Merrimack School District/SAU 26
School Board Special Meeting
with the
Planning and Building Committee and Ad Hoc Committee
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Rm
January 22, 2024

6:00 p.m. – PUBLIC MEETING

Present: Chair Ken Martin, Vice-Chair Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member Jenna Hardy, and Board Member Naomi Halter, Chief Educational Officer Everett Olsen, Assistant Superintendent for Business Matt Shevenell, and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Amy Doyle. Also Present were members of the Planning and Building Committee and members of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Not Present: Board Member Peters and Student Representative Shaun Evidente were excused.

Examining the Need for a New Central Office/SAU Building

Rich Hendricks provided background and historical information on the Planning and Building Committee's past efforts in support of a new combined Student Services and Superintendent's office. Mr. Hendricks displayed a current video documenting the inside of the current Superintendent's Office and Student Services building.

Ken Martin displayed a draft of a proposed new combined Superintendent's Office and Student Services building. The cost estimate for the new construction is $6,900,000. Mr. Martin itemized the cost estimate.

Matt Shevenell received four quotes around the same cost estimate for the 11,000 square foot building. He noted the quality of the building is in materials. He recommends a 15-year bond. In the past, the voters did not support funding a Capital Reserve for a new building nor did they support a warrant article to construct a new building. No action on a new building has been taken in many years. The current buildings do not have fire sprinklers, are not ADA compliant and are unsafe.

Matt Shevenell is very concern for the safety of the individuals working in the basement at the Superintendent's office. In the event of an emergency the only way out is up the steep basement stairs. He noted the Human Resource department is located in the basement of the Superintendent's Office.

Matt Shevenell reported the fire department inspected both buildings. He is still waiting for the report from the Fire Department.

Rich Hendricks noted the cost to lease a portable building would be about $400,000 a year plus an additional $30,000 to set up the utilities.

Matt Shevenell reported that he and Rich Hendricks looked at space to lease in the past. Leasing space is a risk in terms of possibly having to find another location within a short period of time. Rich Hendricks noted waiting for a Safety Building to be built followed by renovations prior to occupying the currently policy station is too far in the future.

Naomi Halter highlighted wasted time and additional mileage expenses because of staff being scattered throughout the District rather than in one building.

Bill Olsen stated a review of current space utilization does not allow for the relocation of staff into the schools.

Ad Hoc Members provided the following input/comments:

- The middle school bond is paid off.
- The District owns the site location (former Brentwood building).
- Add a new building Capital Reserve Fund and bond issue on the ballot as a back-up plan.
- Address other places such as current police station if a Safety Building is built.
- Shut down the Superintendent's Office and Student Services building.
- Some expressed support for building an adequate building that is ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant.
- Report the facts.
- Record a video broadcast with Rosemarie Rung, make presentations to the senior citizens group, the members of the Merrimack Youth Association (MYA), hold an informational event at the Merrimack Public Library, and have people a table outside Shaws' to provide information to the public.
- Create and distribute lawn signs (keep message to only 3 words for easy viewing).
- The current buildings are inadequate.
- Is the video current?
- Explain the reason for the increase in the building cost from then to now.
- 18 office spaces will be criticized.
- Wants to see the fire department report.
- Consider requirements versus wants.
- Why are there not any plans for media equipment in the conference room for broadcasts by Merrimack TV?
- The video presentation needs work (toxic language, remove emotion, keep to facts).
- Find another place for the files in the basement at the Superintendent's Office.
- Clear the deck of all other expenses to avoid overwhelming the voters.
- Have a brief understandable message for WMUR to cover.

Facts

- The current buildings are not ADA compliant.
- Health and safety issues are major concerns.
- Staff spend time traveling to and from meetings.
- The high school conference room is the only space in the District that can tightly accommodate the 21 members of the leadership team.
- There is not enough space at the Superintendent's Office to meet with more than three family members at one time.
- Construction costs increased over the many years since the last discussions.
- Deferred decisions can result in emergency decisions that may not be the best decisions.
- An additional conference room would comfortably accommodate the leadership team and a few guests, be used for table talks with police and fire departments, training opportunities and be available for outside groups.

Create questions for a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document.

Next Steps:

- Send FAQ questions to sandy.swanson@sau26.org
- Publish FAQ
- Create and distribute lawn signs
- Offer informational presentations in support of a new building to the community.
  - ~ senior citizens
  - ~ members of the Merrimack Youth Association
  - ~ parent/teacher groups
  - ~ the public library
  - ~ events during the month of February
- Neighborhood open houses to discuss the proposed project
- Create two- or three-minute videos to address each of the FAQ for Merrimack TV and social media.
- Attend the Deliberative Session on March 4, 2024
- Vote on April 9, 2024

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.