Remote Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Present: Chair Guagliumi, Vice Chair Barnes, Board Members Schneider, Rothhaus, and Hardy. Also present were Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio.

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Guagliumi called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Guagliumi led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Guidelines for Public Participation for Remote Meeting

Chair Guagliumi stated public comments could be sent to publiccomment@sau26.org or by going to sau26.org where a meeting link was provided. She said all comments would be read and written into the record but noted the name and address of the speaker had to be provided.

3. Public Participation

Vice Chair Barnes read the following e-mail into the record that was received on January 8, 2021, as summarized below:

Mr. John Calabro, 16 Hutchinson Road, Merrimack, NH.

As MYA (Merrimack Youth Association) President and school facilities contact I ask what is the current thinking regarding recreational sports for the kids this winter. Will the school gyms be available for the January 19, 2021, reopening? I certainly realize there are more pressing matters for your folks but providing a recreation network for the kids may be an important part of their physical and mental health. MYA's current plan is to start our winter sports (basketball, and wrestling) on Saturday, January 23rd using all of the COVID safety protocols (temperature checks, limited spectators, hand sanitizer, masks, etc.) Please consider and advise. Thank you.

4. Review of Temporary Emergency Policy

Board Member Schneider commented that the Board received a question regarding what the definition of "essential travel" was and add the state had loosened their definition of what "essential travel" was to include parents and students being able to take part in college visits.

Board Member Schneider said the New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services had changed their definition of "essential travel" which included travel for work, school, personal safety, medical care, care of others, parental shared custody, etc.

Board Member Schneider suggested that the policy be changed to allow the expanded definition of "essential travel" which would allow parents and students to take part in college visits. He added

"essential travel" for the purposes of the policy would defer to the definition as described in the state's Department of Health & Human Services travel guidance at:

https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/travel-guidance.pdf

Vice Chair Barnes asked if the administration was in agreement. Superintendent McLaughlin replied he felt it was a good suggestion and it did not put the District in any peril.

Superintendent McLaughlin pointed out he would like to remind people that there was currently an uptick of new cases related to COVID-19 and there was still a risk to the District if people traveled.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to change the travel policy to allow the expanded definition of "essential travel" which would allow parents and students to take part in college visits effective immediately.

Discussion:

Vice Chair Barnes suggested that the Board conditionally approve the motion but also put it on the next meeting's Consent Agenda because they had not yet received public input regarding the policy change. He added the proposed policy change would be available.

Board Member Schneider amended his motion (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to conditionally approve the emergency travel policy but that it would be placed on the next meeting's Consent Agenda because they had not yet received public input regarding the change. He added the proposed policy would be made available on the District's website and Facebook.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.

5. Review of the Proposed Warrant Articles

Articles as Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell read aloud the proposed Warrant follows:

1. A placeholder for the election of officials.

2. Shall the Merrimack School Board be authorized to accept on behalf of the District without further action by the voter's gifts, legacies, and devices of personal real property which may become available to the District during the fiscal year. (School Board Majority Vote.)

3. A placeholder regarding the negotiations between the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association, and the Merrimack School Board. (Majority vote of the School Board & the School District Budget Committee.)

4. A placeholder in case Article 3 failed to authorized the School Board to call a special meeting without first having to go to Superior Court to address the cost items in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

5. To raise and appropriate the sum of $450,000 for the purpose of purchasing computers for the Merrimack School District to support the educational goals of providing a device to each student. (Majority vote of the School Board & the School District Budget Committee)

6. To raise and appropriate the sum of $400,000 for the purpose of improving classroom ventilation with the purchase and installation of eleven unit ventilators and associated controls at the Merrimack High School. (Majority vote of the School Board & the School District Budget Committee)

7. A placeholder for the operating budget. (Majority vote of the School Board & the School District Budget Committee)

Board Member Schneider commented he was not sure Article 5 should remain on the Warrant due to the complexities of fund grants.

Vice Chair Barnes commented that she supported Warrant Article 5 and felt each child should have a device as a matter of educational equity.

Board Member Rothhaus commented she was in support of keeping Warrant Article 5 as she felt it was important to have but also thought it was important to have the community vote on it.

Chair Guagliumi commented her preference was to put the cost for the 1:1 devices in the operating budget.

6. Work Session for Discussion of the Proposed 2021 – 2022 Budget

Board Member Rothhaus commented she would like the job description of the 504 Coordinator to be expanded. Superintendent McLaughlin replied the number of 504 Plans had increased expeditiously over the past few years and added the 504 Coordinator already had a full plate.

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Vice Chair Barnes) to reduce the line item for water, sewer, gas, and oil for the Brentwood building from $23,000 to $11,500.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.

The School Board discussed the ventilation project. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated he would prepare and submit an amortization schedule for a lease/purchase agreement in the amount of $4 million with regard to the ventilation project.

7. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Vice Chair Barnes read aloud the following e-mails from members of the public as summarized below:

Mr. Andy Hunter, 15 Mountain View Drive

Is there a reason why these meetings are no longer on Facebook live? We struggle with attendance for these meetings and making access to these meetings could assist with public awareness. Please reconsider putting these meetings back on Facebook live. Thank you.

Ms. Sarah Hunter, 15 Mountain View Drive

As $176 million is coming from the state as education coded relief. Maybe you should wait and see what we get before adding a bunch of Warrant Articles. With COVID, food insecurities, businesses closing, and many families struggling, this is not the year to ask the taxpayers for more. Thank you, Andy Schneider, for speaking up.

At approximately 9:03 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes made a motion (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to go into a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c)

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.

At 10:14 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to go adjourn the public meeting.