

**Merrimack School District
ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING
MINUTES**

**Session 1: Deliberative Session
March 6, 2023**

Present: School Board members: Laurie Rothhaus, Lori Peters, Jenna Hardy, Naomi Halter and Ken Martin, Interim Chief Educational Officer Everett Olsen, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Amy Doyle, Assistant Superintendent for Business Matthew Shevenell and Legal Counsel Alison Minutelli

At 7:05 P.M., Moderator Brian McCarthy called the meeting to order and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. McCarthy explained the procedures to be followed during the meeting and asked School Board Chair Laurie Rothhaus to introduce the officials on stage. Mr. McCarthy asked Budget Committee Chair Chuck Mower to introduce the Budget Committee members. While introducing the Budget Committee members, Mr. Mower stated that member Carol Lang had recently resigned after many years of service on the Committee and he thanked her for her many contributions to the Committee.

Mr. McCarthy stated Article 1 was election of officers, which would take place by official ballot on April 11th and recognized Mrs. Hardy who moved Article 2 as written. Second: Mrs. Halter.

Article 2

Shall the Merrimack School Board be authorized to accept on behalf of the District, without further action by the voters, gifts, legacies and devises of personal or real property which may become available to the District during the fiscal year? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0).

Mrs. Hardy explained this article appears on the warrant every year to allow the School Board to accept property and other non-cash donations on behalf of the District.

Mr. McCarthy called for discussion on the article. There was none.

Mr. McCarthy declared Article 2 moved to the ballot as printed and recognized Mrs. Peters who moved Article 3 as printed. Second: Mrs. Rothhaus.

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 changes

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? (Majority vote required (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote:12-0-0).

Mrs. Peters spoke to her motion by explaining that this article is a three-year contract for the teachers of Merrimack that builds off the momentum of last year's contract in order to become competitive in the market for professional staff to serve the children of Merrimack. The contract includes a 4.00% increase in the 23-24 school year, a 4.00% increase in the 24-25 school year and a 3.75% increase in the 25-26 school year. She said if this contract passes, at the end of the third year, the district salary scale will be more competitive with area communities which will help to attract new teachers and assist in maintaining the current staff of seasoned professionals.

Mr. McCarthy called for discussion on the article. There was none.

Mr. McCarthy declared Article 3 moved to the ballot as printed and recognized Mrs. Peters who moved Article 4 as printed. Second: Mrs. Hardy.

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? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0).

Mrs. Peters spoke to her motion by explaining that if Article 3 fails, this article gives the School Board the option of calling one special meeting to discuss the cost items only in the negotiated agreement. Without this article the District would have to petition Superior Court to get approval for a special meeting.

Mr. McCarthy called for discussion on the article. There was none.

Mr. McCarthy declared Article 4 moved to the ballot as printed and recognized Mr. Martin who moved Article 5 as printed. Second: Mrs. Halter.

Article 5 (Special Warrant Article)

Shall the District raise and appropriate the sum of One Million One Hundred Eight Thousand Six Hundred Sixty-Nine Dollars (\$1,108,669) for the purpose of roof replacement at James Masticola Upper Elementary School? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: 12-0-1).

Mr. Martin spoke to his motion by explaining that this article seeks to replace 26,000 square feet of roof at James Masticola Elementary School, sections of which have been out of warranty for 15 to 28 years. He said the roof is currently telegraphing potentially urgent problems and the consequences of not replacing the roof at this time could be deck rot and the potential for mold in classrooms. Mr. Martin also indicated this project is part of the District's multi-year comprehensive roof replacement plan.

Mr. McCarthy called for discussion on the article. There was none.

Mr. McCarthy declared Article 5 moved to the ballot as printed and recognized Mr. Mower who moved Article 5 as printed. Second: Mackenzie Murphy (Brenda Lane)

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 \$88,577,992? (Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$ 87,169,047 which is the same as last year, 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)? (Majority vote required). (Recommended by the School Board Vote: 5-0-0). (Recommended by the Budget Committee Vote: 11-0-1).

Mr. Mower thanked the School Administration for their tireless efforts on this budget. He explained that the proposed budget was an attempt to continue making progress recovering from the pandemic as well as move the district forward. He indicated the Budget Committee had reinstated funds proposed by the Administration to continue the furniture replacement plan and to build a dugout for girls softball. He said the Budget Committee had adjusted the English as a Second Language supply line to bring it in line with all other student supply lines in the budget, added a ½ time Maintenance position to help with fields and grounds management and restored a School Board contingency fund. He indicated that the Budget Committee had also added a new purpose line in the budget for preparations and implementation of the master plan.

Mr. McCarthy called for discussion on the article.

Bill Boyd (Joppa Road) asked if it was permissible to make a motion to change the article. The Moderator told him it was.

Mr. Boyd made a MOTION to AMEND the proposed budget amount by cutting \$250,000.
Second: David Rutske (Belmont Drive)

Mr. Boyd spoke to his motion by saying it was the Budget Committee's job to ensure that the expenditures in the proposed budget meet the educational policy decisions of the School Board. He said his cut would return the Budget to \$88,327,992 which was the amount proposed by the School Board.

The Moderator called for discussion on the amendment.

Mr. Mower told the audience that, by statute, it is the Budget Committee who prepares the proposed budget and it is the responsibility of the Committee to tell the voters what the District needs in order to meet its statutory obligations.

Naomi Schoenfeld (Independence Drive) told the audience that this cut will result in things actually needed by the District that won't happen and further, the School Board has unanimously approved the budget as proposed by the Budget Committee.

Chris Christensen (Greatstone Drive) asked for information about what items the Budget Committee had added to the budget. He also mentioned that the proposed state budget eliminates revenue sharing and he was concerned about how that would affect Merrimack.

Shannon Rand (Belair Road) suggested that School District sports teams should be raising funds for their sports and the District should set aside funds yearly for roof maintenance. She said taxes have gone up significantly and she felt voters should be thoughtful about the affects budgets have on taxpayers.

Heather Robitaille (Springfield Circle) told the audience that she had listened to the various meetings held by the School Board and Budget Committee as each worked to prepare the operating budget and she felt the proposed budget was well thought out. However, she said she would support a budget reduction of \$150,000 if such a reduction was proposed.

The Moderator reminded the audience that discussion was about the amendment to reduce the proposed budget by \$250,000 only.

Shayne Albuquerque (Westcott Drive) said he was a member of the Budget Committee and wanted to clarify a few things that had been brought up during the discussion: \$25,000 for table replacement is for table replacement at all schools, not just one school; the softball dugout is an equality issue and roofing replacement and technology upgrades are built in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Joanne Grobecker (Craig Drive) told the audience that she was comfortable supporting the removal of the \$150,000 contingency fund if Mr. Boyd wanted to amend his motion to amend.

Cinda Guagliumi (Ministerial Drive) asked for confirmation that the amount of the reduction proposed that was under discussion was the exact amount that the Budget Committee had added to the budget. She also wanted to know if the items being discussed would be cut or just the dollar amount of the motion and if the District was violating any Title 9 laws by not having a dugout for girls.

The Moderator clarified the dollar amount of the motion to amend was the amount added by the Budget Committee.

Mrs. Rothhaus said that she supports building a girls softball dugout and could support a motion to reduce the budget as long as funds for the dugout were reinstated. However, she said she would be voting against the proposed amendment.

Mr. Boyd and Mr. Rutzke WITHDREW the motion and the Second.

Mr. Boyd made a MOTION to AMEND the proposed budget amount by cutting \$150,000.
Second: Virginia Heald (Pondview Drive)

Mr. Boyd said the resulting budget amount would be \$88,427,992.

The Moderator called for discussion on the new motion to amend.

Mr. Mower asked the Moderator to poll the body to give him permission, as Chair of the Budget Committee, to speak longer than 3 minutes.

The Moderator asked if everyone was okay with this. After an oral reaction from the audience, the Moderator told Mr. Mower that he had 3 minutes to speak.

Mr. Mower said the Budget Committee is responsible for creating a budget which the voters approve and the School Board is responsible for spending the budget to meet the needs of the School District.

The Moderator asked Mr. Mower to return to his seat.

Mr. Mower asked for a vote, rather than a vocal poll on whether he could continue to speak.

The Moderator asked him to return to his seat.

Mr. Boyd called the question.

Mr. McCarthy asked if there was further discussion on the amendment. There was none.

The Moderator called for a vote on the amendment and declared the AMENDMENT PASSED.

The Moderator said Article 6 was amended and the proposed budget amount was now \$88,427,992. He asked if anyone had any additional comments. There were none.

Mr. McCarthy moved Article 6 to the ballot as amended.

The Moderator asked the audience to recognize and thank Lynn Christensen who had served as School District Moderator for 12 years.

Pat McGrath (Peter Road) made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: Mr. Rutzke.

The Moderator called for a vote, declared the MOTION PASSED and adjourned the meeting at 8:10 PM.

Session 2: Ballot Voting April 11, 2023

The Town Moderator and Assistant Moderators opened the polls at 7:00 AM.

At 7:00 PM, the Moderators closed the polls and allowed those present to finish voting.

At 8:15 PM, after all results were tallied, School District Moderator Brian McCarthy announced that 2,293 voters had cast ballots with the following results:

School Board – three years, one seat

Laurie Rothhaus – 1,802 votes

The Moderator declared Laurie Rothhaus elected.

Planning & Building Committee – three years, two seats

Finlay Rothhaus – 1,738 votes

Tim Groff – 1,438 votes

The Moderator declared Finlay Rothhaus and Tim Groff elected.

Budget Committee – three years, four seats

Michelle Mackey – 1,454 votes

Chuck Mower – 1,522 votes

Naomi Schoenfeld – 1,485 votes

Dan Coakley – 1,493 votes

The Moderator declared Michelle Mackey, Chuck Mower, Naomi Schoenfeld and Dan Coakley elected.

Budget Committee – two years, one seat

Heather Robitaille – 779 votes

Jennifer McCormack – 1,100 votes

The Moderator declared Jennifer McCormack elected.

Budget Committee – one year, one seat

Rachel Paepke – 1597 vote

The Moderator declared Rachel Paepke elected.

Article 2: Yes – 1,836 votes No – 339 votes.

The Moderator declared Article 2 passed.

Article 3: Yes – 1,648 votes No – 612 votes.

The Moderator declared Article 3 passed.

Article 4: Yes – 1,732 votes No – 519 votes.

The Moderator declared Article 4 passed.

Article 5: Yes – 1,811 votes No – 446 votes.

The Moderator declared Article 5 passed.

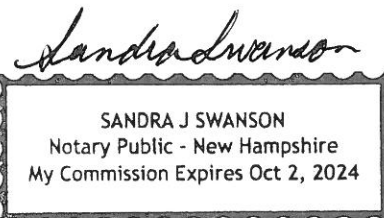
Article 6: Yes – 1,470 votes No – 777 votes.

The Moderator declared Article 6 passed.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Heinrich
School District Clerk



5/30/2023