Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District
School Administrative Unit #26
Tuesday, January 8, 2018
Merrimack Town Hall-Memorial Room

Present: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider, Board Members Guagliumi, Thompson and Schoenfeld, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

Student Representative Puzzo was excused from the meeting.

1. Call to Order

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Budget Presentations

- **James Mastricola Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School**

Chair Barnes invited Elementary Principals and Assistant Principals Michelle Romein, Alisha Hansen-Proulx, Kimberly Yarlott, Rachel Schneider, Bridey Bellemare, and Julie DeLuca to the table.

Principal Yarlott provided an overview of the proposed 2018-2019 school budgets. The budget continues to reflect priorities outlined in the district logic model by maintaining progress in the areas of literacy, numeracy, technology, and school climate. The budget also reflects the need to be fiscally responsible and to strive for minimal budgetary implications. Common to all three budgets are the furniture replacement account, the math text amount, and to ensure that all professional staff have access to their own materials for the purpose of differentiated instruction kindergarten through grade four.

Principal Yarlott then responded to pre-submitted questions from board members.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in regards to furniture replacements: “TFS talks about adjustable desks/chairs and the others do not. What is the difference in quality? Would the other schools benefit from adjustable units if not in use already?”

Principal Yarlott responded that all three schools use the same vendor and all of the chairs are adjustable.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to musical texts: "This is the first time I've seen music texts budgeted, and I'm just curious as to what the music area is that this will cover."

Principal Yarlott responded that James Mastricola Elementary School has not accessed this text account in the past and the current music teacher seeks to access this line item for texts that support the curriculum, the musical and concerts. This was a matter of teacher preference.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if these have been used in the past in a different account.

James Mastricola Elementary School Principal Michelle Romein responded that the funds previously came from parent funding and that there is also the addition of the bells program to the curriculum.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to reading texts: "This area has a (relative) noticeable increase over the other schools' budget item. Can you provide additional details as to what items are being added?"

Principal Yarlott responded that the figure used was intended for a full-day kindergarten program and asked that it be amended from $21,054.00 to $18,614.00.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to multi-year furniture at James Mastricola Elementary School: "Please describe where we stand on any multi-year furniture replacement plans."

Principal Yarlott responded that there have been adjustments to this plan due to deferments over the past few years. The schools have decided as a group to prioritize the replacement of student desks and chairs. This will be achieved under the existing plan which expires in two years. Another five-year account will be created in two years.

Board Member Schoenfeld had submitted a question in regards to the gifted and talented program: "How many students are served by the Gifted and Talented program? Is this funding level sufficient to provide meaningful enrichment and differentiation? (I'm submitting this as a question for each elementary school, but please don't hesitate to answer together if it makes sense to do so.)"

Principal Yarlott responded that in Tier 3 there are thirteen students at MES, twelve students at TFS, and six at RFS. In Tier 2 there are about twelve to twenty-two in each school, and in Tier 1 the whole school climate is considered and enrichment activities include the New Hampshire Historical Society, Owl Presentation, and Invention Convention.

Principal Yarlott thanked the board for the pre-submitted questions.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked if the funding was sufficient for the gifted and talented program.

Principal Yarlott responded that the funding is sufficient as the teachers are able to access all of the classroom materials, technology devices, STEM and makerspace areas and the library.

Chair Barnes thanked the administrators for their hard work.

- **Merrimack Middle School**

Chair Barnes invited Merrimack Middle School Principal Adam Carragher and Assistant Principal Shawna D'Amour to the table.

Principal Carragher began by stating that the 2018-2019 proposed budget is in line with the district logic model by maintaining progress in the areas of literacy, numeracy, technology, and school climate and safety. It also reflects the adoption of the new eighth grade algebra program and the continued support of the newly implemented math curriculum.

Additional highlights include the final implementation of a five year plan to replace worn out lab and art room stools, replacement of one cafeteria table, and an additional six bookshelves for support materials in the language arts classrooms. There is also a request for transportation for a seventh grade science field trip and an eighth grade social studies field trip.

Principal Carragher then responded to board members' pre-submitted questions.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to math textbooks: "This is the second year of math texts based on the new math curriculum. Is this the final year of the update of the math text, or will there be additional years' of budget in this area to upgrade the textbooks?"

Board Member Guagliumi had also submitted a question in regards to the math text account: "Please tell me more about the budgeted amount. Did we only purchase some of the texts this year and need to purchase more? Will this now be an ongoing expense, i.e. subscription-based?"

Principal Carragher responded to both questions. He stated that while the school is in the first year of the Envisions Math program, in that the math curriculum component for grade eight has yet to be adopted and additional special education and other support materials are still needed.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if the budget will decrease after this cycle and was told yes.

Board Member Guagliumi asked Chair Barnes if the Math Curriculum Committee could address the board later in the year.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to the social studies textbooks: "Can you provide some details as to the refresh referenced? Are these replacement of existing texts, or new texts based on updated needs?"

Board Member Guagliumi had also submitted a question in regards to social studies textbooks: "Please tell me more about this budgeted amount. Is this for supplemental materials? I notice it's either a new line item or hadn't recently had any budget amounts over the last couple of years."

Principal Carragher responded to both questions. He stated that the current texts for the Ancient History curriculum have a copyright date of 2007 and most of the need is for re-binding and occasional replacement.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to furniture replacement: "This five-year completion is more than double last year's amount – is this due to previous cuts and trying to adhere to a five-year plan? Can we cut by half and extend to an additional year? Looking for details as to what is critical vs. what can be deferred."

Board Member Guagliumi had also submitted a question in regards to furniture replacement: "Just confirming this is year two of five and did we make any cuts to this last year? Just trying to figure out why it's almost double this year compared to last year."

Principal Carragher responded to both questions. The school is in the final year of a five-year plan of replacing the different lab stools throughout the building. A decision was made to begin to include the replacement of cafeteria tables and book shelves; upon advice from the Director of Facilities.

Vice Chair Schneider questioned the intermingling into an existing five-year plan.

Chair Barnes asked for a segregated list of items on the five-year plan versus the incremental replacement items.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to the FACS refrigerator: "Just confirming this is year two of five and did we make any cuts to this last year? Just trying to figure out why it's almost double this year compared to last year."

Principal Carragher responded that the Family and Consumer Science refrigerator has been in use for over eight years, the handle is broken, and it is highly used.

Vice Chair Schneider asked Merrimack High School Principal Johnson if the life of the high school refrigerator is the same.

Principal Johnson responded that similar things have been replaced at the high school.

Chair Shannon Barnes had submitted a question in regards to a field trip to Squam Lake: "Does it replace Camp Sargent? Will there be highly priced trips there as well?

Vice Chair Schneider had also submitted a question in regards to field trips: "My expectation is that these are existing field trips that are now being entered into the budget, based on last year's

discussion about them being fully-funded by students previously, correct? And if so, is this 100 percent of the funding required, or something that has student contribution as an assumption?"

Assistant Principal D'Amour responded that the seventh grade field trip to Squam Lake replaces the Camp Sargent field trip. It ties into the life science curriculum and costs $15 per student prior to transportation. The eighth grade trip to Lowell Mills directly correlates to the Industrial Revolution component of the social studies curriculum. The school finds various outlets to assist students unable to pay. The entire transportation cost is reflected in the budget item.

Chair Barnes asked if the Squam Lake trip replaces the Mi-Ti-Na and Camp Sargent trips and was told yes.

- **Merrimack High School**

Chair Barnes invited Principal Johnson, and Assistant Principals Bergeron and Zampieri to the table.

Principal Johnson opened with introductory remarks. He pointed out that many areas of the budget are reduced or level-funded. There are proposed increases in the areas of new texts and additional equipment in several departments designed to add to and enhance programs. Marginal increases in various supply accounts are attributed to higher costs for basic supplies.

In regards to new texts, there are requests for new math texts and support materials for algebra one and two and geometry one. These align with the new district math curriculum. The business department is requesting new accounting texts that align with the National Academy of Finance Standards and the Southern New Hampshire University for two dual enrollment classes.

In regards to new equipment, there are requests from the technical education department for an engine start cart and an engine repair trainer to support the automotive program. The art department is requesting one large format color printer to be used by both the technology education and art classes also in support of the curriculum.

Principal Johnson then responded to board members pre-submitted questions.

Chair Barnes had submitted the question: "Section 8300: The page with NHIAA officials costed out is page 27? If corrected it will throw off the rest of the MHS budget book."

Principal Johnson responded that this was just a pagination issue and should be seen as page three.

Chair Barnes had submitted the question: "Why is NHIAA Membership folded under Co-Curricular Membership/Fees? How much of the total is it?"

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded the NHIAA membership has always been placed here and the cost is $6,250.00. There is no separate membership line for athletics.

Chair Barnes noted the board's interest in costing out the parity between the athletic teams and the co-curricular academic teams and competitions.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to the print shop: "What are the details behind the significant increase in upkeep of the District Print Shop equipment? Will this be ongoing?

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that the increase is comparable to past budgets and will be ongoing.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to science transportation: "My expectation is that these are existing field trips that are now being entered into the budget, based on last year's discussion about them being fully funded by students previously, correct? And if so, is this 100% of the funding required, or something that has student contribution as an assumption?"

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that these are new field trips designed for new inter-disciplinary course Project Earth. This budget item is to fund the transportation of the three trips and students will be responsible for the entry fees to the museum.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question on business text books: "Can you provide more information on the standards that are requiring the updated texts? In the case of the dual-enrollment program with SNHU are these text books ones that would normally be used in MHS, or are they special ones specifically for SNHU? If specific to the dual-enrollment, any reason why students are not contributing? (if they already aren't)"

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that the current accounting texts are eighteen years old and are not specific to the dual enrollment program. Students who are in the dual enrollment program will pay toward that program.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question on business math text books: "Will this be a one-year rollout for the next text books for the updated math curriculum, or will this be a multi-year process (similar to MMS)? Any idea of the future cost (range, not specifics)."

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that this is a one-year purchase for multiple sections of three courses. In continuing years new site licenses may need to be purchased.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to technical education: "The two items (Engine Start Cart and Engine Repair Trainer) are significant cost items. Is this the start of a multi-year plan to bring in higher cost items to enhance the mechanics curriculum at MHS? Would be good to talk about the overall program direction, and the impacts to ongoing costs to the district…"

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that the engine repair trainer would complement three items donated this year and would complete a class set so that teams of three students could work simultaneously.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if the intent is to build out the automotive infrastructure as opposed to moving toward a collaborative arrangement with Manchester Community College.

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that as long as there are student requests and enrollments the program will be maintained and equipment added and replaced as needed. The previous instructor taught for about forty years and the program is now in flux. There is a new instructor and the program is expected to stay in place.

Board Member Thompson noted that the Manchester Community College program was designed for its graduates to be work-force ready. He would like to have this option investigated for the high school.

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that this would require a discussion of the high school administration as to if this is a direction they would like to pursue. This would require long-term planning.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that the automotive and math programs will be addressed during the quarterly curriculum review.

Chair Barnes commented that a collaboration with Manchester Community College could be pursued at a later time. She noted that their equipment was provided by automotive manufacturers and that a clean driver's record was a requirement of participating in their program.

Assistant Principal Zampieri added that they have already reached out to continue the relationship with Manchester Community College.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to equipment replacement: "Can you provide more details on the "chairs for volleyball"? What is the requirement here?" Does the spirit mat replace something existing, or is it something new? Related to competition? More details helpful.

Assistant Principal Bergeron supplied handouts to the board that displayed a picture and information on a dedicated athletic chair. The chairs can be used across multiple disciplines.

The existing spirit mat is over nine years old and is transported between different buildings for pep rallies and competitions. This mat cannot be re-conditioned and has begun to show wear.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to the 504 coordinator at the high school: "Curious why this doesn't show up in the Student Services budget? This may be a question for Matt."

Principal Johnson responded that this item is shown in the regular education side of the budget.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to athletics: "Can you tell me more about the helmet and shoulder pad repair process? $12,300 seems like a lot of money for repairs in comparison to the cost of $2,000 to replace up to 15% of new helmets that fail repair and conditioning (page 16). I am not questioning the need for safety by any means, nor would I suggest skimping on safety. I just want to understand the costs associated. In addition, there's also another line item Athletics/Equip/Repl/MHS (Page 25) for $18,500 of which part of that cost is explained as "to replace twenty football helmets and fifteen shoulder pads which are beyond repair or reconditioning …." I'm wondering if there's some duplication in the budget for the helmets. Can you please explain?"

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded with a review of the budgets for athletic equipment repairs, athletic supplies, and athletic equipment replacement.

The athletic equipment repairs line item account covers repairs such as helmet and shoulder pad sanitization, re-conditioning and re-certification.

The athletic supplies line item account covers all consumables such as practice game balls, scorebooks, entry fees, and ice rental, swimming pool rental, and field space rental. Sometime helmets are beyond repair and this accounts for the $2,000.00 budgeting.

The athletic equipment replacement line item account covers the need for new football helmets and shoulder pads that cannot be re-certified and need to be replaced.

Board Member Guagliumi asked for further clarification on the helmet replacement.

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that every year there will be a certain percentage of items to be replaced and this is a known quantity. Unexpected replacements occur throughout the year.

Board Member Thompson asked why the replacement costs aren't in the same budget item. He suggested a wording change in the line item.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to student transportation to out-of-district schools for career technical education programs: "Is the increase based on how we are tracking in the current year budget or due to contractual increases?"

Principal Johnson responded that this is a contractual increase of 3.5%.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to athletic transportation: "How do we handle home games in places that are not in Merrimack, i.e. Global Premier Soccer (GPS) fields in Bedford or home hockey games etc. Is transportation provided to these places, or intended to be provided?

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that student athletes are responsible for getting themselves to home games even when home games are not played in Merrimack. Transportation is provided for away games. Freshmen and some sophomore games played at Reeds Ferry

Elementary School allow for the district to provide for student transportation on the second wave of busses.

Vice Chair Schneider questioned why only away transportation is provided in situations when the away and the home facility is the same.

Board Member Thompson stated that the facility location should be taken into consideration when transportation is considered. He expressed concern over liability issues of student safety.

Principal Johnson commented that this situation applies to several sports at the high school, such as hockey, swimming, soccer and lacrosse.

Chair Barnes suggested that this might be a future agenda item.

Assistant Principal Bergeron suggested inquiring as to how other districts address this situation.

Vice Chair Schneider suggested a break-out session after the budget season to address transportation options and liabilities.

Board Members Guagliumi and Thompson would prefer to address the issue before the end of the budget season.

Chair Barnes thought to have the high school athletic director reach out to gather information from area school districts and to also reach out to the town legal counsel for advice.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to gifted and talented transportation: "Please tell us more about this line item. (Note for SB and Administration can we come back to this at another time… Can we please, please, please consider calling this district-wide something other than "Gifted and Talented" and make it more focused on the services that are offered rather than a student label, i.e. enriched or accelerated learning or something other? Many children not in this program are also gifted and talented, but in different ways. A pet peeve of mine, sorry)."

Superintendent Chiafery responded that after conferring with Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin they agreed to address this further after the budget session. The title is there for a purpose.

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that in the past this account has been utilized to fund trips to Museums of Science and Fine Arts, Women's History Walking Tour of the Boston Statehouse, Freedom Trail in Boston, Currier Museum in Manchester, Hood Museum of Art in Dartmouth, New Hampshire National History Day in Plymouth and Washington D.C.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to co-curricular supplies: "Please tell us more about the new clubs, additional supplies needed and awards."

Assistant Principal Bergeron supplied handouts to board members that sorted the various groups into four categories; Service Clubs, Clubs that Compete, All Other Clubs, and New Clubs.

The new clubs are computer building club, creative writing club, film study club, intramural table tennis, sci-fi club, and strong women/strong girls club.

Chair Barnes questioned the inclusion of Marching Band under clubs that compete. She noted that students receive a grade in this class. Students must compete in the Salem Band Show but there are other band opportunities such as the festivals. She did not think that this should be using co-curricular funds since it is not completely voluntary.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to additional tech education equipment: "Please tell us more about this new item."

Assistant Principal Zampieri noted his previous response about creating a complete set for class instruction.

Board Member Thompson had submitted a question in regards to software and licensing for new math texts: "Please explain what the site license includes."

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that student population fluctuations have been taken into account.

Board Member Thompson had submitted a question in regards to the chairs for volleyball: "Are there particular chairs that are needed for volleyball?" He asked for a verbiage change in regards to a more generic label.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the budget committee can address this when they meet as they have already received their budget books. The change can be made to the on-line version of the budget and the date of the change noted.

Chair Barnes thanked the high school administrators for their responses.

- **District**

Superintendent Chiafery opened by asking board members to note that the majority of the budget is level-funded.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell addressed board members previously submitted questions.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to long-term disability: "The 2016-17 actuals are much high than budgeted, and the 2018-19 budgeted are at that level. Can you provide details as to why this is significantly high than previous years?"

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the last two years saw higher than anticipated claims and this created a spike in the rate. The rate cap is 10%.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to the bus contract: "What year is this of the overall contract. Is there opportunity to look at route and/or bus size optimization during the contract period to help manage the costs? (understanding the contract with automatic 3.5% bumps each year)"

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded this is the regular education transportation account with STA. The district re-negotiated the contract in 2016-2017 for five years. Over the five years the rate will grow from zero to 3.5%.

Many of the routes are very lengthy and this has been an area of concern to many parents. STA is currently looking at route management software.

Board Member Thompson asked if there are state standards on how long children can be on a bus.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the time limit is one hour and a half.

Additional state standards are that transportation stops do not need to be closer than one mile from a student's home and that the district does not need to offer transportation to those living less than two miles from school. Merrimack does not adhere to these standards.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted a question in regards to insurance liability: "This is about a 10% increase over previous periods. What has changed to result in this sizable increase?"

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that this is where we are with the Primex rate cap.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in regards to health insurance: "Comment: Just to put the cost of health insurance (excluding dental) for the district into perspective, if my calculation is correct, it's 15% of the overall proposed budget.

Comment: Thank you for including the last payment information on the debt line items on page 9. As of right now, we are tracking to be debt free by the 2023-2024 budget year, which is seven years from now. I realize things may change in upcoming budget years, but I really appreciate that information.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the cost of health insurance has grown significantly. The Health Care Cost Containment Committee has worked diligently to keep these increases on the conservative side.

5. Budget Discussion

Chair Barnes asked if there were any further questions from board members.

The next agenda will address possible warrant articles.

The hearing on January 16th will look to put the budget to a vote.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that at the January 9th hearing she expects to try to come before the board with some tiering of potential cuts. The last date for the school board to vote on the budget is February 5th.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if there was enough time to address the issue of transportation liability before the next school board meeting.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she will contact the town attorney and see if this is possible.

Superintendent Chiafery noted that one of the warrant articles is in regards to full-day kindergarten. The formal presentation will be given at the January 16th meeting to address questions that have arisen since their last presentation.

Board Member Thompson asked if the administration could calculate the contractual increases that impact the budget for the current year so that taxpayers can see the impact.

6. Public Participation on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

7. Manifest

The board signed the manifest.

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to enter non-public session per RSA 91-A: 3, II (a)(b)(c) at 8:38 p.m.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 5-0-0.

At 9:21 p.m. Board member Schoenfeld moved (seconded by Board member Guagliumi) to adjourn.

The motion passed 5-0-0.