

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
September 12, 2022**

6:00 p.m. – NON-PUBLIC SESSION IN ACCORDANCE WITH RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack TV Training Classroom

- 1. Negotiations**
- 2. Legal**

Present: Chair Rothhaus, Vice-Chair Peters, Board Member Hardy, Board Member Halter, and Board Member Martin. Also present was Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Doyle, Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen, and Student Representative Vadney.

Not Present: Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell (Excused)

Vice-Chair Peters welcomed Kaitlyn Vadney who was back from summer vacation to serve as the Student Representative on the School Board.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Rosemarie Rung, 21 Ministerial Drive, addressed the Board and said an event was held on August 20th, “Community for Classrooms,” where school supplies and donations were collected. She added there was a tremendous turnout.

Ms. Nancy Murphy, 20 Brenda Lane, said the event collected 5,815 school supply items. She thanked all of the Merrimack residents and business owners who donated and provided support.

Ms. Rachel Paepke, 67 Tinker Road, thanked all of the staff for a great start to the school year. She also gave a shout-out to the following projects that occurred over the summer:

- Laura’s World Organization for the high school concession stand.
- Thornton’s Ferry Elementary School Playground Fund.

3. RECOGNITIONS

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen recognized Ms. Sue Sheridan, who was a long-term cheerleading coach who had recently been awarded the Carol Dozibrin Advancement of Sports Award.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen presented Student Jack Paepke with a certificate for his participation in the Regional 2022 Major League Baseball Red Sox Pitch, Hit, & Run Team Championship. He said Jack finished first.

Chair Rothhaus recognized the Thorntons Ferry Playground Committee, Ms. Julie DeLuca, Principal, the Chairs of the committee, Ms. Rachel Paepke, and Ms. Kim Desmarais who raised \$122,000 to create the new playground.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the school year started great and thanked all the staff involved. He also said the new concession stand at the high school would be opened and dedicated the following Friday, September 16, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. at the field.

Regarding the SAS (Statewide Assessment System) Scores presented the previous week by Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Doyle, Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he felt there was room for improvement. He said Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle and he had a meeting with the leadership team and would be meeting with the staff in each building to have a listening session and they were committed to raising the scores.

b. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said they had a great beginning to the school year. She also said they had a great professional learning day on Friday, September 2, 2022, with Detective Bill Vandersyde of the Merrimack Police Department who provided training on active shooter drills, and Firefighter Dan Newman of the Merrimack Fire Department who provided the staff with additional training.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said she had talked to many people regarding the SAS data and said it was great to hear that there was a sense of urgency and commitment to getting the scores up. She also said they were putting together a comprehensive plan to address the critical need to continue the work on curriculum revisions.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

There was no update to share.

d. School Board Update

Chair Rothhaus said she appreciated the fact that the school's opening was focused on school safety.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Vadney said she was happy to be back from summer vacation. She said the Homecoming Dance would be held the following Saturday and the next day would be Spirit Week. She also said the class of 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023, were able to contribute an additional \$12,000 for the concession stand at the high school.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Review of Interim Chief Educational Officer's Performance for the 2021 – 2022 School Year

Chair Rothhaus said during a non-public session the prior July, the School Board met with Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen to review his employment and performance. She said the Board

had given Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen a distinguished rating in educational leadership, school district culture, school management, and district goals.

The School Board collectively agreed that Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen was doing a fantastic job for the district and was a great leader.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review of Staff Professional Development

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle provided an overview of the professional learning activities scheduled through June 2023.

b. Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association (MESSA) Memorandum of Understanding

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the district was having a hard time filling support positions that were covered under the MESSA agreement. He said he felt the district needed to be more competitive and added they negotiated an agreement for the 2022-2023 school year to offer a \$1,000 payment to the MESSA members plus a \$500 signing bonus if they were able to bring qualified employees to the district, given the employee stay with the district for at least 90 days. (Maximum of two sign-on bonuses per year). He added the district would be allowed to hire staff at any step on the existing salary scale. He said he was confident that the district would be able to hire and retain support staff personnel.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with MESA. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

Chair Rothhaus commented that she did not like the idea of schools being open on Election Day for the safety of the students. She said there would be a full safety study done. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen ensured that he would be sure that the Calendar Committee considered that.

Chair Rothhaus asked if the district complied with suicide information being included on student identifications. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied that they were in the process of making the appropriate modifications.

Board Member Halter asked what the status was on creating a Policy Committee. Vice-Chair Peters replied that Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen and his staff would reach out via email to see who was interested in serving on the subcommittee.

7. POLICIES

a. Student Records and Access (JRA)

b. Change of Class or School Assignment Best Interest and Manifest Hardship (JCA)

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to waive the first reading of policy (JRA) Student Records and Access and policy (JCA) Change of Class or School Assignment Best Interest and Manifest Hardship. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Chair Rothhaus commented that she felt the line pertaining to “Students’ weight and height of members of athletic teams” should be omitted. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied it was included because that was what the statute stated.

Chair Rothhaus asked if Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen could get a legal opinion regarding the suggested omission. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied he would.

Chair Rothhaus also commented on page 3 of 7 of the policy that in all cases of the word “parent” it could be changed to “parent/guardian.”

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. July 25, 2022 – Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to approve the non-public minutes of the July 25, 2022, meeting, as presented. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

- b. August 23, 2022, Public and Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the public and non-public minutes of the August 23, 2022, meeting, as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Martin)

9. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Teacher Nominations

Ms. Sarah Demers, School Counselor, Merrimack Middle School
Ms. Catrina Sylvia, Social Studies Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
Ms. Kimberly Sinfonico, Preschool Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
Mr. Samuel Perron, Social Studies Teacher, Merrimack High School
Ms. Stephanie Scherr, Science Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

- b. Professional Staff Resignations

Alexandra McCafferty, Grade 5 Teacher, James Masticola Upper Elementary School

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, as presented. Vice-Chair Peters seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

10. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS/GRANTS UNDER \$5,000

- a. Merrimack Friends & Families to Merrimack School District for \$1,000

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to accept the donation in the amount of \$1,000 from Merrimack Friends & Families to the Merrimack School District with the School Board's sincere appreciation. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

11. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Vice-Chair Peters shared that the Professional Development Committee would meet the following Thursday at 3:30 p.m.

b. Correspondence

Board Member Hardy commented that she received correspondence from a parent who was concerned about an issue at the high school, and she referred the parent to the appropriate person.

Chair Rothhaus commented that she received correspondence from a parent regarding the SAS test scores.

Vice-Chair Peters commented that she received correspondence concerning a teacher at the high school and she forwarded it to the appropriate person.

c. Comments

Board Member Martin applauded the administration's plan to respond to the SAS test scores, in addition to keeping the safety of the school of the utmost importance.

Board Member Hardy commented that she felt letting transitioning students start two hours earlier on the first day of school was a very good decision.

Vice-Chair Peters said she appreciated the steps the leadership team was making regarding the SAS test scores.

12. ADJOURN

MOTION: At approximately 8:08 p.m. Board Member Hardy made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.