Merrimack School District/SAU 26
School Board Meeting
Preliminary Agenda
May 6, 2024
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

6:00 p.m. **1. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** — Lori Peters

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION — Lori Peters

6:15 p.m. **3. RECOGNITIONS** — Lori Peters
- NHDBA Middle Level Honor Band Festival
- NHMEA South Central Regional Honor Band/Chorus Festival
- NHMEA Composition Contest

6:40 p.m. **4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES** — Lori Peters
a. Superintendent Update
b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update
c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update
d. School Board Update
e. Student Representative Update

6:50 p.m. **5. OLD BUSINESS** — Lori Peters
a. Signing of the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Contract for 2024-2027 — Lori Peters
b. Discussion Regarding Goals Setting Meeting — Lori Peters

7:10 p.m. **6. NEW BUSINESS** — Lori Peters
a. 2024-2025 School Board Committee Assignments — Lori Peters
b. Request to Hire at Will — Everett Olsen
c. Discussion to Improve Communication — Everett Olsen
d. Expectation for Field Preparations — Tom Touseau
e. Memo of Agreement Between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association Regarding Reduction in Force
f. Other

8:10 p.m. **8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES** — Lori Peters
a. April 1, 2024 Non-Public Minutes
b. April 15, 2024 Public and Non-Public Minutes
c. April 18, 2024 Public Special Minutes

8:15 p.m. **10. CONSENT AGENDA** — Amanda Doyle
a. Educator Resignations
b. Educator Nominations
c. Educator and Administrator Nominations for School Year 2024-2025

8:20 p.m. **11. OTHER** — Lori Peters
a. Committee Reports
b. Correspondence
c. Comments

8:30 p.m. **12. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS** — Lori Peters

8:45 p.m. **13. ADJOURN**

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

05-06-2024

New Hampshire Music Educators
Composition Contest

Boden Walters

New Hampshire Music Educators Association
South Central Regional Honor Band/Chorus Festival
(students were selected to audition by nomination)

Lauren Brodsky
Nora Campbell
Elizabeth (Ella) Duval
Hunter Gladding
Tucker Landry
Jacinda Reisman
Parker Shavell
Josephine Swisher
Sadie Taylor
Boden Walters

New Hampshire Band Directors Association
Middle Level Honor Band Festival
(students were selected to participate by audition. MMS had the most participating students from any school state-wide)

Lauren Brodsky
Nora Campbell
Elizabeth (Ella) Duval
Hunter Gladding
Sam Greenspan
Noah Henault
Maya Kricheli
Tucker Landry
Ryan Marone
Grace Massey
Sara McDowell
Asher Remy

Holly Levine, Instrumental Music Director
Matthew McGinnis, MMS Chorus Teacher and Music Teacher at TFS

5-6-2024

2024-2025 School Board Assignments

In-District Committee Assignments (* Denotes District Officer; ▪ Denotes Active Engagement)

Assignment	2023-2024	2024-2025
▪School Board Chair*	Ken Martin	
▪School Board Vice Chair*	Laurie Rothhaus	
▪Budget Committee	Naomi Halter	
▪Alternate	Jenna Hardy	
▪ NH School Boards Association (NHSBA) Delegate	Ken Martin	
▪Alternate	Lori Peters	
▪Curriculum/Instruction/Technology (CIT) Committee **(2 members)**	Jenna Hardy Ken Martin	
▪School Bus Stop Committee	Naomi Halter	
▪ Professional Development Committee	Ken Martin	
▪Alternate	Lori Peters	
▪ Planning & Building Committee	Laurie Rothhaus	
▪ Wellness Policy Implementation Committee - **Last active 2019**	Lori Peters	
▪ Healthcare Cost Containment Committee	Ken Martin	
▪ District Parent Group - **Last active 2018**		
▪ Alternate		
▪ Communications Committee **(2 members) - Last active 2018**	Jenna Hardy Ken Martin	
▪ Policy Committee **(2 members)**	Naomi Halter Lori Peters	
Superintendent Search **(3 members)**	**Currently Inactive**	
▪ Athletic Advisory Committee **(2 members) - New 2023**	Jenna Hardy Laurie Rothhaus	
▪Joint Loss Management Committee - **New 2023**	Melissa Fazlic Lori Peters	
▪Strategic Planning Committee - **New 2023**	Jenna Hardy?	
Collective Bargaining:		
▪ Merrimack Teachers Association #1 (MTA)	**Currently Inactive**	
▪ Merrimack Teachers Association #2 (MTA)	**Currently Inactive**	
Merrimack Education Support Staff Association (MESSA) #1	Laurie Rothhaus	
Merrimack Education Support Staff Association (MESSA) #2	Lori Peters	
Advise and Confer #1	Jenna Hardy	
Advise and Confer #2	Naomi Halter	

Out-of-District Committee Assignments

Assignment	2023-2024	2024-2025
▪Grater Woods Subcommittee (SB Rep Position)	Matt Shevenell	
▪Town Center Committee	Matt Shevenell	
▪Parks & Recreation	Naomi Halter	
▪Alternate	Laurie Rothhaus	

Disseminated to the
School Board on 5-06-2024

Explanation of
School Board Assignments

Committee	Tentative Time Commitment	Focus
Budget Committee	Evening meetings	Is in receipt of end of year school district fiscal report; examines the School Board's budget as it goes through the review process in preparation for approval by the Budget Committee.
New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) Delegate	Convenes on a Saturday in October	Attends a Delegate Assembly. Represents Merrimack School Board members' positions.
Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Integration Committee (CIA-formerly CIT, PERC)	Normally meets third Tuesday of each month during the school year from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. or as needed.	To discuss, review and recommend curriculum, instruction, and assessment materials in all formats, as well as technology systems to determine they are academically and aligned to student need.
School Bus Stop	Meets as needed	Takes under advisement parent requests for additional bus stops and/or bus issues that need further review.
Professional Development Committee	Meets second Thursday of each month during the school year from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.	Considers issues pertinent to the professional growth of educators and support staff in the district. Ensures that the Local Master Plan for Professional Development is revised and fulfilled as stipulated by state requirements.
Planning and Building Committee	Meets as needed. When needed, meets the second and/or fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.	Is an advisory group to the School Board; completes assignments or charges assigned by the School Board related to school facilities.

Disseminated to the
School Board on 5-06-2024

Committee	Tentative Time Commitment	Focus
Wellness Policy Implementation Committee	**Currently Inactive – Last met 2/18/19** Met quarterly or as needed, primarily at the close of the school day.	Implements the district's wellness policy. Discussed and implemented district-wide wellness initiatives for students Has different goals than the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee Sandy will facilitate the Wellness policy for Board review.
Healthcare Cost Containment Committee	Meets as needed with Health Trust representative. When needed, meets at 3:30 p.m. HR Director Melissa Fazlic is the current chair	Discusses and implements district-wide wellness initiatives for staff, as well as health care saving measures available through Health Trust.
District Parent Group	**Currently Inactive – Last met 1/29/18** Met quarterly from 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Historically consisted of two representatives from each buildings' parent groups, the superintendent, and two School Board representatives. Discussed issues pertaining to the officers of the schools' parent groups and become informed about district programs.
Communications Committee	**Currently Inactive - Last met 11/27/18**	Started in 2017 to address the communication protocols for the district. Some framework was started, but incomplete.
Policy Committee	Asynchronous meetings, primarily through email correspondence	Review draft polices as needed for school board consideration and adoption. Consider adding an applicable administrator who could provide insight into the implementation of individual policies.

Disseminated to the
School Board on 5-06-2024

Committee	Tentative Time Commitment	Focus
Superintendent Search	Met as needed. Currently inactive	Conducted search for the district's superintendent. The Board recently extended CEO Olsen a two-year contract. **This committee could move to inactive status at the Board's discretion.**
Athletic Advisory Committee	***New committee needed – currently being formed by Athletic Director Soucy. Vice Chair Rothhaus is Board representative.**	**Draft:** Review policies, practices, and protocols related to our athletic programs?
Joint Loss Management	Meets at least quarterly. ***Committee needed to be in compliance with RSA 281-A:64**	Development of district safety program and review losses through workers' compensation.
Collective Bargaining or Advise & Confer MTA (Professional Staff) – Fall 2025 MESSA (Support Staff) – Fall 2027 Advise & Confer – Fall 2024	Begins meeting in the fall with frequent meetings thereafter during contract negotiation years.	Formulates a collective bargaining agreement with the professional staff or support staff. Formulates an agreement through an Advise & Confer process with Principals/Assistant Principals and Directors of Student Services, Technology/Library Media, and Student Wellness.
Grater Woods Subcommittee	**Currently Inactive** Could be called to meet for updates to the plan that is currently 10 years old.	Discuss Grater Woods Stewardship Plan, which includes the use of property near Merrimack Middle School.
Town Center Committee	Meets on the 3rd or 4th Friday of each month at 12:00 noon.	To implement the Merrimack Town Center Pedestrian and Trail Master Plan.
Parks and Recreation Committee	Meets the third Wednesday of the month at 7:15 p.m.	Keeps the School Board informed about the town's Parks and Recreation agenda that might inform the board's decision making.
Merrimack 275 Anniversary Committee	Meets as needed	Celebration of the town's 275th anniversary

MERRIMACK SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Administrative Unit #26
36 McElwain Street
Merrimack, New Hampshire 03054
Tel. (603) 424-6200 Fax (603) 424-6229

AMANDA S. DOYLE
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum

EVERETT V. OLSEN, Jr.
Chief Education Officer

MATTHEW D. SHEVENELL
Assistant Superintendent for Business

To: Lori Peters
Jenna Hardy
Naomi Halter
Ken Martin
Laurie Rothhaus
Chase Rheault

From: Everett V. Olsen, Jr.

Date: May 2, 2024

Subject: Hire at Will

As in prior years, I am requesting that the School Board grant administrators the authority to offer conditional contracts to candidates for professional staff openings. This act will preclude talented individuals from choosing a position in another district and assist the administrative team in the hiring process when there are fewer board meetings during the summer months.

Athletic Field Discussion

May 6, 2024

- Number of Fields in Merrimack School District
- School District Field Maintenance Staff
- Role of Contractors
- Conditions For A Playable Field in Early Spring
- 2024 Weather-Related Challenges
  - March Rainfall 2023 = 4.05”
  - March Rainfall 2024 = 5.47”
- Going Forward

Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
April 15, 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: Chair Ken Martin, Vice-Chair Laurie Rothhaus, Board Member Lori Peters, Board Member Jenna Hardy, and Board Member Naomi Halter. Chief Educational Officer Everett Olsen, Assistant Superintendent for Business Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Amy Doyle, and Student Representative Chase Rheault were also present.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Chair Martin called the public hearing to order.

2. PUBLIC HEARING

- Board to authorize the purchase of security cameras and access control from the SAFE Grant III in the amount of $387,127.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell explained that the grant would provide money for the district to purchase additional security cameras and locksets. He added that the funds had to be committed by June 1, 2024, and installed, operational, and paid for by December 31, 2024.

Chair Martin asked if any members of the public had questions or comments. There were none.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept the SAFE Grant III money in the amount of $387,127. Chair Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell for all of his hard work in obtaining the grant.

Board Member Halter asked if the items covered by the grant were a one-time purchase or if it would obligate the district to any ongoing purchases. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied that the security cameras would have to be part of the maintenance plan that was part of the operating budget. He said it would cost approximately $20,000 more.

3. SCHOOL BOARD REORGANIZATION

- **Chair of the School Board**

MOTION: Mr. Martin made a motion to nominate Ms. Lori Peters to the position of Chair of the School Board. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mr. Martin stated that he felt Ms. Peters was very motivated to improve the school district and had a tremendous amount of experience.

Ms. Halter asked Ms. Peters what she thought was the Board's biggest priority and how she would move it forward as the Chair of the School Board. Ms. Peters replied that the biggest challenge they faced was that they were working within the default budget, and it would require wise decision-making.

Ms. Hardy said she felt Ms. Peters was an exemplary Board Member.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- **Vice-Chair of the School Board**

MOTION: Ms. Rothhaus made a motion to nominate Ms. Jenna Hardy to the position of Vice-Chair of the School Board. Mr. Martin seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Ms. Rothhaus stated that she felt Ms. Hardy was very passionate about the school district and had a lot of enthusiasm and energy.

Mr. Martin stated that he felt Ms. Hardy had an incredible depth of knowledge about the district.

Ms. Peters commented that she and Ms. Hardy had worked together on the Budget Committee, as well as the School Board, and acted with the utmost integrity.

Ms. Halter asked Ms. Hardy what she thought was the Board's biggest priority and how she would move it forward as the Vice-Chair of the School Board. Ms. Hardy replied that she agreed that the biggest challenge they faced was that they were working within the default budget, while keeping up with the improvements they had tried to make and building on them.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Chair Peters thanked Board Member Martin and Board Member Rothhaus for the fine work they had done as Chair and Vice-Chair of the School Board.

4. COMMITMENT TO BOARD CODE OF ETHICS

Chair Peters and Vice-Chair Hardy read aloud the Merrimack School Board Code of Ethics. Chair Peters noted that the entire School Board signed a copy of the document.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Rosemarie Rung, 21 Ministerial Drive, addressed the Board and suggested that the School Board consider establishing a few committees that could help broaden awareness, understanding, and advocacy of school district programs and policies.

- Re-establish PERC (Program Evaluation and Review Committee)

- Establish an Ad Hoc Committee of Community Members to revisit the new Central Office Proposal
- Establish an Ad Hoc Committee to work jointly with the Town Counsel and the School Board to develop a strategic plan to meet field recreation needs.
- Consider what potential or proposed legislation was needed to support the district.

Ms. Heather Robataille, 45 Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and said she looked forward to seeing the work that the School Board had focused on. She said she agreed that communication with the public was very important.

Ms. Jeannie Wagner, 4 Cowin Road, addressed the Board and said at a recent meeting that Board Member Martin had mentioned that the School Board had come to an agreement with Chief Educational Officer Olsen and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle regarding future contracts. She asked where she might find the contracts. Chair Peters noted that the current contracts were available to view on the website; however, she noted the new contracts would not be there as they were for the next school year.

6. RECOGNITIONS

There were none.

7. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked Mr. Martin and Ms. Rothhaus for their respective roles as Chair and Vice-Chair, and he also welcomed Ms. Peters and Ms. Hardy for the work they would do in their seats as Chair and Vice-Chair.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said on Thursday, April 18th, a public budget meeting would be held at 6:00 p.m. to discuss proposed budget reductions.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted the following:

- Congratulated Ms. Brenda Wygant, a preschool teacher at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, for being named "WZID Teacher of the Month."
- He also said one of the district's teachers ran in the Boston Marathon and finished in 3 hours and five minutes.
- A bowling team would be starting at the middle school.
- The "Get Set" program at the high school had started the planting in the garden beds.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle said they had a great middle school science curriculum program, and they were very close to deciding on what materials would be used

in grades 6 through 8. She said similarly that they continued to work on the teacher evaluation model and were close to deciding that as well.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that there was a new scoreboard on the high school football field, and it would be operational the current week.

d. School Board Update

Chair Peters thanked all of the residents who came out to vote, pointing out that over 4,000 ballots had been cast.

Chair Peters also encouraged everyone to either attend or watch the meeting on April 18th, as they would discuss some very serious changes due to the default budget situation.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Rheault commented that several students from Merrimack High School had participated in the All-State Festival on behalf of the New Hampshire Music Educators Association. She congratulated all of those who received awards.

Student Representative Rheault said on April 6th, the Statewide Annual Destination College Event was held on behalf of Merrimack High School. She said juniors were invited to Saint Anselm's College for a day of college planning workshops.

Student Representative Rheault also noted the following:

- Student Council Class 2026 held a Spring Fling dance.
- Student Council Class 2025 was starting to prepare for the junior prom.

8. OLD BUSINESS

a. Review Outcome of School District Elections, 2025 – 2026 Budget, and Warrant Articles

Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked the voters for approving the roof project and said the district would adjust accordingly regarding working with the default budget.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell appreciated the public's support in passing the support staff contract.

Vice-Chair Hardy said she had some concerns about the public not being able to have their voices heard before the Board finalized cuts to stay within the default budget. Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied that he understood and respected the importance of public feedback, but someone would always be impacted by cuts: a person, a program, or a service, and it would become personal to a family. He said the proposed cuts would be decided in the most thoughtful and logical way possible but added they needed to find $2 million in budget cuts.

Board Member Martin said that while the proposed new SAU Central Office Building did not pass, the issue was not going away, and they would continue to look at options.

Board Member Rothhaus noted that they were still waiting for the report from the Merrimack Fire Department and felt that may have been one of the reasons why the article failed.

Board Member Halter said she was pleased that the roof and support staff contract had passed. She noted that she would like to have the School Board meet with the Planning & Building Committee to come up with a different proposal regarding the SAU building because something clearly had to be done. She also said she felt the Board needed to figure out better avenues of communication with the public.

Board Member Rothhaus said she appreciated the comments regarding better communication and felt it was very important to take public comments seriously as they moved ahead.

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Memo of Agreement between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association Regarding Retirement Provision for 2023 – 2024

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that there was an employee who had given many, many years of outstanding service to the Merrimack School District, and there was a provision in the MTA contract in terms of a retirement incentive payment. He said the person was just shy of the stipulated criteria of 15 years, and they had decided that it would be appropriate to enter into a one-time agreement to provide the retirement incentive to the employee.

MOTION: Chair Peters made a motion to accept the Memo of Agreement between the School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association regarding the one-time retirement provision. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. Responsive Classroom Presentation

Ms. Michelle Romein, Principal of the James Mastricola Elementary School, and Ms. Kate Merva, a 5th-grade teacher at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, representing the K-6 elementary school principals, provided a presentation as summarized as follows:

Ms. Romein explained that a Responsive Classroom was a model for building a community within the classroom and the school. She added that it included how people interacted with each other, the curriculum, and all of the teachers in the building.

Ms. Romein stated that parts of Responsive Classroom that had been implemented across all four elementary school buildings in the current year:

- Daily morning meetings where students can get to know each other and ask questions.
- Some classes had closing meetings.
- Every adult was a part of a morning meeting.
- Daily morning messages.
- Grade-level classroom expectations.

Ms. Merva commented that Responsive Classroom was the foundation of all of her teaching. She said that with the district's support, she had been able to take part in almost every training session Responsive Classroom had. She said she felt that a Responsive Classroom builds leadership, the act of valuing everyone, and allows every student to be heard.

The School Board collectively thanked the teachers and administrators for providing such an informative and detailed presentation.

c. Last Day of School

Chief Educational Officer Olsen suggested that Friday, June 14, 2024, be the last day of school (1/2 day) for the Merrimack School District, as the instructional hours had been met. He further said that June 17th, 18th, and 19th would be used for professional development days. He noted, however, that the date of graduation would not change and would still be held on Saturday, June 15th.

MOTION: Board Member Martin made a motion that the last day of school (1/2 day) would be on Friday, June 14, 2024. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

d. Summer Meeting Dates

MOTION: Board Member Rothhaus made a motion to hold the summer School Board meetings on Monday, July 15, 2024, and Monday, August 12th. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

e. Date for June Goals Meeting

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to hold the Board's Annual Goals meeting on Thursday, June 27, 2024. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

f. Other

Board Member Rothhaus commented that the Board had discussed the Superintendent's performance evaluation at the previous meeting, which included educational leadership, school district culture, school district goals, school district management, and relationship with the School Board.

Board Member Rothhaus asked if a discussion regarding improving communication and looking at adding new committees that would support the improvement of communication could be added to the next meeting agenda.

Board Member Rothhaus requested that an agenda item regarding the annual expectations for field preparations be added to the meeting.

10. POLICIES

a. Updated Suicide Prevention/Response Plan (JLDBB-R)

Ms. Sara Parrotto, Director of Student Wellness, addressed the Board and said that the policy (JLDBB-R) needed to have warning signs within the Suicide Prevention/Response Plan, and since she noticed that was not included in the plan, she added it. She said she took the information directly from the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline website.

Board Member Rothhaus suggested adding language that included a crisis team and a list of who was on that team.

Board Member Rothhaus said she had some concerns about the line on page 4 of the policy that stated, "Should the child or parent indicate the presence of firearms, the administrator or designee will inform the police, who will review gun safety measures" because the State of New Hampshire was a "right to carry state" it might be a violation under New Hampshire law. Mr. Parrotto replied she would look into that.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. April 1, 2024 – Public Hearing Minutes, Public Meeting Minutes and Non-Public Meeting Minutes

Edits:

Non-Public Meeting Minutes – Board Member Rothhaus's last name was corrected. (To be corrected and voted on at a future meeting.)

Public Meeting Minutes – Page 1, line 52, the word "phoenix" was changed to "phonics."

MOTION: Chair Peters made a motion to approve the public minutes from the April 1, 2024, meeting, as amended. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

12. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Retirements

- Barbara DeFrancisco, Elementary Classroom Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary
- Eleni Floras, Science Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Karen King, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Kathleen King, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Claire Mitchell, Elementary Classroom Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary
- Christine Reinart, Special Educator Coordinator, Merrimack High School
- Cheryl Smith, Math Coordinator, Merrimack Middle School
- Carol Smith, Math Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Pat Zink, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School

b. Educator Resignations

- Morgan Bailey, Special Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary
- Sarah Demers, School Counselor, Merrimack Middle School
- Micayla Eason, Math Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Denver Greene, Physical Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary
- Marina Nickerson, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Lauren Sorenson, Elementary Classroom Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary
- Paige Webster-Scribner, English Teacher, Merrimack High School

c. Administrator Resignation

- Laura Livie, Assistant Principal, Reeds Ferry Elementary

d. Educator Nominations

- Lindsay Middleton, Language Arts Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Leanne Keller, Science Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- William Hughen, School Counselor, Merrimack High School

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Board Member Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

13. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

There were none.

b. Correspondence

Vice-Chair Hardy said the entire Board had received correspondence regarding the graduation date.

c. Comments

The Board collectively thanked all of the educators who had retired/resigned and wished them well.

Chair Peters reminded everyone that it was very important to tune into the Special School Board meeting to be held on April 18th.

14. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Jeannie Wagner, 4 Cowin Road, addressed the Board and encouraged the Board to stop by when they toured the school buildings. She said she hoped that they toured all six schools a couple of times a year.

Ms. Rosemarie Rung, 21 Ministerial Drive, addressed the Board and said when she was on the School Board, they would hold their meetings at the different schools, and they would also hold a listening session for members of the public for the first 30 minutes of each meeting.

15. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 8:00 p.m., Board Member Martin made a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Recorder's Note: All available "Supporting Material for Board Meetings" are on the School District's website.

Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
April 18, 2024

Present: Chair Lori Peters, Vice-Chair Jenna Hardy, Board member Rothhaus, Board Member Board Member Naomi Halter and Board Member Martin. Chief Educational Officer Everett Olsen, Assistant Superintendent for Business Matt Shevenell, and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Amy Doyle.

Not Present: Student Representative Chase Rheault

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Chair Martin called the public hearing to order.

Prior to the beginning of the meeting, Chair Peters commented that the School Board would be making decisions to align the budget with the will of the voters.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that no cuts would be made to athletics. He added that the staff had to have their contracts by May 1st, so it was important to make such decisions regarding the default budget as soon as possible.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Chuck Mower, 4 Depot Street, addressed the Board and said he felt it was very difficult to bring relief to people in the current times. He said he felt everyone was trying to recover (financially) from COVID-19.

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and said she felt that the community wanted and needed to know what the thought process was regarding making the necessary cuts.

3. OLD BUSINESS

a. Review of the Proposed 2024 – 2025 Budget Reductions

Chief Educational Officer Olsen reviewed the default reductions for the Merrimack School District:

Default Reduction – Item/Position	Dollar Amount	Comment
JMUES – Windows	$200,000	Safety Issue – Money to come out of the 2023 – 2024 budget.
MES – Preschool Teacher	$ 74,078	Decline in enrollment.
MES – Kindergarten Classroom Teacher	$ 86,557	This was an additional request for the 2024 – 2024\5 school year.
MHS – Social Studies Teacher	$ 70,549	Decline in enrollment. Position to be absorbed by existing classes.
MHS – Science Teacher	$128,624	Decline in enrollment. Position to be absorbed by existing classes.

MHS – Library Assistant	$ 43,170	Retirement – Position to be absorbed by existing employees.
MHS – World Language/Mandarin	$118,186	Decline in enrollment.
MHS – World Language/Arabic	$ 73,828	Decline in enrollment.
MMS – Math Coordinator	$119,683	Retirement – Position to be absorbed by an existing employee.
MMS – Special Education Teacher	$ 89,857	Position to be absorbed by existing employees.
MMS – Digital Learning Specialist	$ 92,570	Eliminating the position & re-assigning the employee.
JMUES – World Language Teacher	$ 94,958	Eliminating position.
JMUES, JMES, TFS, & RFS Gifted & Talented Program & Related Supplies	$225,000	Elimination of the Gifted & Talented Program & Supplies
Computer Replacement	$ 40,000	Purchase deferred to a future year.
iPad Replacement	$ 90,000	Purchase deferred to a future year.
Classroom Peripherals	$ 15,000	Purchase deferred to a future year.
JMUES – World Language Supplies	$ 1,000	With the elimination of the World Language experience, these supplies would no longer be needed.
JMUES – Round Tables	$ 7,000	Purchase deferred to a future year.
JMUES – Texts Literacy, Science, & Social Studies	$ 21,516	Purchase deferred to a future year.
TFS Classroom Teacher	$ 86,557	This was an additional request for the 2024 – 2025 school year.
Tier 1 Supplies	$ 47,428	DESSA and Wayfinder
SEL/Intervention Supplies	$123,000	SAP and 1 YEES (Youth Educational Employment Service)
Various	$ 53,466	Hiring and Operational Savings
SAU – CIP Materials	$ 25,000	
SAU – PD Mentors	$ 20,000	
MHS – Band Camp (Summer)	$ 30,000	
SAU – Contingency	$100,000	
SPED – Wellness Director	$124,472	
Total Proposed Cuts:	**$1,976,499**	**Positions Listed are Inclusive of all Benefits.**

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Rosemarie Rung, 21 Ministerial Drive, addressed the Board and asked if any staff positions were not being absorbed into other positions or if they were actually being cut. She also said she felt the district should try to keep the summer band camp.

- ***Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the two positions that they were unable to place elsewhere were a Spanish teacher and a Social Studies teacher.***

Ms. Gina Groff, 29 Dahl Road, addressed the Board and said that as a member of the Budget Committee, she had received many telephone calls from parents regarding the budget. She asked the Board to reconsider purchasing the round tables at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School.

- ***Chief Educational Officer Olsen said that the round tables at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School were in good enough shape to wait until the following year.***

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 25 Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and said social media had become a popular place for people to leave information that was not always accurate. She suggested that the voters know what services, curriculum, and staff might be cut if they voted for the default budget. She also said that she felt the Gifted & Talented program should remain in the budget.

- ***Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that he found that deciding what reductions would be too early, given unknown conditions, could cause a tremendous amount of anxiety for the staff. However, he noted that it could be advantageous for voters to know what would be cut if they voted to use the default budget.***

Ms. Kaitlyn Kelly-Bernier, 2 Birch Street, addressed the Board and stated that she, too, was in favor of keeping the Gifted & Talented program.

Mr. Robbie Reisman, 8 Iris Drive, addressed the Board and said he was in favor of keeping the Gifted & Talented program.

Ms. Melanie Hern, 122 Joppa Road, addressed the Board and asked what the current unassigned fund balance was. She also asked if any consideration was given to cutting any of the positions that the district was unable to fill year after year. She also said she was not in favor of cutting the World Language program at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and was not in favor of cutting the Gifted & Talented program.

- ***Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the previous year, $6.2 million was returned to the taxpayers, and he was hoping to have at least that amount. He said he would know the amount for certain after the audit.***

- ***Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said cutting positions that were not filled was a decision that the unions had to make. He added that once the positions were gone, they were removed from the operating budget, and the default budget and the money would have to be reappropriated.***

- ***Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Doyle stated that the paraprofessionals were paid out of the Special Education line item, and the positions were dictated by need and the service grid for students.***

Ms. Lisa Allen, 1 Fuller Mill Road, addressed the Board and said she hoped that the hockey program would not end up on the list of cuts.

Ms. Jennifer Jobin, 42 Merrymeeting Drive, addressed the Board and said she was not happy to see that Mandarin was on the list of cuts. She also said she was hopeful that the district could find a way to keep the Gifted & Talented program.

Ms. Nicole Tomaselli, 11 Knollwood Drive, addressed the Board and said she would like the Board to consider zero-based budgeting.

- ***Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that zero-based budgeting would be a bit challenging to use in a school district when it came to staffing. He added that enrollment dictated staffing.***

Ms. Jennifer McCormack, 34 Cramer Hill Road, addressed the Board and asked how the district found the money for the window project at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School.

- ***Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said there would be a surplus in the 2023 - 2024 budget, and that would pay for the window replacement project at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School.***

Ms. Marcia Brew of 39 Merrimack Drive, addressed the Board and said she also hoped the sports programs were not on the cut list.

At approximately 8:53 p.m., Chair Peters declared a break, calling the meeting back to order at approximately 8:58 p.m.

School Board Discussion

Board Member Halter commented that she appreciated the vast experience that the leadership team had.

Vice-Chair Hardy said Merrimack was one of the few schools in surrounding towns that offered Mandarin. She also said she felt keeping the Gifted & Talented program was important. Chief Educational Officer Olsen replied that the Mandarin class had not seemed to gain traction, and the enrollment was low.

Board Member Martin commented that any of the items on the list could come back at a future time.

Chair Peters said she had hoped that the World Language Department could become more robust, but she agreed that they could bring it back in the future.

Board Member Halter suggested that perhaps having a stipend position at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School that provided short classes with games and activities that could get students excited about World Languages at the middle school.

Board Member Rothhaus suggested the possibility of having a World Language Summer Enrichment program but noted that she felt these suggestions should be discussed by the Board at a future date.

Chair Peters said she felt all high academic achievers were challenged in the classroom.

Board Member Halter commented that she was most concerned about cutting the Gifted & Talented program.

Board Member Martin said he, too, had concerns about cutting the Gifted & Talented program.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to keep the Gifted & Talented program line items (personnel & materials) in the amount of $224,020.

The motion failed due to the lack of a second.

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the administration's suggestion to cut the World Language program at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that with the motion made, they had reached the goal of $1.985 million in reductions.

Chair Peters stated that Band Camp would remain on the cut list, but they would look for a solution and have a discussion at the May 6, 2024, School Board meeting.

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to keep the Gifted & Talented program line items (personnel & materials) in the amount of $224,020. Board Member Rothhaus seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Chair Peters commented that, although it was very difficult to say, it meant the district would spend $220,000 for 32 students out of 1,938 students.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen explained that by restoring the Gifted & Talented program, the Board agreed to approve the cuts pertaining to Hiring & Operational Savings, SAU – CIA Materials, SAU – PD Mentors, the MHS – Band Camp, and the SAU Contingency. The Board collectively agreed that they understood that.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle, addressed the Board and said she appreciated the fact that the Board decided to keep the Gifted & Talented program. She also thanked the staff who the cuts would impact.

Ms. Jennifer McCormack, 34 Cramer Hill Road, addressed the Board and said she appreciated the way the Board and the administration were thinking outside of the box.

Ms. Melanie Hern, 122 Joppa Road, addressed the Board and commented that "Graduation Alliance" might be a good avenue to look at with the elimination of the YEES position.

Ms. Kaitlyn Kelly-Bernier, 2 Birch Street, addressed the Board and thanked the Board for listening to all of the members of the public who attended the meeting and made public comments and for keeping the Gifted & Talented in the budget.

Timothy, a student, thanked the Board and the administration for all of their hard work on the budget.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 9:33 p.m., Board Member Halter made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.