Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack High School - Cafeteria
January 16, 2020

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1. Call to Order

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

Present: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Guagliumi, Board Members Nunez, Schoenfeld, and Schneider. Also in attendance were Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio, Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, and Student Representative Koroma.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Date for Deliberative Session

Chair Barnes stated that the Board checked with Ms. Lynn Christensen, School District Moderator, and the Deliberative Session would be held on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School APR (All Purpose Room) with a snow date of March 5th.

5. Discussion and Review of Proposed Articles

Superintendent McLaughlin explained at the last School Board meeting administration provided the Board with four options that included a variety of cuts in different categories. He further explained the Board provided the administration with some insight into the way they were thinking and also provided the administration with a number to shoot for.

Superintendent McLaughlin commented the Board had Option 5 which was a combination for the various options that were presented with the one exception of the vocational education transportation which was a Board recommendation. He further commented Option 5 brought the number to $270,436 below the default budget.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated the proposed cuts totaled $1,123,869 which was broken down as follows:

- Health Insurance - $450,000
- Window Replacement - $265,000
- Furniture Replacement Items at the James Mastricola Elementary School, the Reeds Ferry School, the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, the Merrimack Middle School, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, and the Merrimack High School. He pointed out they left enough money in the budget to furnish the two additional kindergarten classrooms. - $42,586
- Brentwood Demolition - $125,000
- Master Plan Study - $100,000
- Merrimack Middle School Drainage - $75,000
- The Charter School Bus - $41,000
- Reduced the amount of the Vocational Education Transportation - $150,000

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated the previous years' budget was $79,000,034 and if all of the proposed reductions indicated above were accepted the budget would be $79,993,977 which was a difference of $959,500 or a 1.21% increase.

Vice Chair Guagliumi commented she did not support removing the furniture from the budget and she felt it was important to be replaced. She noted that some of the furniture is greater than forty years old. Chair Barnes commented if the furniture was not removed the proposed budget would be $80,036,563.

Chair Barnes shared there were three options to consider regarding the Merrimack Middle School Drainage project:

Option #1 – Put in back into the Operating Budget
Option #2 – Pull it forth as a Warrant Article
Option #3 – Not to have it as a Warrant Article

Board Member Nunez commented she would like to see it go back into the budget.

Board Member Schoenfeld said, on the one hand, she felt they needed to save every penny possible for various reasons in which case, it would stay out. She further said, on the other hand, there was the prudence of doing what the District needed which was a grey space. She said on the face of it she felt it should be in but could change her mind depending on the extent to which the Board decided the goal had to be to absolutely minimize the budget.

Board Member Schneider said he felt it definitely had to be addressed but the question he had was whether it would be a Warrant Article or something put into the operating budget. He said he was leaning towards putting it in the operating budget.

Vice Chair Guagliumi said she felt it made the most sense to put it back into the operating budget.

Chair Barnes stated she felt it should be on a Warrant Article due to the fact that if the District had money to be diverted it needed to go towards more teachers in the classrooms due to the upcoming spike in population.

Chair Barnes commented that the will of the School Board seemed to be that the field drainage should be added to the operating budget and would bring the proposed budget to $80,111,563.

Chair Barnes asked the members of the Board what their thoughts were on Master Plan Redesign Study which would cost $100,000.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated Mr. Keach of Keach-Nordstrom would lead public forums and take public input. He said they could also do the design Charette which would provide input from other architects but he needed a professional to coordinate it. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell added that Mr. Keach had given him a number of $82,500. Further, he said the $100,000 could be moved out of the operating budget and the $82,500 could go on a Warrant Article.

Chair Barnes shared there were three options to consider regarding the Master Plan Redesign Study:

Option #1: - Operating Budget
Option #2: - Warrant Article
Option #3: - Removal

Board Member Nunez commented she would like to put the Master Plan Redesign Study on Warrant Article.

Board Member Schneider commented he felt one of the more important pieces of it, as written, was “engage the public in open community forums resulting in a selection of a comprehensive plan option.” He said his concern was if it was on a Warrant Article and it was defeated they would not have the ability to even request a smaller amount of money from the District.

Chair Barnes stated she was okay with putting it on a Warrant Article with an amount of $82,500.

Board Member Schneider commented as written, the Article stated: “Shall the District raise appropriate $82,500 for the purpose of preparing a Master Plan Study.” He suggested at the very beginning it be written as “For the purpose of after community forums outlining specific requirements the appropriation of a Master Plan” and remove the words “open community forums” at the end. He said his point was to make sure it was clear that the Master Plan would be undertaken once community input was received.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell agreed that the first step of the plan would be to engage the community to find out what the wants and needs were.

Chair Barnes moved on to the window replacements in the amount of $265,000 and the three options were as follows:

Option #1: - Operating Budget
Option #2: - Warrant Article
Option #3: - Put it off to a different year

Board Member Nunez, Board Member Schoenfeld, Board Member Schneider, and Vice Chair Guagliumi all stated they would like to put the item on a Warrant Article.

Chair Barnes said her preference was to skip it but she supported the will of the School Board.

Chair Barnes noted if everything was taken out of the furniture line item except for the two kindergarten classrooms that were needed the operating budget would be reduced by $42,586.

Board Member Nunez stated she felt some furniture should put some but was not sure of the dollar amount. She said she wondered if there were some pieces they could hold off on versus others which would bring the $42,586 down.

Board Member Schoenfeld commented she would like to the furniture restored in full.

Board Member Schneider said he felt the $42,586 should be cut in half and allow the administration determine what the priorities were.

Vice Chair Guagliumi and Chair Barnes commented that she too was in favor of the furniture being restored in full.

Chair Barnes asked what the School Board member’s thoughts were regarding the Brentwood building.

Board Member Nunez commented she felt the Brentwood building should be taken down.

Board Member Schoenfeld stated while she wanted to see the Brentwood building taken down, she suspected if they did spend the money on that they would not get a Master Plan.

Board Member Schneider felt they needed to do a Master Plan prior to taking the building down and did not support putting it back into the budget.

Vice Chair Guagliumi said she was not in favor of putting back into the operating budget.

Chair Barnes stated that she agreed with Board Member Schneider's thoughts on the matter and was not in favor of putting it back into the operating budget.

Chair Barnes said the remaining items were reductions for the charter school bus and vocational education transportation.

Board Member Nunez, Board Member Schoenfeld, Board Member Schneider, Vice Chair Guagliumi, and Chair Barnes all stated she would like to see both items removed and not included as a Warrant Article.

> **Article #1** – Election of Officers (School Board, School Planning and Building Committee, and the Budget Committee.) No vote required.
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> **Article #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 or real property which may become available to the District during the fiscal year. A majority vote would be required.

Chair Barnes asked if there were School Board members who had questions or comments.

Board Member Schoenfeld stated she felt the full meaning for Article #2 should be provided for the record.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated Article #2 authorized the School Board to accept gifts of real property, such as land.

Chair Barnes polled the School Board regarding Article #2 as written and the results were as follows:

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

Article #3 – Shall the District raise and appropriate the amount up to $150,000 said sum not-to-exceed 10% of the unencumbered surplus funds remaining at the end of fiscal year 2019 - 2020 and to transfer that amount to the School District repair capital reserve fund previously established for the purpose of providing unanticipated and/or emergency repairs to all School District facilities. A majority vote would be required.

Chair Barnes noted Article #3 would also be voted on by the School Budget Committee because an appropriation was involved.

Chair Barnes asked if there were School Board members who had questions or comments.

Board Member Schneider commented he was not in favor and added he felt $350,000 was an adequate amount of money to get them through the year.

Board Member Nunez replied in the affirmative but felt the number should be lowered to $50,000.

Board Member Schoenfeld commented she agreed with Article #3 as it was written.

Board Member Schneider stated he would support Article #3 if it was a lower amount.

Vice Chair Guagliumi commented she agreed with Article #3 as it was written.

Chair Barnes said she was really “on the fence” regarding the item.

Vice Chair Guagliumi stated she would rather either not put it on an Article at all and go for something with a greater dollar amount the following year which would decrease the number of Warrant Articles being asked for from the public or to just leave it at $150,000. Board Member Schoenfeld commented she agreed with Vice Chair Guagliumi.

Chair Barnes said she agreed with Article #3 as it was written.
Chair Barnes polled the School Board regarding Article #3 as written and the results were as follows:

The motion passed 4 – 1 – 0. Board Member Nunez voted in opposition.

Article #4 – Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of $265,000 for the purpose of window replacements at the Merrimack High School that were original to the 1970 addition and have crack seals and manual locking systems that are not operational. A majority vote would be required.

Chair Barnes noted Article #4 would also be voted on by the School Budget Committee because an appropriation was involved.

Chair Barnes explained that the School Board had already decided they wanted the item to be on a Warrant Article.

Chair Barnes polled the School Board regarding Article #4 as written and the results were as follows:

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

Article #5 – Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of $82,500 for the purpose of hiring an engineer to collaborate with the public in open community forums designed to develop a Master Plan Study to include a series of options for the use of Merrimack High School property and School District property along O'Gara Drive, focused on optimizing student and staff parking, promoting citizen safety, considering placement of office space, improving traffic flow, analyzing/optimizing field space resulting in the selection of a community-driven comprehensive plan for the reconfiguration/redesign of this site.

Chair Barnes noted Article #5 would also be voted on by the School Budget Committee because an appropriation was involved.

Chair Barnes polled the School Board regarding Article #5 as written and the results were as follows:

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

Article #6 – Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of $105,000 for the purpose of replacing the bleachers in the Smith Gym that were original to the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and were not ADA (American's with Disabilities Act) compliant. A majority vote would be required.

Chair Barnes noted Article #6 would also be voted on by the School Budget Committee because an appropriation was involved.

Chair Barnes polled the School Board regarding Article #6 as written and the results were as follows:

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

Article #9 – Shall the District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations of by special Warrant Articles and other appropriations voted separately the amount set forth on the budget posted with a Warrant or as amended by vote of the first session for the purposes set forth therein totaling $80,111.663.

Should this Article be defeated the operating budget shall be $80,264,413 which was the same as the previous year with certain adjustments required by previous actions of the District or by law or the governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA-40:13 §10 and §16 to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. A majority voted would be required.

Chair Barnes noted Article #9 would also be voted on by the School Budget Committee because an appropriation was involved.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

Restored to the Operating Budget - Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of $655,805 for the purpose of replacing the roofs at the James Mastricola Elementary School, and the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School.

Chair Barnes noted the roofs were past their warranty period and the new roofing system had a 40-year warranty. A majority voted would be required.

Restored to the Operating Budget - Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of $75,000 for the purpose of providing proper drainage for the upper field at the Merrimack Middle School in order to divert water from the surface of the field to allow the surface to be usable in the spring. A majority vote would be required.

6. Budget Discussion

Chair Barnes explained that the default budget was $270,436 below the default budget with the cuts proposed. Chair Barnes further explained two areas were restored; the drainage at the Merrimack Middle School for $75,000 and furniture replacement at $42,586 which totaled $117,586. Chair Barnes stated the number still remained $152,850 below the default budget.

Chair Barnes stated the current proposed budget was $80,111,563.

Board Member Schneider mentioned that the previous year the Bedford School Board, which the Merrimack School District was frequently compared to, made a decision to take the guaranteed maximum rate for healthcare and reduce it by 1% which would save the District $100,000. The School Board collectively felt it was not a good idea.

Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Vice Chair Guagliumi) to put forth an operating budget in the amount of $80,111,563 for 2020 – 2021.

The motion passed 5 – 0 - 0.

7. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Mr. Scott Adler, 3 Deerwood Drive, addressed the School Board and thanked them for all of their work during the budget session.

Adjournment

At 9:41 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to adjourn.

The motion passed 5– 0 – 0.