

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
October 18, 2021**

6:00 p.m. – Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) (I)

-Legal
-Staff Welfare

-Negotiations
-Student Welfare

Present: Chair Guagliumi, Vice Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Hardy, Board Member Peters, and Board Member Barnes. Also present were Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Yarlott, Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen, and Kaitlyn Vadney, Student Representative.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Guagliumi called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Guagliumi pointed out that the School Board would accept public comment via email and to do that members of the public could send emails to publiccomment@sau26.org.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Naomi Holter, 10 Everest Drive, addressed the Board and said she would be in support of putting off any strategic planning for a year or two when the new Superintendent would be in place.

Ms. Rosemarie Rung, 21 Ministerial Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

At the Merrimack School Board meeting on October 5, Ms. Trant spoke at public participation and said that in August of 1996, the Merrimack School Board all left their positions because of what was taught in the schools. This is patently false. I was on the Merrimack School Board in 1996 and for another 8 years, during which time only 2 people resigned. One due to a job relocation and another who retired and moved south. Nothing was taught in our schools at that time which was controversial.

Many others made comments that are also untrue or misleading. It is frustrating for people watching from home to listen to what has become a concerted effort to undermine the authority of the School Board. Please continue to base your decisions on valid information, data, and sensibility and not be influenced by people who carelessly throw out statements not based on fact.

Ms. Shayna Debork, 89 Belmont Street, addressed the Board and said three weeks prior she had started a petition to support the cancellation of the contract with 2Revolutions. She said there were currently 225 signatures.

Ms. Jennifer Jobin, 42 Merrymeeting Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

First, I'd like to say thank you to the members of the school board, school administration, and teachers in our district. You continue to show up and put in time and effort for the benefit of our students and our community during difficult times. It is greatly appreciated!

I've heard that there may be a motion tonight to suspend the contract for the strategic planning initiative. While I wholeheartedly support the strategic planning process to outline the future of our education system in Merrimack, I hope that all Board members will agree to postpone it. While we continue to deal with the pandemic, there is added stress on all of you, on our educators, our students, and our community. We want to have all of those groups involved in the process and be able to commit the time and energy that is needed to formulate a robust plan that meets the needs of all of our students.

Since the district is currently searching for a permanent superintendent, a delay will allow the new Superintendent to be in place to lead the process.

This will also allow time to better educate the community on what will and will not be involved in the strategic planning process, which will lead to a more positive experience and better community involvement.

Ms. Jennifer Motyl, 27 Ellie Drive, addressed the Board and said she read the aforementioned petition and said she did not like to categorize students by what letter grade they had. She said they were whole children and they all mattered.

Ms. Sara Lock, Cota Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

There has been an awful lot of distraction and stress placed on our educators and admin lately — bless them for rising above, and continuing to do the best they can for our children.

With that in mind, I encourage the board to support the suspension of the contract with 2Revolutions for the 21/22 school year. In an effort to alleviate the stress of multiple outside matters being hurled at our teachers and admin, and refocusing on educational matters, while in the midst of the district's superintendent search, I think it's best to take another look at that at a different time — this isn't it.

I also want to take a moment to thank Michaela Champlain, TFS, and the Merrimack Police Department for their swift response at Thornton's Ferry last week. It was extremely irresponsible and shocking to arrive at the school and see a disruption to the drop-off line at the elementary school, caused by an unnecessary "protest" of sorts. The community should be reminded that these actions are banned from taking place on school property, and that alarming small children is no way to gain support.

My daughter is thriving at TFS, and I look forward to bringing educational matters back into focus at these meetings.

Ms. Heather Callahan, 5 King Henry Court, addressed the Board and said she felt masks on children may do more harm than good.

Ms. Ashleigh Lowe, 2 W. Chamberlain Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

First, I would like to thank the entirety of the Merrimack School district faculty and staff for their efforts over the past 18 months. Every single one of the people in the employ of the district made sure our students received the best education possible under enormously stressful conditions. Teachers, paraprofessionals, office staff, food service, custodial staff, and many more. They all made the past 18 months more bearable and never gave up, they never quit. They showed up for their students. I sincerely thank them all.

Secondly, I want the School Board to extend their pause on implementing 2Revolutions into our curriculum. This is causing a rift within town like I haven't seen recently, and I think people on both sides of the issue could use time to learn as much as they can about it. If this divisiveness continues, I worry that Merrimack will lose more of the sense of community that we have had in town. No matter the content of the program, maybe it is just not good for the town if it is causing so much fighting and disagreement amongst the town population. We are all residents, all neighbors, and it would be a shame to have something threaten that.

Thirdly, and lastly, I would like the board to consider implementing a mask mandate within school buildings for the coming months. New Hampshire had a very mild flu season last winter, largely because of distancing and making use. Flu symptoms are nearly impossible to distinguish from covid symptoms without a test. Students will be sent home from school for a cough, snuffle, runny nose, etc., and likely won't be able to return until a covid test comes back. This will cause them to lose time out of the classroom. Masking would help control the spread of flu as well as covid. Recently, after an outbreak in the district, Bedford NH had to go to universal masking for a two-week period. It worked, their outbreak cleared and cases dropped. Masks will help protect our students from not only becoming ill but also prevent them from losing time out of class while they await test results.

Mr. Robert Reisman, 8 Iris Drive, addressed the Board and expressed gratitude to the teachers and the school staff.

Mr. Dan Coakley, 89 Back River Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Opinions are like body parts; we all have them. Many have fought and died for us to have them, even when they are wrong. Including some from right here in Merrimack.

Subjective evaluations of meetings are just that, subjective, and will vary based on the number of people evaluating. Google research is an oxymoron, as is Facebook research.

Anecdotal evidence is not research, though we must accommodate the needs of all students, medical, mental, and social. Many years ago, as a younger man, I marched on Washington for Civil Rights. We accomplished some change, but that challenge is unmet.

I also marched against a war that we ended and had a President refuse to run as a result of our protests. I marched to defeat a President who ultimately resigned, and I attended Woodstock. I tell you this because I lived in those troubled times and in my opinion (remember opinions from above?) we would never see such divisive times again. I was wrong.

Today we face the most divisive times in our history. (In My Opinion) Tip O'Neil said "All politics are local" so the national divisiveness has landed right here in our town.

You as Board members are right in the crosshairs of this divisiveness. I don't envy your positions. Your goals should be the education and safety of ALL the students of Merrimack. And in my opinion, you strive to do just that. But I fear that the pressures you are under will lead to reaction rather than pro-action and that will not serve your goals of education and safety of ALL students. That would be failure.

I know and have worked with some of you and though we do not always agree, I respect your positions. Please keep the goals of education and safety of ALL as you vote on all issues. Try to ignore the misogynistic bullying that seems to have entered the discussions. (As difficult as that may be) Stand your ground on your goals of the education and safety of ALL students.

Compromise can be like "kissing your sister" but is a political process and attempts to appease both sides of an issue. But if the goals and compromise conflict, your goals must be the answer. Thank you for serving in this most challenging of times, stay safe, good health, and success in your endeavors.

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle, thanked the members of the Board for all of their hard work and dedication to the community. She also thank the teachers and the school staff. She also said she felt wearing masks reduced illnesses. Additionally, she said she did not feel it was the right time for the district to address strategic planning.

Haylee, student, Merrimack Middle School (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to comment on my thoughts! I would like to just say that I am not opposed to either side, whether it's wearing a mask, or not wearing a mask, and I feel that since we are in a country of freedom, WE should have the freedom to choose. We all may choose one of the above for different reasons, as some may find that they are not able to change their mask or sanitize every 20 minutes, while others may have different health conditions, or simply just not like wearing one. I also think that everyone should have the right to choose, whether it's students, teachers, staff, or substitutes.

I have also seen some of my classmates that don't wear a mask have rude comments made to them or be bullied about it, and I have also experienced it. Things have been said such as "Pull your mask up. I don't wanna get sick from you." "I don't know if you're vaccinated. Can you prove it? Can I see your vaccine card?"

I've also been TOLD by a classmate to put my mask on despite them knowing I have an opt-out and medical issues. I think it's very unfair that when we have this choice to do what feels comfortable for ourselves, and we choose to not wear a mask, people are getting bullied for it. I think that we should be able to choose without having to worry about others judging, or getting mad no matter which side of the argument we are on.

I feel this is just the beginning of a larger problem to come in the future. If we could come to a better understanding that we all are American citizens and that we all live in a free country and have the right to choose what's best for ourselves, then we will be able to find our way back to

the normal that we all know and are comfortable with before this turns into an uncontrollable situation.

Thank you again for your time in reading my comment aloud, and God Bless America.

Ms. Michelle Caracatos, 25 Swift Lane, said she was against hiring 2Revolutions because the money could be better used for what the district needed, like a psychologist and therapist. She also said she felt parents were the ones who needed to make medical decisions for their children.

Mr. Chris Brown, 15 Four Winds Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Let me first thank all the School Board members and the Merrimack School District teachers and staff for their continued hard work through this very difficult time. Your efforts and commitment to Merrimack families are very much appreciated by many in this community.

On September 17, 2021, the Merrimack School Board was presented with a petition for a Special Meeting pursuant to RSA 197:2 regarding the use of face coverings in all school properties by all individuals. In reviewing the agenda, I see it will be discussed tonight.

Merrimack is an SB2 community. It would require a two-step process: a Special Meeting and a Town Wide Election. I am concerned about this for the following reasons.

First, there is a significant cost. According to School District personnel, the cost of the Special Meeting alone would be approximately \$12,000. A Town-Wide Special Election would cost tens of thousands of dollars for the printing of ballots, election staff wages, polling place set-up and break down, and police details. Does the school budget have money allocated for this already and if not, where would the money come from?

Secondly, I am very concerned about what sort of precedent this will set for future decisions made by the Merrimack School Board. Our School Board members are elected and are, therefore officials that the majority of Merrimack citizens have chosen to represent them. Mr. Olsen reported during the School Board Meeting on October 4, 2021, that about one-third of the children in the Merrimack School District have been opted out from wearing a mask by a parent or guardian. This leaves a clear, two-thirds majority of parents and guardians who support their children wearing a mask at school.

It is my hope that moving forward, the School Board is able to focus on providing a strong education that meets the needs of all Merrimack students. Thank you for taking a few moments to consider my feedback.

Ms. Jeanie Fandozzi, Mitchell Street, addressed the Board and said she felt the children should have the right to exercise their freedoms regarding whether or not they should wear a mask.

Ms. Rachel Paepke, 67 Tinker Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I would like to first thank all of our teachers, educators, support staff, and administrators; their hard work and dedication to our children and each other does not go unnoticed. I truly appreciate what they do for all of our students each and every day. I would also like to recognize the hard work of the curriculum team at Thorntons Ferry School and the district for embarking on a new literacy program to provide phonemic instruction to all K-4 students through the Heggerty Program. I know many parents who are excited to see and hear about the work their children are doing through this new curriculum! I have one last shout out for a group of parents who volunteered their time through the Parents & Teachers of Thorntons Ferry School to help paint stencils and create a new outdoor sensory obstacle course at TFS just last week! Their hard work means the students have an updated space to see colorful artwork and a place to take movement breaks as they transition from various locations throughout the back of the school!

I would also like to express my support for terminating the 2Rev contract at this time as I believe a contract intended for strategic planning should be considered only after Merrimack has a new Superintendent in place. This will not only allow the new leadership team to have input and say into strategic planning, but will also allow teachers and educators the time to focus on teaching this year, as well as the time to regroup from the past 1.5 years of students being hybrid, full-remote, and/or in-person. Thank you for your consideration.

Ms. Donna LaRue, Pond View Drive, addressed the Board and said the Board was surrounded by many people who were professionals.

Mr. Michael Susalka & Ms. Caroline Herold, 31 Valleyview Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Our household would like to publicly thank the front-liners: the teachers & building administrators who are navigating this insane situation, solely to keep the schools open and the students safe.

They do this in spite of differing opinions, disparate messaging, and a variety of opinions on masking. We would also implore the Board to NOT treat masking as a political issue--because it should not be. It is a matter of public health, of keeping the community safe. Please continue to follow the science, and ignore misinformation--regardless of the volume!

Ms. Bonnie Dunham, 16 Wren Court Drive, addressed the Board and said she felt it was important to wear masks, especially for those people who were most vulnerable.

Ms. Michelle Colón, 2 Jonathan Circle (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

First, I'd like to thank the teachers and School Board for their hard work and perseverance during these challenging times. I do wish the Board would stand up against the opposition to wearing masks during School Board meetings and ask those that refuse to wear masks to leave the meeting. Not enforcing masking is causing attendance at the meetings to be skewed towards anti-maskers because many people do not feel safe attending.

I have a child in middle school and I would like to voice my support for wearing masks in school, as recommended by the CDC. The community should do everything it can to help protect

immune-compromised students. It is callous to think that it is worth potentially sacrificing a child's life just so other children do not need to wear masks. From what I have seen, many children aren't as bothered by masking as adults. My daughter is vaccinated and wears a mask to school. She wants to wear her mask and do her part in trying to end the pandemic.

I'd also like to voice my support for the 2Revs contract. There was a comment during the last meeting opposed to how 2Revs wants to 'make teachers look different than they currently do. The speaker insinuated that diversity among teaching staff would be a negative thing. I was shocked when people clapped after that statement was made. Clearly, we have some work to do. I admire 2Revs commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Most Fortune 500 companies have Equity, diversity, and inclusion goals and promote these values. Diversity provides additional perspectives that can only benefit our children. And, please note that equity doesn't mean the same outcome for every child. It means the same opportunity for every child. I believe children should be educated about racism because it does exist in our community and they will eventually encounter it. People can try to refute that significant inequalities exist, but facts are facts, systemic racism exists, and why shouldn't that part of history be taught? Knowing the facts will help children be more compassionate and empathetic toward others.

Ms. Sabrina Bebe, Wire Road, addressed the Board and said she was grateful that the district was allowing at-home COVID testing. She also said she did not support the 2Revolutions contract.

Mr. Ken Martin, Woodward Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Unfortunately, I am not able to attend tonight's important meeting but I did have a few comments to share with you through email regarding 3 topics.

1. If you have not been able to watch the video of the Merrimack High School Marching Band's performance at the Salem Marching Band Invitational last weekend, I strongly suggest you do so. They put on what was easily one of the best performances of the night and continue a long standing tradition of high-level musicianship here in Merrimack. Congratulations to all the students and staff on a great performance.

2. In regards to the revisitation of the masking policy for the school district I implore you to continue to listen to the advice of the DHHS and look at the local data regarding transmission. At the last meeting, Mr. Olsen stated that $\frac{1}{3}$ of the families in Merrimack have opted out of the masking policy, leaving $\frac{2}{3}$ of the community following the school district's recommendations. I believe this one bit of data tells you all you need to know in regards to how the families that send children to our schools feel about the masking policy.

3. I support the decision to place a pause on any kind of contract with 2Revolutions at this time. After what has been a tumultuous couple of years our teachers need to focus on teaching and connecting with our students, not implementing a huge philosophical overhaul. Additionally, any major examination of our systems in place will require the support and cooperation of a permanent superintendent, whoever that may be. Their buy-in is essential and until we know who that is, I suggest we pump the brakes. Thank you for your time and thank you for all of your hard work and effort.

Mr. William Pfingston, Jessica Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Please read Hailey's email again. That 8th grader had more common sense in her email than most other comments tonight. Well-spoken Hailey!

P.S. Just say "NO" to 2Rev and no to mandatory masking.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were no recognitions.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that all of the schools were recognizing Anti-Bullying month. He said Marsha McGill, Principal at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School informed him that the students were constructing 1,000 paper cranes to capture and celebrate their hopes and dreams for the 2021 – 2022 school year and they would be displayed at the school.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen also said Steve Claire, Interim Principal at Merrimack High School said an extraordinary number of students had signed up for after school activities. He added that Bonnie Painchaud, Principal at the Reeds Ferry Elementary School had asked him to recognize the Merrimack Hawks Cheerleading Organization for their generous donation of supplies to Reeds Ferry Elementary School.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he and Ms. Yarlott were continuing with their "listening tour" where they were visiting each school and talking to staff about what was working well and what they could improve upon.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he attended a Parent Advisory Council meeting with Heather Barker, Director of Special Education, and found it to be very beneficial.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott stated the focus had most recently been on professional development. She said some teachers had attended the Universal Design for Learning Program (UDL) lab with the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) in Concord. She added they would also be working with the staff regarding cognitive coaching, and they would begin training surrounding Envision the following day for new educators.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott said staff continued to work on Canvas updates and she would be providing training with the Heggerty Program, which was a phonemic awareness program with all three lower elementary schools.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the grid for the following year's budget had been built and the preliminary information had been sent out to the schools.

Board Member Barnes asked if the CIP had been reviewed by the Planning & Building Committee. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied it had not been put together yet but they were working on it.

d. School Board Update

Chair Guagliumi stated they were still working on the Superintendent search and she noted there were stakeholder surveys on the website and the deadline to fill them out was the following day. She said the goal over the next few weeks was to get a timeline put on the website to make it clear how the process was moving along. Chair Guagliumi said the process would include stakeholder input at every level.

e. Student Representative Update

Kaitlyn, Student Representative said a few weeks ago some high school students put together a display of artwork and woodshop works for the Derryfield Fair and said they won 1st Place in the high school division. She also said a Red Ribbon Week would be coming up and the purpose was to encourage students to abstain from underage drinking and drugs. In closing, Kaitlyn said the high school would be having a "Spirit" week leading up to the Homecoming/Halloween dance.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Health & Safety Task Force Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he met with the Health & Safety Task Force the previous week and the data still indicated that Merrimack was a community of substantial transmission. He recommended continuing with the current mask policy through the month of November.

b. 2Revolutions

Chair Guagliumi said 2Revolution presented a proposal at the May 17, 2021, School Board meeting and two weeks was allowed for public feedback and voted the first week in June. She pointed out that she abstained from the vote because she knew one of the founders and she would continue to abstain from voting on the item.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to sever the contract with 2Revolutions with a thirty-day notice according to the contract. Board Member Barnes seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Board Member Barnes said she felt all steps should be taken to recover any funds paid to 2Revolutions for work not yet conducted.

Board Member Peters read aloud from a prepared statement as summarized below:

I am in support of ending the contract with 2Revolutions for several reasons. First, information has come to light that was not previously accessible to the Board in May and June when we first interviewed the vendor. This information for the sake of neutrality I believe has given pause to contracting with 2Revolutions. Secondly, because the issue of Critical Race Theory is so divisive it is best to distance this community and district from any appearance of partnership with these values. Lastly, the goal of creating a strategic plan within the community and with all stakeholders requires mutual respect and cooperation, and the current contract with 2Revolutions is failing to provide that mutual respect and cooperation.

That being said, I am very disappointed with the way in which we have come to this moment. I would never be in favor of the CRT worldview. I appreciate that people have become more involved in attending School Board meetings, however, in the last several weeks' much misinformation has been shared regarding what 2Revolutions would and would not do regarding the strategic plan for the district. Even after the communication from administration was sent out, many in this community sought the same level of divisiveness as CRT by continuing to communicate this misinformation regarding the strategic plan planning process and members of this Board on social media both nationally and locally. In communications with this Board, both in person and by email, it is clear that we have been divided by outsiders in social media that is riddled with misinformation. I am also disappointed by those who know me personally but never picked up the phone to ask questions about the process and what influence, in any, that 2Revolutions would have on our district's core values and mission. Rather, many jumped on the bandwagon of misinformation and accused Board Members, including myself, of beliefs and values we do not hold. If we are to move forward in unity we must all do our due diligence to seek accurate information and wise counsel from those who seek to unite and not divide.

Board Member Hardy said she would defend Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion every day in the school district because that was what it was about 100% of the time.

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

c. Third Review of Use of Masks by Students and Staff Policy (EBCVM)

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated the masking policy as it pertained to "Interscholastic Athletics Policy" was changed to:

For indoor interscholastic athletics conducted in the Merrimack School District, students will be distanced while on the sidelines and no masks will be required. When an athlete is in competition, in Merrimack, no masks are required; however, participants may opt to wear a mask at their discretion. No masking is required for outdoor interscholastic sports conducted in the Merrimack School District.

Board Member Barnes asked if parents chose for their children to opt out of mask wearing in the classroom would it be held against the student if they chose not to sing so they could keep their masks off. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied it would not and he would be sure to make that clear.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the Use of Masks by Students and Staff Policy. Board Member Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Initial Thoughts from School Board Regarding 2022 – 2023 Budget

Chair Guagliumi requested that each School Board member send her anything they would like administration to consider as they prepared the budget.

b. Early Release Days in January and March

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he was proposing two early release days (as an amendment to the school calendar) for mandatory training. He said the first training session, January 14th, would be for suicide prevention training and the second proposed early release day, in March, would help them comply with the new Student Discipline Law amendments that went into effect on July 1, 2021.

Board Member Barnes requested the item be tabled for future discussion as she did not agree with Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen's position that it did not fall under professional development. Chair Guagliumi replied the item would be placed on a future agenda.

c. Partnership between Merrimack School District & Greater Nashua Mental Health Center

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen introduced Ms. Fern Seiden, Director of Student Wellness, and Ms. Heather Barker, Director of Special Education.

Ms. Seiden explained that the Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) was the multi-tiered model for partnering with community mental health and youth-serving agencies to reduce barriers and increase access to prevention supports and intervention services.

Ms. Seiden said the "System of Care Law" was passed in 2016 due to the serious mental health issues not only in New Hampshire but in the entire country. She also said the Department of Education (DOE) supported the effort by supporting districts in established multi-tiered systems by providing coaches in each region.

Ms. Seiden said the Greater Nashua Mental Health Center had started hiring school-based mental health counselors and they had been talking with them since the summer to better understand what they had to offer.

Ms. Barker explained some of the benefits of students partnering the GNMH (Greater Nashua Mental Health) such as reducing geographic barriers for students to access needed supports without disrupting the school day, early, effective interventions to increase students wellness, and success, and to eliminate wait times for mental health supports in the community by bypassing waitlists.

Mr. Barker further explained it could mean instead of families trying to access mental health services in the community on their own there could be services located in the school building. She said they would not be employed by the district but because they were co-located within the building they could help facilitate the referrals to a clinician. She said the services would be paid through insurance and the programs had processes in place to help families get the insurance.

Ms. Barker said the next steps would be to have a Memorandum of Understanding for 2021 – 2022, noting there would be no budget implications, and develop a “co-located” relationship. Further, Ms. Barker said the goals for 2022 – 2023 would be the expansion of the Memorandum of Understanding, a decision of making process to determine the expanded role, and what the budget implications would be.

Vice Chair Rothhaus commented that she was very in favor of the plan.

Board Member Barnes also commented that she thought the information and the plan were very good but asked if the reason the expanded role and possible budget implications were not in the 2021 – 2022 budget. Ms. Seiden replied in order for the plan to rise up and be successful the co-located services were the first step in a bigger plan that would take some time.

Board Member Barnes asked if they had identified the spaces within the district in which they wanted to use and if there were things they could currently do to prepare those spaces to be welcoming spaces.

Board Member Peters asked for clarification regarding protecting parental rights for permission to treat, and permission to screen. Ms. Barker replied it was not a school counselor in a school office that a student could go see anytime they wanted to but rather it is an appointment with the Greater Nashua Mental Health Center which is simply co-located in the school. She said confidentiality was of the utmost importance and school staff in any capacity would only be involved with the permission of the parent.

Board Member Hardy said she was in favor of the proposed partnership. She said there was a huge need for the plan.

Chair Guagliumi said she too was very supportive of the plan and felt it being student-centric was very important.

d. Guaranteed Maximum Rate for Health & Dental Insurance for 2022 – 2023

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the guaranteed maximum rate for 2022 – 2023 would be a decrease of 1.4% for health insurance, and 1.5% for dental insurance.

e. Construction Update on Woodbury Street and the Roundabout

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that the work had already begun and trees had been grubbed out. He said there would be 1,250 linear feet of sidewalk that would be 5 feet wide and the width of the road would be increased to 24 feet. Additionally, he provided an update surrounding the roundabout project that the Town of Merrimack was doing.

f. Position on Proposed Warrant Article via Petition

Chair Guagliumi said the Board received a petition which had approximately 150 signatures on it regarding the topic of making masks optional at all times during school hours and on all school district properties for students, staff, and visitors.

MOTION: Vice Chair Rothhaus made a motion that the Board decline the petition to request to hold a Special Meeting on the Citizen's Petition to make the wearing of face coverings on school property optional for all students, staff, and visitors and it does such for the following reasons:

- The Board, not the Citizen's Meeting, is responsible for adopting the policies of the district. The legislator and the Department of Education have granted policy-making authority to the School Board.
- The legislator has not granted policy-making authority to the school district meeting.
- The petition article goes beyond the authority granted by the legislator to the meeting. The Board's current policy is lawful and it is a subdivision of the state, the district is following the health recommendations of the Department of Health & Human Services.
- The citizens of the district should not be required to participate in a Special Meeting where a yes vote would produce an unlawful outcome.

Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Vice Chair Rothhaus stated the cost of a Special Meeting would cost the district between \$25,000 to \$30,000 and the Board would not have to accept the outcome of the vote. She said the School Board was the elected body for the Merrimack School District. She also said it could become a very slippery slope to elect a School Board and then have petition Warrant Articles to change the decisions of the Board.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

g. Other

Board Member Barnes stated when she initially joined the Board the members of the Board were assigned to different curriculum areas. She said a few years prior the Board decided to receive quarterly curriculum updates from administration regarding the curriculum work being done throughout the district. She asked that those updates resume.

Board Member Peters asked that they receive a refresh on how the budget process works and what the responsibilities were from the School Board and the Budget Committee.

Chair Guagliumi commented there had not been an update on the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys and ask that it be done. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated he was in complete agreement.

Chair Guagliumi stated there was usually a grade point average that students had to have to participate in sports activities. She said she wanted to look at perhaps providing a little bit of extra grace as it applied to some students. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied he would be happy to have a discussion with administration and the Athletics Director regarding the matter and would report back to the Board.

7. APPROVAL REQUESTS

- a. October 4, 2021 Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 4, 2021, meeting. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items to address.

9. OTHER

- a. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes commented the Professional Development Committee had met the previous Thursday where they reviewed subcommittee reports regarding recertification, individual professional development plans, technology updates, and making sure the committee was properly represented by paraprofessionals.

Board Member Barnes also said the Master Plan Revision Committee also met and reviewed some special projects and funding. She said funding for special projects were approved at the high school.

Board Member Barnes said the previous Saturday she represented the School Board as the delegate to the New Hampshire School Board's Association Delegate Assembly and everything went as planned. She said a resolution was presented and passed to keep an option for remote participation so members could dial into the meetings if need be.

Board Member Peters said the Budget Committee had made its schedule for the upcoming budget season and the first meeting would be on November 16, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. at the Merrimack High School.

- b. Correspondence

Chair Guagliumi said she the entire School Board had received several emails that related to:

- 2Revolutions - 1
- Against masking requirements – 2
- Concern for lunchroom and/or recess protocols – 2

- Follow-up regarding the status of the mask optional petition – 1

Chair Guagliumi said she personally received an email regarding the assistance needed for historical finance records from one of the Booster Clubs at the high school and she referred that person to Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

Chair Guagliumi said she also received an email that expressed support for continuing the protocols around allowing families to opt-out of masks.

Chair Guagliumi said she and administration received an email from a parent who was following up on previous communications regarding their child who was a high school student.

c. Comments

There were no comments made.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Evan Fulmer, Woodbury Drive (the beginning of his comment was inaudible) said he relied on paper yet did not receive information in paper form anymore. He also said he did not quite understand the issue of masks in that he felt they were necessary.

Ms. Brittany Damon, Turnbuckle Lane (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Please remember that equity does not mean equality. Make sure you understand the difference before you decide to support 2Revolutions.

Ms. Jen Motyl, Ellie Drive, addressed the Board and thanked the Board for their service. She also said she was thankful for the partnership between the Merrimack School District and the Greater Nashua Mental Health Center. She shared that in Nashua, with parent permission, the school nurses were administering COVID tests so the kids could get a swab and go back to class if the test was negative. She also suggested that the Board take a look at perhaps raising the pay for substitute teachers and paraprofessional's to be more competitive. Ms. Motyl said she was grateful that Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott were going to each school to talk with teachers and that type of communication was very important.

Ms. Lila York, 46 Belmont Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I'm not sure what we are really supposed to say anymore to get all of the people on the Board to understand that we are fighting for choice. Clearly, we have a School Board member who thinks we are being unreasonable. We are trying to fight for everyone's choice to mask. Like I said before, we are all in the same storm but not in the same boat. What might be best for one person might not be for another. I don't think anyone in this room right now is right or wrong. We are clearly in a time where scientific data is being used to fuel every side. I have worked in the food industry my entire life. I have had training in the cross-contamination field and it has been etched in my brain for years. For 15 years I worked in food service in a nursing home. I was also educated on the health side of it as well. I can tell you I have seen so much cross-contamination going on it baffles my mind. Even the people who think they are doing a good thing are spreading

germs like wildfire. As soon as you touch that mask on your face you are supposed to wash your hands right away and that's not happening. They would also teach you to throw it away as soon as you touch it and get a new one. Kids are fidgeting with them as well as grown adults. We could possibly be spreading it around more than we know, not to mention that the studies done on masks found E-coli and other germs as well. Last year we had strict mask policies in place throughout the state. My child still got sick two times last year which was the same as she always does. Not once was it COVID which I am thankful for, but if masks work so great, how did this happen when COVID is much more contagious? How did a normal cold manage to sneak under her mask twice and get her sick? My guess is it's due to cross-contamination. I'm also concerned about the guidelines we are following for quarantine. How is this making any sense to people? It has already been determined that the vaccinated people are spreading it just as much as the unvaccinated people. Can you not see the hypocrisy? Look at the studies coming out of Israel, they are ahead of the US and are already into their third booster shot and talking about the fourth one because it's not helping. How is it that we are letting people who could be wrong or be persuaded with money or an agenda to tell us what to do or believe? I find it very concerning that we are listening to a bunch of people who are all being funded by each other to follow the science – it's their science. Let's stop pretending that these people have our best interests at heart because they don't. Again, if it was about our health, the borders would be closed. Millions of people wouldn't be pouring into our country spreading the virus we have all been trying hard to fight. There are people with money and power who manipulate people into doing what they would like. I leave you with these thoughts. Hitler was once in government and millions of people listened to him. Jeffrey Epstein was covered up by people in the government and young girls were continued to be taken advantage of. Dr. Death (aka Dr. Christopher Dutch) was a real story in the US and people tried to stop him but money was more important. The movie Concussion was based on a true story and the deaths of athletes were hidden and covered up because money was more important because of the NFL funding money to our government. Pizer paid the largest criminal fine in US history when they agreed to pay out \$2.3 billion. Make no mistake, people might be gaslighting us. All we want is the freedom to choose for everyone in our community and country for vaccines and masks.

Ms. Rosemarie Rung, 21 Ministerial Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I want to thank the School Board for their common-sense decision to deny the Special School District meeting. I am very concerned that the cost of holding this meeting and an extra election day would take tens of thousands of dollars away from our students. Any vote is advisory anyway and to spend tax dollars when most parents agree with the mask policy is an absurd waste of money. I hope in the future that anyone considering such a petition for a special meeting would do their homework and consider the burden on the taxpayer before moving forward.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: At approximately 9:30 p.m. Board Member Hardy made a motion to adjourn. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.