Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
September 11, 2023

5:30 p.m. – NON-PUBLIC SESSION PURSUANT TO RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) & (c)
Matthew Thornton Room

- **Staff Welfare**

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

Not Present: Student Representative Evidente (Excused)

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Chuck Mower, 4 Depot Street, addressed the Board as both the Vice-President of the Historical Society and as a member of the Budget Committee. He said he wanted to see competency assessment done as quickly as possible. He also commented on the importance of extended learning opportunities. He also said the Historical Society comprised several experienced and retired individuals who were the top in their fields and felt the district could benefit from partnering with some of them.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were no recognitions to share.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked the students and staff for persevering through a very hot first week of school.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that legal training regarding various issues would occur at the end of the week as a continuation of the August retreat.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said there would also be a bi-weekly meeting regarding competencies and competency-based education and grading. He said they chose to utilize the New Hampshire Learning Initiative to help lead them to a point where they worked with competencies with great integrity and value. He added that it might take a bit longer, but it was more important to be done well.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association honored three Merrimack staff members: Kip Jackson, Tammy Lambrou, and Rick Urda.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he received a letter from a local restaurant owner, Melissa Castonguay, who said she had the pleasure of serving the boys' soccer team dinner, and she was very impressed and found them to be perfect gentlemen.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen recognized that it was the 22nd year anniversary of 9/11 and remembered all those who were lost.

b. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said they had a very robust schedule with the New Hampshire Learning Initiative.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell shared that they had finished their annual audit a few weeks prior and said there would be a $6.7 million surplus at the end of the year.

d. School Board Update

Chair Martin also thanked the staff and students for dealing with the extreme heat during the first week of school.

e. Student Representative Update

There was no update to share.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Review of Revised 2023 Goal Setting Document

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle reviewed the updated 2023 Goal Setting Document.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion Surrounding Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) at MHS

Mr. Harley T. Hall, Director of Graduation Pathways, addressed the Board and reviewed the status of Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO's) at Merrimack High School. He said the summer focus for ELO work was building an infrastructure that could absorb the initial push, remain flexible, and grow with student interest.

Mr. Hall said the mission of the Graduation Pathways Program was to provide all students with multiple pathways to graduation. He explained that an ELO was a credit-bearing learning experience that occurred outside the traditional classroom and often outside the traditional school day. He added that ELOs were for all students at all levels of learning.

Mr. Hall said there were thirteen active ELOs; six were in the planning stages for the first semester, and two were planned to start in the second semester.

The members of the Board collectively said they were very much in favor of the ELOs and felt it was a big step in the right direction.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commended the work Mr. Hall had done.

Mr. Hall commented that there would be a $150.00 stipend for each teacher who taught an ELO, so a line item would have to be added to the budget. He said he would follow up with Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

b. Curriculum Instruction & Assessment Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle reviewed the Curriculum Instruction & Assessment Update, which included:

- Literacy
  - Full Implementation of Fundations & Geodes in Kindergarten through Grade 2; UFLI to be used in Grade 3.
  - Continued use of Hegerty in K-2.
  - Spelling Connection in Grades 3, 4, 5, & 6 (Replacing “Words Their Way”)
  - Pilot of Wit & Wisdom in Grades 5 & 6.
  - High School English Department Course and Text Realignment.

- Mathematics
  - Implementing the most up-to-date Version of envisions K-6.
  - Implementing the most up-to-date Version of Big Ideas Grades 7 & 8.

- Science
  - Mystery Science K-5.
  - New High School Physical Science Textbooks.

- Social Studies
  - Implemented Civics Education Requirement pursuant to RSA 189:11
  - Half-year Middle School Course will be in Grade 8.
  - Need to Prioritize Common Materials in K-6.

- SEL/School Counseling
  - Continued use of Second Step – K-6.
  - Character Strong/Wayfinder Pilot – Grades 7 & 8.
  - Wayfinder – Grades 9 – 12.

- EduPlanet 21 Update
  - Significant Progress made over the Summer regarding Updating, Aligning, and Revising the Curriculum using EduPlanet 21.

  - The Goal is to have the MSD District Blueprint Posted this Fall to Include Course Overviews, Abstracts, and Unit Lists.

c. Gallup Poll Results

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that in May of 2023, she had provided the Board with a memo regarding an invitation for the Merrimack School District to participate in a three-year longitudinal study of student engagement, hope, entrepreneurship and financial literacy, and career-connected learning as measured by the New Hampshire Student Gallup Poll. She added that in June of 2023, Merrimack students in grades 7-12 were provided the opportunity to participate in the Poll, and the district received an overall scorecard based on the group data. She reviewed the results, as summarized below:

- Engagement
  - Engaged: 18%
  - Not Engaged: 38%
  - Actively Disengaged: 44%

- Hope
  - Hopeful: 30%
  - Stuck: 25%
  - Discouraged: 45%

- Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy:
  - I am learning how to start and run a business in school: 1.97
  - I am learning how to save and spend money in school: 2.44

d. Other

Vice-Chair Rothhaus stated that they had spoken with Town Counsel regarding the School Board's meeting space, and in the future, the School Board would always meet in the Matthew Thornton Room unless Town Counsel needed to meet in it.

7. POLICIES

a. Approval of Admission of Homeless Students (JFABD)

b. Approval of Education of Children in Foster Care (JFABE)

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that legal counsel had thoroughly reviewed both policies, and he recommended approval.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve policy (JFABD) Approval of Admission of Homeless Students and policy (JFABE) Approval of Education of Children in Foster Care, as presented. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

c. Second Reading of Suicide Prevention and Response (JLDBB)

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve policy (JLDBB) Suicide Prevention and Response, given its second reading. Board Member Peters seconded the motion.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus pulled the motion from the table as Board Member Halter edited the last page regarding student identifications on page 4.

d. First Reading of Student Dress Code (JICA)

Vice-Chair Rothhaus suggested that they table the discussion surrounding the Student Dress Code and ask the Student Council to develop an Ad Hoc Committee to discuss the topic of dress codes in today's environment.

Board Member Hardy said she did not feel the item needed to be tabled but said she felt the following line needed to be deleted, as stated below:

"Students are encouraged to wear tops that either tuck into bottoms or overlap bottoms while seated, walking, and standing."

Board Member Hardy also commented that she felt there should be designated committees to review the dress code at each school level.

e. First Reading of Public Participation at Board Meetings (BEDH)

Board Member Peters said she felt there needed to be a clause added that stated:

"Someone who had a complaint can request to go through the Grievance Policy up to the School Board."

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- August 14, 2023, Public and Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the August 14, 2023, public and non-public meeting minutes, as presented. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

9. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS AND GRANTS UNDER $5,000

a. Merrimack Rotary Club to Merrimack High School for $500.00
b. Pro AV Systems to Merrimack High School Golf Team for $500.00

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the gifts from the Merrimack Rotary Club and Pro AV Systems, respectively, with the School Board's sincere appreciation. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

10. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Resignation
   - Mr. Keith Bike, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

b. Teacher Nominations
   - Ms. Heather Syliva, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
   - Ms. MacKenzie Stanley, Kindergarten Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School

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

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

11. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Board Member Halter said she had attended a Parks & Recreation Committee meeting on August 16th but would provide an update at the following School Board meeting.

b. Correspondence

Chair Martin said the entire Board had received correspondence regarding the dress code.

Board Member Peters said she received a few communications from working parents who indicated they did not appreciate the staggered start times because they had kids in multiple schools.

c. Comments

Board Member Halter said she had been hearing a lot of comments regarding the shorter, 20-minute lunch period. She said she went to the school and observed a lunch period and thought it was extremely efficient.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

13. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 8:05 p.m., Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.