Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
January 29, 2024

Present: Chair Ken Martin, Vice-Chair Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member Lori Peters, Board Member Jenna Hardy, and Board Member Naomi Halter. Also present were Assistant Superintendent for Business Matt Shevenell, and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Amy Doyle.

Not Present: Chief Education Officer Everett Olsen (Excused)

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Martin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

3. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

There was no update to share.

b. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that the district's last full professional development day of the school day was held the previous Friday, in which they provided differentiated learning opportunities for the staff. She said there was training from Envisions regarding the updated math program from K – 6, i-Ready training for all teachers in K – 8, and NHLI (New Hampshire Learning Initiative) was on hand to provide some support as the work at the middle school and high school surrounding PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) and competencies continued. She further said that school counselors, SEL (Social Emotional Learning) specialists, homeschool liaisons, and nurses received some training from the Greater Nashua Mental Health and the DOE (Department of Education.) Additionally, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that the Unified Arts Teachers had met to discuss their curriculum in Eduplanet and to have some K – 6 collaboration time; the Title I team had training from "Do the Math," which was a math intervention program that they would be using at the three elementary schools as well as the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. She said the paraprofessionals received training on proactive training strategies from the 3 2 1 IMPACT program, and they also spent some time with the new Assistant Director for Student Services, Ms. Bridget Pare. She noted that the next professional development day would be held on March 29th, which was a day that would have a two-hour early release.

c. Assistant Superintendent of Business

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that he had applied for a SAFE (Student Awareness of Fire Education) grant, and the Merrimack School District was awarded $300,000, but they had not actually received the money yet, so he had not purchased any locksets or security

cameras. He said the money should be signed off on by the Governor and the Executive Council by the end of February.

d. School Board Update

Chair Martin stated that Student Representative Evidente had stepped down from his position due to time constraints. He said he would contact Mr. Claire, the Principal of Merrimack High School, and let him know there was a vacancy.

4. OLD BUSINESS

a. Board's Response to the 2024 – 2025 Budget

Chair Martin commented that he felt the two really big items in the proposed budget were the MESSA (Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association) contract and the new SAU building. He shared that he had some concerns with where the budget currently stood and said he would like to find some areas where they could scale the budget back.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the proposed budget was currently at $94,296,497, which was approximately 3.92% over the previous year's budget. He said the default budget was $91,301,349.

Board Member Peters commented that she felt the leadership team should decide what amendments should be made to the budget.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to decrease the proposed budget by $1 million from $94,296,497 to $93,296,497 and to allow the administration to decide what items would be deleted. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Board Member Hardy stated that she felt it was very important to pass the MESSA contract and to pass the proposed new SAU building. She added that she felt it was important to improve educational outcomes.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Board Member Halter commented that she agreed that it was most important to provide safe spaces for the district's employees, fair compensation for staff, and a curriculum that improves student outcomes.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus stated that she agreed with her colleagues' comments and the suggested budget cut. She said the Board was listening to the community and did not want to lose the trust that had already been built.

b. High School Football Field Scoreboard

Chair Martin noted that the School Board had said that they would consider supplementing some of the cost if they needed a little push to get it over the line so they could afford their plan for a new scoreboard. He pointed out that there was never a plan to provide the organization with a blank check to pay for the scoreboard.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that he had been in conversations with Mr. Sean Powers, who had attended a School Board meeting and laid out a plan for installing a new, high-tech scoreboard. He said it would take some time to gather the money for it, and in the meantime, the district needed a functional scoreboard. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated if the district could take $45,000 from the $500,000 in retained surplus, they could buy a replacement scoreboard that would be functional, and in the future, they could move that scoreboard to a different location and integrate the higher tech solution.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that she appreciated that it was the best they could do at the time.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus moved to approve $45,000, to come from retained surplus, to replace the high school scoreboard. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

5. NEW BUSINESS

a. Board's Vote on the 2024 Warrant Articles:

1. To Elect all Necessary School District Officers for the Ensuing Year. (Vote by Ballot.)

2. Construction and Original Equipping of a new Central Office Building. ($6,900,000)

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to accept Article 2, as presented. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Board Member Hardy stated that she would present Warrant Article 2 at the deliberative session. Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she would second it.

3. Shall the Merrimack School Board be Authorized to Accept Gifts, Legacies, and Devises of Personal or Real Property.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to accept Article 3, as presented. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Chair Martin stated that he would present Warrant Article 3 at the deliberative session. Board Member Halter said she would second it.

4. Collective Bargaining Agreement for MESSA (Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association)

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to accept Article 4, with a "to be determined amount," Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Board Member Peters noted that she would present Warrant Article 4 at the deliberative session. Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she would second it.

5. Shall the District, if Article 4 is Defeated, Authorize the School Board to Call a Special Meeting, at its option, to address Article 4 Cost Items Only.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to accept Article 5, as presented. Chair Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus stated that she would present Warrant Article 5 at the deliberative session. Chair Martin said he would second it.

6. Roof Replacement at the James Mastricola Elementary School and the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. ($797,000)

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to accept Article 6, as presented. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Board Member Halter stated that she would present Warrant Article 6 at the deliberative session. Board Member Peters said she would second the motion.

7. Shall the District Raise and Appropriate as an Operating Budget. ($93,296,497)

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to accept the proposed Operating Budget in the amount of $93,296,497. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

The Budget Committee will present Warrant Article 7, pertaining to the Operating Budget, at the deliberative session.

b. Review of 2010 Merrimack Athletic Fields Plan

Chair Martin explained that the information in the board's packet was informational. He said there was currently no intention to perform any work but rather to review what had been done with the athletic fields in the past, what the current needs were, and what could be changed.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. January 2, 2024, Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the public minutes from the January 2, 2024, meeting. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. January 8, 2024, Public and Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the public and non-public minutes from the January 8, 2024, meeting. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

c. January 22, 2024, Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the public minutes from the January 22, 2024, meeting. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Peters)

7. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Resignation

- Mr. James Harvell, Science Teacher, Merrimack High School

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

8. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that the joint Planning and Building Committee and School Board meeting had been held, and she appreciated the feedback from Ad Hoc members. She said she felt it was a really productive meeting.

Board Member Halter said that she had attended many Budget Committee meetings over the past month. She added that in some cases, they actually visited the facility to see it and speak with the administration.

b. Correspondence

Chair Martin stated that he received a few emails and phone calls regarding the scoreboard.

Board Member Peters stated that she, too, had received some correspondence regarding the scoreboard, and she also received correspondence regarding paying off the bond at the middle school.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she received a correspondence that she sent back through the chain of command.

c. Comments

There were none.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 7:10 p.m., Board Member Hardy made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.