Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
January 8, 2024

5:30 p.m. – Non-Public Session Pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) & (c) – Merrimack TV Training Room

- **Negotiations**

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

Not Present: Student Representative Shaun Evidente (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. NEW BUSINESS (Part 1)

a. Merrimack High School Scoreboard Fundraising Presentation

Mr. Sean Powers, a Merrimack resident, addressed the Board and said he was present to discuss the fundraising for a new scoreboard. He said a new, much larger scoreboard would be better placed in between the poles on the field. He said the hope was to purchase a new 13' x 25' state-of-the-art video/sign board. He added they would like to put a customized 4' x 8' digital sign for the scores themselves.

Mr. Powers said they were looking for a complete package with the possibility of adding things in the future. He said in addition to the actual scoreboard, they could use it for advertising, which would help defray the cost.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that she felt it was more about student safety because having a scoreboard would allow the coaches to keep their eyes on the field and not their watches.

Board Member Halter asked what the timeline was. Mr. Powers replied that he would love to break ground in the spring. He said the fundraising had already started but would like the Board's blessing to continue.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell added the district could supplement the project up to $50,000, if necessary, from the unassigned fund balance.

Board Member Peters asked what the final cost would be. Mr. Powers replied that it would cost approximately $250,000. Mr. Powers added that the cost of maintenance should be taken into consideration as well. He asked the Board if financing would be an option. Chair Martin replied in the affirmative.

4. BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

a. Merrimack Middle School

Mr. Chrigus Boezeman, Principal, and Ms. Kathy Hoppa, Assistant Principal, were present to discuss the Merrimack Middle School's proposed 2024 – 2025 budget.

Mr. Boezeman said the Merrimack Middle School was focusing on the following Core Principles:

- Social Maturity of the Students – Ramp up the MTSS B System
- Determination – Spending time with i-Ready & WIN (What I Need) Blocks
- Support – The Entire Month of December was Dedicated to "Kindness"
- Fun – The Importance of Making Memories in Middle School

Mr. Boezeman said it was important to have a safe and secure school, and they worked very closely with the Merrimack Fire & Police Departments, as well as the School's Resource Officer, where they reviewed safety procedures and protocols to finetune them.

Mr. Boezeman explained that one of the items the Merrimack Middle School was asking for was to purchase an Electronic Hall Pass System. He said at any given moment, especially in the case of an emergency, a teacher could see where the students were, whether they went to the restroom or the nurse's office, etc. He said the system could also keep track of instructional minutes lost on a per-student basis. He said they could try the system out for a 30-day trial, but it would cost approximately $3.33 per student annually. He added that they budgeted for $2,165.00, which included a $500.00 one-time start-up fee.

Question: Board Member Peters asked if the data collected could be shared with the student's parents.

Answer: Mr. Boezeman replied that it could.

Mr. Boezeman also commented that the Merrimack Middle School was hoping to purchase both online subscriptions and materials for science and social studies. He said all of the subscriptions would be annual.

Question: Board Member Peters commented that she felt $3,000 was quite a bit more than the previous year. She asked if the proposal was replacing existing materials or if it was in addition to the existing curriculum.

Answer: Mr. Boezeman replied that it would be an additional resource for social studies but that the science department had already been using the resource.

Regarding the chorus program, Mr. Boezeman stated that the previous year, the classes were being taught on the stage. He said they had been able to get the students into a general education classroom but not a chorus classroom. He said a chorus classroom had a specific cabinet for sheet music and books, and he was hoping to purchase one.

Mr. Boezeman noted that there were currently 77 students enrolled in the music department's band. He said 17 students were percussionists, which was a lot. He said they were using a set of bells that were purchased in 2004, and while they were working fine, they wanted to invest in a second set of bells.

Comment: Board Member Peters said she felt they could purchase a quality set of bells for less money.

Comment: Board Member Hardy commented that the budget for athletics (in the Merrimack Middle School) was over $43,000, and alternatively, the budget for the arts, including music equipment, All-State, supplies for general music, and new instruments and equipment, was only $12,000. She noted that band was a class and not extracurricular. She also pointed out that she felt the Merrimack Middle School had an incredible theater program, and there was no line item in the budget for that….zero. She said she felt that moving forward, it was important to provide more equity in the programs.

Comment: Vice-Chair Rothhaus pointed out that there were more fees, such as for referees when it came to sports.

Mr. Boezeman stated that Merrimack Middle School had some needs regarding technical education, including the replacement of a 3D printer and bandsaws, which were over ten years old and did not have HEPA filters.

Mr. Boezeman also stated that the Merrimack Middle School had created a replacement plan for the cafeteria tables. He said the plan included the purchase of two tables per year.

The School Board collectively thanked both Mr. Boezeman and Ms. Hoppa for their presentation of the proposed budget for the Merrimack Middle School.

b. Merrimack High School

Mr. Steve Claire, Principal of Merrimack High School; Mr. Rich Zampieri, Assistant Principal of Merrimack High School; and Ms. Jill Hanlon, Assistant Principal of Merrimack High School, were present to discuss the Merrimack High School's proposed 2024 – 2025 budget.

Mr. Claire began the presentation by reading Merrimack High School's budget statement into the record, as summarized below:

Mr. Claire stated that there was an overall increase of less than 5% in the Merrimack High School's proposed budget for 2024 – 2025, with many level-funded items. He said the decision to move the extended learning opportunity/alternative graduation pathway budget from the Student Services line item to the Merrimack High School budget was part of the increase, as well as an increase of 15% in the supplies line item.

Mr. Claire reviewed the proposed increases as follows:

- The Science Department is Requesting New Physical Science textbooks.
- Technology Education
    - The Woodworking Program is Requesting a Replacement of the Cutter Head on the Planer.
- Co-Curricular
    - Increase in both Supplies and Transportation
- The Athletic Department is Renewing the Practice Transportation Budget
- A Significant Increase in the Testing Line to Administer the PSAT Test

Question: Board Member Halter asked what benefits the PSAT testing offers. I noticed that this line item was not funded before 2023 – 2024. Was the required testing being paid for from a different line item?

Answer: Mr. Claire replied that after discussions with Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle, they felt there was a need to progress and monitor the freshmen and sophomore students, particularly in English and math. He said that in the past, the freshmen and sophomore students were asked to pay to take the PSAT, and they would like the funding to be part of the budget.

Question: Board Member Halter asked me about all of the instructional equipment and what the lifecycle is. How many hours of use does it get per year, how old is our equipment in general, and how often do we replace equipment versus repair it?

Answer: Mr. Claire replied that each year, prior to the budget process, he asked department heads and staff to review their needs and to inform him of equipment that needed to be repaired or replaced. He said unsafe equipment was a priority to be replaced, and in addition, they also had yearly replacements for normal wear and tear.

Question: Board Member Halter asked why the district stopped funding the Practice Transportation line item in 2022 – 2023 and 2023 – 2024 and why it is needed again.

Answer: Mr. Claire replied that in past years, there had not been as much interest, and they were having a difficult time procuring drivers, so they cut the line item from $22,000 to $11,000, and the following year, they cut it out completely. Mr. Claire said the Interim Athletic Director had been able to procure some busses for transportation. He said he felt it was important to reinstate $10,000 for transportation for all students who needed it.

Question: Board Member Halter asked if the software in the Athletic Supplies line item was new and what was driving the increase.

Answer: Mr. Claire replied that the software was not new, and the $15,000 increase was based on the general 15% increase in all supplies.

Question: Board Member Halter asked how many years it would take to replace the textbooks for the science department.

Answer: Mr. Zampieri replied that as the district reviewed and revised the various curriculums over the next several years, they would determine whether or not the current text met their needs.

Question: Board Member Halter asked if a plan was being followed for furniture replacement. How many years would it take to replace all of it?

Answer: Mr. Zampieri replied that the high school did have a plan, noting they were only replacing one cafeteria table at a time. He said the budget also included desk combos, chairs, and lab stools that became unrepairable, and they were a standard purchase as required.

Question: Board Member Halter asked if there was a plan being followed for projectors, chargers, and cable replacement. How many years would it take to replace all of it?

Answer: Mr. Zampieri replied that the high school worked in conjunction with the Technology Director, Mr. Pelletier, in trying to meet the needs of all of the students. He said they were replacing the projectors with interactive display panels, and they were also budgeting for a charger in every classroom.

Question: Chair Martin asked what software was being discontinued.

Answer: Ms. Hanlon replied that SmartMusic would be discontinued due to the increase in cost and decrease in usage. She added that it would be replaced with Site Reading Factory, which was a fraction of the cost.

Question: Vice-Chair Rothhaus asked for a number of high school classes that had fewer than twelve students.

Answer: Mr. Claire supplied the Board with a hard copy list.

Question: Vice-Chair Rothhaus asked how many new microscopes are proposed to be purchased, how they are recycled, and what the process is.

Answer: Mr. Zampieri replied that the microscopes were reconditioned and repaired as needed on an annual basis. He said they rarely needed to be replaced; however, if needed, they would order them.

Question: Vice-Chair Rothhaus asked who maintained the chemical supply cabinet and how much was spent on chemicals.

Answer: Mr. Zampieri replied that a science teacher maintained the supply cabinet, and the chemicals cost approximately $6,700.

Question: What is the lifespan of copiers?

Answer: Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied that the district had a system in place in which the number of copies made was tracked. He said there were fourteen copiers at the high school, and the cost of leasing the copiers was approximately $2,000 to $2,500 annually. He said the lifespan was dictated by how many copies were made, and the high school made approximately 3.5 million copies per year. He also said the copiers were always leased and not purchased outright.

Question: Vice-Chair Rothhaus asked if there was enough money in the budget to provide every freshman with a printed program of studies in a student handbook.

Answer: Mr. Claire replied they were available online, but they did print some if a student needed one.

Question: Vice-Chair Rothhaus asked for more detail regarding Graduation Pathways as it was a new line item in the budget.

Answer: Mr. Claire provided the Board with a handout describing the program.

Comment: Addressing Board Member Hardy's inquiry, Mr. Claire commented that there was an average of thirty students participating in the theatre program, which was an increase over the prior year. Board Member Hardy requested that the Board receive a breakdown of how much money was budgeted for each co-curricular.

Board Member Hardy also commented that she felt the budget should reflect more equity between athletics and other co-curricular activities.

The School Board collectively thanked Mr. Claire, Mr. Zampieri, and Ms. Hanlon for their presentation of the proposed budget for the Merrimack High School.

c. Additional Sessions with Departments, if Needed

There was none.

d. Warrant Article Discussion

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell pointed out that the Deliberative Session had been scheduled for March 4, 2024.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell read aloud the proposed Warrant Articles, as summarized below:

1. Shall the Merrimack School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $6.9 million for the construction of an original equipping of a new central office to include but not limited to Superintendent Services, Student Services, Student Wellness, Technology, Business Operations, and Human Resources. To be raised through the issuance of bonds and notes, and further, to be raised and appropriated by general taxation, $174,000 for interest payments on said bonds or notes during the fiscal year 2024 – 2025 and to authorize the School Board to issue and negotiate sell and deliver said bonds and notes and determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof. And to authorize the School Board to apply for any grants, state or federal, that may be available for said project. (Requires a 3/5 majority vote)

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said additional Warrant Articles included a request to vote to raise and appropriate funds for a roof as well as for the operating budget.

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to hold a work session with the Ad Hoc Committee and the Planning & Building Committee on January 22, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reviewed the sequence of events and dates regarding the work done on acquiring a new central office building.

e. Budget Work Session

This will be further discussed at the next School Board meeting.

f. Other

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to support the fundraising and movement towards a scoreboard and the support of the School Board to consider future gap funding. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen asked the Board to provide the administration with some direction in terms of providing them with a reduced budget at the next School Board meeting.

5. NEW BUSINESS (Part 2)

a. Bond Hearing Date and Warrant Article for Construction of New Student Services and Central Office Consolidate Building

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said because Article 1 was a bond, there needed to be a public hearing. He suggested that the public hearing be held prior to February 6, 2024.

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to hold the public hearing on February 5, 2024. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. December 18, 2023, Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the public minutes from the December 18, 2023, meeting, as amended. Chair Martin seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Edit: Page 7, Line 353 – “Board Member Halter” was changed to “Board Member Hardy.”

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. December 18, 2023, Non-Public Minutes

The approval was tabled until the next School Board meeting.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Nominations

- Mr. Chad Seaver, Science Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

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

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 8:23 p.m., Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.