

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Memorial Room
August 25, 2025**

5:00 p.m. – Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c) – Merrimack TV Training Room

● **Staff Welfare**

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

Also Present: Mr. Everett Olsen, Chief Educational Officer; Dr. Kathleen Scholand, One-year Interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum; and Mr. Matt Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At 6:00 p.m., Vice-Chair Rothhaus 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 rigor 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 no public comments.

3. RECOGNITIONS

Chair Peters noted that on May 23, 2025, Chief Educational Officer Olsen was named Chelmsford, MA, Citizen of the Year.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that Chair Peters had recently received her doctorate.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

a. Superintendent Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that school would resume the following Thursday and wished the very best to the students and staff.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the district held its annual legal conference, where they covered a wide range of items, including the new policy regarding cell phones.

b. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Scholand addressed the Board and stated that the summer programming had gone very well, including Camp Invention, Extended School Year programs, and Credit Recovery programs. She added that the staff had done a lot of work on competency and course development.

Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Scholand, commented that the Torch Bearer Mentor Program was held the prior week and it was very successful. She also commented that the MESSA (Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association) had an onboarding training opportunity for the paraprofessionals.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said the district received its allocation for IDEA for the 2025-2026 school year. He added that the audit was complete and there was a small surplus. He added that the roof project at the James Masticola Elementary School would unexpectedly take a few more weeks to complete. He said Triumph Roofing had not covered the roof with tarp properly, and the gymnasium floor was damaged, adding that Triumph Roofing was responsible for the entire cost.

d. School Board Update

Chair Peters welcomed the students and staff back to school.

5. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Implementation of Cell Phone Law

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that state law RSA 189:1-a, V, restricted the use of cell phones and smart devices during school hours from bell to bell. He said they were particularly concerned about how that law would affect the high school.

Mr. Stephen Claire, Principal, Ms. Jill Hanlon, Assistant Principal, and Mr. Shane Rozamus, Merrimack High School, were present to discuss the new law.

Mr. Claire stated that they would approach the situation with empathy and care, noting that some students would have a difficult time adjusting to the new law. Ms. Hanlon and Mr. Rozamus reviewed the procedures and consequences.

Mr. Claire said the relationships between students and teachers were very important, and the administration would assume much of the responsibility regarding consequences.

Mr. Claire asked if the expectation was for the high school to keep cell phones overnight if a parent was unable to pick them up. Chair Peters replied that the phones should be placed in a secure place, such as a safe.

Chair Peters noted that the Board would discuss and vote on the policy regarding cell phone and personal electronic communication device usage.

Second Review of Prohibition on Use of Student Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Communication Devices Policy (JICJ) (Fast Track)

MOTION: Chair Peters made a motion to accept policy (JICJ) Prohibition on Use of Student Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Communication Devices, as amended. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. Data Collection Update

Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Scholand and Ms. Bonnie Henson, Administrative Assistant to the Interim Assistant Superintendent, were present to discuss the item.

Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Scholand stated that the Merrimack School District used a variety of tools and assessments to monitor student progress and guide our instruction, including:

- Heggerty: Kindergarten – Grade 1
- LETRS: Grades 2 & 3
- iReady: Kindergarten – Grade 8
- NH SAS (Statewide Assessment System): Grades 3 – 8, & Grade 11 for Science
- PSATs: Grades 9 & 10
- STAs: Grade 11

Vice-Chair Rothhaus noted that the prior Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum had wanted to make changes to the curriculum, but due to budget cuts, these changes could not be made. The Board agreed collectively that literacy and math had to be focused on. Some students were still feeling the effects of COVID-19.

Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Scholand stated that they would bring additional information and updates to the Board at future meetings.

c. FY27 Budget Timeline

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell reviewed the draft budget timeline as stated below:

Date	Location	Start Time	Agenda
Monday, 12/1/2025	Matthew Thornton Room	6:00 p.m.	School Board Special Meeting: Budget Presented to the School Board
Monday, 12/8/2025	Memorial Room	6:00 p.m.	School Board Meeting – Special Food Service, MES, RFS, TFS. JUMUES
Monday 12/15/2025	Matthew Thornton Room	6:00 p.m.	School Board Meeting Maintenance, Technology/Library, Student Services, & District
Thursday, 12/18/25	Memorial Room	6:00 p.m.	School Board Meeting – Special: MMS, MHS Additional Sessions with Departments, if Needed Work Session and Warrant Article Discussion
Monday, 1/12/2026	Memorial Room	6:00 p.m.	School Board Meeting – Special – Snow Date, if Needed – Work Session and Warrant Article Discussion, if Needed.
Monday 2/2/2026	Matthew Thornton Room	6:00 p.m. 6:30 p.m.	Bond Hearing School Board Meeting Vote on Warrant Articles

Chair Peters commented that they would like to see the School Board budget done by Christmas. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said he would make some changes and get back to the Board.

- d. Chief Educational Officer Olsen reviewed the enrollments for the 2025-2026 school year and noted that they may have to increase class sizes in 2027, but said he was watching it closely.

e. School Safety Posters

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the district had received training from the “I Love You Guys.Org” training program, noting that it was one of the best school safety trainings he had ever come across. He said a poster reflecting that program would be in every classroom.

f. Overview of August Leadership Retreat

Chief Educational Officer Olsen shared that the leadership team had a very successful retreat. He said Kelly Driscoll was the consultant, and she met with every person on the leadership team. He said they reviewed the fire and evacuation drills.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they had run out of time regarding radio training, but that training would be rescheduled. He added that they also discussed the process for investigating bullying.

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that he was working on a document regarding the administrative recertification process. He said three goals had to be met over three years:

- Student Achievement Goal
- Self-Improvement Goal
- District Improvement Goal

g. January 20th and February 17th School Board Meeting Dates

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to accept moving the School Board meetings to Tuesday, January 20, 2025, and Tuesday, February 17, 2025, due to scheduled holidays. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

h. Special Education FY26 Budget Update

Chief Educational Officer Olsen stated that the district had conducted an internal audit, which revealed that it had contracts with too many service providers. He said the number of School Psychologists in the district was reduced. He added that they were not reducing services to students, but were providing the necessary amount of services. He said the amount of money received from the state was not commensurate with the need.

7. POLICIES

- a. School Guidance and Counseling Program Policy (JLD) (2nd Reading)
- b. Revised Behavior Management and Intervention (JLDBA) (2nd Reading)
- c. Accommodation of Lactation Needs Policy (ACN) (2nd Reading)
- d. Revised Daily Physical Activity Policy (IMAH) (2nd Reading)

Chair Peters stated that the Policy Committee had reviewed the above policies, but they were awaiting comments from Town Counsel. She added that the policies would be on the mid-September agenda for approval.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. July 14, 2025 – Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 14, 2025, public meeting, as presented. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

b. July 15, 2025 – Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Vice-Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 15, 2025, non-public meeting, as presented. Board Member Paepke seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

c. July 23, 2025 – Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 23, 2025, non-public meeting, as presented. Vice-Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Paepke)

d. August 11, 2025 – Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 11, 2025, public meeting, as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

9. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Educator Resignations

- Sara Parrotto, School Counselor, Merrimack Middle School
- Sherry Burbank, Out-of-District Coordinator, Student Services
- Rachael Allan, Classroom Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Inas Dirani, Science Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Dayna Chow, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School

b. Educator Nominations

- Colleen Sliva, Director of Student Services, Districtwide
- Colleen Blanchard, Preschool Coordinator, Student Services
- Jeffrey Brown, One-Year Art Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Sarah Cooper, Special Education Coordinator, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Michelle Vachon, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Christian Peterson, Special Education Coordinator, Merrimack Middle School

- Mikella Eichen, One-Year Kindergarten Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Sheena Keating, Science Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Na Lin, Technology Coordinator Grades 7-12, Merrimack Middle School/Merrimack High School

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

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.

10. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Vice-Chair Rothhaus commented that she had attended a Parks & Recreation Committee meeting, where she volunteered to chair a committee in honor of the USA's 250th anniversary.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus said they would be losing an MYA field in the spring because the business was moving out of town. She said she felt the Field Study Committee should reconvene.

Vice-Chair Rothhaus also stated that she informed the committee that they were losing a Crossing Guard at Thornton's Ferry Elementary School.

b. Correspondence

Board Member Hardy stated that she had received three telephone calls from concerned citizens, and she said she pointed them in the right direction.

Chair Peters stated that a meeting of the Forest Committee would be held in September in the Matthew Thornton Room. She said she had forwarded some correspondence she received to the administration.

Chair Peters also commented that she would be meeting with a representative from the New Hampshire School Fairness Funding Project the following week.

c. Comments

The School Board collectively wished the staff and students a great school year.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

There were none.

MOTION: At approximately 8:12 p.m., Board Member Halter made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.