Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
May 1, 2023

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

- **Staff Welfare**

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

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. Gary Krupp, 4 Ministerial Drive, addressed the Board and said he was present to address the issue of coaching evaluations at the high school Athletic Department. He said as a concerned parent, he had provided constructed feedback to the Athletic Director, the principal, and the Superintendent over the past three years on coaching evaluations without any discernable action being taken. He added that he felt it was essential for the district to establish a comprehensive evaluation system that included input from students, parents, and coaches. He said the system should be transparent, objective, and provide coaches with constructive feedback that would enable them to improve their skills and better serve the student athletes.

Chair Martin asked if any other members of the public wished to make public comments. There was none.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were no recognitions.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the following week was Teacher Appreciation Week and the district would be recognizing the staff.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that Friday was “School Lunch Hero Day” where the district would recognize school Food Service workers.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the business students participated in the New England Food Truck Challenge. He said the New England College received over 100 submissions and multiple students were winners.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said Senior Week ticket sales had begun. He said the events included a movie on the football field, a trip to Six Flags, a senior semi-formal on the Mt. Washington, and the Hawk Walk. Ha also said the 4th-grade classes and one multi-grade class at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School spent time weeding and cleaning up the flowerbeds at the school. He added that the families of the 3rd and 4th graders were invited to join Unified Arts Team also from the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for the year-end Showcase of Learning Celebration on Tuesday, May 23rd from 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated the middle school had seven band students and two chorus students working very hard to prepare for Saturday's South Central District Honor Band and Chorus Festival.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked everyone for all the support for the Robotics Team at the high school. He said the Robotics Team qualified for the second year in a row for the FIRST Championships in Houston.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said that Mr. Kevin Huran, a paraprofessional and music instructor was offering rock band programs to the Merrimack Parks & Recreation students from the Reeds Ferry Elementary, the Thorntons Ferry Elementary, and Merrimack schools.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said students from the James Mastricola Elementary School would be participating in the American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life" on June 17th in Derry, NH. He also said the Merrimack Granite State Challenge team had defeated Hopkinton to advance to the finals. He said the finals would air on New Hampshire public broadcasting on Thursday, May 11th.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle commented that they were entering their spring assessment schedule and encouraged parents to attend school on the days of testing. She said she had received a lot of positive feedback from teachers regarding the transition to iReady.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said the last early release for the school year would be on May 26th and would develop differentiated options for the teachers and staff to ensure that they were meeting their specific needs. She said they would also offer kindergarten screenings for the Class of 2036.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said additional leaks had been discovered on the roof of the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, and the repairs would begin as soon as possible.

d. School Board Update

Chair Martin thanked teachers in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week. He also said it was School Principal's Day as well.

e. Student Representative Update

f. Student Representative Vadney said tickets for Senior Week were on sale. She added that permission forms were required to be signed by parents, noting that there were no exceptions.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Council Meeting Update

Chair Martin said he and Vice-Chair Rothhaus attended the Town Council meeting where they discussed the possibility of moving the voting day to the Town of Merrimack back into the month of March. He said he did not think the idea was received particularly well, and it was decided to keep it as it was.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said the Town Council suggested that perhaps the School Board could think outside the box in terms of attracting interest in working for Merrimack. Board Member Peters replied that outside of the box would require funding.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Pathways to Graduation Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that when he first started working for the school district, he noticed that they did not have a program to provide an alternative pathway for whom a comprehensive high school education was not the most well-suited for their needs. He said he was happy to announce that the district was on track to implement the beginnings of a program for the 2023 – 2024 school year, much in part by hiring Mr. Harley Hall.

Mr. Harley Hall, Director of Graduation Pathways and Extended Learning Opportunities addressed the Board and said the first goal was to keep the students that they already had and earn a diploma. He said it was not an alternative program or GED program, or a special education program, but that it was a high school diploma. He said, however, it did not have the same graduation requirements set for by the School Board for Merrimack High School. He said it met a completely different RSA for high school graduation, but it was still a diploma.

Mr. Hall said the students would be allowed to take different coursework in the evening while still remaining in the building for most of their courses. He said the RSA allowed the program to grant elective credits in areas that a traditional high school program could not do. He said the programs would be held at Merrimack High School after hours, exact times to be determined.

Mr. Hall said to the extent possible, Merrimack teachers would teach the classes and would be paid a stipend for four hours per week and would be expected to work with their Pathway students in the same fashion they worked with their day students. He added he would reach out to past students who had dropped out to see if he could help them get their diplomas, noting that all students under the age of 18 would need parental/guardian consent.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus asked if there was any kind of funding available for people who could not afford the courses. Mr. Hall replied in the affirmative.

Board Member Hardy thanked both Mr. Hall and Vice-Chair Rothhaus for all of their hard work getting the program up and running and for writing and receiving the grant monies. Chair Martin also expressed his thanks.

b. Merrimack High School Athletics Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said coaching was becoming more difficult and demanding in every school district across the country.

Mr. Mike Soucy, Director of Athletics, addressed the Board and discussed what high school athletics and what it should be as summarized below:

- Highly competitive club programs and AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) programs whose focus was to prepare young adults to advance in their particular sport. To get scholarships and develop their athletic skills.

- Parks & Recreation programs to give students the base knowledge of a sport, to expose them to different things, and to have fun along the way.

- High school athletics had a hand in both worlds; one being "win at all costs" and one "was let's have fun."

Mr. Soucy said the purpose of high school athletics was to teach the students about life skills that they needed so they were prepared for all of the challenges life would throw at them. He said sportsmanship was at the forefront of everything.

Mr. Soucy stated the goal was to enhance the academic mission of the school and to teach students some of the soft skills they needed.

Mr. Soucy quoted Ms. Karissa Neihoff, CEO of NFHS (National Federation of High School Athletics Associations): "High school sports have become too focused on performative and not enough on formative." Mr. Soucy said he would like to bring it back to the formative part of things, but noted that did not mean that they were not going to try to compete to win. He said the goal of high school sports was to win, but that it was not their purpose. He said the purpose was in the development of their young men and women.

Mr. Soucy said kids were under so much pressure these days with family obligations, and academic obligations, and some played multiple sports and were pulled in multiple directions.

Mr. Soucy said it was important to bring the "fun" back. He said the coaches should criticize privately but yell at the rooftops in applause. He said he felt if coaches were to trip up sometimes it had to do with communication.

Mr. Soucy said quality coaching, per the U.S. Olympic and Para-Olympic Committee, was defined as the consistent application of integrated professional interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes' competence, confidence, connection, and character in a specific coaching context.

Mr. Soucy stated the school district had 71 paid coaches for 21 sports and 47 teams. He said he felt the district needed more coaches. He also said more educators should be coaches.

Mr. Soucy said upon his hiring six years prior, he developed a coaching evaluation assessment as stated below:

- Varsity head coaches were evaluated after every season with the tools used in the Coaches Handbook.

Mr. Soucy said he sent out a confidential evaluation to each athlete so they could provide comments on their coaches.

Board Member Peters explained that the School Board had received several emails over the past two years from parents that were consistent with similar teams and coaches and the parents did not feel like they were being heard. She said at what point did Mr. Soucy feel it was time to let a coach go because athletes were leaving teams because of the coaches. Mr. Soucy replied that it would depend on the circumstances and if at the end of the day, the majority of students were having good experiences, then they would work with the coach to develop a better relationship with the athletes that he/she was not having a good relationship with.

Board Member Peters suggested that a confidential survey should be sent out to parents to see how they felt about their students' coaches. Mr. Soucy replied he could do that.

Board Member Hardy said she felt it was very important to have a very clear evaluation given to the coaches, and the students and parents should all fill out surveys regarding the evaluations.

Board Member Hardy also suggested that there should be a Parent Advisory Committee comprised of parents of athletes from different sports.

Mr. Soucy said since Covid-19, there was a decline in female participation in sports and their struggle with mental health. He said they were going to gather a group of coaches, parents, and administrators who would meet once per month initially and have discussions. Board Member Hardy said she felt it should be a more widespread discussion about all athletes.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said in 2016 and 2017 she was involved in the NHIAA (New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association) Self-Assessment Tool for Creating an Athletic Culture through the Life of an Athlete. She said she felt the conversation she heard was all about the rights of everyone except for the coach's rights. She said if there was a legitimate concern then they needed to find a solution. She said there was not one coach who had 100% support from the athletes but that did not mean the coach was not a good one. She also said she did not agree that the parents should be evaluating the coaches.

Mr. Soucy said even if the coaches were doing all the right things, the athletes who did not get off of the bench were having a hard time and the parents were frustrated.

Board Member Halter asked if there was a student-athlete handbook available. Mr. Soucy replied there was.

Board Member Hardy said she felt it was very important to find a way in which athletes and parents could make complaints without the fear of being retaliated against. Mr. Soucy said he agreed.

c. 2023 – 2024 School Board Assignments

Assignment	**2022 – 2023**	**2023 - 2024**
School Board Chair	Laurie Rothhaus	Ken Martin
School Board Vice-Chair	Lori Peters	Laurie Rothhaus

Budget Committee	Naomi Halter	Naomi Hater
(Alternate)	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
NH School Boards Association (Delegate)		
(Alternate)		
Curriculum/Instruction/Technology (CIT) Committee	Jenna Hardy Ken Martin	Jenna Hardy Lori Peters
School Bus Stop Committee	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
Professional Development Committee	Lori Peters	Ken Martin
(Alternate)	Lori Peters	Ken Martin
Planning & Building Committee	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus
Wellness Policy Implementation Committee	Lori Peters	Lori Peters
Healthcare Cost Containment Committee	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
District Parent Group	Jenna Hardy	Jenna Hardy
(Alternate)	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
Communications Committee	Jenna Hardy Jenna Hardy	Ken Martin Ken Martin
Policy Committee	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
Superintendent Search Committee	Lori Peters Laurie Rothhaus Jenna Hardy (Rotation)	Lori Peters Laurie Rothhaus Jenna Hardy (Rotation)
Collective Bargaining		
Merrimack Teachers Association #1 (MTA)	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus
Merrimack Teachers Association #2 (MTA)	Lori Peters	Lori Peters
Merrimack Education Support Staff Association (MESSA) #1	Jenna Hardy	Laurie Rothhaus
Merrimack Education Support Staff (MESSA) #2	Ken Martin	Lori Peters
Advise & Confer #1	Laurie Rothhaus	Naomi Halter
Advise & Confer #2	Lori Peters	Jenna Hardy

Out-of-District Committee Assignments

Assignment	**2022 – 2023**	**2023 - 2024**
Grater Woods Subcommittee (SB Representative position)	Ken Martin	Ken Martin
Town Center Committee	Matt Shevenell	Matt Shevenell
Parks & Recreation	Naomi Halter	Naomi Halter
(Alternate)	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus
Merrimack 275 Anniversary Committee	Laurie Rothhaus	Laurie Rothhaus

Board Member Hardy asked that the Board not vote on the 2023 – 2024 School Board assignments to allow some time for additional conversations. She added that she felt the Athletic Advisory Committee should be added to the list. Further, Board Member Hardy said two of the committees she was given, the District Parent Group, and the Communications Committee had not met in the entire time she had been a member of the Board.

Board Member Halter stated that she felt it would be a good idea to take another look at the list of committees to see if they still existed.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she was not yet sure if the Athletic Advisory Committee would be a sitting committee or just a couple of meetings to hear parent input. She further stated that some committees only met a few times per year.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus suggested that the School Board should vote on the committee assignments as proposed and then they could go back and figure out what needed to be changed.

Board Member Hardy commented that she felt additional conversations needed to be had which would include the designees for collective bargaining as it was very concentrated with the same two people. She said she would like to see the newer members of the Board learn from the more experienced members as was past practice.

Chair Martin stated that he could certainly see the point Board Member Hardy was making but his thought process was that the support staff in the district was in such a critical shortage across the board. He said he thought the two people who hit it out of the park with the Collective Bargaining Agreement in the past year had more than qualified themselves to negotiate the contract.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to table voting on the 2023 – 2024 School Board Assignments until the next meeting. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Vice-Chair Rothhaus stated that she felt the Board should discuss any changes as they could not meet in a non-public meeting regarding the topic.

Board Member Hardy expressed interest in serving on the Merrimack Education Support Staff Association to assist in negotiating the contract.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that he did not think the Communications Committee had been active since 2017.

Board Member Peters commented that she felt the Wellness Committee had been integrated into the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee.

Board Member Hardy called the question.

MOTION CARRIED: 3 – 2 – 0. (Nay – Chair Martin, and Vice-Chair Rothhaus)

d. Call for 2023 NHSBA Resolutions

Chair Martin said that each NHSBA member-school board was allowed to submit one or more proposed resolutions. Proposals may be a new resolution or may seek to amend any current NHSBA resolution. Each member-school board may send one voting delegate to the Annual Delegate Assembly, however, any board members are invited to attend. He said the deadline for submitting such proposals was Friday, July 28, 2023, at the close of business.

Board Member Halter said she felt it was important to send someone to the Delegate Assembly on Saturday, October 14th because that was their vote and voice.

e. Gallop Survey

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that the district had received information about participating in the New Hampshire Student Gallop Poll. She said since its launch in 2009, the Gallop Student Poll had helped schools better serve students by providing positive measures that support engagement in school and create hope for the future. To date, the Gallup Student Poll had been completed over 6 million times in schools and districts across the country. She said the Milford School District had been invited to participate in the New Hampshire version of the Gallup Student Poll. She said there was a 24-item academic survey for students. She said it would be anonymous, voluntary, and take about 10 minutes to complete. She said if the Board approved the survey, it would be given to students in grades 7 through 12 between May 8th and June 6th of 2023, but they would also be agreeing to give it in 2024, and 2025.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said the poll measured the elements of student engagement, hope, and career-connected learning. She added there would be no cost to the district.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion that the Merrimack School District participate in the gallop three-year longitudinal data study. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

f. Other

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that members of the School Board could participate in the 4th of July parade.

7. POLICIES

a. Home Education Instruction (IHBG) 1st Review

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to waive the first reading of policy (IHBG) Home Education Instruction (IHBG) and post it on the district's website for public comment. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. Video Surveillance on School Property (EEAA) 2nd Reading

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he had not received any comments on the policy, and it had been thoroughly reviewed by legal counsel.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. April 17, 2023 – Public and Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2023, public, and non-public meetings, as presented. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

9. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Resignation

There were none.

b. Educator Nominations

- Ms. Kaleigh Lemieux, Elementary Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Mr. Ryan McKenna, Physical Education Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Ms. Kylie Salvatore, Elementary Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Ms. Bridget Bishop, Elementary Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Ms. Hannah Schwack-Trovitch, Elementary Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Ms. Hannah Greene, Elementary Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Ms. Caroline Mahoney, Elementary Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Ms. Amanda Apostolou, School Counselor, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the educator nominations. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

c. Administrator Nominations

- Mr. Chrigus Boezeman, Middle School Principal, Merrimack Middle School
- Ms. Sara Reinhardt, Director of Student Services, Districtwide

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the administrator nominations. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

10. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

There were no reports to share.

b. Correspondence

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she received correspondence, and she referred them back to the chain of command.

Board Member Peters said she received correspondence, and she encouraged that person to speak during public comments.

Chair Martin said he received correspondence and hopefully addressed the concerns shared.

c. Comments

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she received some very positive feedback regarding the huge safety training last week at the high school, noting, however, a prior alert would have been preferable.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Heather Robitaille, Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and said she thought the District Parent Group used to be a quarterly meeting between a representative of the parent/teacher organizations from each school and shared best practices and ideas.

Ms. Robitaille also thanked Chair Martin and Vice-Chair Rothhaus for opening a dialogue with Town Counsel regarding changing the voting date and the impact that it had on the district's ability to compete for contracts.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 8:25 p.m. Board Member Peters made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.