

Newmarket School Board Meeting

June 20, 2024

JSHS Library

5:15 PM

Present: Gary Swanson, Phil Nazzaro, Lonnie Stebbins, Superintendent Allen.

Amy Tilton excused absence. Gary Swanson asked for a vote from the Board members.

The board approved Dan Smith's request to attend remotely.

Gary Swanson called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Gary Swanson opened the floor for public comment at 5:15 PM. Seeing no members of the public present, he closed the floor for public comment at 5:15 PM.

Board Comments and Committee Updates

- **Lonnie Stebbins** stated the committee continues to work on the Teachers Growth and Evaluation Plan. There continues to be a great deal of discussion, and the committee continues to move forward with building a tool that encompasses all the core beliefs. The next meeting is scheduled for July 23, 2024.

Reports

- **Superintendent Allen** stated school ended on June 13, 2024. He also stated he was glad school wrapped up on the 13th instead of the 17th. Having classes would have been very difficult with the extreme heat and humidity.
 - a) **Superintendent Allen** congratulated all the administrators and staff who put on the end-of-year events, especially the graduation held on June 7, 2024; it is a great sense of pride for the community. He also recognized the great work of the 8th-grade staff. They did a great job with graduation on June 12, 2024. It was great to hear the teachers recognize our students. In addition, there was a 5th-grade celebration on June 12th. **Superintendent Allen** thanked Principal **Sean Pine**. The ceremony was scheduled to be held outdoors. The weather that day was not conducive to an outside event, and Sean had to shift the entire event on the fly. The ceremony was held in the gym. Thank you, Sean!
 - b) A staff professional day was held on June 14, 2024. It was very successful, and there was a much more relaxed atmosphere with school out. The students also spent time reviewing the growth plans for next year. The Junior/Senior high school developed its plan through the New England Association of Schools (NEAS) process. On July 11, 2024, principals Andy Korman and Sean Pine will present their growth plans to the Board.
 - c) Two administrative leadership retreats have been scheduled for the summer. The first was held on Monday, June 17, 2024. This meeting focused on the work that

needs to be done over the summer. The leadership also spent time crafting district goals. The second leadership retreat is scheduled for August.

- d) **Superintendent Allen** indicated the team did something new on the last day of school this year. The team did an organizational health inventory, which is also known as a climate survey. This allowed staff to give feedback on how they felt about the organization. Superintendent Allen indicated he would share the information with the Board later in a non-public meeting.
- e) **Superintendent Allen** provided some follow-up on pending legislation a few months ago.
 - 1) The governor has signed a new Right to Know Law version. The law includes a provision that allows the district to recoup costs associated with excessive requests.
 - 2) A law affecting student representatives to the School Board was passed. The law allows the student representative to miss a School Board meeting, whereas in the past, they had to attend all meetings.
 - 3) A law centered around Charter Schools and their ability to access building aid was passed. The law allows charter schools to apply for building aid.
 - 4) A bill that failed in the legislature was to expand education freedom accounts for people eligible at the 350% poverty level to now include eligibility at the 500% poverty level.
 - 5) There is a bill attempting to regulate athletics, targeting the transgender population. For example, a biological male cannot participate in a female sport. The law defines it as male/boy, female/girl, and another category co-ed. This law puts pressure on the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA) to not make permissive rules to allow students to play in different gendered sports.

Gary Swanson asked **Superintendent Allen** whether the organizational survey would be an annual activity. Superintendent Allen indicated he told the staff it was anonymous and would provide direction to follow up on more precise feedback. Superintendent Allen commented that as the district continues to work on improvements, even good change causes stress and anxiety.

Presentations

- **Proposal for Tier 2 Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Support: Erica MacNeil**, Director of Student Services. A need was identified at the end of the second half of the school year at the Elementary School level. There are students who are not able to regulate their emotions and remain safe in the classroom. There have also been incidents where teachers have been injured on the job. Intervention at a very early age is key to preparing students to learn. The request is for contract service. This service would provide training and tools to the staff to address the changing dynamics in the

classroom. The cost would be \$105,055.00. In addition, a request is being made for a new position. This position would be a behavior tutor. This would cost \$55,969.00. The tutor would be in the classroom full-time and available to students needing a break.

Superintendent Allen provided additional insight as to why these requests are being made. This is not unique to Newmarket. These students are not special education students. However, it does impact their ability to perform in the classroom. It also impacts the teacher's ability to deliver training to the entire group of students.

A program at the junior/senior level addresses these concerns. There are currently an estimated 30 students who have been identified to be at risk in their ability to learn. They are not special education needs students but have difficulty learning. This is often referred to as tier-2 support, which is the ability to provide behavior management planning. This is not just to make the plan, but to ensure the plan is followed through on. This type of support provides a place for these students to go when they are struggling throughout the day.

Erica indicated that through preliminary analysis, she may have some funds available within her budget to support these two requests. Both Erica and Superintendent Allen indicated they want to address these concerns early. If they are not addressed early, they will continue to grow, and that could potentially mean an out-of-the-district placement that would ultimately be more costly.

Gary Swanson asked if the quote provided for the new hire is an all-in number. The quote for the contract position is from the vendor, and the tutor position is an all-in number.

Phil Nazzaro asked whether this is a bump based on when the students were born, related to Covid, or whether this will continue. **Phil Nazzaro** also asked whether a permanent tutor is required or if could contract for a tutor.

Lonnie Stebbins stated that as a teacher, she sees more and more early retirements because the dynamics in the classroom have shifted. Even though it has been said that everything is back to normal now after COVID-19, behavioral issues continue to rise.

Dan Smith stated that if the district sees this continuing, hiring a person would make more sense. However, contracting would be more prudent if this is a short-term need.

- **Literacy Program Update: Patty Wons**, Assistant Superintendent. **Patty Wons** provided an update on the Literacy Program in the Elementary School. The pilot ended in March. The team met in April. The meetings were about sharing feedback on both programs. My View Literacy was selected. However, the assessment tool selected is from the other vendor, I-Ready, for reading and math. She also indicated that 60 teachers are engaged in summer work.
- **Employee Handbook and 4th Quarter Financials: Janna Mellon**, Business Administrator
 - a) **Janna** started off the presentation by thanking everyone who volunteered for this project. The input and collaboration were great.
 - b) As background, a committee was formed in early 2024 to create a revised, compliant, and updated employee handbook. The committee met from January 2024 through June 2024 and collaboratively created a proposed handbook. ***The handbook is included as part of the meeting materials.***
 - c) There were three goals for this project.
 - 1) The first goal was to ensure the handbook was legally compliant. The legal team has reviewed it twice.
 - 2) The second goal was to rectify some disparities that have grown over the years.
 - 3) The third goal was to support the vision of a graduate from the employee side.
 - d) The goal was to have a single handbook for every student in the district.

The Board provided input on items that need to be modified. **Superintendent Allen** has the master list of changes requested by the Board. During this meeting, **Janna Mellon** is seeking approval of the Board handbook.

- **4th Quarter Financials:** **Janna Mellon** stated that while most anticipated expenditures have been encumbered at this point of the year, she has made every effort to accurately estimate the year-end revenue and expenditure balances. It is important to understand these figures are not final. ***The detailed financial review documents are included as part of the meeting materials.*** The FY24 Fund Balance will likely also include certain financial adjustments made by the auditors as part of the financial audit. Please note these financials are based on all current information to date.
 - a) Based on early estimates of expenditures and revenue balances for FY24, as of May 31, 2024, and before making accounting adjustments, the general fund balance is \$620K. This balance is made up of unexpended expenditures and additional revenues beyond what was budgeted. This balance does not take into consideration the two warrant articles we hope to fund from the fund balance.
 - b) **Looking down the road FY25:** There are two items of focus.
 - 1) New Hampshire House Bill 1279. In 2024, a bill was introduced in the House that would permanently restore a state payment of 7.5% to the retirement system to reduce employer contributions for teachers.
 - 2) Federal Grant allocations: For 2024/2025, the district has been advised that the preliminary federal grant allocations reflect a decrease in federal funding of (25K). ***A multi-year chart showing history has been provided as part of the meeting materials.***

Discussion

- **Correspondence:** **Gary Swanson** received a favorable correspondence about a district staff member.
- **School Board Committee Goals:** The Board made a few minor adjustments after reviewing and discussing all goals. ***The detailed goal content is included in the meeting materials.***

Action Items

- **Dan Smith** made a motion to approve the two proposals for Tier 2 social, emotional, and behavioral support. **Lonnie Stebbins** seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.
- **Lonnie Stebbins** made a motion to approve the employee handbook with the edits suggested during the June 6, 2024, Board Meeting. **Phil Nazzaro** seconded the motion.
- **Phil Nazzaro** made a motion to approve the FY24 Fund Balance Retention percentage of 3.5%. **Dan Smith** seconded the motion with a statement he would want to put a pin on the notion that 5% is somewhere we want to be. **Dan Smith** is not sold on that. **Phil Nazzaro** agreed with his statement. The motion passed 4-0.
- **Dan Smith** made a motion to approve the 2024-2025 School Board Committee Goals that were finalized during the June 6, 2024, Board Meeting. **Lonnie Stebbins** seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

- **Dan Smith** made a motion to approve policy second read: BIA-R: New Board Orientation. **Phil Nazzaro** seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.
- **Dan Smith** made a motion to approve the June 6, 2024, Board Meeting minutes. **Phil Nazzaro** seconded the motion. There were a few minor changes required. **Superintendent Allen** will ensure the changes are made to the original document.
- **Phil Nazzaro** made a motion to approve the manifest in the amount of \$1,961,808.24. **Dan Smith** seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.
- **Lonnie Stebbins** made a motion to approve the donation from Mercy Church in the amount of \$1,700.00 to pay off the year-end student lunch debt. **Phil Nazzaro** seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0. The Board expressed their sincere appreciation and extended a thank you to the church for their generous donation.
- **Phil Nazzaro** made a motion to acknowledge the staff hires, and the 2024 fall coaches reviewed by **Superintendent Allen**. **Dan Smith** seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Staff Hires

- a) Stephanie Reitan, Grade 3 teacher
- b) Samantha Scarfo, JSHS Student Support Counselor
- c) Christine Loeb sack, Mathematics Domain Teacher Leader
- d) Erin Milbury, NES Assistance Principal
- e) Katherine Smith, HS Physical Science Teacher

2024 Fall Coaches

- a) Ken Najem, Varsity Boys Soccer
- b) Andrew Dawson, Varsity Girls Soccer
- c) Annaliese Schmidt, JV Girls Soccer
- d) Blake Neri, Varsity Cross Country
- e) Nicole Sanborn, MS Girls Soccer
- f) Jen Dolloff, MS Cross Country

Dan Smith expressed his thanks to all the coaches and staff hires.

Phil Nazzaro made a motion to adjourn the at 7:21 PM. **Lonnie Stebbins** seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:21 PM.

The next School Board Meeting will be held on July 11, 2024, at 5:15 PM in the JSHS Library Media Center.

Meeting Minutes submitted by: Jean Martori-Cram