Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
May 20, 2024

Present: Ms. Lori Peters, Chair; Ms. Jenna Hardy, Vice-Chair; Ms. Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member; Mr. Ken Martin, Board Member; and Ms. Naomi Halter, Board Member.

Also present were Mr. Everett Olsen, Chief Educational Officer; Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business; Ms. Amy Doyle, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum; and Student Representative Chase Rheault.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Chair Peters called the public hearing to order.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

3. RECOGNITIONS

Chief Educational Officer Olsen awarded certificates of recognition to the following students for their participation and their win in the Granite State Challenge:

Liam Clark
Avis Clever, Alternate
Trey Grant
Erin Murray Shelby Pennington, Alternate
Kishan Sreenivasa, Captain

Coach: Dr. Sara Campbell
Assistant Coach: Sally Agel

Kishan Sreenivasa, the Captain of the team, thanked Coach Campbell and Assistant Coach Agel for all of their help and guidance.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that the Merrimack High School woodworking class had participated for the second time and hosted a collaboration of the Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers. He said they made wig stands for cancer patients and they were put to a wonderful use.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that the Reeds Ferry School House #3 had been added to the National School Registry, as was mentioned in the *Nashua Telegraph*. He said the school dated back to the 1800's, built in approximately 1845.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the last day of school was June 14th.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that the previous Friday there was an early release which provided the staff with the opportunity to have training surrounding suicide prevention.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell explained the district's federal audit regarding the Entitlement Funds had occurred the prior week.

d. School Board Update

Chair Peters congratulated the Granite State Challenge Team. She said the NHSBA (New Hampshire School Board's Association) had a call for Resolutions with a deadline of August 2nd. She added that it was an opportunity for the Board to draft any resolutions or raise any concerns, and at future meetings they would discuss the existing Resolutions that would be up for a vote on October 19th.

Chair Peters said she looked forward to the Goals Meeting in June and noted they were looking at other facilitators other than Primex as they were moving away from goal setting.

Chair Peters stated that she had been working with Mackenzie Murphy, the Acting Chair of the Budget Committee, as well as the new Chair of the Building & Planning Committee, Shayne Albuquerque, to partner with them for the next year to obtain a more cooperative effort on the Budget and Infrastructure needs.

Chair Peters stated that Memorial Day was a time to acknowledge those who had unselfishly lost their lives in war.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Rheault noted the following:

- Senior Service Day was held on May 20th.
- The MHS Concert Band, Jazz Band, & Chorus concert was held the previous week.
- The NHS (National Honor Society) participated in the annual watching of the Red Sox game.
- The MHS Seniors would participate in an annual Teddy Bear picnic on May 21st. The seniors would visit the elementary schools in Merrimack.
- The Student Council held the Junior Class Prom.
- Student Representative Rheault reviewed multiple sports-related activities to occur prior to the end of the year.
- MHS would participate in the "Mock Crash Demonstration" to occur the following Thursday.
- 3rd Annual Field Day for MHS on Thursday.
- Top Ten Scholars Dinner for MHS hosted by the Merrimack Rotary Club.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Strategic Plan Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they were making very good progress on the Strategic Plan, noting that part of it was already constructed and they anticipated having their final meeting on May 29th and would present to the Board sometime in June. He said they had drafted strategic initiatives in six areas:

- Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
- Facilities
- Cultural Wellness
- Family & Community Engagement
- Vision of a Learner
- Vision of a Graduate

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Request from a Scout to Build a Gaga Ball Pit at Reeds Ferry Elementary School

Leenie Haddad, a Life Scout from Troop 15G of Merrimack, part of Scouts BSA, and former Reeds Ferry Elementary School student. Mr. Kevin Rotchford, a Committee Member for Troop 15G was present as an Eagle Advisor to Leenie.

Leenie stated that her proposed project was to put in a new Gaga Ball Pit for the students at the Reeds Ferry Elementary School on the North playground. She said the ground material would originally be sand but could be refilled with the same safety fiber as the rest of the playground when needed. She also noted that the pit would be handicapped accessible.

Leenie said she hoped to pay for it through fundraisers and she estimated the cost to be $1,675.00. She said her ideal start date would be June 14th and her ideal finish date was July 14th.

b. Presentation by Merrimack Village District Regarding Low Salt Use on Continental Boulevard

Mr. Jamie Emery addressed the Board and said the Merrimack Village District was in a position where salt use had been a major problem for the drinking water supplies. He said the bottom line was the salt use in Merrimack had to be reduced. He explained that Merrimack was served by a series of wells and was strictly groundwater.

Mr. Emery said the area they were focusing on was on the Naticook Brook Aquafer. He said the area he was referring to was where one of the school properties existed and was straddling the wellhead protection area. He said every water drop that fell inside the area ultimately went into the wells and the drinking water that was consumed. He said the sodium and chloride had increased exponentially. He said one of the key mitigation measures would

be to use brine, which was a liquid measure of salt, which used approximately 80% less salt than rock salt. He said they needed to get away from de-icing. He added that he felt they needed to prevent the ice from forming rather than letting the ice form and trying to melt it with salt.

Mr. Emery said he was present to request that the Board sign an agreement with New Hampshire Department of Transportation to use limited salt at the interchange of Continental Boulevard and Industrial Drive as discussed with the Town Council and the School Board.

c. Discussion to Improve Communication

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the issue of improving communication was being addressed in the Strategic Plan. He asked if the Board felt the district should hire someone to address the issue or if perhaps contracting the services would be best.

The School Board collectively felt that hiring a full-time, dedicated person to manage communications on behalf of the district was very important.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that he would speak with the leadership team to see how they would like to see enhanced communications and an enhanced website.

d. Expectation for Field Preparations

Mr. Tom Touseau, Director of Maintenance & Facilities, addressed the Board and said there were seven fields in the district, although some of them overlapped, which consisted of approximately 22 acres. He said 2.5 employees were dedicated to grounds, although they did not always have 2.5 people available to work.

Mr. Touseau said hiring outside contractors could save a great deal of time doing such things as "laying out the fields."

Board Member Rothhaus noted that the "Field Study" was over ten years old. She added that she felt it would be great if the town could have some of their employees help get the fields ready.

e. Memo of Agreement between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association Regarding Reduction in Force

Chief Educational Officer Olsen explained that the memo was an agreement that would essentially protect a long-time employee whose assignment was being changed.

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to accept the Memo of Agreement between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association regarding Reduction in Force. Board Member Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

f. Other

Chair Peters commented that the Board would be moving forward with consolidating the evaluation for the Superintendent.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- April 1, 2024 – Non-Public Minutes
- April 15, 2024 – Public and Non-Public Minutes
- April 18, 2024 – Public Special Minutes

Edit: Line 15 – "Chair Martin" was changed to "Chair Peters" (Halter)

MOTION: Chair Peters made a motion to accept the minutes from the April 1, 2024, non-public meeting, the April 15, 2024, public and non-public meetings, and the April 18, 2024, public special meeting, as amended. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Resignations

○ Jennifer Ruscito, Special Education Coordinator	Merrimack Middle School	
○ Megan Shevenell, School Counselor	Reeds Ferry Elementary	
○ Debi Rapson, Technology Education Teacher	Merrimack Middle School	
○ Hannah Greene, Elementary Classroom Teacher	JMUES	
○ Kaitlin Soucy, Special Education Teacher	Thorntons Ferry Elementary	

b. Teacher Nominations

○ Michael Smith, School Counselor	Merrimack Middle School	
○ Jennifer Labonte, Social Studies Teacher	Merrimack Middle School	
○ Gena Richards, Technology Education Teacher	Merrimack Middle School	
○ Kathleen Hilliard, Special Education Teacher	Merrimack Middle School	
○ Amy Bergquist, Special Education Teacher	JMES	

b. Educator and Administrator Nominations for School Year 2024 – 2025

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle reviewed the document with the School Board.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, as presented. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

9. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

There were none.

b. Correspondence

Board Member Rothhaus commented that she received one communication regarding an NHIAA question.

Chair Peters commented that she received correspondence regarding the fields and one question about graduation.

Vice-Chair Hardy commented that she had received multiple questions regarding graduation.

c. Comments

Board Member Rothhaus commented that she was very grateful to have Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell's institutional knowledge at the meetings as he could remember things going back to the 1970s, which proved to be very helpful.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Shannon Rand, 1 Blair Road, addressed the Board and suggested that the Merrimack Booster Club invite the school for a clean-up day and help to get fields ready. Regarding the communications position, she suggested reaching out to area colleges to see if there were students who could do internships in lieu of contracting positions out of the district.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 7:46 p.m., Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.