Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
April 17, 2023

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

- **Staff Welfare**
- **Student Welfare**

Present: Chair Laurie Rothhaus, Vice-Chair Lori Peters, Board Member Naomi Halter, Board Member Jenna Hardy, and Board Member Ken Martin. 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 Rothhaus called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. SCHOOL BOARD REORGANIZATION

- Chair of the School Board

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to nominate Mr. Ken Martin for the position of Chair of the School Board.

Board Member Halter said she nominated Mr. Martin because his experience as an educator would be very helpful in working with the administration. She said he had the experience of being the Chair of groups in the past.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- Vice-Chair of the School Board

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to nominate Ms. Laurie Rothhaus for the position of Vice-Chair of the School Board.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to nominate Ms. Lori Peters for the position of Vice-Chair of the School Board.

Discussion:

Board Member Hardy stated that she felt Ms. Peters had done a very good job in the past year and wanted it to be acknowledged.

Chair Martin stated that any one member would do a great job in any of the positions. He said his reasoning behind his nomination for Ms. Laurie Rothhaus was due to her experience and institutional knowledge.

Chair Martin called the question, resulting in the following vote in favor of Ms. Laurie Rothhaus assuming the role of Vice-Chair of the Board.

MOTION CARRIED: 3 – 1 – 1 (Nay – Board Member Hardy) (Abstained – Board Member Peters)

3. COMMITMENT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD CODE OF ETHICS

Chair Martin reviewed the Merrimack School Board Code of Ethics. (Full document can be viewed by going to the Merrimack, NH School Board's Supporting Materials of the April 17th meeting) He noted that all five School Board members had signed the document.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

5. RECOGNITIONS

There were no recognitions to share.

6. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen congratulated the Robotics Team who participated in the First Robotics Competition where they won the "Impact Award", adding it was the highest team award in that competition and they had won it two years in a row.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the 4th graders at the Merrimack Elementary School had put on an amazing musical called "The Pirates", noting the teachers and students designed all of the sets. He also said that the Merrimack Theater Club announced that sophomore Brianna B. placed 1st in the Senior Individual Performance Category of the New Hampshire National History Day Competition. He added Brianna would compete in the National Competition in Washington, D.C. in June.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that the College and Career Fair was held and nearly 300 parents and students attended.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that the Quiz Team at the high school competed at the state finals, and they tied for 2nd place. He also said that the Reeds Ferry Elementary School had its first annual Bingo Night hosted by the Parent Faculty Association which 260 people attended and it was a very successful event.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said students at the Merrimack Middle School used the video editing program called "Wevideo" to create movie trailers for a project about Westwood Expansion. He said four students took top honors at the first Annual A2 Film Festival, Chloe H., Sam D., Evelyn G., and Noah J.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen pointed out that Ms. April Doss, Special Education Teacher at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School had been nominated for the 2024 Teacher of the Year Award in New Hampshire.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said that the Merrimack Rotary Club had received nominations for the Excellence in the Workplace Award and would be honored at a dinner on April 20th. He said they would be honoring Christi Moore, Cynthia Blanchette, Bunny Saranita, and Pat Zink.

Additionally, Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he had met with CJ F. who was working on an Eagle Scout project where garden beds would be placed behind the high school for the students in the Pass & Get Set Program to grow, harvest, and hopefully use it in the food service program in the fall.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said she wanted to let the Board and the community know that after an extensive process of research and exploration, they were close to making a decision on a new Assessment Suite that would be used in the selection process for the Gifted and Talented Program across the district. She said they identified a test called the "Cognitive Abilities Test" which was owned by Riverside Publication as the initial screener and could provide the follow-up testing measure.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle noted that she and Melissa Fazlic, Director of Human Resources had attended a couple of job fairs and Merrimack's table had a lot of interested people. She also said there were two open positions on the district's leadership team, and they were vetting candidates for the new Director of Student Services, as well as the Merrimack Middle School Principal position. She said they hoped to bring a finalist to Chief Educational Officer Olsen by the end of the week.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle noted that a survey went out to the middle school staff and community which elicited their feedback in their next building leader and another survey was sent out to the middle school families and staff looking for the same information.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the Master Plan for the Merrimack High School campus continued to evolve and they had taken the work that Keach-Nordstrom had done and forwarded it to VHB. He said they would be doing a traffic study and would present three different options to try to minimize the traffic at the end of the day. He said they also received some preliminary information from I.C. Reed as far as burying the utilities, but they would put that on hold because at present the cost was $1 million.

d. School Board Update

Chair Martin thanked the voters who came out the previous Tuesday and supported the teacher's contract, the budget, and getting all of the Warrant Articles passed.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Vadney said the students had a successful Spirit Week and Pep Rally to celebrate the winter and spring sports. She said tickets were on sale for Senior Week which would be held the first week of May, noting May 5th was the last day the tickets could be purchased.

Student Representative Vadney also noted that the Junior Prom would be held on May 12th at the Doubletree Hotel in Manchester. She added the theme would be "Las Vegas". She said the Student Council was starting elections for all school Student Council.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that Harley Hall, Chief Educational Officer Olsen, and herself had been working on the adult education grant for the State of New Hampshire. She said the grant was just finalized being written and said how much she enjoyed the experience.

Chair Martin stated that he and Vice-Chair Rothhaus would be attending the Town Council meeting where they would discuss what the options were to possibly move voting day a little bit earlier in the cycle.

8. NEW BUSINESS

a. Signing of the Merrimack Teachers Association Contract for 2023 – 2026

Chair Martin signed the contract.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that she ordered a banner to be placed at the middle school thanking the voters for their support of the contract. She noted, however, that she would be paying for the banner with her own money, and it would not come from the taxpayers.

b. "Get the Lead out Program"

State Representative Bill Boyd addressed the Board and said in 2018 state law was passed requiring childcare facilities and schools to test their water fixtures that could be used as a source of drinking water for lead. He said the remediation standard was 15 parts per billion, but the Department of Environmental Services had found that there was at least one outlet at six schools in Merrimack that tested over and above during the last sampling period. He said as Chair of the New Hampshire Drinking Water and Groundwater Advisory Commission back in 2018, they approved $1.6 million out of the trust fund to be allocated to the Department of Education to remediate those particular fixtures and reimburse districts at a rate of 50%. He said the reimbursement would now be 100%. He urged the district to fill out the necessary paperwork to get 100% reimbursement.

Representative Boyd also mentioned that there was a website entitled GettheLeadoutNH.org which may have funds for laboratory fees.

c. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Presentation

Mr. Jason Pelletier, Director of Technology, addressed the Board and said in 2020 they gave every student access to technology to address remote learning. He said in grades 2 through 12 there was one device per child, and from grades 5 through 12 there was a 1 to 1 program where they were allowed to take the devices home with them.

Mr. Pelletier said while BYOD had some advantages, moving forward with only using school-issued devices had far more advantages, and would like to consider using only these school-issued devices during the school day.

Mr. Pelletier said that having a standardized device would help service student needs quickly and efficiently. He also said that the Technology Department could quickly fix most issues that occurred with Chromebooks and most repairs could be completed on the same day. It's very difficult to offer support in a BYOD model due to the thousands of different devices and parts on the market. He also said Chromebooks could be managed to ensure students were using district-approved software, and the State of NH had data governance legislation that required to keep student and staff data safe and secure.

Mr. Pelletier added that standardizing specific hardware and software ensured the most reliable and compatible network connectivity and compatibility. He said decisions made to upgrade and create a robust infrastructure were more streamlined and cost-effective.

In conclusion, Mr. Pelletier said starting the 2023-2024 school year, he would like the School Board's consideration to allow only using school-issued devices during the school day and sunset the bring your own device model currently in place. He said moving in that direction created a consistent and standardized learning experience for all learners and allowed the teachers to provide effective, unique, personalized, and immersive experiences for our staff and students. He added that the Chromebook model they were using was approximately 200% less expensive than an inadequate device.

Board Member Peters asked if the students would be taught how to download their work to a flash drive or external hard drive. Mr. Pelletier replied he was not sure, but he would find the answer.

Chair Martin asked if they had looked into Google Drive. Mr. Pelletier replied that a survey had been sent out to the staff regarding that and they were looking into it.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented it was a good time of year to move forward.

Board Member Hardy the upcoming seniors did not have a 1 to 1 device because it was pre-Covid. She said she did not think it was fair to make the seniors use a Chromebook if they had invested in their own devices. Mr. Pelletier said he felt that was a reasonable request and he would speak with the administration team.

Student Representative Vadney said she would recommend moving very thoughtfully if they were going to ask the students to move to Google.doc because many of them were taught using Microsoft.

d. Demolition Plan for the Brentwood and Student Services Buildings

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that they had the approval to take the Brentwood building down but said they may wait until the end of the school year. He said they sent the cost of demolition out to bid, expecting the cost to be about $300,000, and upon receiving the bids, the cost to demo the red building would cost approximately $53,000. He said that the cost of the demo included the slab, the foundation, the mechanical, and the existing hole where the cellar was would be filled in.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said perhaps they could relocate the people in the Special Services building to another school where there was room. He further said, in the meantime, they could look at the demolition of that building as well. He said that the building would cost $58,000 to demo and it was more expensive than the Brentwood building was because there was about $44,000 of asbestos that needed to be remediated. He added that it made more sense to demo both buildings at the same time.

e. Review and Approval of the Document Entitled "FY2024 General Assurances, Requirements, and Definitions for Participation in Federal Programs"

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated the document was one that the School Board received every year which was generally the district's assurances to the federal government that they would comply with all fiscal regulatory conditions associated with any grant project and any federal statute that applied to health, safety, well-being, environmental protection, etc. He added that it was a standard form that all school districts needed to sign in order to be eligible to receive federal funds.

MOTION: Board Member Peters made a motion to accept the document entitled "FY2024 General Assurances, Requirements, and Definitions for Participation in Federal Programs." Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

f. Date for June 2023 Goals Meeting

The School Board collectively decided to hold its' Goals Meeting on June 22, 2023.

g. Summer Meeting Dates

- Monday, July 10, 2023
- Monday, August 14, 2023

h. Other

There was no other new business to discuss.

9. POLICIES

a. Approval of Non-Educational Surveys and Questionnaires (ILD)

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve policy (ILD) Non-Educational Surveys and Questionnaires, as amended. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. April 3, 2023 – Public Minutes

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2023, meeting, as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

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

a. Health Trust to Merrimack School District for $3,000

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said that Health Trust, who was the district's health insurance provider, wanted to give the district $3,000. He said it was affiliated with the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee for health and safety training.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the gift of $3,000 from Health Trust with the School Board's sincere thanks. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

12. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator and Administrator Resignations

Teacher Retirements		
Traci Prinz	Grade 6 Teacher	James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
Joanne Talbot	School Nurse	James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
Joan McMahon	Science Teacher	Merrimack Middle School
Deborah Barker	School Counseling Director	Merrimack High School
Cheryl Riley	Math Teacher	Merrimack High School
Jan Moynihan-Cooney	English Teacher	Merrimack High School
Teacher Resignations		
Andrea Hatch	Elementary Teacher	James Mastricola Elementary School
Anissa Cote	Special Ed. Teacher	James Mastricola Elementary School
Katie Finken	Speech Therapist	Reeds Ferry Elementary School
Michaela Sellappah	Elementary Teacher	Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
Kayla Lanagan	SEL Support Specialist	James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
Richard Loftus	In-School Interventionist	Merrimack Middle School
Mitchell Bull	Language Arts Teacher	Merrimack Middle School
Sara Guilmette	Special Education Teacher	Merrimack Middle School
Brielle Lapiana	School Counselor	Merrimack High School
Leah Sutherland	School Counselor	Merrimack High School
Administrator Resignation		
Adam Caragher	School Principal	Merrimack Middle School

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the teacher retirements, teacher resignations, and the administrator's resignation. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. Educator and Administrator Nominations for School Year 2023 – 2024

Teacher Nominations	**Starting in 2023-2024**	
Heather DeLuca	Elementary Teacher	Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
Denver Greene	Physical Ed. Teacher	Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

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

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept the administrator slate. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to accept the continuing contract. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

c. Approval of Literacy Coordinator (formerly LA Coordinator) Job Description

MOTION: Chair Martin made a motion to approve the Literacy Coordinator (formerly LA Coordinator) job description. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

13. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

There were no reports to share.

b. Correspondence

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said she received one correspondence from a concerned parent, and she sent them back through the chain of command.

c. Comments

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that there was a public forum for all of the candidates running for town council and it was set up by high school students and she said it was very well done.

Board Member Peters thanked the community for coming out to vote and was very pleased that the teacher's contract, the budget, and the Warrant Articles passed.

Chair Martin commented that seven Merrimack High School band and chorus members participated in the Regional All-Eastern Music Festival in Rochester, NY.

14. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Finnegan, a student, addressed the Board and said he was not in favor of using Chromebooks.

Ms. Heather Robitaille, Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and said she too was thankful that the community came out to vote and that important items, like the teacher's contract, passed.

MOTION: At approximately 7:40 p.m. Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.