Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
April 3, 2023

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, and, Chief Educational Officer Everett (Bill) Olsen.

Not Present:

Ms. Kaitlyn Vadney, Student Representative – Excused

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. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none.

3. RECOGNITIONS

a. New Hampshire House Proclamation/Resolution

State Representative Rosemarie Rung, Representative Bill Boyd, Representative Tim McGough, Representative Nancy Murphy, and Senator Shannon Chandley were present to recognize the girls' wrestling team.

Representative Rung said not only did Emily Angelo, a junior at Merrimack High School, win the championship for Merrimack High School, but she was the first champion of girls' wrestling in the state. She also said Avery N. came in third place and pointed out that Leni H., and Khalia U. also wrestled for Merrimack.

Representative Rung presented Emily Angelo with a declaration from the Speaker of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, Sherman A. Packard, Speaker of the House.

Senator Shannon Chandley presented Emily Angelo with a Resolution on behalf of the New

Hampshire Senate in recognition of being the winner of her weight class in the "Meet of Champions," and therefore, becoming the first female wrestling champion in the State of New Hampshire.

b. Gymnastics

Chair Rothhaus and Chief Educational Officer Olsen presented a formal recognition to Mia LeBlanc who was the NHIAA Gymnastics All-Around State Champion and thanked gymnastics coaches Noha Labib, and Aya Mahgoub.

c. Boys' Wrestling

Chair Rothhaus and Chief Educational Officer Olsen presented a formal recognition to Brendan C. - NHIAA Division II Wrestling Championship, and thanked wrestling coaches Bryan Dine, Brett Wilson, Zach Hicks, and Eric Theriault.

d. Swim

Chair Rothhaus and Chief Educational Officer Olsen formally recognized Josey S. – NHIAA Division I 200-Yard Individual Medley Championship, and Sara C. – NHIAA Division I 100-Yard Fly Championship. They thanked coaches, Tim Thompson, and Becki Stevens.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared the following positive news from the district:

- Melanie Hedlund and Trevor Knight were offering an in-person Mentor/Mentee program with the elementary school students meeting with the high school students.

- Beth Powers had informed him that the Merrimack High School Activism and Civic Engagement Club was holding a candidates' forum.

- Mike Soucy informed him that the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association and the New Hampshire Athletic Director's Association Scholar Athlete Award Ceremony was held at the Capital Center for the Arts in Concord and the following seniors received a varsity letter in at least two sports and had at least a B+ or better grade point average:

    - Gaylor S., Trent J., Matthew L., Emily W., Jackson F., Riley S., Lilly M., Maxwell T., Heather H., Tyler S., Kali D., Ramilla H., Nathan B., Amelia P., Tyler B., & Michael M.

- Leah Johnson at the middle school commented that the enthusiasm from staff to work in the summer programs was growing and to date, there were approximately 100 students who would be participating in the summer school program.

- Fern Seiden informed him that they would be recognizing mental health awareness in May with the theme "Mental Health in the Digital Age."

- There would be a community book read of "Screenwise" by Devorah Heitner and the first 30 people who expressed interest would receive a free book.

- Julie DeLuca wished to thank the Parent Council at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for having the 3rd and 4th graders participate in a cartoon program with Marek Bennett.

- Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that it was "National Assistant Principals' Week and thanked all of the Assistant Principals in the district for their hard work and dedication.

- Heather Barker wanted to remind people of the Bright Futures survey that was being conducted. He noted that the link to the survey could be found on the district's website.

- Sara Campbell shared that the prior week the Merrimack School District participated in the Granite State Challenge and defeated Souhegan High School with a score of 520 to 210.

- Rebecca Spotts shared that the College and Career Fair was the following Thursday and would be the largest ever.

- Aimee Piccolo shared that the New Hampshire Scholastic Arts celebrates New Hampshire's creative teens with awards, exhibitions, and scholarships. Twenty-six pieces of art and photographs were accepted into the Juried Art Exhibition at Pinkerton Academy in February. Six of the pieces were awarded New Hampshire Gold Keys. Jordan Z. received a New Hampshire Scholastic Gold Key Award at the state level and was advanced to the National Scholastic Art Competition where he was awarded a National Scholastic Silver Key Award.

- The Merrimack High School Student Council was getting ready for Spring Spirit Week which would end on Friday, April 14th with a pep rally and the last school dance of the year.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle reminded people to fill out the 603 Bright Futures survey. She further said that Melissa Fazlic, Director of Human Resources would be attending a job fair at SNHU where they hoped to recruit the next best and brightest people to work for the Merrimack School District.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said the Merrimack School District was selected for two audits from the Department of Education. She said the first one was in-person for access testing at the James Mastricola Elementary School. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle explained that access testing was the testing given to English language learners every year to monitor their progress in acquiring and being able to use English as their primary language. She said the second audit the district was selected for was a desktop audit done remotely. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle explained it was for Title I & Title IIA, she added there was quite a bit of paperwork regarding grants.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted the voter's guide had been mailed to everyone in the community, he noted it was also published on the website.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that they received the bids for the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School roof, and they were within the budget of what was placed on the Warrant Article.

d. School Board Update

Chair Rothhaus commented that she had the pleasure of meeting Harley Hall, Director of Graduation Pathways, and Extended Learning Opportunities. She said the district hired the right person for the job and had hit the ground running. Additionally, Chair Rothhaus stated that even though it was only April, the administration had already met most of the goals discussed the previous summer.

Chair Rothhaus added she would be sending the School Board information regarding the Superintendent's evaluation.

e. Student Representative Update

There were no reports to share.

5. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Summer Programming Offerings

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said the majority of the summer programming would be offered between July 10th and August 11th. She said there would be a robust offering of extended school year programs for those students identified with IEPs (Individual Education Plans) through the Office of Student Services, and that covered all students from kindergarten through grade 12. The programs being offered are as follows:

- Credit recovery and highest tutoring at Merrimack High School.
- 8.5 Program for rising freshmen (focus on students entering the 9th grade from the 8th grade)
- The summer learning program for students in grades kindergarten through grade 4 would be hosted at the Thorntons Ferry School.
- Fern Seiden from the Office of Student Wellness would organize Mindful Moves and Summer Soar Programming.
- Camp Invention would also return.
- Working toward coordinating programming for students in grades 5 through 7.
- Band camp at Merrimack High School.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said she would keep the School Board up-to-date regarding the summer programming.

b. Competencies Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle explained that over the past few months, they had been in conversation and collaboration with members of the New Hampshire Learning Initiative to bring some consultation and coaching to the district. She said they would primarily start by focusing on high school. She added they would start with some high-quality professional development in professional learning communities. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle commented she was very happy to be working with Brian Stack of Solution Tree.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that they would be working in tandem to bring competency-based learning and assessment to the district. She said they would have a district leadership team, a school leadership team, and a teacher leadership team. She also said there would be a coordinated effort to communicate the plan to the community in terms of what they could expect as they did the work over the next few years.

c. Strategic Plan Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle and himself had chosen Mark Dolan, Strategic Planning Facilitator of the New Hampshire School Boards Association as the person who would best fit their needs in developing a Strategic Plan. He added the cost of the facilitation to be done by Mr. Dolan was $5,000 and it was the lowest cost of any individual/company that was considered.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen reviewed the 3-year Strategic Plan as summarized below:

- The goal over the next 10 – 12 months was to draft a Strategic Plan that would provide direction and focus in the following areas:
    - Teaching and Learning
    - School Finances and Resources
    - Technology and Infrastructure
    - Facilities and Operations
    - Culture and Climate
    - Student and Staff Wellness
    - School Security

Vice-Cahir Peters noted that the Strategic Plan would include all stakeholders, parents, students, teachers, staff, administration, Board Members, and all members of the community.

MOTION: Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the development of a 3-year Strategic Plan prepared by Mark Dolan and accept the financial responsibility of $5,000. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

d. Other

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said that he and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell had put together some notes regarding school safety, especially in light of yet another school incident of violence.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said over the last year a new crisis management plan had been redrafted. He said they collaborated with Detective Bill Vandersyde of the Merrimack Police Department. He added the police department was providing training to the staff, however, it differed slightly at the elementary level due to the age of the children.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that they would have another simulated evacuation and reunification over the summer.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen reviewed slides pertaining to:

- The Duration of School Violence Events
- Research on School Violence Motives
- School Violence Data
- Behavioral Warning Signs
- Those Involved with School Violence Experienced Home Life Factors

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted that the information would be available on the website. He also said he would continue the conversation with the police department regarding placing SROs (School Resource Officers) in all of the schools.

Chair Rothhaus suggested that there be a panic button in every main office in addition to having walkie/talkies. She also suggested if a student were to present in a way that was dangerous to other students that they look for alternative placements and that it should be in the form of a policy.

Board Member Hardy said she was grateful that the district has SEL (social and emotional learning) in place.

7. POLICIES

a. Approval of Early Admission to Kindergarten and Grade One (JFAAA)

Chief Educational Officer Olsen pointed out that the following verbiage was added to paragraph three of the proposed policy: "A child must have attained the age of 5 by September 30th to attend kindergarten in the Merrimack School District."

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to approve policy (JFAAA) Approval of Early Admission to Kindergarten and Grade One, as amended. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. Approval of Service Animals (IMGA)

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to approve policy (IMGA) Service Animals. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

c. Approval of Animals in the School (IMG)

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to approve policy (IMG) Animals in the School. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

d. First Reading of Non-Educational Surveys and Questionnaires (ILD)

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to waive the first reading of policy (ILD) Non-Educational Surveys and Questionnaires into the record, and to approve it for a second reading. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

e. First Reading of Video Surveillance on School Property (EEAA)

MOTION: Board Member made a motion to waive the first reading of policy (EEAA) Video Surveillance on School Property into the record, and to approve it for a second reading. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

The microphone was off; Chair Rothhaus could not be heard.

Board Member Halter indicated that only audio recordings were mentioned under the sub-heading of Video and Audio Recordings. Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he would check with legal counsel and the item would be placed on a future agenda.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. March 20, 2023

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 20, 2023, meeting. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Vice-Chair Peters)

9. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Job Description for Literacy Coordinator (formerly Language Arts Coordinator)

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that the job goal for the Literacy Coordinator in the district (formerly known as the Language Arts Coordinator) was defined as follows: "To provide professional leadership and management for the coordination of curriculum, instruction, assessment, programs, and services related to the literacy-based needs of all students through a multi-tiered system of support." She said the title of Literacy Coordinator was a more appropriate title in the year 2023.

10. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Board Member Halter said she had attended the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting where they discussed possibly having to relocate the skateboard park when the new SAU building was constructed. She said some considerations included an area that was easy for skateboarders to get to and easy for the police to patrol. She added that possible locations were a field at the middle school or in Wasserman Park.

b. Correspondence

Chair Rothhaus said she received correspondence from a parent with some concerns and she advised them to follow the chain of command.

Vice-Chair Peters said she had multiple emails regarding the violence in Nashville, TN the prior week and said the administration had done a great job at reviewing safety practices/policies that were in place as well as future plans.

Vice-Chair Peters said she also received communication from a parent who wished to speak with her regarding questions and thoughts about Social and Emotional Learning.

c. Comments

Board Member Martin said the high school band and chorus performed at the High School Large Group Festival at Bow High School and the Merrimack Concert Band had received a perfect rating.

Board Member Martin also said the previous weekend he attended the New Hampshire All-State Festival where nineteen Merrimack students represented the town as the top musicians in the state.

Board Member Martin suggested that the best musicians were not recognized as athletes were and would like to see that happen. Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied those recognitions were already on a future agenda.

Board Member Hardy commented that she would like to see representatives from the CTE program attend a School Board meeting and provide a presentation. She also said she would like to know more about dual enrollment offerings.

Chair Rothhaus said the School Board had discussed having principals rotate attending the School Board meeting and asking them to mention student recognitions in each school.

Vice-Chair Peters said the School Board and town election would be held on Tuesday, April 11th from 7:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m. She said the teacher contract would do amazing things to help the teachers.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Rick Foote, 129 Indian Rock Road, addressed the Board and said he did not think they should replace the skatepark. He said he felt that some people who used the skatepark left large amounts of trash behind.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 7:36 p.m. Board Member Martin made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.