

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room  
November 7, 2022**

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

- **Student Welfare**
- **Staff Welfare**
- **Legal**

**Present:** Chair Laurie Rothhaus, Vice-Chair Lori Peters, Board Member Ken Martin, and Board Member Naomi Halter. Also present were Assistant Superintendent for Business Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Amy Doyle, Chief Educational Officer Olsen, and Kaitlyn Vadney, Student Representative.

**Not Present:** Board Member Jenna Hardy - Excused

**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.

Vice-Chair Peters said Friday was Veteran's Day and thanked all of those who have served and were currently serving in the armed forces to protect their freedoms.

**2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were none.

**3. RECOGNITIONS**

There were none.

**4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES**

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that the district had lost one of its colleagues as Victoria Moynihan had passed away the previous weekend. He called for a 30-second moment of silence. Chief Educational Officer Olsen reminded everyone that Election Day was on November 8, 2022, and urged people to be very careful driving in and out of the parking lots at the schools.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that the Varsity football team had advanced to the NHIAA Division I football tournament with a 14 – 6 win over Portsmouth.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen also shared that two members of the Varsity Cross Country team also competed in the NHIAA meet at Alvrine High School. He said Melanie Bedard finished 60<sup>th</sup> out of 132 runners in the 5K, and Cameron Fredette finished 20<sup>th</sup> out of 146 runners in the 5K.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the class of 2023 held a Halloween breakfast and Kaitlyn Vadney and Julia Thibeault participated in the Merrimack Police Department's Annual Senior Fair.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that students at the Merrimack Middle School would be writing thank you notes to be delivered to the "Million Thanks Organization" just in time to be passed out to active service members and Veterans for the holidays.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said Richard Loftus was going to start an intramural fitness program at the middle school during the winter months.

Board Member Martin asked if there would be a police presence in the buildings on Election Day. Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied in the affirmative.

Board Member Martin commented that two students from Merrimack were accepted into the Jazz All-State Band; Hikari McDowell, and Scott (Trey) Grant.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle noted that the leadership team and the administration were very committed to the continual improvement of the educational experience the Merrimack School District was providing. She said one of the protocols they discussed was how students were provided homework and practice.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that they had an active demo account for i-Ready and she had drafted a Curriculum Review Cycle Framework that she would share with the leadership team and the Board once everything was put into EduPlanet.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle shared that the next "Vision of a Learner" committee would be held on Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. She said they would be discussing the most appropriate way to share the information with the community.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that he attended a year-end review meeting with the Budget Committee.

d. School Board Update

Chair Rothhaus stated Chief Educational Officer Olsen had accepted a new two-year contract and they were very excited and felt he was an exceptional leader.

Chair Rothhaus said the Board was also very happy with how the Merrimack School District honored Veterans. She also said the Board honored all the Veterans in the community.

Chair Rothhaus noted that she was the NHIAA (New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletics Association) Spirit Chair, and the Merrimack Spirit team competed and did very well. She pointed out that Mr. Mike Soucy, Athletics Director, attended the competition every year and she appreciated the fact that he felt all sports teams were valued.

e. Student Representative Update

Ms. Vadney explained that there would be a class of 2023 fundraiser and Texas Roadhouse rolls could be ordered for Thanksgiving.

**5. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

a. Preliminary Discussion FY24 School Board Priorities

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that the Board's budget priorities in 2022 – 2023 focused on:

- Social Emotional Learning
- Competitive Pay & Benefits
- Graduation Rates & Support Staff
- Technology
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Facilities

He further stated that the School Board's goals for 2022 – 2023 were to:

- Create an Engaged, Inclusive, and Collaborative District Culture built on Mutual Trust & Respect.
- Alternative Pathways to Graduation.
- Improve our Learning Outcomes by Ensuring our Instruction is Responsive to the Varied needs of our Student Population.
- Have Facilities & Equipment that are Safe, Secure, Clean, Healthy, Current, & Appropriate for Meeting the Educational needs of Students & Staff.
- On-going Review of Existing Policies to Ensure they are Compliant and in Alignment with District Practices.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said potential things to be considered for the 2023 – 2024 budget included:

- Alternative Pathways/Extended Learning Opportunities including Hiring an (ELO) Director
- Alternative Pathways Staff, Materials, Supplies
- Curriculum Updates/Revisions
- Centralized Registration Process (Registrar)
- Student Interventionalist/Counselor at Merrimack Middle School and Merrimack High School
- Technology Replacement
- Elementary Reading/Math Specialist
- Behavioral/Emotional Disabilities (ED) Consultant
- Work on Competencies
- Progress Monitoring Tools and Assessments

Chair Rothhaus commented that they had discussed many areas of focus at the Goals Meeting that was held the previous August. She said school safety was a major priority and further discussion needed to be held regarding it. She also said it was important to have a research-effective reading program at all elementary schools and to ensure they had a competency-based system and a lot of professional development hours.

Chair Rothhaus said she felt demolishing the Brentwood Building was a priority as it could be a safety issue. She also commented that she agreed with each point Chief Educational Officer Olsen had mentioned.

Board Member Martin stated that he felt the Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) Coordinator position was a huge plus. He also commented the competencies would take years to get buy-in and thoughtful

planning for it in the budget was critical. He also said he felt a performing arts facility should be part of the long-term plan.

Board Member Halter said she wondered why they did not have any Capital Reserve Funds for projects that needed to be done. She also said 30 paraprofessional positions were open in the district and she said she felt it was important to get them filled.

Vice-Chair Peters stated that the School Board had passed a massive budget in the prior year, they fixed a major problem with the teacher salary grid and the taxpayers overwhelmingly supported the teachers. She further said she was 100% behind all of the goals but that they needed to find savings in the budget where they could because they needed to be cognizant of where the taxpayers were in the current economy.

b. 2023 – 2024 Budget Meeting Dates and Timeline

Date	Location	Start Time	Agenda Items
12/12/2022	MHS Cafeteria	7:00 p.m.	School Board/Budget Committee Mtg.
12/19/2022	Matthew Thornton Rm	7:00 p.m.	Budget to School Board
1/4/2023	Matthew Thornton Room	7:00 p.m.	FS, MES, RFS, TFS, JMUES
1/10/2023	Matthew Thornton Room	7:00 p.m.	Student Services, MHS District
1/12/2023	Memorial Room	7:00 p.m.	Technology/Library/Media, Maintenance, MMS
1/19/2023	Memorial Room	7:00 p.m.	Work Session & Warrant Article Discussion

(updated 12/21/2022)

c. Establish a Meeting Date with the Budget Advisory Committee

**MOTION:** Board Member Halter made a motion to move the regularly scheduled School Board meeting from December 5, 2022, to December 12, 2022. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**

d. Parent/Student Handbook Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared copies of the 2022 – 2023 Parent's Guide for the James Mastricola Elementary School, the Reeds Ferry Elementary School, and the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

Board Member Martin commented that he felt there should be some future discussion regarding the dress codes.

## 7. **POLICIES**

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that all of the proposed policies had been reviewed by legal counsel.

a. Pupil Safety and Bullying (JICK) 1<sup>st</sup> Reading

**MOTION:** Board Member Martin made a motion to waive the first reading of Pupil Safety and Bullying (JICK). Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**

Vice-Chair Peters noted that Policy JICK would be available for the public to review and comment on.

Chair Rothhaus commented that New Hampshire had one of the strictest bullying policies in the nation but realized that did not stop bullying. She said she would like to see very clear professional

development and make sure the district had a clear procedure in place that would ensure students understood the consequences.

b. Review of Use of Physical Restraint/Seclusion (JKAA) 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading

**MOTION:** Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept Policy JKAA, Use of Physical Restraint/Seclusion, given its third reading. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**

c. Review of Public Participation at Board Meetings (BEDH) 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading

**MOTION:** Board Member Martin made a motion to accept Policy BEDH, Public Participation at Board Meetings, given its third reading. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**

d. Review of Student Records and Access (JRA) 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading

Board Member Martin suggested charging .15 cents per page for copies.

Board Member Halter suggested removing the weight and height of members of athletic teams.

**MOTION:** Board Member Martin made a motion to accept Policy JRA, Student Records, and Access, given its third reading, as amended by including charging .15 cents per page for copies, the removal of the weight and height of members of athletic teams, and the change of wording on page 3, paragraph #6. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**

**8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a. October 3, 2022 – Public Minutes

**MOTION:** Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 3, 2022, public meeting as presented. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**

b. October 17, 2022 – Public & Non-Public Minutes

**MOTION:** Board Member Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 17, 2022, public & non-public meeting as amended. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

**Edits:**

Page 1 – The word “November” was changed to the word “October” – Chief Educational Officer Olsen

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**

**9. CONSENT AGENDA**

There were no items to address.

## **10. OTHER**

### **a. Committee Reports**

Board Member Martin commented that he attended his first Budget Advisory Committee meeting and he found it to be very informative. He added a member of the committee had stepped down so there was an open seat.

Board Member Halter commented that she attended a Parks & Recreation Committee meeting where they discussed entering the budget season. She said one of the things they talked about was adding an afterschool program in the function room at Wasserman Park. She added that the gazebo at Watson Park or the bandstand at Abbie Griffin Park had an online portal to reserve the use of them and was free of charge to Merrimack residents.

Board Member Halter also noted that the holiday parade would be held on December 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **b. Correspondence**

Chair Rothhaus stated that she received correspondence from a concerned parent, and she replied to that parent making sure they followed the correct chain of command and did not go directly to the School Board. She said she also received correspondence regarding public comments.

Vice-Chair Peters stated that she received correspondence from a parent who was concerned about a component of the SEL curriculum in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade and it was forwarded to the leadership team for follow-up.

### **c. Comments**

Vice-Chair Peters commented that they had been hearing a lot about the national scores in math and reading. She said there was a lot of attention from the media who were saying things like “school districts need to do something about it.” Vice-Chair Peters said the Merrimack School District immediately extended its summer programs in 2020 and 2021 and extended tutoring and eligibility for support. She said the district would continue to help all students as a result of the pandemic.

Chair Rothhaus said she appreciated the administration’s transparency and their trust in the Board to have the deep conversations needed.

## **11. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Mr. Chuck Mower, 4 Depot Street, addressed the Board and stated the importance of choices and their consequences. He added that there were some critical needs in the district that needed attention.

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

At approximately 8:32 p.m. Board Member Martin made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

**The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.**