Approved 02-20-2023

Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Memorial Room
January 19, 2023

Present: Chair Laurie Rothhaus, Vice-Chair Lori Peters, Board Member Jenna Hardy, Board Member Naomi Halter, 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 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

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and said she was whole-heartedly in agreement that SEL (Social & Emotional Learning) was a vital piece of the student's education and shared the desire for community synergy in Merrimack, however, she said a comment was made at the January 17, 2023, School Board meeting that she was disappointed in. She said the words used seemed to be in contrast with the goal of harmony.

Chair Rothhaus said that Mr. Shawn Croteau, a teacher at the elementary school had passed away and she requested that the School Board hold a moment of silence.

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. Brief Discussion on State Budgeting

State Representative Rosemarie Rung addressed the Board and said that the state had a constitutional responsibility to provide an adequate education for its children. She said the state defined that in terms of money.

Representative Rung said adequacy was defined on a per-pupil basis which was $3,786.00. (if a school district had 1,000 pupils, they would receive 1,000 x $3,786.00. She further said four things were added to that number; how many students participated in the free and reduced lunch program which was multiplied by $1,893.00; how many students were in special education which was multiplied by $2,037.00, how many students that English was not their primary language which was multiplied by $740.00; and how many third graders who scored less than proficient in reading and that was multiplied by $740.00. She said the above numbers were what the state considered the total cost of an adequate education. Representative Rung stated that the state used "two primary buckets" to provide funding; the Adequacy Grant which came out of the state's Education Trust Fund, and SWEPT (Statewide Education Property Tax) which was a number that the state determined how much money was to be raised to support education, beyond the Adequacy Grant. She said they took that money and divided it by the total value of property in New Hampshire to come up with a tax rate. She added, however, that the state tax rate had nothing to do with the calculation of the Merrimack tax rate.

Representative Rung explained that in 2021 the state lowered the amount of SWEPT monies to $263,000 million which dropped the tax rate because they were collecting $100,000 million less than they had previously. She said Merrimack would see $2 million less in the SWEPT revenue. She said the state increased the Adequacy Grant to make up the difference.

Representative Rung said she was working with her colleagues on the Finance Committee to look at innovative ways to address the needs of local districts beyond the constraints of the formula.

4. BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

a. Work Session

Chair Rothhaus commented as the Board moved forward, the purpose of the School District's budget was to create and implement a financial plan that would support appropriate funding for all programs benefitting all students while balancing the Merrimack community's ability to pay its taxes.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Peters made a motion to reduce line item 100-4600-62-8451-08 – Repair Maintenance – Remove the girls' softball dugout in the amount of $54,553.00 to see it back in the budget the following year. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Chair Rothhaus said she felt the Board should support the dugout. Vice-Chair Peters replied she supported it as well but there was a $775,000 debt payment left on the middle school that they would not have the following year. Board Member Martin said he agreed with Vice-Chair Peters.

The motion passed: 3 – 2 – 0. (Nay – Chair Rothhaus & Board Member Hardy)

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell proposed the following budget cuts:

1. $239,00 from various salary lines due to rehires.
2. $12,000 in Technology Infrastructure Improvement – Replace only half of the Cisco telephones.
3. $30,000 in Technology Infrastructure Improvement – Some computers were still viable.
4. $20,000 in Technology Infrastructure Improvement – Could do without 2 fewer servers.
5. $63,000 in Technology Infrastructure Improvement – Reduce the number of switches to seven.
6. $25,350 in Furniture Replacement – Reduce the number of replacement furniture.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the total proposed cuts (1 through 6 as listed above) including the proposed cut of $54,553.00 for the dugout was $443,903.00.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that the proposed cuts would not compromise the education of the students or have a significant impact on the teachers. He also added that the proposed cuts would not be "kicking the can down the road."

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion to accept the cuts as proposed by the administration. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed: 5 – 0 – 0.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept the revised budget for the 2023 – 2024 school year in the amount of $88,329,636 and to provide it to the Budget Committee. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

The motion passed: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. Warrant Article Discussion

ARTICLE 1: To elect all necessary School District officers for the ensuing year. (Vote by ballot.)

ARTICLE 2: Shall the Merrimack School Board be authorized to accept on half of the district, without further action by the voters, gifts, legacies, and devices of personal or real property which may become available to the district during the fiscal year.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept Warrant Article 2 as presented. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

The motion passed: 5 – 0 – 0.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the District approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association which calls for the following net change in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels over the amount paid in the prior fiscal year:

Year	Estimated Amount
2023 – 2024	$1,205,797
2024 – 2025	$1,272,070
2025 – 2026	$1,230,198

and further raise and appropriate the sum of One Million Two Hundred Five Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety-Seven Dollars ($1,205,797) for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at the current staffing levels?

MOTION: Vice-Chair Peters made a motion to accept Warrant Article 3 as presented. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed: 5 – 0 – 0.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the district, if Article 3 is defeated, authorize the School Board to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 3 cost items only?

MOTION: Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept Warrant Article 4, as presented. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

The motion passed: 5 – 0 – 0.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the district raise and appropriate a sum of $1,108,669 for the purpose of roof replacement at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School?

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept Warrant Article 5, as presented. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

The motion passed: 5 – 0 – 0.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the district raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by Special Warrant Articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the Warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling $88,329,637, if not, the default budget was $87,167,947, which was the same as the previous years' budget, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the district or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept Warrant Article 6, as presented. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed: 5 – 0 – 0.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were no comments from the public.

At approximately 8:22 p.m. Board Member Martin made a motion to adjourn. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed: 5 – 0 – 0.