

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
March 21, 2022**

6:30 p.m. Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91 – A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack TV Training Classroom

- **Staff Welfare**

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

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 those members of the public could send emails to publiccomment@sau26.org.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were none.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked the members of the community who attended the School's Deliberative Session.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said there would be an early release day on Friday, March 25th so staff could discuss collaborative problem approaches regarding discipline. He also noted the district was advertising for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction as well as the Assistant Principal for Merrimack High School and they received several applications.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen congratulated the First Robotics Team at Merrimack High School for winning the "Engineering Inspiration Award."

b. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Yarlott said the collaborative problem-solving approach was one of three initiatives established for the school year under social & emotional learning. She said the other two were UDL (Universal Design for Learning) and the Canvas initiative. She also noted

that the training would occur at all six schools for all staff including paraprofessionals and professional staff.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Yarlott stated that they had trained staff persons on how to use the EduPlanet 21 tool for curriculum development and the health curriculum would be loaded to the platform.

c. Assistant Superintendent of Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said they appeared before the Trustees of Trust Funds and secured the sum of \$42,500 to supplement the \$100,000 the parent group had already raised for the inclusive playground at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School. He added there was \$30,000 in the operating budget for associated site work.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said they also presented a request for funds to renovate the Merrimack High School library.

Chair Guagliumi thanked the parents of the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for all of their efforts regarding the playground.

d. School Board Update

There was none.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Vadney reported the high school students were taking SAT's and there were no block days in the current week.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Approval of Revised Student Conduct, Discipline, & Due Process Policy (JICD)

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she felt core values were extremely important to discuss with the students, for example, respect, responsibility, character, courage, and trustworthiness.

She suggested that the student handbook and the discipline policy be placed together on the website.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus requested further information regarding "Planned Ignoring" indicated on page 4 of the policy, and also asked for further clarification regarding "Time Away from Activity/Group." She suggested changing the sentence: "the district will not require apologies but will work with students to understand the need to repair the harm caused in relationships" to "we would encourage all students to apologize for their behavior."

Vice-Chair Rothhaus, referring to page 8 of the policy, said when a student had a long-term suspension, there should be a meeting with the principal, the parents, and the student to re-engage them back into the environment.

Board Member Barnes suggested having meetings with the parents and student prior to the student returning, perhaps over Zoom.

Board Member Peters commented that she agreed with adding the verbiage Vice-Chair Rothhaus suggested.

Chair Guagliumi said the staff handbook should be aligned with the discipline policy and the student handbook. She suggested Ms. Heather Barker, Director of Student Services and Ms. Fern Seiden, Director of Student Wellness also provide input.

Chair Guagliumi said page 5 of the policy indicated that “Middle and High School Graduated Disciplinary Consequences” included Superintendent involvement and said she did not know if it was customary to have every disciplinary action include Superintendent involvement.

Chair Guagliumi also suggested there be more discussion regarding situations that were a manifestation of a disability. She added there was a section that indicated “any administrator’s decision cannot be appealed” but noted there was a contradiction on page 9 which stated, “Any student who repeats any of the long-term suspension infractions listed above may be referred to the School Board for an expulsion hearing.”

Additionally, Chair Guagliumi noted she had questions on page 10 of the policy regarding “Any act of physical or sexual assault would be a felony in committed by an adult.” She asked if all of the students would be treated as “students” or some as “adults.”

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen suggested the Board send their comments to him and he would discuss the items with the leadership team.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review of the 2022 – 2023 School Calendar

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he wanted to ensure that the school calendar was readable and noted there were many factors, some of them mandated, that were considered in the creation of the calendar.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen indicated that he included a “Guide to Religious and Cultural Observances” that reviewed holidays and how those holidays were observed.

The School Board collectively agreed that school should begin prior to Labor Day which was in line with what most of the parents had indicated on the survey.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the 2022 – 2023 School Calendar would be on the next meeting’s agenda.

b. The Vision of a Merrimack High School Graduate

Mr. Steve Claire, Principal, Merrimack High School, Ms. Dayna Chow, Special Education Teacher, and Ms. Marcy Pope, Art Teacher presented a PowerPoint presentation as summarized below:

Mr. Claire stated the Vision of the Graduate statement was the cornerstone of the NEASC (New England Association of Schools & Colleges) accreditation work.

Ms. Chow said the driving question was “What do Merrimack High School graduates need to know and what should they be able to do to be successful?”

Ms. Chow said they developed three phases of the Vision of a Graduate journey:

1. Develop a Process
2. Synthesize, Distill, & Create
3. Approval Process

Ms. Pope explained that a committee was created, and work began working on a draft in the spring of 2020 to identify the skills and attributes a graduate should have. She read aloud the Merrimack High School Vision of a Graduate as follows:

Merrimack High School Vision of the Graduate

Merrimack High School students engage in authentic learning that prepares them for necessary life skills to become independent as individuals and active participants as citizens upon graduation.

Merrimack High School Graduates are Positive Community Members

Graduates are effective, creative, and critical thinkers. They feel empowered to be leaders, to care about their self-worth, others, and their local & global community. This may be evidenced by being resilient, ethical, open-minded, confident, and flexible.

Merrimack High School Graduates are Future Ready

Graduates are driven to achieve their goals. Merrimack High School graduates take ownership of and responsibility for their choices and will continue to be self-directed, life-long learners.

They have prepared for this by:

- Participating in a dynamic curriculum that aligns with the State and National standards.
- Developing executive functioning skills.
- Becoming digitally and financially literate.
- Developing communication skills in areas of listening, speaking, and writing.

Ms. Pope stated that in October of 2021 the plan was presented to the faculty and received 94% approval, and received approval by the District's Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Committee on November 18, 2021.

Mr. Claire stated they would move forward with the NEASC accreditation process that would culminate in the decennial visit in the spring of 2022.

Chair Guagliumi said the item would be on the next meeting's Consent Agenda.

- c. Review of 2022 Proposed Voter Information Guide

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reviewed the proposed Warrant Articles and asked Board members to send him comments and/or edits.

1. Election of School District Officials
2. Accepting Gifts on Behalf of the School District
3. Merrimack Teacher's Association Contract
4. Merrimack Teacher's Association Contract (Special Meeting)
5. Merrimack Teacher's Association Contract – Market Adjustment

6. Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Roof Replacement
7. Authorization to Retain Year-End Unassigned General Fund Surplus
8. Merrimack School District Operating Budget

d. Scheduling the 2022 Graduation Date

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the graduation for the Merrimack High School seniors would be on Saturday, June 18, 2022.

7. POLICIES

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reviewed the below policy given its' first reading.

- a. Administration of Federal Grant Funds Policy (DAF) (1st Reading)

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. February 21, 2022 – Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 21, 2022, meeting, as presented. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

- b. March 7, 2022 – Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the non-public minutes from March 7, 2022, as presented. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

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

- c. March 7, 2022 – Public Minutes (After Deliberative Session)

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the non-public minutes from March 8, 2022, as presented. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

9. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Educator Retirement
 - Ms. Patricia Cunningham, Music Teacher, Merrimack High School
- b. Educator Nomination
 - Ms. Toni O'Keefe, Special Education Teacher, James Masticola Upper Elementary School

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

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

11. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes stated that the Parks and Recreation Committee had met on March 16th where they reviewed ordinances that had not been reviewed in five years.

Board Member Barnes also said the Professional Development Committee met on March 17th where they discussed devices for paraprofessionals, so they did not have to use their own. She also said IPDP (Individual Professional Development Plan) deadlines were discussed as there were people who were going into their third year of certification.

b. Correspondence

Board Member Barnes said she received correspondence from a non-resident who asked if teachers who taught in Merrimack could receive a discounted tuition if their children attended school in the Merrimack School District. Board Member Barnes noted the teachers did not receive a discount.

Chair Guagliumi said she received correspondence from a parent who was concerned about starting school prior to Labor Day.

c. Comments

Vice-Chair Rothhaus thanked Ms. Lynn Christensen, School District Moderator for all of her years of dedication in addition to Board Member Barnes and Chair Guagliumi.

Board Member Barnes asked the administration to place a new agenda item regarding the dropout rates for the next meeting.

Board Member Hardy noted that at some point she would like to see further information regarding the district's trade programs.

Board Member Hardy thanked Mrs. Cunningham for her years of service.

Board Member Peters thanked both Chair Guagliumi and Board Member Barnes for their work in the past year.

Chair Guagliumi suggested placing an agenda item on the next meeting's agenda regarding the removal of accepting public comments via email.

Board Member Peters requested information regarding how many teachers had left the district to go to competitive districts. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied he would gather the data and present it to the Board at a future meeting.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and thanked the School Calendar Committee for all of the thought and transparency that went into creating it. She also said she wholeheartedly supported the information that would be made available in the Voter Information Guide.

Ms. Jennifer Motyl, 27 Ellie Drive, (Board Member Barnes read aloud the following email into the record)

Anticipating that the mid-term elections will be well-attended in 2022, I am personally uncomfortable as a parent and community member with having school open on November 8th. I have worked at the schools in prior years when the schools were open on Election Days and in times when elections were not as well attended. I found that even back then, the closed spaces can cause disruptions to the school day. This includes a disruption in gym classes, school lunches, arrival & dismissal procedures, and other disruptions. Some students are able to roll with these changes quite easily, but others might find these changes much more difficult to adjust to. I also feel that security cannot be guaranteed. Despite the very best efforts and planning, there is always a possibility for a kid to wander into the wrong area or for a door to be left unsecured and/or unguarded. I also have concerns about busy and potentially chaotic parking lots during school arrivals and dismissals. I respectfully ask the Board to consider having school closed on election dates, specifically our mid-terms, but I would prefer closure on both Election Days for the reasons stated above. I do appreciate the new look of the calendar, what an improvement and thank you for all of the thoughtful planning and work that the team put into planning and creating it.

MOTION: At approximately 8:33 p.m. Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to go into a non-public session. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Board Member Hardy, Board Member Peters, Board Member Barnes, Vice-Chair Rothhaus, & Chair Guagliumi	5
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Nay:	0
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The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

At approximately 8:59 p.m. Board Member Peters made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.