

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Merrimack Town Hall – Memorial Room  
January 3, 2021**

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**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](mailto:publiccomment@sau26.org).

**2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ms. Barbara Sousa, 4 Griffin Street – (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

For kids who test positive for Covid and are missing school what are we doing to help them stay current with work at school. We don't have the option for remote and when they get back to school they have moved on and have a week's worth of work to catch up on in addition to current work. My middle school kids can use Canvas for assignments that have been posted but they don't have the benefit of the work assigned to them. Not all assignments are on Canvas.

Ms. Lisa Mungovan, 14 Lamson Drive – (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I am writing to you this morning to consider keeping Merrimack school districts quarantining to 10 days or to let families know what the quarantining rules now are. The CDC said that you no longer had to quarantine after 5 days of Covid infection if symptom free - but MUST mask. If Merrimack is considering implementing the CDC guidelines you must consider that these students must keep their masks on at all times even if opted out. This includes separating these students for lunch. Or maybe even testing before returning to school to ensure they are negative for infection. I know some districts are still staying with a 10-day quarantine period. Whatever the decision, please make it known to families what the policies are for the Merrimack School District.

**3. RECOGNITIONS**

There were none.

**4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES**

a. Superintendent Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the vaccination clinic was moved to January 13, 2022, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Merrimack High School cafeteria.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that he received a letter from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges that the accreditation visit would take place from Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup> through Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said there would be an early release on January 14<sup>th</sup> for required staff training.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked the staff and students of the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School for sponsoring “Kindness Month.” He said grades 5 & 6 band students had been invited to perform at the December recital and did an excellent job. He also said the “Promising Futures Grant” that was obtained by the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School was being used to hire a mindfulness consultant to design and implement wellness strategies for the classroom.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that Ms. Tracy Gruber, Art Teacher, along with help of Mr. Mark Tyres, Special Education Teacher, was offering an afterschool Art Club for students, and there were approximately 30 students attending every Tuesday between 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Yarlott said the Digital Learning Specialists (grades K through 6) had been meeting regarding setting up some standardization for the Canvas pages in terms of students accessing instruction and teacher’s posting lessons on the pages.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

There were no updates.

d. School Board Update

There were no updates.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Vadney stated mid-terms were coming up and reviewed the schedule.

**5. OLD BUSINESS**

a. Health & Safety Task Force Recommendation for January

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the current data reflected that the numbers of positive Covid cases were increasing and he was watching that data very closely.

Board Member Peters noted that she felt it was important to point out that although the CDC had changed its policy to quarantine for five days the district’s policy remained unchanged.

Board Member Hardy asked if there was a way they could utilize the technology used the prior year to minimize the educational impact for students in the event they had to quarantine for ten days. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied the administration would be discussing it at their next leadership team meeting the following Wednesday.

Board Member Barnes said she felt it would be a good idea to stream while recording to at least provide the students with access to the lesson plan as it was presented to their classmates.

Vice Chair Rothhaus said she felt administrators and teachers knew what they needed to do and they should be left to decide on what the best plan would be.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said Mr. Jason Pelletier was the new Director of Instructional Technology & Learning Systems who would also be part of the leadership team meeting discussing the topic.

Student Representative Vadney said she was in agreement with Board Members Hardy and Barnes.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Boards Response to the 2022 – 2023 Capital Improvement Plan**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated the CIP and bonded debt schedule was available online and included a map of the roofing sections at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School as well as a copy of a letter from their roofing consultant.

Mr. Tom Touseau, Director of Maintenance, addressed the Board and said there were portions of the roof at Thorntons Ferry that had to be replaced and some repaired. He said the James Masticola Elementary School was still in need of a roof replacement and that it was not as high on the list as Thorntons Ferry.

Board Member Barnes said she did feel the roof at Thorntons Ferry should be a Warrant Article as it was in definite need of immediate attention, and therefore, should be in the budget.

Chair Guagliumi said if it went on the Warrant and it was voted down then “no meant no” and they would not be able to rework the budget to pay for it, even if it were absolutely necessary.

After lengthy discussion the School Board decided to place the Thorntons Ferry roof repair as a Warrant Article rather than to include it in the operating budget. The reason for this decision was the Board felt the expense would be more transparent and the Board could more effectively educate the public on the importance of the Thorntons Ferry roof repair if it were a Warrant Article rather than if it were included in the operating budget.

Vice Chair Rothhaus said she felt it was very helpful that the District had a very good business administrator and director of maintenance who had led the district in a very positive way.

Chair Guagliumi asked if there were any other questions or comments from the Board.

Board Member Barnes commented that the CIP did not have place settings with amounts for the student services/SAU office and the MHS field. She said she felt it was difficult to look at the big number if they did not have a number and how to schedule it. She also said she felt the student services/SAU office should be placed with a ten-year bond with an estimate of \$4 million in the 2023 – 2024 budget because the first payment on a bond, unlike the lease/purchase, would only be the interest.

Board Member Barnes said she felt the placement of the turf field should be in 2025 – 2026 in the amount of \$2 million in either an outright purchase or a bond.

**MOTION:** Board Member Barnes made a motion to add \$4 million in the form of a placeholder for an SAU/SPED office for 2023 – 2024, noting it would be a ten-year bond with the first year being interest only (\$100,000) and to add the turf field to 2025 – 2026 in the amount of \$2 million, with a first year bond payment of \$50,000. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.**

b. Formal Presentation on Maintenance Budget

Mr. Touseau, Facilities Director, stated there would be three areas that would increase in the upcoming budget; one was the access to playground equipment at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School; two was the retrofit lease for unit ventilators; and an increase in utility costs.

Mr. Touseau reviewed questions and answers as summarized below:

Chair Guagliumi & Vice Chair Rothhaus

Remind us of the total and complete cost to maintain the Brentwood building. Also, how many times have the police department used it for training in the last year? How many times does the police department expect to use it in the next year?

Mr. Touseau

The 2020 – 2021 expended is approximately \$6,054.33. This was a Warrant Article in the 2020 – 2021 budget. The appropriated cost was \$125,000 to raze the building. The present-day cost is estimated to about \$200,000.

The police department has used the building approximately six times and the fire department has used the building five times.

Chair Guagliumi asked if the razing of the building should be part of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the razing of the building was one of the components of the SAU's master plan.

Chair Guagliumi asked if there was anything they needed to put in the CIP to address the “swampy area” of the soccer field. Mr. Touseau replied that the existing swale was not percolating very well and they were looking into some additional drainage mitigation.

Chair Guagliumi suggested, depending on the cost, adding the cost for the drainage mitigation to the CIP and placing it in either the 2023 – 2024 or the 2024 – 2025 year.

Vice Chair Rothhaus suggested that the Planning & Building Committee provide input.

Board Member Barnes

The overall message makes it seem like we are level funding while expecting we will likely face increased costs. There is a definite increase in funding commensurate with the increased cost of goods, and utility increases.

Mr. Touseau

The increased costs of utilities are estimated to be \$178,000, the additional leasing cost for installation of unit ventilators is \$370,754, and the site work cost at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is \$30,000.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell added that due to Covid it was recommended that the HVAC systems run 24 hours a day for 365 days per year which would increase the cost of utilities.

Board Member Barnes

Can you please confirm what this repair account covers and why we are able to continue to not fund it?

Mr. Touseau

Prior to the 2020 – 2021 budget CIP items were in the repair account (100-4600-62-8451-08.) In 2020 – 2021 CIP items were removed and instruction was given by the School Board to look at Warrant Articles for high ticket items. \$25,500 remained in the account for small repairs, such as pressure relief valves and high school choral risers.

Board Member Barnes

Regarding supplies, how are you level funding when custodial supplies are likely to have increased costs due to inflationary increases in goods such as bags, paper products, soaps, etc.?

Mr. Touseau

Because of the past two Covid years, it has been difficult to predict any increased costs relating to various supplies. We expect that there will be a decrease in supplies because the costs of the electrical items (LED project) will no longer be needed, i.e. ballasts, bulbs, etc.

Board Member Hardy

There are budget lines for the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and the Merrimack Middle School for electricity. Why are they so much more than the elementary schools?

Mr. Touseau

The three elementary schools have considerably less square footage than the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and the Merrimack Middle School. The middle school has less square footage than the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, however, the electricity cost is more due to central A/C.

Chair Guagliumi & Vice Chair Rothhaus

Please clarify the rotation of finishing the gym floor. How often does this need to be done to maintain the quality of flooring?

Mr. Touseau

All wooden gym floors (gym, all-purpose) are screened, re-coated, repaired, and if needed, re-lined.

Chair Guagliumi & Vice Chair Rothhaus

We are possibly addressing parking lots in the CIP. If so, it may make sense to hold off on striping.

Mr. Touseau

This cost is for maintaining the striping of existing parking lot striping. This is done every other year and it was important to keep it to be done on a regular basis.

Chair Guagliumi & Vice Chair Rothhaus

We want to make sure there is enough money to support the playground site work at Thorntons Ferry. If the parent group falls short, how can we ensure the project would still go forward? If this project something that is being considered for the other schools with playgrounds? If so, is this something that the managers of the trust fund could help with?

Mr. Touseau

The agreement with the parent group was the district would fund the site work needed and they will fund the actual playground structure. There was a possibility of adding \$10,000 to the site work figure.

It was being considered at other schools.

Chair Guagliumi & Vice Chair Rothhaus

Please tell us the areas where cameras are needed to ensure full coverage of our buildings, particularly on the inside areas.

Mr. Touseau

The district received \$200,000 from the state and was able to put up an additional 139 cameras totaling 221. We will assess as time demands. Possible new areas are stairwells and additional playground cameras.

Chair Guagliumi Vice Chair Rothhaus

Please describe the reliability of the scoreboards. Will the work being budgeted for the scoreboard prevent any disruptions for live games? We have heard from parents through the years of some frustration about scoreboards not working so we want to ensure we have whatever funds necessary to provide scores to spectators. If \$2,000 is not enough then we would like to understand what amount would provide a greater sense of reliability.

Mr. Touseau

This is not a maintenance question, however, noted the lights were replaced and Mr. Soucy, the Athletics Director was working on it.

c. Formal Presentation on Merrimack Middle School Budget

Mr. Adam Caragher, Principal, Merrimack Middle School, addressed the Board and said his proposed budget for 2022 – 2023 showed their continued commitment to the students. He said there was a request for \$6,000 related to afterschool assistance programming and enrichment programs.

Mr. Caragher reviewed questions and answers as summarized below:

Board Member Barnes

Please outline the additional co-curricular programs you are looking to offer and also please provide what was in place in typical years for the students.

Mr. Caragher

We would like to have the following funded through this account:

- Yearbook, Science Olympiad, Quiz Bowl, and afternoon interventions.

In previous years, we have provided a stipend for these staff members through a Service Learning Project which is funded through the MTA (Merrimack Teacher's Contract) contract.

- d. Formal Presentation on Technology/Library Media

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the proposed budget was level funded and carried over from the work done by Nancy Rose. He noted it was only Mr. Pelletier's third day working for the district and was getting up to speed.

Board Member Barnes

Please outline the computers that are leased, when they were procured, length of lease, if there is a buyout at the end (usually \$1.00), and who the devices are assigned to.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell

There are 729 leased and 2022 – 2023 is the last year for these payments. Also included is a firewall appliance. We would like to maintain this line for future replacement purposes past 2022 – 2023. These computers were acquired in 2020. There is a \$1.00 buyout at the end of the lease.

Board Member Barnes

Please provide how much of the infrastructure was covered by federal funding such as ESSER and ECF. Also, how much of our infrastructure was procured using federal E-Rate; a long-standing funding federal mechanism for connectivity that is unrelated to Covid programs.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell

Due to the massive ramp-up during Covid and the necessity to acquire devices, ESSER funds were used to purchase 1,700 Chromebooks, 400 iPad's, and a new server. E-Rate provides us with a discount on our internet services but has not been used for devices as they are not eligible. We will be speaking with our E-rate consultant to see how to better leverage available services.

The School Board collectively welcomed Mr. Jason Pelletier in his new position as Director of Technology and Library Media Services.

- e. Location of the January 18, 2022, Meeting

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated the January 18<sup>th</sup> meeting would be held at the high school in the cafeteria.

- f. Date for Deliberative Session

Chair Guagliumi said the date of the Deliberative Session had been set for March 8<sup>th</sup> with a snow date of March 10<sup>th</sup>.

g. Other

Board Member Barnes stated a few months prior the Historical Society had gone to the School Board to access the old PTA Kindergarten facility on Depot Street for an annual rent of \$1.00. She asked if it made sense to have a Warrant Article that would give ownership of the facility to the Town of Merrimack and then would become the permanent home of the Historical Society. Chair Guagliumi replied they would add the item to a future agenda.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell shared that it was his understanding if the property were to cease being used for school purposes then \$10,000 had to be paid to Dartmouth College.

**7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. November 15, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes (6:00 p.m.)
- b. November 15, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes (9:22 p.m.)
- c. November 30, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes (5:00 p.m.)
- d. December 20, 2021 – Non-Public Minutes (6:00 p.m.)

**MOTION:** Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the non-public minutes from November 15<sup>th</sup>, (6:00 p.m.) November 15<sup>th</sup>, (9:22 p.m.) November 30<sup>th</sup> (5:00 p.m.) and December 20<sup>th</sup> (6:00 p.m.) with an update that a student name had been redacted from the November 15<sup>th</sup> (6:00 p.m.) minutes due to privacy protection. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.**

- e. December 20, 2021 – Public Minutes

**MOTION:** Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the public minutes from the December 20, 2021, meeting, as presented. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.**

**8. CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Educator Resignations

Ms. Athena Tsourvakas, Tech Ed Teacher – Merrimack Middle School  
Ms. Eva Quill, Language Arts Teacher - Merrimack Middle School

**MOTION:** Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.**

**9. OTHER**

- a. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes said as she served on the New Hampshire School Board Association she wanted to share that there were two scholarships available to students; one for School Board members and one for Student Representatives.



b. Correspondence

Board Member Peters said she received communication from a concerned parent regarding if they could investigate a way to have the bus company communicate with the school who could then communicate with parents if a bus broke down or had other issues.

Board Member Hardy said she received communication from a parent regarding whether the district would be changing the isolation/quarantine policy to coordinate with the CDC. She also said someone had told her that every day on the Covid dashboard the number of occupants of the high school since December 12<sup>th</sup> had increased by one. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied he would check into it.

Chair Guagliumi said she received communication from a community member regarding masking given that the numbers were rising in the State of New Hampshire.

c. Comments

Chair Guagliumi commented the state had the highest numbers ever regarding the pandemic and the Board completely understood if an emergency meeting needed to be called.

**10. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

There were none.

At approximately 8:54 p.m. Vice Chair Rothhaus made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.**