

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
September 21, 2026**

6:00 p.m.: Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) – Merrimack TV Training Classroom

- **Personnel Matter**

Present: Ms. Lori Peters, Chair; Ms. Jenna Hardy, Vice-Chair; Ms. Naomi Halter, Board Member; Ms. Rachel Paepke, Board Member; Mr. Harley Hall, Board Member; and Ms. Cadence Bassett, Student School Board Representative.

Also Present: Mr. Robert Thompson, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Allison Noel, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment; and Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

PUBLIC HEARING

- Receipt and Expenditure of a Student Assistance Coordinator (SAP) Grant in the amount of \$80,218.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Noel addressed the Board and said the Student Assistance Program was focused on prevention, early intervention, student wellness, and school community connection.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Noel said that the proposed position would serve grades 7 through 12 and be based primarily at Merrimack High School. She added that the grant-funded position required a 25% district match and was time-limited, meaning they would have to apply every year. She also pointed out that there was no long-term commitment.

Chair Peters stated that the topic had been discussed in more depth at the last Board meeting.

Chair Peters asked whether any members of the public had questions or comments. There were none.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to accept Student Assistance Coordinator Grant in the amount of \$80,218.00. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

Recorder's Note: Supporting Documentation and Presentations can be found in their entirety by visiting the Merrimack School District's website.

At 6:45 p.m., Chair Peters called the meeting to order.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

The Merrimack School District will provide high-quality, future-focused education for all students in the community. Students will engage in learning opportunities that reflect both rigor and relevance and meet their cognitive, social, and emotional needs. The district will prepare students to understand, adapt to, and adjust to civic, economic, social, and technological changes worldwide. Our overall goal is to inspire, create, and encourage students to be curious, connected, prepared, resilient, and dedicated 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. RECOGNITIONS

Superintendent Thompson said he provided the School Board with a copy of a letter he received and forwarded to the high school on behalf of the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA). He read the letter aloud as summarized below:

On behalf of the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association's Sportsmanship Committee, I am pleased to inform you that your high school has been ranked among the top three in sportsmanship ratings as voted on by your divisional opponents this season.

Superintendent Thompson congratulated the students for receiving the award.

Superintendent Thompson also thanked the teachers who completed their first full week of school the prior week, noting that it was a great week!

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Superintendent Thompson shared the following updates:

- Continued to hold listening sessions, with one held last week with parents.
- A parent and staff survey had been sent out regarding what they liked about the Merrimack School District, what needed improvement, and how the Superintendent might do better.
- Held an Open House for Sandy Swanson in honor of her retirement.

- Participated in a criminal records check online seminar.
- Toured Camp Sargeant, and the new director was very interested in collaborating with the Merrimack School District.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Noel provided the following updates:

- She had the privilege of riding the school buses with the students over the past few weeks.
- Congratulated Laurette Cillo of STA, as she had been a bus driver for 51 years, and riding her bus was safe and fun!
- Met with the Professional Development Committee. She thanked the committee members.
 - During the first meeting, they discussed processes and procedures.
 - Actively pursuing how other districts approve individual requests for professional development.
 - A survey was sent to staff to get an idea of what topics they would like to learn more about, and a few of them were:
 - Student Behavior
 - Technology/Screen Time in Classrooms
 - Classroom Management
 - In-person and collaborative small group learning opportunities
 - Time to collaborate with colleagues.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Noel said she was looking forward to taking a deep dive into the survey suggestions.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell provided the following updates:

- Currently working to provide a comprehensive engineering audit of the energy infrastructure across the Merrimack School District, conducted by Honeywell Building Solutions. He said the findings indicate that significant portions of the district's HVAC infrastructure were operating well past their intended service life.
- Suggested adding ventilation to areas in need.
- When pricing is available, he would like to have Bob Marcotte and Jim Lucy give the School Board a presentation.

d. School Board Update

Chair Peters provided the following updates:

- She was registered for the NHSBA Delegate Assembly to be held on October 17, 2026.
- Attended the 9/11 Remembrance Service at the American Legion.
- Congratulated Police Chief Brian Levesque on his upcoming retirement.
- The prior week was "Constitution Day," and students did a lot of fun events which could be seen on the district's social media sites.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Bassett addressed the Board and provided the following updates:

- NHIAA Scholarship Awards – the boys tennis team got 3rd place, the girls softball team got 2nd place, and the boys lacrosse team got 1st place.
- The Unified Soccer team against Alvirne would be held the following Wednesday at 1:00 p.m.
- The Club Fair was held the prior week.
- The first Social Science Honor Society was founded.
- Parent/teacher conferences were coming up beginning on October 9th.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Retainment Amount from Surplus

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said that a couple years ago, the Board voted to retain up to 5% of the unassigned fund balance. He said 5% of the net assessed evaluation

would be \$3.5 million. He said they were proposing \$900,000 for emergency or unforeseen operational requirements and to apply the remaining \$4,781,002 unassigned fund balance toward tax relief.

Board Member Paepke asked if they could move the window replacement or other projects forward. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said he agreed with moving the window replacement project up.

Chair Peters clarified that they had already allocated \$400,000 for the gym floor, so \$500,000 remained in surplus.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that he felt the critical projects that needed to be done were repaving O’Gara Drive, but that was a lot of money, and you would have to get permission from the voters. He suggested the School Board wait until it receives the comprehensive engineering audit of the energy infrastructure across the Merrimack School District, conducted by Honeywell Building Solutions, and then review which projects they felt were critical.

Superintendent Thompson commented in early November that the Department of Safety and Homeland Security would perform a safety assessment of all six buildings and felt that some items would need to be purchased for critical safety infrastructure.

Board Member Paepke suggested retaining \$1.3 million, which would give flexibility to spend it on a suggestion from Honeywell or a safety project.

MOTION: Board Member Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to authorize the retention of \$1.3 million of the unassigned fund balance and direct the application of all remaining unassigned fund balance toward reducing the school portion of the tax rate for the December 2026 tax bill. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Data Collection Update (presentation posted on Merrimack School webpage.)

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Noel addressed the Board and reviewed the Merrimack School District’s Assessment & Progress Monitoring Tools, as summarized below:

- The school district used a variety of tools and assessments to monitor student progress and guide instruction, including:
 - Heggerty: Kindergarten through Grade 1 (Showed growth by the end of the year)
 - iReady: Kindergarten through Grade 8 (Showed growth by the end of the year)
 - NH SAS: Grades 2 through 8, & Grade 11 for Science (Showed some growth/stability by the end of the year.)
 - PSATs: Grades 9 through Grade 10 (Showed some growth)
 - SATs: Grade 11 (Showed some growth, slightly below statewide)

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Noel stated that it was clear that more focus was needed in mathematics at the upper elementary school and middle school levels.

Chair Peters commented that there were lots of scores to celebrate. She also requested a breakdown of AP in the spring.

The Select Board discussed the importance of engaging students in the PSATs and SATs.

Board Member Halter said she was impressed with the growth on iReady, especially in the lower grades; however, in the upper grades, it had not changed as much.

Vice-Chair Hardy commented that she agreed they needed to focus more on math.

b. NH School Boards Association Delegate Assembly

Chair Peters asked the Board to review the NHSBA's proposed change to the legislative policy process and, if they had input, get back to her by October 5, 2026.

c. Review of the June 19th Goal Setting Meeting

Chair Peters stated that there would be a presentation at the School Board meeting on October 5th reviewing the Goal Setting Meeting held on June 19th.

d. Vape Detectors

MOTION: Board Member Hall moved to request that Superintendent Thompson obtain estimates for vape detectors and present them to the Board. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

7. POLICIES

- a. School District Legal Status (AA) – 1st Reading
- b. School Superintendent (CB) – 1st Reading
- c. Superintendent Evaluation and Goal Setting (CBI) – 1st Reading
- d. Administration in Policy Absence (CHD) – 1st Reading
- e. Revised Fraud Prevention and Fiscal Management (DIH) – 1st Reading
- f. Chemical Safety and Chemical Hygiene Plan Policy (EBCH) – 1st Reading
- g. Tutoring for Pay (GCRD) – 1st Reading
- h. Instructional Needs of Each Individual Student (IFA) – 1st Reading
- i. Class Sizes and Student -Educator Ratios (IIB) – 1st Reading
- j. Revised Student Conduct (JIC) – 1st Reading

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to waive the first readings of policies a through j. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- k. Revised Tobacco Products Ban Use and Possession In and On School Facilities & Grounds (ADC) – 2nd Reading
- l. Revised Administration of Federal Grant Funds (DAF) – 2nd Reading
- m. Mandatory Drug/Alcohol Testing – School Bus Drivers and Contracted Carriers Policy (EEAEA) – 2nd Reading
- n. Access to Public School Programs by Non-Public Resident Students Policy (JJJ) – 2nd Reading
- o. Authorized Signatures Policy (DGA) – 2nd Reading
- p. Audits Policy (DIE) – 2nd Reading
- q. Payments, Checks, & Manifests Policy (DK) – 2nd Reading
- r. School Safety Policy (EEB) – 2nd Reading
- s. Electronic/Digital Records & Signatures Policy (EHAC) – 2nd Reading
- t. Revised Pupil Safety & Violence Prevention – Bullying Policy (JICK) – 2nd Reading
- u. Teaching About Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco (IHAMA) – 2nd Reading
- v. Student Searches and Their Property (JIH) – 2nd Reading
- w. Student Health Services & School Nurses (JLC) – 2nd Reading
- x. Concussions & Head Injuries (JLCJ) – 2nd Reading
- y. Supervision of Students (JLIA) – 2nd Reading
- z. Reconsideration of Instructional Material (KEC) – 2nd Reading

- aa. Board Member Indemnification Policy (BIE) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to accept Board Member Indemnification Policy (BIE), given its third reading. Board Member Hall seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- bb. Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedure Policy (ACA) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to accept Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedure Policy (ACA), given its third reading. Board Member Hall seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- cc. Suspension of Policies Policy (BGF) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to accept Suspension of Policies Policy (BGF), given its third reading. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- dd. Employee-Student Relations Policy (GBEBB) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to continue review of Employee-Student Relations Policy (GBEBB). Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

ee. Use of Private Vehicles to Transport Students Policy (EEAG) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to accept Use of Private Vehicles to Transport Students Policy (EEAG), as amended, given its third reading. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

ff. Crisis Prevention and Emergency Response Plans Policy (EBCA) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to accept Crisis Prevention and Emergency Response Plans Policy (EBCA), given its third reading. Board Member Hall seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

gg. Training & Information Relative to Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy (GBCE) –
3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Hall made a motion to accept Training & Information Relative to Child Sexual Abuse Prevention (GBCE), given its third reading. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

hh. Programs for Pupils with Disabilities Policy (IHBA) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to accept Programs for Pupils with Disabilities Policy (IHBA), given its third reading. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

ii. Evaluation Requirements for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities Policy (IHBAA) –
3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to accept Evaluation Requirements for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities Policy (IHBAA), given its third reading. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

jj. Emergency Plan for Sports-Related Injuries & Additional Protocols for Athletic Participation Policy (JLCJA) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to accept Emergency Plan for Sports-Related Injuries & Additional Protocols for Athletic Participation Policy (JLCJA), given its third reading. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

kk. Revised Admission of Tuition & Non-Resident Students Policy (JFAB) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to accept Revised Admission of Tuition & Non-Resident Students Policy (JFAB), as amended, given its third reading. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

ll. Use and Location of Automated External Defibrillators Policy (EBBCA) – 3rd Reading

MOTION: Board Member Paepke made a motion to accept Use and Location of Automated External Defibrillators Policy (EBBCA), given its third reading. Board Member Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

- a. Student Searches and Their Property (JIH) – 1st Reading
- b. Student Health Services and School Nurses (JLC) – 1st Reading
- c. Concussions and Head Injuries (JLCJ) – 1st Reading
- d. Supervision of Students (JLIA) – 1st Reading
- e. Reconsideration of Instructional Material (KEC) – 1st Reading
- f. Electronic/Digital Records and Signatures Policy (EHAC) – 1st
- g. Revised Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention – Bullying (JICK) – 1st Reading
- h. Revised Tobacco Products Ban Use and Possession In & On School Facilities & Grounds (ADC) – 1st Reading

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. August 17, 2026 – Public & Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Hall made a motion to approve the public and non-public minutes from the August 17, 2026, meeting, as presented. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

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

- b. September 8, 2026 – Public & Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the public and non-public minutes from the September 8, 2026, meeting, as amended. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

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

9. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Teacher Nominations

- Sandra Conley, Special Education Teacher - Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hardy made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

10. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Board Member Paepke stated that she attended the Professional Development Committee but felt Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Noel accurately described what was discussed at the meeting.

Vice-Chair Hardy stated that she attended the Planning & Building Committee meeting on September 16th, where they listened to a great presentation from Chris Christianson regarding the school trust funds. There were also updates as it pertained to athletic fields, advisory committee, and the building utilization inventory. She said the one request the committee had was to ask the Board for permission to update the facilities naming application and present it to the Board for approval.

Board Member Halter commented that she attended a Parks & Recreation Committee meeting where they heard a presentation from an Eagle Scout, and they got an update on the paving at Wasserman Park. She reviewed some events that were coming up which could be found on the Parks & Recreation website.

b. Correspondence

Board Member Halter said she had a conversation with a parent who had concerns about opting out of social media. She said that she forwarded that parent to the appropriate people.

Vice-Chair Hardy said she spoke with a parent who had questions about athletics.

Chair Peters commented that she received communication from a former board member about the possibility of giving physical education credit to students participating in varsity athletics. She said multiple community members also commented on policies, and Superintendent Thompson responded.

Chair Peters stated that the Board received an email, and she noted that she had received the DVD that was discussed if any of the members would like to review it.

Chair Peters also said she received a concern from a parent, and she forwarded that concern to the principal at the high school.

Chair Peters also said she had received another parental concern who had followed the chain of command and she then referred the parent to the superintendent.

c. Comments

There were none.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At approximately 9:20 p.m., Board Member Halter made a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chair Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.