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Merrimack School District
ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING
MINUTES

Session 1: Deliberative Session
March 2, 2022

Present: School Board members: Cinda Guagliumi, Shannon Barnes, Laurie Rothhaus, Lori Peters, and Jenna Hardy; Student Representative Kaitlyn Vadney, Interim Chief Educational Officer Everett Olsen, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Kimberly Yarlott, Assistant Superintendent for Business Matthew Shevenell and Legal Counsel Kathy Peahl.

At 7:05 P.M., Moderator Lynn Christensen called the meeting to order and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mrs. Christensen explained the procedures to be followed during the meeting and asked School Board Chair Cinda Guagliumi to introduce the officials on stage. Mrs. Christensen asked Budget Committee Chair Chuck Mower to introduce the Budget Committee members. The Moderator asked the body to recognize Jane Coelho who had retired after 20 years of service as a Supervisor of the Checklist.

Mrs. Christensen stated Article 1 was election of officers, which would take place by official ballot on April 12th and recognized Mrs. Hardy who moved Article 2 as printed. Second: Mrs. Peters.

> **Article 2**
> **Shall the Merrimack School Board be authorized to accept on behalf of the District, without further action by the voters, gifts, legacies and devises of personal or real property which may become available to the District during the fiscal year? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0).**

Mrs. Hardy spoke to her motion by explaining that this article appears on the warrant every year and gives the School Board authority to accept gifts of personal or real property.

Mrs. Christensen called for discussion on the article. There was none.

Mrs. Christensen declared Article 2 moved to the ballot and recognized Mrs. Barnes who moved Article 3 as printed. Second: Mrs. Rothhaus.

> **Article 3**
> **Shall the District approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association which calls for the following net in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year:**

Year	Estimated Amount
2022-2023	$1,247,930

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and further raise and appropriate the sum of One Million Two Hundred Forty-Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Thirty Dollars ($1,247,930) for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at the current staffing levels? (Majority vote required (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote:11-0-0).

Mrs. Barnes spoke to her motion by explaining this was a one-year contract with the teachers providing a 3.75% increase in salary for the 2022-2023 school year. She said this is the first step is attempting to make the Merrimack teachers' salary scale more competitive with 12 surrounding districts. She indicated that the Merrimack salary scale ranges $4,000 to $12,000 behind these other area districts.

Mrs. Christensen called for discussion on the article.

Tom Koenig (Danforth Rd) asked if this was an "across the board" 3.75% salary increase or if the Merrimack Teachers Association (M.T.A.) would be deciding which salary step or who got what raise.

Mrs. Barnes replied that in collaboration with the M.T.A, the increase will be spread over various scale steps to close the biggest salary gaps.

Mr. Shevenell said that more than 3.75% will be added to lower steps with the intent to attract teachers and less will be added to the highest steps on the scale.

Mr. Mower stated this was an attempt to increase the salary scale up because our teachers are underpaid when compared with neighboring districts. He said this article attempts to remedy the situation and make the Merrimack salary scale competitive with those districts.

Mrs. Barnes said this article is not going to make the Merrimack salary scale competitive. She said this one-year contact will keep Merrimack from falling behind other districts and stated there was another article on the warrant that will try to close the gap.

Mr. Shevenell said that area school districts are also voting on salary increases so their salary gap will increase even more. He said the Merrimack School District is not only having difficulty attracting new teachers; it is also losing current teachers to neighboring school districts.

There was no further discussion.

Mrs. Christensen declared Article 3 moved to the ballot and recognized Mrs. Barnes who moved Article 3 as printed. Second: Mrs. Hardy.

Article 4
Shall the District, if Article 3 is defeated, authorize the School Board to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 3 cost items only? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0).

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Mrs. Barnes spoke to her motion by explaining that should Article 3 fail, this article gives the School Board the option of holding a special meeting to discuss contract cost items only without the need to petition the Superior Court to hold a meeting.

Mrs. Christensen called for discussion on the article. There was none.

Mrs. Christensen declared Article 4 moved to the ballot and recognized Mrs. Rothhaus who moved Article 5 as printed. Second: Mrs. Guagliumi

> **Article 5**
> **Shall the District approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association which calls for the following net changes in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year for a market adjustment added to base salary beginning in 2022-2023 to position the Merrimack Teachers Association at competitive rates in regards to surrounding districts in the amount of up to Nine Hundred Fifty Thousand dollars ($950,000), said sum not to exceed Twenty Five Percent (25%) of the unencumbered surplus funds remaining at the end of fiscal year 2021-2022? (Majority vote required (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: 11-0-0).**
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> ***NOTE: This Article represents a one-time salary adjustment to the scale for the fiscal year 2022-2023 and if approved will be imbedded into the salary schedule from 2022-2023 forward. It is not cumulative.***

Mrs. Rothhaus spoke to her motion by explaining this article is a market adjustment to the salary scale in addition to the salary increase in Article 3. She stated even if Article 3 passes, the District's salary scale will still be $3,000 - $11,000 behind the average of neighboring districts. She indicated this article represents an additional 3% salary increase for teachers and will allow Merrimack to further reduce the salary gap as well as begin to become more competitive with area districts.

Mrs. Christensen called for discussion on the article.

Mr. Koenig asked for clarification regarding the note to the Article 3. He said he wanted to understand whether the intent was to add this increase to the salary scale in addition to the increase in Article 3 going forward or if this was a one-time salary increase.

Mr. Shevenell stated that the amounts from both Article 3 and Article 5 will be added to the salary schedule and this would be clarified in the Voter's Guide.

There was no further discussion.

Mrs. Christensen declared Article 5 moved to the ballot and recognized Mrs. Guagliumi who moved and read Article 6 with the amount of the Article changed to $1,400,500. Second: Mrs. Peters.

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Article 6 (Special Warrant Article)
Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of One Million Four Hundred Thousand Five Hundred Dollars ($1,400,500) for the purpose of roof replacement at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School? (Majority vote required).

Mrs. Guagliumi spoke to her motion by explaining that the District had received a quote for roof replacement at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School that was $200,000 less than the amount that was printed on the warrant for this article. She said replacement of the roof sections in question was urgently needed. She stated that the School Board would be meeting after Deliberative Session to vote on this changed article.

Mrs. Christensen called for discussion.

Mr. Mower said the Budget Committee would also be meeting after Deliberative Session to vote a recommendation for the article as read.

There was no further discussion.

Mrs. Christensen declared Article 6 moved to the ballot and recognized Mrs. Peters who moved Article 7 as printed. Second: Mrs. Hardy.

Article 7
Shall the District vote to authorize the School Board indefinitely, until specific rescission of such authority, to retain year-end unassigned general funds in any fiscal year, in an amount not to exceed 5% of the current fiscal year's net assessment, in accordance with RSA 198:4-b,II? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 4-1-0).

Mrs. Peters spoke to her motion by explaining that this article allows the School Board to retain up to 5% of the District's net assessment yearly taken from the unassigned general fund balance. She said that net assessment is the amount to be raised by taxes, minus all revenues. She indicated that normally the District has an unassigned fund balance about $3 million dollars at the end of the fiscal year and this year, the District's net assessment is $53,653,239 which means the maximum amount the School Board could retain would be $2,682,000.

Mrs. Christensen called for discussion on the article.

Andy Hunter (Mountain View Drive) asked if the School Board had a plan to build up this fund.

Mr. Shevenell explained that the School Board cannot build the fund up to more than 5% of the net assessment in any given year and could vote not to retain any funds and return the entire unassigned fund balance to the taxpayers.

Mr. Mower said he thought the article came about due to the Budget Committee's request that the School Board review upcoming capital needs and fund existing or create new Capital Reserve Funds.

Mr. Koenig said he was bothered that the fact that this fund seems open-ended and, even though the School Board had to hold a Public Hearing before spending the funds, the Board could spend the funds for anything it wanted.

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Brian Stisser (Middlesex Road) said this article does not raise the tax rate because the funds to be retained have already been raised by taxes. He said this article gives the School Board to opportunity to retain some funds for some unforeseen purpose.

Mrs. Barnes said that until recently, School Boards were not allowed to be the agents to expend this type of fund. She said this article allows the School Board to spend this fund for things that were unbudgeted and were needed by the District.

Mr. Shevenell said he doesn't expect this fund to be used for anything except emergencies.

There was no further discussion.

Mrs. Christensen declared Article 7 moved to the ballot and recognized Mr. Mower who read and moved Article 7. Second: Mr. Stisser

> **Article 8**
> **Shall the District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling $83,439,166? (Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be $83,174,461 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the District or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only)? (Majority vote required). Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: 11-0-0).**

Mr. Mower spoke to his motion by saying the proposed budget was nearly level funded budget, only 1.48% more than last year. He indicated the increases in the budget were mainly due to utilities and the costs associated with implementation of social-emotional learning and district wide co-curricular programming. He also said the Budget Committee had added a new purpose to the budget: demolition of the Brentwood Building should funds become available. He noted that the difference between the proposed budget and the default budget was less than $300,000.

There was no discussion.

Mrs. Christensen declared Article 8 moved to the ballot and called for a motion to adjourn.

Mrs. Hardy made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: Lon Woods (Arbor Street)

Mrs. Christensen reminded everyone to vote on April 12th and declared the meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

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Session 2: Ballot Voting
April 12, 2022

The Town Moderator and Assistant Moderators opened the polls at 7:00 AM. At 7:00 PM, the Moderators closed the polls and allowed those present to finish voting.

At 8:10 PM, after all results were tallied, School District Moderator Lynn Christensen announced that 2,411 voters had cast ballots with the following results:

School Board – three years, two seats

Jaimie von Schoen – 744 votes
Naomi Halter – 1,189 votes
Ken Martin – 1,320 votes
Jennifer McCormack – 1,033 votes

The Moderator declared Naomi Halter and Ken Martin elected.

Planning & Building Committee – three years, two seats

Shayne Albuquerque – 1,415 votes
Gage Perry – 1,516 votes

The Moderator declared Shayne Albuquerque and Gage Perry elected.

Budget Committee – three years, four seats

Carol J. Lang – 1,386 votes
Michelle Bronchuk – 1,430 votes
Lee French – 1,357 votes
Gina Groff – 1,367 votes

The Moderator declared Carol J. Lang, Michelle Bronchuk, Lee French and Gina Groff elected.

Budget Committee – one year, one seat

Rachel Paepke – 1,537 votes

The Moderator declared Rachel Paepke elected.

Moderator – three years, one seat

Brian McCarthy – 1,689 votes

The Moderator declared Brian McCarthy elected.

Clerk – three years, one seat

Patricia Heinrich – 1,662 votes

The Moderator declared Patricia Heinrich elected.

Treasurer – three years, one seat

Jennifer E. Heinrich – 1,642 votes

The Moderator declared Jennifer E. Heinrich elected.

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Article 2: Yes – 1,873 votes No – 333 votes.
The Moderator declared Article 2 passed.

Article 3: Yes – 1,661 votes No – 700 votes.
The Moderator declared Article 3 passed.

Article 4: Yes – 1,718 votes No – 625 votes.
The Moderator declared Article 4 passed.

Article 5: Yes – 1,529 votes No – 815 votes.
The Moderator declared Article 5 passed.

Article 6: Yes – 1,840 votes No – 507 votes.
The Moderator declared Article 6 passed.

Article 7: Yes – 1,484 votes No – 825 votes.
The Moderator declared Article 7 passed.

Article 8: Yes – 1,541 votes No – 789 votes.
The Moderator declared Article 8 passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Heinrich
School District Clerk