Merrimack School District/SAU 26
School Board Meeting
Preliminary Agenda
January 21, 2025
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room

5:30 p.m. NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack TV Training Classroom

- Staff Welfare

PUBLIC MEETING

6:30 p.m.	**1. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**	Lori Peters
6:35 p.m.	**2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**	Lori Peters
7:00 p.m.	**3. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES** a. Superintendent Update b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update d. School Board Update e. Student Representative Update	Lori Peters
7:15 p.m.	**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES** a. December 11, 2024 Public Minutes b. December 16, 2024 Public and Non-Public Minutes c. December 18, 2024 Public Minutes	Lori Peters
7:20 p.m.	**5. CONSENT AGENDA** a. Educator Resignation	Amanda Doyle
7:25 p.m.	**6. OTHER** a. Committee Reports b. Correspondence c. Comments	Lori Peters
7:35 p.m.	**7. OLD BUSINESS**	Lori Peters
7:40 p.m.	**8. NEW BUSINESS** a. Partnership with Rotary b. Improvement to Merrimack School District Presentation c. Potential Capital Reserve Warrant Article d. Budget Item Discussion e. Other	Lori Peters Maureen Tracy Everett Olsen Lori Peters Lori Peters
8:30 p.m.	**9. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**	Lori Peters
8:50 p.m.	**10. ADJOURN**	

* These times are estimates and may vary depending on discussion.

Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
December 11, 2024

Present: Ms. Lori Chair Peters, Chair; Ms. Jenna Hardy, Vice-Chair; Ms. Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member; Mr. Ken Martin, Board Member; and Ms. Naomi Halter, Board Member.

Also Present: Mr. Everett Olsen, Chief Educational Officer; Ms. Amy Doyle, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum; and Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

Not Present: Mr. Finnegan Haddad, Student Representative.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Chair Peters called the special meeting to order.

Chair Peters read aloud the Merrimack School District's mission statement into the record as follows:

The Merrimack School District will provide a high-quality, future-driven education to all students in the community. Students will engage in learning opportunities that reflect both rigger and relevance and meet their cognitive, social, and emotional needs. The district will prepare students to understand, adapt, and adjust to civic, economic, social, and technological changes in the world. Our overall goal is to inspire, create, and encourage students to be curious, connected, prepared, resilient, and dedicated individuals who are lifelong expert learners. Merrimack graduates exercise judgment; they are innovative and will become responsible contributors to society. We hope the discussions we have tonight will always align with that mission.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

3. BUDGET QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

a. Maintenance

Mr. Tom Touseau, Director of Maintenance, was present to discuss and answer questions regarding his budget. Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business, was also present to provide financial context and answer questions.

Question: From the School Board. One of the questions was regarding the $22,500 on sidewalk repairs.

Answer: Mr. Touseau replied that it was money to re-seal and power wash the sidewalks, which would prolong the length of the concrete sidewalks.

Question: From the School Board. Please explain the critical need to replace doors (security) and explain the need for additional cameras when many in the community may feel we have enough.

Answer: Mr. Touseau replied he was also requesting $15,000 for door replacements that could not be repaired any longer, and it was important for safety reasons. Additionally, Mr. Touseau said his request for $75,000 worth of new cameras was because they found they needed to place monies into the infrastructure of the cameras, such as the servers.

Board Member Rothhaus commented that she was in favor of supporting the $75,000, and she said she felt it would be money well spent.

Question: From the School Board. Please explain the increase from 2023 – 2024 to 2024 – 2025 that is level-funded for 2025 – 2026. (Trash Disposal)

Answer: Mr. Touseau said the trash was not being picked up all of the time. He said they were still experiencing a lack of employees, and companies who had CDL drivers were few and far between.

Question: From the School Board. Please provide an overview of these expenditures and the need for the requested $164,000 increase.

Answer: Mr. Touseau replied that the line item was a "catch-all" line item. He said some of the line items were consistently in the budget, and some were not. He further said that the items that comprised the $164,000 were not items that were in the budget the previous year. (Sidewalk repair, door repairs, camera repairs, and money for a districtwide access system)

Question: From the School Board. Why did line item 100-4600-62-8451-08 decrease?

Answer: Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied that in the past, the roof program was part of the operating, and then it was taken out of the operating budget and put in a warrant article to decrease the operating budget and give people the choice as to whether or not they wanted to put a roof on a building. He added that the danger of doing that was that if the people voted no, then there was no roof, even if it were leaking. He said that the people had been very good about passing the roof articles, and when it passed, he put the money in that account number, which paid for the roof at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School roof in 2024 – 2025 in the amount of $797,000.

Question: Board Member Halter asked how Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell calculated for how much money had to be set aside for utilities in the budget.

Answer: Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied he did multi-year contracts, which saved on utilities' prices, noting that the contract would be up in 2028. He added, however, that they could not control what the Public Utilities Commission did.

b. Technology/Library

Mr. Jason Pelletier, Director of Technology, was present to discuss and answer questions regarding his proposed budget.

Mr. Pelletier explained that the largest line item was that of the capital improvement program. He said that line included laptops, computer replacements, server replacements, the 1:1 Chromebook initiative, and other equipment, firewalls, and the VOIP (voice over IP) for the telephones. He

added that they were able to streamline better to bring costs down and use their technology to the fullest.
Mr. Pelletier stated that while technology and library had always been together, they split them into two separate items. He said this affected the supply line the most, and he was careful to pay close attention to each school, as it depended in part on the population.

Mr. Pellietier noted that there was an increase in the software licensing line item. He also said the instructional equipment line item was bumped up to $31,000, and they level-funded it within the current proposed budget.

c. Student Services

Ms. Sarah Reinhardt, Director of Student Services, was present to discuss and answer questions regarding her proposed budget.

Ms. Reinhardt stated that the proposed budget reflected the cost of providing the legally required Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students who were identified as in need of special education. She said a FAPE was considered sufficient when it enabled a student with a disability to make appropriate progress in light of their circumstances. She further stated that in Merrimack, approximately 775 were identified as in need of special education, or about 20% of the population.

Ms. Reinhardt said one of the notable items on the proposed budget was the cost of contracted services used for speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and BCBAs. She said prior to COVID-19, it was a fiscally responsible way to use the money as they could adjust the contracts based on the student's needs. She added that after COVID-19, there was a drain in professional staff.

Ms. Reinhardt stated that there were two requests for administrative assistants for the Student Services Department, and the current administrative assistants needed help as they were overwhelmed with the number of students who were utilizing special education.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle commented that there was also a request for a third administrative assistant to help with the 504 plans. She said it was the same type of circumstance in that the current administrative assistant was overwhelmed with the workload, with 478 students having a 504 plan.

Question: From the School Board. Please explain why such an increase is proposed for this year to carry into next year.

Answer: Ms. Reinhardt replied that the Director of School Counseling K-8, Ms. Sara Parrotto, oversaw the line items. She said it was level-funded because it included the YES Program, which supported at-risk students. She said currently, only high-risk students at the high school were supported. She said they saw approximately 20 students at any given point. She also said the Greater Nashua Mental Group provided self-regulation programming and training at the K through grade 8 levels. Ms. Reinhardt noted there was Adventurelore that provided experiential learning for at-risk students, and they had adjusted different items to keep the line level funded.

Ms. Reinhardt also explained that they had guest speakers for students regarding anti-bullying, etc., which was approximately $2,000 per school, and the staff received suicide prevention

training, which was a one-time fee of $12,000. She said a part-time contracted counselor continued to be needed at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and the Merrimack Middle School to provide counseling, as outlined in students' IEPs.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle commented that the suicide prevention training was required on an annual basis.

Question: From the School Board. What is the increase of $12,427 in line item 100-2122-41-8610-10?

Answer: Ms. Reinhardt replied that the increase included the cost of supplies for Tier 1, and it also included a three-year contract for Second Step. She said she did not anticipate the price of Second Step being in the following year's budget.

Question: Is there any room for decreases with the following line items, seeing how so little of it had been utilized? 100-2122-41-8114-10, 100-2122-41-8114-20, and 100-2122-41-8114-30

Answer: Ms. Reinhardt replied that the line items were used to support paraprofessionals to support students in co-curricular activities, and more students participated in the activities.

Question: Board Member Rothhaus asked how much the district had spent so far in the current year and how many students needed the extra support.

Answer: Ms. Reinhardt replied she would create a document and provide it to the School Board.

Question: Board Member Halter asked how many paraprofessionals the district currently had and how many unfilled paraprofessional positions there were.

Answer: Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied that the district was understaffed by 17 paraprofessionals, but some of those positions were filled with a contracted paraprofessional. He added that, by law, he could not remove the MESSA (Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association) Master Agreement FTE's (full-time employees) in the operating budget.

Question: From the School Board. What is the year-to-date expenditure, and what is encumbered with these items?

Answer: Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied they were salary lines, and each of the line items had approximately $300,000 remaining. He added that they used some of the money to pay for the contracted services.

Question: From the School Board. Is there any room for decreases here, given that the previous year's expenditures never exceeded $60,000? 100-1138-38-8122-30

Answer: Ms. Reinhardt replied that the line item was used for tutoring any student who had a documented medical condition that caused them to be removed from school for more than 10 consecutive days.

Ms. Reinhardt also replied that this line item pertained to the Extended School Year Summer Program and what they think it would cost to provide it at the high school. She added it was difficult to get staff to work during the summer months, so they would have to hire contracted services to fill the positions.

Question: How do you calculate the increase? 100-2140-41-8323-06

Answer: Ms. Reinhardt replied that the line item pertaining to the cost of the contracted services for the current year for the speech occupational therapist-assisted technology consultant, orientation and mobility consultant, a teacher for deaf people, and a teacher for the visually impaired. She said it also included the Hear to Learn contract, which provided an educational audiologist for students who were hearing impaired, and DTS Therapy, which provided physical therapists.

Question: What accounts for the almost 108% increase in this line item? How many elementary referrals for 2024 – 2025 and how many elementary re-evaluations for 2024 – 2025 were used or are being used for the contracted services? Please bring concrete data to support this line item.

Answer: Ms. Reinhardt replied that the line item included the school psychologists at the elementary schools. She added that as of that day, the preschool had 28 referrals, James Mastricola Elementary School had 15 referrals, Reeds Ferry Elementary School had 16 referrals, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School had 5 referrals, Merrimack Middle School had 12 referrals, and the Merrimack High School had 3 referrals.

Ms. Reinhardt added that they were still trying to catch up with students who did not receive triennial or complete evaluations during Covid, which added to the amount of time that a school psychologist needed to be in the buildings. She said she felt once the referrals started to normalize, she projected that the cost would decrease.

Chair Peters stated that she would like to see what it would look like financially to hire in-house school psychologists rather than using contracted services. She said the salaries in Nashua ranged in wages from $45,000 to $90,000, excluding benefits.

Ms. Reinhardt stated that she felt it was important to mention that they were able to decrease some of the line items.

Question: Chair Peters asked Ms. Reinhardt to please explain the need for and number of out-of-district placements and the anticipated increase.

Answer: Ms. Reinhardt replied that the districts had students whose learning needs were so complex that they could not control the regular education environment enough to allow them to access their Free and Appropriate Public Education. She added when they had complex learners, those students typically had severe social and emotional needs where. They required a smaller setting with intensive therapeutic responses that public schools did not have. She said the IEP team had to exhaust all of the services that they could bring into a school to make the school accessible to a child, and once they saw that the student was not making any progress, they had to look at an alternative learning environment.

d. District

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the district's budget was made up of contracted services, benefits, obligations per law, and other items from a curriculum standpoint. He added that the district was obligated, per the teacher contract, to provide an early retirement incentive for at least seven MTA (Merrimack Teachers' Association) members and that money was in the district's budget. He said the health insurance went up by $1.2 million, and the dental insurance went up by $46,000. He also said the cost of transportation had gone up, among many other line items that were part of the proposed budget.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that aimsWebPlus was an item in the proposed budget. She said there was also a request for a stipend for mentoring new teachers and a request to procure some curriculum development supplies.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle and other Board Members expressed their extreme disappointment that the district had mandates put upon them without receiving any funding for those mandates.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

5. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 8:02 p.m., Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
December 16, 2024

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

- Staff Welfare

Present: Ms. Lori Chair Peters, Chair; Ms. Jenna Hardy, Vice-Chair; Ms. Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member; Mr. Ken Martin, Board Member; and Ms. Naomi Halter, Board Member.

Also Present: Mr. Everett Olsen, Chief Educational Officer; Ms. Amy Doyle, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum; Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business; and Mr. Finnegan Haddad, Student Representative.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Chair Peters called the regular meeting to order.

Chair Peters, on behalf of the entire School Board and the administration, stated that their thoughts and prayers were with the Madison, WI, community.

Chair Peters read aloud the Merrimack School District's mission statement into the record as follows:

The Merrimack School District will provide a high-quality, future-driven education to all students in the community. Students will engage in learning opportunities that reflect both rigger and relevance and meet their cognitive, social, and emotional needs. The district will prepare students to understand, adapt, and adjust to civic, economic, social, and technological changes in the world. Our overall goal is to inspire, create, and encourage students to be curious, connected, prepared, resilient, and dedicated individuals who are lifelong expert learners. Merrimack graduates exercise judgment; they are innovative and will become responsible contributors to society. We hope the discussions we have tonight will always align with that mission.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Maureen Tracey, 17 Burt Street, addressed the Board regarding the SAU building. She said she had recently visited the SAU building and found it to be very outdated and dangerous.

3. BUDGET QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

a. Merrimack Middle School

Mr. Chrigus Boezeman, Principal of Merrimack Middle School, and Ms. Kathleen Hoppa, Assistant Principal, were present to discuss and answer questions regarding the proposed budget needs at the middle school.

Question: From the School Board. Please explain the changes to the language program that have occurred/are occurring.

Answer: Ms. Hoppa commented that all 7th-graders, with very few exceptions, took a quarter each of exploratory Spanish and exploratory French.

Question: From the School Board. If a student only does a full year in 8th grade, how does that impact their placement at the high school?

Question: Do 8th-graders who do not take the entire year get more of the exploratory course?

Answer: Ms. Hoppa replied that the 8th-grade world language offerings were both one-year-long courses. She said the following year would be the first year that credit-bearing French or Spanish.

Comments: Mr. Boezeman said the Title I Reading & Math Programs were fully staffed. He said the Academic Advisory was available so that everyday students could have an opportunity to see a teacher or get some extra help; he added that the Performance Arts groups included Concert Band and Chorus and had been very successful.

Mr. Boezeman added that a breakfast program had been added to the middle school and had proved to be successful.

Question: From the School Board. Could you explain what the Blick Econo Etch Model II Press is and its purpose?

Answer: Mr. Boezeman said that the focus of the budget for fiscal year 2026 was on the Unified Arts Programs. He said the Visual Arts class had been working on printmaking. He said the teachers were hoping to make an investment and purchase another press.

Question: From the School Board. Are students certified in CPR? If so, who certifies them?

Answer: Mr. Boezeman also said that in the health class, teachers provided the students with hands-only CPR instructions. He said they were hoping to get an additional CPR mannequin so both health teachers could use them at the same time. He said they did not offer any CPR certification.

Mr. Boezeman added that the Music Department had purchased keyboards in 2004 so students could be exposed to music theory and practice-based keyboarding techniques. He said in 2008, they began a two-keyboard-per-year replacement program.

Mr. Boezeman said they would like to expand the offerings in the Technical Education area by including digital content creation. He said they hoped to purchase some digital cameras.

Mr. Boezeman commented that over the past few years, the school nurse had received a number of donations for consumables, primarily for hygiene products. He said he would like to incorporate some money into the budget so the nurse would not have to rely on donations and run out of products.

Question: From the School Board. How much bottled water gets handed out? It is a tiny thing in terms of the overall budget, but we are wondering about giving them dixie cups to use at the water bubbler instead of bottled water.

Answer: Mr. Boezeman replied that the nurse used bottled water for some students who needed it. He said they did not have a water bottle filling station. He said the nurse sometimes had to pay for the small bottles of water out of her own pocket and was hoping it could be put in the budget.

Question: From the School Board. When was the last time coaching stipends went up? Are you having any issues recruiting or retaining coaches?

Answer: Mr. Boezeman replied that he was not able to find any increases in the stipends for coaches in approximately ten years. He said he was hoping to increase the stipend of the middle school and assistant coaches to the same as the freshmen coach at the high school.

Question: From the School Board. Is there already a girl's B-Team for soccer? What other schools have a B team? How many middle schools offer lacrosse?

Answer: Mr. Boezeman also said that he would like to expand the opportunities for male athletes in soccer by trying out having a B-Team. He commented that there were about six B-Teams in the tri-county league. He also said they currently did not have a B-Team for females.

Ms. Hoppa said that students had been asking for a lacrosse program at the middle school in the spring, and they would love to offer that. She added that Amherst, Hollis, Milford, Londonderry, and Bedford all had lacrosse B-Teams.

Question: From Board Member Halter. Regarding account 100-2134-07-8610-21 (health supplies), why was this over budget in 2023-2024, and have you budgeted enough for FY26?

Answer: Mr. Boezeman replied that he believed it was due to the purpose of AED pads and batteries, but he said he would verify it.

Question: Board Member Rothhaus asked what it might cost to have the 7th and 8th graders be certified in CPR as well as using the AED machines.

Answer: Mr. Boezeman replied that he agreed.

Comment: Board Member Halter noted that even though there were several requests for new equipment (block printing press, alcohol awareness goggles, band saw, and a few others) there were other new requests the prior year that were not included in the FY26 budget, so it was not just increases. She said, overall, the additional equipment lines were down a little bit. (by approximately $2000) from FY25.

b. Merrimack High School

Mr. Steve Claire, Principal of Merrimack High School, and Ms. Jill Hanlon, Assistant Principal of Merrimack High School and Mr. Richard Zampieri, Assistant Principal of Merrimack High School, were present to discuss and answer questions regarding the proposed budget needs at the high school.

Mr. Claire started the discussion by stating that the proposed budget for the high school included an overall increase of less than 10%, with many line items having decreased or being level-funded.

Mr. Claire said the decision to move the Merrimack High School library budget from the district's technology budget to the Merrimack High School budget was part of the reason for the increase. He said the significant increase in the Athletics' Officials Home Game Management line was due to the request to have a Merrimack, NH, police detail at every home game and match for safety reasons.

Comment: From the School Board. We like the summary of how everything is moving around, and we appreciate that you are being mindful of the best places for different items, even though it means quite a bit of movement.

Question: From the School Board. There were a few supply lines with requests for more equipment due to increased enrollment – can we have a list or summary of class offerings and how many students were in each?

Answer: Mr. Claire replied he had provided Chief Educational Officer Olsen with that list in October.

Comment: Mr. Claire replied that this request was to purchase new blue football uniforms, as the current uniforms were purchased in 2019. He said they also wanted to purchase new championship banners for athletics and academic teams, as well as volleyball standards and lacrosse nets.

Comment: From the School Board. We are glad to see the investment in championship banners for the non-athletic activities!

Question: We would like to see a comparison between athletic spending and co-curricular spending, including the number of kids served in the various sports and activities.

Answer: Mr. Zampieri replied that he did not know what the current spending was, but he said there had been 498 athletes signed up for one or more sports to date, and the advisors for all of the co-curricular clubs had submitted their numbers for the fall and estimates for the winter and spring and over 936 were signed up to participate in one or more sports or clubs.

Comment: Mr. Claire replied that with the discontinuation of the Gifted & Talented Program, the co-curricular lines had a lot of movement. He said supply and transportation lines within the co-curricular budget had been increased to include the costs that were formally covered by the Gifted & Talented Program. He added that the co-curricular membership line had been reduced even though they had added three Honor Societies for music, science, and Spanish by moving the athletic memberships to the administration member line, which was where they belonged.

Mr. Claire stated that the lodging costs for the music department's festivals had also been moved from co-curricular memberships to co-curricular travel. He added that the budget line under computer education was used from the 6th-grade through 12th-grade Technology Coordinator had an overall decrease; however, many of the individual line items showed significant increases and decreases. He said the supply and equipment line had a drastic decline.

Mr. Claire said there was a request for new civics textbooks, which were necessary because the New Hampshire Department of Education required students to pass the civics exam as a graduation requirement. He said the textbooks currently being used were published in 2009.

Question: From the School Board. Regarding the school store's point of sale system, what are they using now? Can you please provide more information about the school store as well?

Answer: Ms. Hanlon replied that the students from the business and marketing classes were running the school store. She said they were currently using cash only, and it limited the amount of sales they had. having a point-of-sale system was a computerized system, and it would also assist with keeping inventory.

Question: From the School Board. We would like to know if you know yet how close the estimate for the cost of PSAT testing is for FY25.

Answer: Mr. Claire replied that PSAT 9 costs approximately $9.00 per assessment, and PSAT 10 costs approximately $18.00 per assessment. He said the total cost of the pre-SAT and the SATs would be approximately $12,000.

Question: From the School Board. How many teams made it to the final four round competitions?

Answer: Mr. Claire replied that three teams made the tournament, and the boys' and girls' soccer teams both made it to the quarter-finals. He said the football team had made it to the preliminary round of the tournament and lost to Pinkerton in the first round of the tournament.

Question: From the School Board. There are a few new lines for field trips. Are these new trips or moving funds for more transparency?

Answer: Ms. Hanlon replied that the line item regarding field trips was already occurring but that they were accounting for them better.

Question: From Board Member Halter Regarding line item 100-2725-24-8519-31, how many kids were using this so far? (Athletic transportation)

Answer: Mr. Claire replied that approximately 120 – 130 had used it for practice to date, but it changed based on bus driver availability.

Question: From the School Board. What is the anticipated Logic and Rhetoric class?

Answer: Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle replied that it had not definitely been decided, but they were working on it. Ms. Hanlon added that it came from the new (unfunded) graduation requirement from the state, and the course was entitled the "Art of Arguing."

Question: From the School Board. We understand the need for police at events that draw big crowds. Is this increase intended to provide police at all home games, regardless of crowd size? Was this the school district's decision or the Merrimack Police Department, or was it a required change? Do any other high schools in New Hampshire have police detail at every event?

Answer: Mr. Claire replied that he and Chief Educational Officer Olsen had started discussing the matter after there had been some school shootings at athletic events in other areas. He said that at that time, they decided to offer a police presence at all of the sporting events, not just the ones that were most attended. He added that in August, he and Chief Educational Officer Olsen met again and discussed if they wanted to continue with that

practice, and they decided they would put it in the proposed budget due to safety concerns. Mr. Claire said that while he understood the chance of a violent event occurring was rare, it was certainly still possible.

Comment: Board Member Rothhaus said she had spoken with the Superintendent of Schools at Pinkerton Academy, and he said they only had a police detail at games where they knew there would be a large turn-out or two competitive teams were playing. She said that while she agreed some events warranted a police presence, she did not feel that the district could financially sustain having that presence at every event.

Comment: Board Member Martin said he understood that would bring peace of mind to all of those in attendance, and if they had any evidence that they considered worrisome, he would be entirely in favor of a police presence. He said, however, that he felt they would have a closer look at having a police presence at every event.

Comment: Chair Peters suggested that they look further at events where there had been issues. She also said that not every event would draw large crowds, and there would be an increased possibility of violence.

Comment: Vice-Chair Hardy stated that she felt it would be a good idea to parse it out a bit and agreed that some events would draw more crowds than others.

c. Additional Sessions with Departments, if needed:

There was none; however, Chair Peters noted that the following Wednesday, the School Board would discuss any changes they wanted to make to the budget.

Comment: Board Member Rothhaus requested that, in the future, all of the Athletic Directors attend the budget meetings.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. December 2, 2024 – Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 2, 2024, meeting, as presented. Board Member Rothhaus seconded the motion.

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

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Wendy Thomas, 10 Wildcat Falls, addressed the Board and said she was one of the State Representatives representing Merrimack. She said 140 Education Bills had been filed, and they knew nothing about them except the titles at that point. She added that one of the most alarming ones was to remove any CAP from school vouchers, which would blow the entire program up. She said she was keeping an eye out and would keep the Board informed.

Mr. Chuck Mower, 4 Depot Street, addressed the Board and said he felt a good alternative to having a police detail at all school events might be to create some auxiliary group of parents who could have some community training that could assist at some school events.

Student Representative Haddad addressed the Board and said he had some concerns about the amount of the stipend that the Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) teachers

received. He said presently, an ELO teacher was paid $150.00 for half of the year. He said he felt the stipend should be increased to $200.00 or $300.00 per semester. Board Member Rothhaus replied that she felt that money should be funded in a different line item because the course had been created.

Ms. Shannon Rand, 1 Blair Road, addressed the Board and stated that she felt it would be great if the school district could share what other ways the Booster Clubs could collect money, other than cash, as well as any other information that may help them.

MOTION: At approximately 7:25 p.m., Board Member Martin made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Memorial Room
December 18, 2024

Present: Ms. Lori Chair Peters, Chair; Ms. Jenna Hardy, Vice-Chair; Ms. Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member; Mr. Ken Martin, Board Member; and Ms. Naomi Halter, Board Member.

Also Present: Mr. Everett Olsen, Chief Educational Officer; Ms. Amy Doyle, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum; and Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

Not Present: Mr. Finnegan Haddad, Student Representative.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Chair Peters called the regular meeting to order.

Chair Peters read aloud the Merrimack School District's mission statement into the record as follows:

The Merrimack School District will provide a high-quality, future-driven education to all students in the community. Students will engage in learning opportunities that reflect both rigger and relevance and meet their cognitive, social, and emotional needs. The district will prepare students to understand, adapt, and adjust to civic, economic, social, and technological changes in the world. Our overall goal is to inspire, create, and encourage students to be curious, connected, prepared, resilient, and dedicated individuals who are lifelong expert learners. Merrimack graduates exercise judgment; they are innovative and will become responsible contributors to society. We hope the discussions we have tonight will always align with that mission.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were none.

3. BUDGET PRESENTATION

a. Work Session

Board Member Martin commented that he felt the administrative team had done a fantastic job at finding ways not only to decrease the costs of things that were no longer needed or were not in need of improvement but also to find things that the district truly did need. He added that he felt nothing being requested was frivolous. He said he felt the requests were in line with the district's goals.

Board Member Martin said if he had to pick two items that could be cut from the proposed budget, it would be the van for the Food Services Department and to hire a police detail for events at the high school.

Chair Peters commented that the current van only had 65,000 on it and felt they could still get some use out of it.

Board Member Rothhaus commented that the Food Service Department's budgets had always been very frugal, but also said that it was critical to get the food to the different schools and perhaps selling the van would be a better option.

Vice-Chair Hardy said the Food Services Department was self-funded, including the van.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the Food Services Department had over $300,000 in surplus, and by statute, they would have to spend it down. He said it would not affect the tax rate.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that the surplus funds could not be used for other purposes.

Chair Peters commented that every member of the Board had some concerns regarding having a police detail at so many events and asked for the Board's thoughts.

Board Member Martin commented that he did not feel there was any evidence that supported having a police detail at every sporting event.

Vice-Chair Hardy commented that some events would draw more people, and she felt that having police details should be event-specific. She suggested that the amount of the requested money could be decreased.

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to decrease the amount for a police detail from $54,45 to $27,072.50. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Board Member Rothhaus, regarding contracted services, asked if there was a way for the district to hire its own people in some of the positions. Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied that they always looked to hire their own people first.

Chair Peters requested that the district continue to look at finding the most efficient contracted services.

Board Member Halter said she felt the asks were not large. She said, however, that the delivery charges for electricity were a bit high. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied that the supply rates would be stable, the delivery charges were up to the Public Utilities Commission, and the district had no control over that. She also asked if they could decrease the utility lines by a little bit in each line item.

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to direct the administration to look at the utility lines in the maintenance budget and find $30,000 in cuts. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Board Member Rothhaus commented that she was not comfortable with making that cut. Vice-Chair Hardy and Chair Peters agreed with Board Member Rothhaus' statement.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that the utility accounts were often influenced by global instability.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said he was reasonably confident that they could make the $30,000 in cuts.

MOTION FAILED: 1 – 4 – 0 (Nay: Chair Peters, Vice-Chair Hardy, Board Member Rothhaus, & Board Member Martin.)

Board Member Rothhaus, regarding the addition of three administrative assistants, said she wanted more information as she did not feel that the district needed three. Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied he would provide additional information but noted that it was an area that the district needed to do a better job of mandatory compliance, record keeping, and communication.

Vice-Chair Hardy suggested that one or more could be part-time positions.

Board Member Rothhaus commented that at the last meeting, Student Representative Haddad was discussing a particular teacher who was giving up their prep time to teach. She said there was no budget line to address teachers who were teaching an independent study. She also said many talented teachers could teach something in their field, and it would be great to have a stipend line item at some point in the future.

Chair Peters asked if any other members of the Board would like to make changes to the budget. There were none.

Chair Peters said that the School Board's recommendation was to reduce the proposed budget by $27,072.50, with the stipulation that there may be some changes regarding the three administrative assistant positions.

Vice-Chair Hardy stated that while there was a request for money to replace the football uniforms, she did not see any requests for other sports and wanted to make sure it was equitable. Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied that he would provide the Board with further information.

Vice-Chair Hardy commented that she felt it would be helpful for the Athletic Director to make their own presentation at the following year's budget meeting.

Chair Peters, commenting on co-curricular activities, stated that she would like to see the district's principals look into more parental volunteers and more creative ways to have them without increasing the budget.

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to reduce the proposed budget by $27,072.50, leaving a total proposed budget of $96,823,198. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the default budget was approximately $1 million less than the proposed budget the Board had just voted on. He said that equated to .50 cents on the tax rate, which was $100.00 less than voting in the budget the Board just requested that the Budget Committee review. He read aloud an excerpt from RSA 40:13 as follows:

"The default budget as used in this subsection means the amount of the same appropriation as contained in the operating budget authorized for the previous year."

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the default budget was the purview of the School Board only and could not be changed at the Deliberative Session.

b. Warrant Article Discussion

Chair Peters commented that there was a Warrant Article that was not included in the School Board's packet, and it was related to the proposed new SAU building. She said they had not yet had a formal presentation from the Building & Planning Comminute, but they had all watched the meetings, and at its last meeting, they voted to recommend the newest proposal for an SAU building. She said, as Chair of the School Board, she did not include it in the packet because they had not heard the Building & Planning Committee's presentation, and she was very concerned about putting a Warrant Article on the ballot about the SAU building. She further stated that the operating budget was critical for passing if they were going to provide the best education for the best tax dollar for the students.

Board Member Martin commented that he felt the number one priority was the passing of the operating budget. If anything could possibly get in the way of that not passing, then he felt they needed to have a serious conversation about it. He said although he felt support for the SAU building was gaining momentum, he felt it was a tough pill to swallow.

Board Member Halter commented that her biggest concern was that they had been in the same position before, and she said she felt they could not let the matter remain stagnant for years to come.

Board Member Rothhaus commented that not only was the building not ADA-compliant, but she had serious safety concerns about the current SAU building. She said she felt they should march on with the project, especially if they could get the price down a bit by getting other funding sources.

Vice-Chair Hardy commented that she agreed with her fellow Board Members' comments.

Board Member Rothhaus commented that perhaps they could have a Warrant Article that authorized putting surplus money towards the proposed project. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that it could be done, and it might soften the blow for the taxpayers.

Board Member Martin stated that he would be in favor of creating such a Warrant Article for a Capital Reserve Fund.

Chair Peters said they would continue the discussion at its January meeting.

Recorder's Note: Board Member Martin was excused at approximately 7:25 p.m.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the Deliberative Session would be held on March 4, 2025, with a snow date of March 6, 2025. He said the voting would be held on April 8, 2025.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reviewed the Warrant Articles as summarized below:

1. Shall the Merrimack School District be authorized to accept, on behalf of the district, without any further action by the voters, gifts, legacies, and devices of personal or real property.

2. Shall the Merrimack School District be authorized to expend $823,230 to replace the roofs on the '97 additions.

3. Shall the Merrimack School District be authorized to add money to an already existing Roof Capital Reserve Fund at such time as there will be a ten-year gap where the district did not have to replace any roofs.

4. Shall the Merrimack School District be authorized to create a Capital Reserve Account to fund the SAU building?

5. Shall the Merrimack School District be authorized to accept the 2025 – 2026 operating budget in the amount of $96,823,198, with a default budget of $95,808,066.

MOTION: Board Member Rothhaus made a motion to accept the Warrant Articles, as presented, with the adjustment to the budget. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. December 4, 2024 – Public Minutes

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2024, meeting, as presented. Board Member Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

MOTION: At approximately 7:50 p.m., Board Member Halter made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.

Improvements to the Merrimack School District

—

2021-Present

Revised 1.7.2025

Operational Improvements

- Updated existing policies and drafted and approved new policies
- Major update to Student Handbooks
- Initiated and maintained an annual goal setting meeting between the School Board and District Administration
- Drafted a 3-year strategic plan
- Meetings with staff in every school to discuss the strengths and needs of our district at all levels
- Refocused the "Service Learning Project" program to focus on activities that improve staff skills
- Introduced "Observe and Conserve" energy savings suggestions
- Improved the design and readability of the annual school calendar
- Continually improving the culture of our school district... How we can do things instead of why we can't do something
- Utilizing ESSER funds and then incorporating into the general fund, established and maintained a one to one device ratio and supporting infrastructure for all students

Curriculum/Student Focused Improvements

- Planned and implemented the "Pathways to Graduation" program at Merrimack High School
- Introduced "Summer Band Camp"
- Improved the theatre arts program at Merrimack High School
- Developed course competencies
- Centralizing the preschool program
- Implemented a new progress monitoring system for academic achievement - iReady in Kindergarten through Grade 8; PSATs in Grades 9 and 10; and aimswebPlus for students receiving intervention services, including special education
- Carefully planned and implemented the following curriculum improvements
  - Literacy, which includes reading, writing, listening, and speaking, in Kindergarten through Grade 7
  - Mathematics in Kindergarten through Grade 8 - transitioned to programs that are aligned to the national standards
  - Science in Kindergarten through Grade 8
  - Replaced Physical Science and Biology textbooks for the required courses in Grades 9 and 10, respectively
  - Curriculum and programming for our multilingual, English Language Learners
- Expanded our grant funding sources by reestablishing Title III activities
- Improved our systems, practices, and procedures following multiple audits from the New Hampshire Department of Education
- Revised and updated our district's federal compliance manual for our comprehensive local plan for English Language Learners
- Expanded our summer learning opportunities to provide academic support to our at risk students

Improvements Related to School Safety

- Updated crisis plans and provided evacuation/reunification training
- Upgraded the district-wide security surveillance hardware and software as well as access control
- Maintained the continuation of our roof replacement program to avoid unanticipated repairs and major expenditures
- Established strong school safety collaboration with the Merrimack Police Department

Personnel/Staff Development Improvements

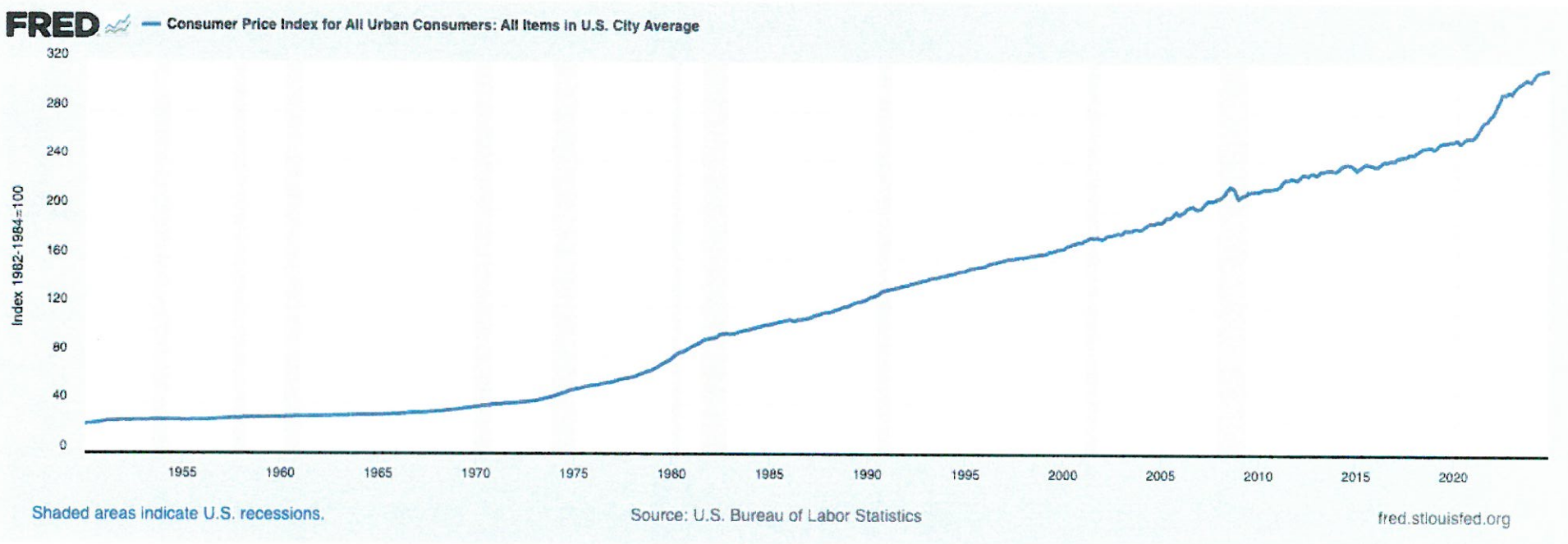
- Updated job descriptions
- Develop Administrator Evaluation Process and Instrument (form)
- Proposed and implemented K-4 Reading Interventionists
- Improved Human Resources processes, including electronic contracts and digitized employee files for those that have left employment
- Provide high quality professional development to all staff related to required and recommended trainings, as well as and district initiatives
- Expanded our district's mentoring program to provide new staff with robust opportunities that support their transition and establishment into the Merrimack community
- Revised and updated the Teacher Evaluation Model, including walkthroughs, formal and informal observations, and summative evaluations
- Incorporated 5 early release days in annual school calendar for staff professional development

1/21/2025

Proposed Warrant Article

ARTICLE 3 (Special Warrant Article) Shall the District establish a capital reserve fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1, to be known as the Administrative Office Development Fund for the purpose of construction and original equipping of appropriate office space located in the district to include but not be limited to the Superintendent Services, Student Services, Student Wellness, Technology, Business Operations, and Human Resources, and to raise and appropriate an amount of up to Seven Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars ($750,000) from the unencumbered surplus funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year 2024-2025 and to transfer that amount to the said fund, and name the school board as agents to expend from this fund?

(Recommended by the School Board Vote: _____).
(Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: _____).


FRED
Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items in U.S. City Average
Index 1982-1984=100
320
280
240
200
160
120
80
40
0
1955
1960
1965
1970
1975
1980
1985
1990
1995
2000
2005
2010
2015
2020
Shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
fred.stlouisfed.org

2024-2025 Budget as Passed		
Article 8 - Operating Budget (Default)	$	91,301,349
Article 6 - JMUES Roof	$	797,000
Article 4 - MESSA Labor Contract 24-25	$	1,200,624
Total Gross Budget as Voted MS22 24-25	**$**	**93,298,973**
Total Gross Budget as Voted MS22 24-25	**$**	**93,298,973**
Contracted Salaries for 25-26	$	888,087
SPED Services	$	905,875
Ins/Health/Dw	$	1,224,196
Ins/Dental/Dw	$	46,008
Work Comp Ins/Dw	$	14,646
Repairs/DW - Warrant Article Roof	$	(797,000)
Transport/Reg	$	138,747
Food Service	$	75,471
Insurances/Prop & Liab/Dw	$	13,063
Total Default 25-26	**$**	**95,808,067**

Roof Article Removed for Default Calculation

Year	Inflation
2018-2019	2.44%
2019-2020 (partial-year shut down Covid)	1.81%
2020-2021 (Covid)	1.23%
2021-2022 (expanded summer programs)	4.70%
2022-2023 (MTA Passes)	8.00%
2023-2024 Y1 MTA	4.12%
2024-2025 Y2 MTA, Y1 MESSA 15% health insurance increase - Default	~2.95*
2025-2026 Y3 MTA, Y2 MESSA, 10% health insurance increase	

*2024 has not been calculated yet. This amount is the average of 11 months of inflation.

Approved	Expended	Expended Adjusted for CPI
	72,428,972	74,196,239
	72,893,785	74,213,163
	71,210,831	72,086,724
	74,155,752	77,641,072
	80,575,999	87,022,079
	85,778,265	89,312,330
93,298,973	93,298,973*	96,051,293
96,823,198		

*Budget+Messa+Roof
Potential suprlus return
to tax payers ~$3-4mil.

Administrator Comparison

Hudson:
Same number in District
1 Principal, 1 AP per elementary, middle school
Alvirne HS 1000 students – Principal, 3 APs, Dean of Academics

Amherst:
Same number in District
1 Principal, 1 AP per elementary, middle school
Souhegan HS 698 students – Principal, 3 APs, 2 Deans

Londonderry:
Same number in District
1 Principal, 1 AP per elementary, middle school
Londonderry HS 1400 students – Principal, 4 APs

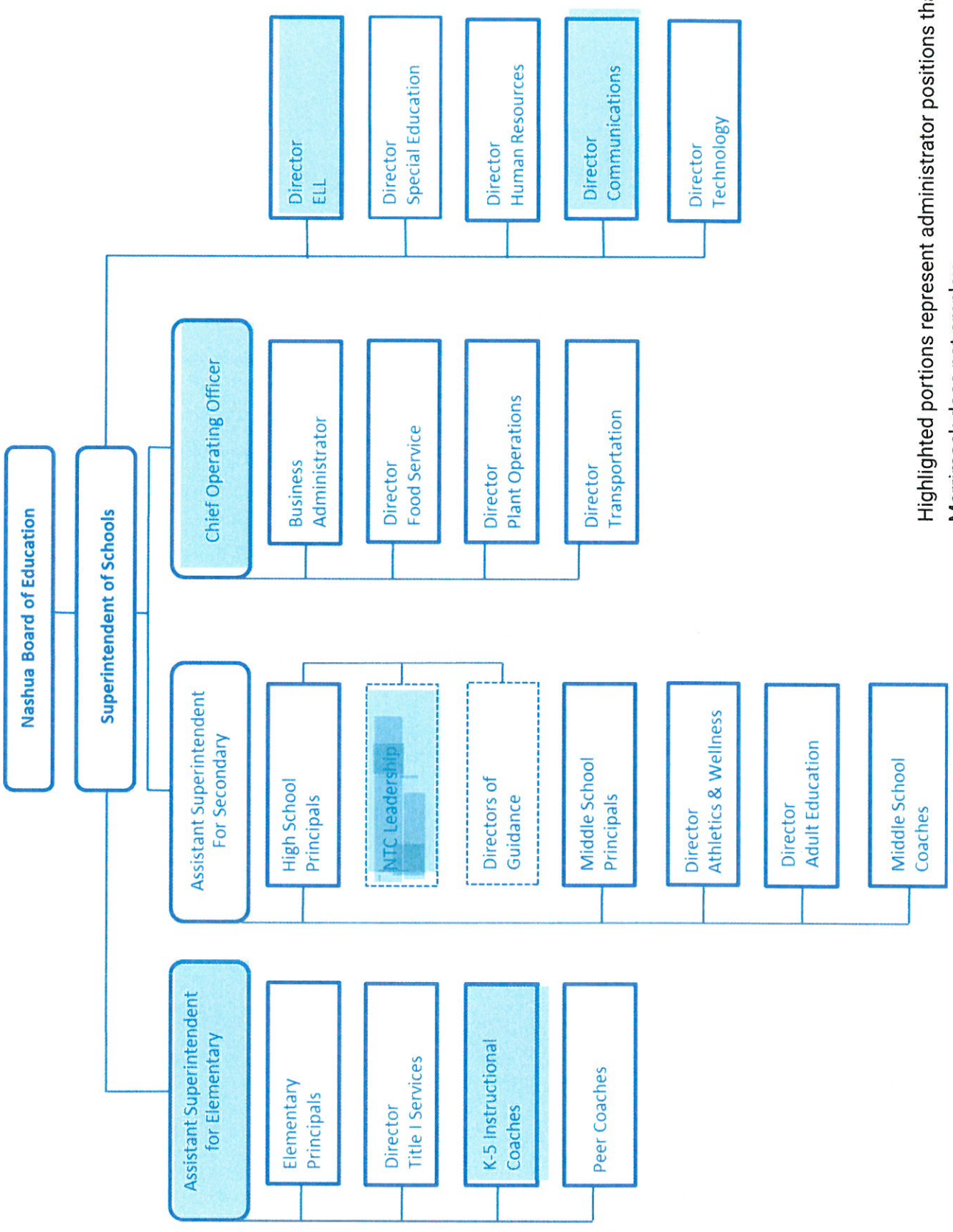
Bedford:
Same number in District
1 Principal, 1 AP per elementary, middle school
Bedford HS 1400 students – Principal, 1 AP, 3 Deans

Nashua:
Six additional District administrators
1 Principal, 1 AP per elementary, middle school
Nashua North 1600 students – Principal, 4 APs
Nashua South 1700 students – 1 Principal, 4 APs

Merrimack
Same number in District
1 Principal, 1 AP per elementary, middle school
Merrimack HS 1200 students – Principal, 2 APs

Administrator salaries encompass 2.5% of the total budget. Our administrators work 12 months of the year and attend meetings, events, and emergency matters outside teacher contract hours. Many administrative positions come from unfunded mandates or positions not needed or required in the distant past. They are 10 months positions.
Sample from Massachusetts of unfunded federal mandates: https://www.masc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/underfundedmandates.pdf

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Highlighted portions represent administrator positions that Merrimack does not employ.

MERRIMACK SCHOOL DISTRICT MONTHLY ENROLLMENTS 2024-2025

January 6, 2025

January 6, 2025	PRE	K	1	2	3	4	Total	5	6	Total	7	8	Total	9	10	11	12	Total	ODP	HSS	TOTALS
MES	21	62	57	76	83	70	**369**														**369**
RFS	53	92	114	84	85	78	**506**														**506**
TFS	42	81	92	100	100	90	**505**														**505**
MUES								263	276	**539**											**539**
MMS											240	241	**481**								**481**
MHS														258	253	266	269	**1046**			**1046**
PR-12 Total																					**3446**
Student Services ODP**																			24		**24**
Home Study (HSS)																				148	**148**
Total	**116**	**235**	**263**	**260**	**268**	**238**	**1380**	**263**	**276**	**539**	**240**	**241**	**481**	**258**	**253**	**266**	**269**	**1046**	**24**	**148**	**3618**

**Out-of-District Placement

MONTHLY ENROLLMENTS 2024-2025

Month	*PRE	K	1	2	3	4	Total	5	6	Total	7	8	Total	9	10	11	12	Total	ODP	HSS	TOTALS
September 9, 2024	104	239	267	267	266	239	1382	263	274	537	238	246	484	262	261	271	284	1078	20	139	3640
October 1, 2024	105	239	266	265	269	239	1383	261	272	533	237	242	479	258	257	268	273	1056	20	139	3610
October 7, 2024	106	238	266	265	269	239	1383	261	273	534	238	240	478	257	257	267	274	1055	20	139	3609
November 4, 2024	107	238	265	263	270	240	1383	264	274	538	239	240	479	257	256	265	273	1051	22	144	3617
December 2, 2024	110	237	264	262	267	239	1379	263	275	538	240	240	480	257	256	265	270	1048	22	147	3614
January 6, 2025	116	235	263	260	268	238	1380	263	276	539	240	241	481	258	253	266	269	1046	24	148	3618

BUS SUSPENSIONS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

	MHS	MMS	JMUES	MES	RFS	TFS
Fighting						
Vandalism						
Disrespect/Disruption			4		4	1
Unsafe Behavior						
Other						
TOTAL	**0**	**0**	**4**	**0**	**4**	**1**