Honeywell Ventilation Project

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the Board passed a lease/purchase for \$4 million to provide ventilation in five schools, noting that the middle school was already up to code.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell explained they had executed the contract with Honeywell and the amount of interest rate was approximately 1.55%. He also explained they were able to upgrade the number of unit ventilators from 56 to 61 units and was still within the budget. He said the E section of the high school would be addressed first.

9. Resumption of Before and After School Programming for Fall 2021

Superintendent McLaughlin said they had already contracted with the Adult Learning Center and re-entered into their agreement. He said before and after school programming would resume in the fall.

10. Proposed Summer School Board Meeting Dates

Board Member Barnes suggested the Board should continue to have meetings on the first and third Mondays of the month as they were looking at hiring an Interim Superintendent and working with 2Revolutions.

Superintendent McLaughlin said he would check the availability of the Matthew Thornton Room on July 12th, July 26th, July 6th (if needed) August 9th, and August 23rd.

11. Request to Hire At Will

Superintendent McLaughlin explained that granting the administration to hire at will meant they could extend an offer and not wait until the next Board meeting.

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to authorize the Superintendent's office to hire at will for the months of July and August. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0

12. Approval of School Board Meeting Minutes

- **May 10, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes**
- **May 13, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes**
- **May 17, 2021 – Regular School Board Minutes**

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 10, 2021, non-public meeting; the May 13, 2021, non-public meeting; and the May 17, 2021, regular meeting as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0

13. Consent Agenda

- **Educator Resignations**

Ms. Amy Deese, 1st Grade Teacher – Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
Ms. Tammy O'Connor, Special Education Teachers – Merrimack High School
Mr. Doug Bonnema, School Counselor – Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

- **Teacher Nominations**

Ms. Caroline Conrad, Art Teacher - James Mastricola Elementary School
Ms. Kristen Hrubowchak, Health/Physical Education Teacher – Merrimack High School
Ms. Andrea Hatch, 1st Grade Teacher – James Mastricola Elementary School
Ms. Allison Romero, 4th Grade Teacher – Reeds Ferry Elementary School
Ms. Kaitlin Soucy, Special Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda. Board Member Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0

14. Other

- a. **Correspondence**

Board Member Barnes stated she received communication regarding feedback for the moving up day at the James Mastricola Elementary School and Principal McGill had already contacted that parent.

Chair Guagliumi said she received a few communications regarding the high school graduation and stated many of the concerns had been resolved as it related to people attending the ceremony.

Chair Guagliumi said she also received a few emails from people expressing support for REAL learning and she received an email expressing opposition to concurrent learning.

b. Comments

Board Member Barnes suggested that guests of the District who were to speak on an item on the agenda should be placed first on the agenda. Chair Guagliumi stated she agreed with Board Member Barnes.

15. New Business

Chair Guagliumi said the School Board would be interviewing six candidates for the position of Interim Superintendent on the following Wednesday. She said there were two internal candidates and four external candidates.

Chair Guagliumi said the Board would then begin work with 2Revolutions and begin work on the selection of a Superintendent by going through a very thoughtful and inclusive process.

Superintendent McLaughlin shared that the state had recently required that Districts provide a reopening plan and it had to be completed by June 23, 2021. He said he felt the timeline was not feasible. He also said the state was requiring Districts to issue a survey to staff, families, and taxpayer's. In addition to the state-mandated survey, Superintendent McLaughlin shared that the Merrimack School District had developed a seven question survey for parents. He said a survey would also be sent out to staff members.

Chair Guagliumi asked Superintendent McLaughlin to provide the School Board with a copy of the survey questions.

Board Member Hardy asked if she could make a motion under New Business. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied he did not think so because she would be making a motion on a new subject matter that was not on the agenda.

Board Member Hardy recommended that the Districtwide mask requirement be lifted for the 2021 Merrimack High School graduation for everyone.

Board Member Peters added the CDC's (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) new guidelines provided more room for individuals to choose. She said she felt it was not the District's responsibility to police the community.

Board Member Barnes commented if the Board chose to go with the no mask route they needed to come up with a very fast and furious communication plan.

Chair Guagliumi announced the consensus of the School Board was to allow students and staff to go unmasked without consequence at the 2021 Merrimack High School graduation.

Chair Guagliumi stated she would like to add the Boards use of masks during meetings moving forward. She also wanted to place the Warrant Articles that were not expended but approved by the public for the 2020 – 2021 years.

16. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes stated she received a phone call from Congressman Pappas' office who wanted to follow-up on the testimony regarding infrastructure funding out of the federal government. She thanked Superintendent McLaughlin and Assistant Superintendent for

Business Shevenell for meeting with Congressman Pappas and herself for taking the time to talk about what real infrastructure challenges were being faced and the federal resources that would be beneficial.

Board Member Barnes said they were also able to show Congressman Pappas the water filtration system that they were forced to install that was not offset by St. Gobain.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio said the Professional Development Committee had their last meeting of the year and thanked all of them for their hard work. He also said they had completed the final draft of the professional development plan that would take them through the next five years.

17. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Ms. Lindsay Thibeault, 19 Pleasant Street

Do you have a plan for the fall regarding masks for the kids? I'm hoping we will have moved past the masks, and would like to have the time to plan for my kids for the upcoming year.

MOTION: At approximately 9:17 p.m. Board Vice Chair Rothhaus made a motion (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a)(b)(c).

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

At approximately 9:52 p.m. Board Member Barnes made a motion to adjourn the public meeting. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.