

Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD)
School Board Meeting Minutes
(Approved Minutes)
September 20, 2011
Gilsum Elementary School, Gilsum, NH

Members Present: Ed Jacod, Bruce Barlow, Pat Bauries, Richard Thackston, James Carnie, William Felton, Mike Blair, Jen Labadie, Eric Stanley, Winston Wright, Mike Morrison, and Phyllis Peterson. **Absent:** Scott Ellsworth, Lisa Steadman and unassigned seat from Roxbury.

Administration present: D. Hodgdon, Superintendent, K. Craig, Assistant Superintendent, T. Kennett, Director of Student Services and J. Fortson, Business Manager,

Also present: M. Suarez, D. Mousette, J. C. Russell and J. Butterfield.

“The goal of the Monadnock Regional Board is to be the Best School District in the State.”

1.PUBLIC COMMENTS: D. Mousette welcomed the Board to Gilsum Elementary. He thanked the Board for allowing the Gilsum and Sullivan Parent Group to have a discussion with the Board. The committee gave the Board 9 questions to answer. R. Thackston explained he would read the question and the Board would answer. The committee may add to the conversation at anytime. The committee will ask questions when the Board is finished.

Question #1: Last summer the MRSD School Board adopted a set of goals. This included such objectives as getting more parent involvement, Improving test scores, lowering average per pupil costs and integrating with the community. What are the priorities for this year, what specific actions is the Board committed to taking to achieve those goals in 2011-2012 and how will you measure the results? R. Thackston explained the Board is doing a number of outreach projects. They have done the goal setting, principal visits, dessert with the HS principal, Cheshire TV and they had planned a Selectmen dinner but it had to be cancelled. He explained the primary goal is to make the culture of making, implementing and achieving goals part of our organizational culture. B. Barlow explained the priority is to achieve State average per pupil costs. He feels with declining enrollment he does not believe that will happen. We need to know the value for what we are spending. NECAP scores have increased. We are involving the community by the Cornucopia grant, the Harrisville grant and the involvement of the Fish and Game. The Board has decided to take the show on the road and hold our Board meetings at the different schools.

Question #2: One of those goals is to lower average per pupil costs. Given that, what are the Board’s intentions with regard to the Gilsum Elementary and Sullivan schools in the next 2-5 years? R. Thackston explained the Board understands that the

per pupil cost in the smaller schools will always be higher. The Board is committed to maintaining and improving the physical plant as well as support an excellent staff. The Board has moved to have a teaching principal in each of the Northern schools will report to the Assistant Superintendent. E. Jacod commented that it is not practical or feasible to address our needs looking at the per pupil cost. There is not room to be cutting corners. W. Felton commented he was against the Surry withdrawal. He is looking at what is the best for the students. What is the real purpose of the school system? P. Peterson commented with the new administration we are focusing on student learning and taking a look at being more efficient but not at the cost of the students. J. Carnie commented the Board as a whole has not looked at these questions. The responses are individual responses and he would like to see the Board answer collaboratively. He hopes the administration has a long term approach with Gilsum and Sullivan. He hopes there is an understanding that there is no agenda. B. Barlow commented the goal is not to lower per pupil cost. We wanted to be at average. J. Labadie commented her concern about taking out the full time principal. She is not convinced the Board does not want to cut. People are worried about their children and taxes. She is very nervous when we say we will never under fund. She commented read the small print and watch the Board. E. Stanley commented people should come to the Board. We can cut and not effect education. We have had a savings in maintenance of \$400,000.00. The new HS principal will be able to cut without effecting education. The Board is looking at ways to bring back the special ed. students and get them what they need in the District. R. Thackston commented to remember that Gilsum and Sullivan are receiving towns. We run more efficiently with a 7 school District. It would be a tragedy to have Sullivan and Gilsum leave.

Question#3: If Sullivan were to withdraw from the district, how would that affect the future of the Gilsum Elementary School. Question #4: If Gilsum were to withdraw from the district, how would that affect the future of the Sullivan Elementary School? Question#5: If Gilsum or Sullivan were to decide to leave the district, form their own districts and operate their own elementary schools, would MRSD be open to having children tuition into the middle and high schools, as Keene does for some towns? R. Thackston explained he would take these three questions together. He said the Sullivan students would be able to attend Gilsum, the school is big enough. The students going to Sullivan may not work. Sullivan has a really small school population. We would have to reevaluate both towns. He would encourage both schools to stay in SAU #93. We have an excellent administration at SAU #93. R. Thackston explained the Board would have to decide on the cost of the SAU 93 services to the individual towns.

Question #6: How are you addressing the remaining issues with regard to accreditation with the NEASC? When will the district get off of academic probation? J. Butterfield explained he is the Chair of the NEASC Self Study. He reported there are three areas of deficiency. The district has made great efforts. The district should be off probation in 6 months to a year. We continue to work on getting off probation and filing the required reports. W. Felton commented the district has been continuing to improve the facility with the pay as you go. R. Thackston commented parents have been approaching the Board to ask if their children from another district

would be accepted to the MRSD. M. Blair commented in his experience students have been accepted to good colleges even with the high school being on probation.

Question#7: The NES Before and After School Program (Formerly NEASACCESS) has helped to improve grades and test scores in Gilsum and Sullivan while meeting broader developmental and educational needs. Does the school board support this program? If so, as federal grant funding designed to launch the program phases out at the end of the 2011-2012 year, what plans, if any, does the district have to provide financial support? D. Hodgdon explained with anything we need to look at what goes in the budget. Is it reasonable? We need to look to see the balance. What we need at the moment. K. Craig commented we are at the beginning of the budget process. We do not know if there is a plan. J. Labadie commented her sense is there is no intention to add it. We will have to come up with something else. D. Hodgdon commented there may be potential for grants from the State.

Question#8: In recent years the district has had a high turnover in administrative management and staff. MRSD makes a substantial professional development investment in the management and staff. Knowing that leadership is key to implementing the goals you've committed to, what are your plans for attracting and retaining administrative and staff talent? (How do you plan to build, strong, cooperative relationships with the board). R. Thackston commented on the fact that there are many people in the district that has been employed for many years. The administration and the staff have been with the district for years. Many of the staff and administration are stable and happy. Many of the teachers say things are working and moving ahead. M. Blair commented there is a misunderstanding about the Board. Although we do not always agree we are all looking out for the best interest of the students. J. Carnie commented on D. Mousette employed by the district for 27 years, as well as J.C. Russell for 27 years and most teachers on the top 2/3 of the salary scale. We have had people for stability. T. Kennett commented that he is not hurting for applications. He has received many with a lot of education and experience. B. Barlow commented you would not believe the difference in the District. W. Wright commented we hire qualified candidates..

Question#9: If room were available, would the district consider opening a preschool program in the Northern Schools? (We understand that there may be an unmet need in the district for these services, that the program is full, and the program may be constrained by physical space issues). R. Thackston commented we have buildings in the wrong places. It would be a 45 minute ride for a 3 year old to attend the Northern Schools. Show us a need and that it is viable. T. Kennett commented there is a need for a new 3 year old program in the district. We have a waiting list. We service the disabled students. The preschool is 50/50 mix of students. We are looking for something. The location is an issue. We have supplies for the program through a grant for this year and next year. There will be a plan before the School Board soon.

R. Thackston called for a 5 minutes recess at 8:25 PM.

2. Consent Agenda: MOTION: P. Peterson **MOVED** to accept the September 6, 2011 Public Meeting Minutes and September 6, 2011 Non-Public Meeting Minutes as presented. **SECOND:** B. Barlow. **VOTE:** 12.609/0/0/2.391. **Motion passes.**

3. Student Government Report: R. Thackston reported the student government member left due to the time of the meeting. He reported the student government and the cheerleaders are getting ready for Homecoming. The students are happy with the 4 minutes between classes.

4. Business Manager's Report: J. Fortson asked the Board for direction on the motion made by the Budget Committee reducing the budget by 4%. R. Thackston explained the Board needs to see the default number and then we need to conference. D. Hodgdon explained the Budget Committee has a number for the bottom line. R. Thackston would like to have the Budget Committee's number with the implications at the October Meeting. J. Fortson explained the October 15 meeting in the high school is in conflict with PSAT testing. R. Thackston suggested looking at the number at the first meeting in October. It was commented we need to move and not wait until Nov. or Dec.

5. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT:

1. Correspondence and Announcements:

D. Mousette welcomed the Board and appreciated the conversation with the Sullivan and Gilsum Group.

J. Butterfield commented on a nice open house and pretty well attended. The MAPS Testing is complete and the NECAP Testing should begin soon. The budget process is on their mind and October 1, 2011 is Homecoming.

M. Suarez reported on a very successful back to school. There was an informational meeting for the first grade parents. There are 25 first graders and the teachers informed the parents on how they will be structuring the class. The parents were pleased with the outcome. MAPS Testing is going on and the NECAP testing will begin in October.

2. Curriculum Report: K. Craig reported the results of the NECAP Science Testing from this past spring will be out soon and she will have a report for the next Board Meeting.

3. Evaluation of MRSD Administrators: D. Hodgdon explained the administration is looking at a comprehensive plan for the administrators. In the past the Assistant Superintendent took care of the evaluations for the principals. D. Hodgdon explained

what will be involved with the evaluation. His expectation is to meet with the Education Committee and then the full Board.

4. Other Issues of Importance:

6. Board Chair Report:

7. School Committee Report:

1. Community Relations Committee: B. Barlow informed the Board the committee did not meet. The Sentinel has finally published a letter written by B. Barlow. The committee had dessert with the principal and it was well attended. On Thursday the committee will have a meet M. Suarez informational meeting with the public.

2. Finance Committee Report: J. Carnie reported he would be bringing a motion from the Finance Committee. R. Thackston asked for the motion at this time.

MOTION: J. Carnie **MOVED** on behalf of the Finance Committee to accept proposed energy reduction plan in the amount of \$27,200.00 for the MS/HS upgrade program. **SECOND:** B. Barlow. **DISCUSSION:** E. Stanley explained the Facilities Committee is on board with this motion. D. LaPointe explained this fits in the 4 and 5 year renovation project. **VOTE:** 12.609/0/0/2.391. **Motion passes.** J. Carnie reported the committee has been discussing the town payments, the \$600,000.00 surplus, the Winchester Special Ed. Student issue and the SAU 38 wrap up. The committee received input from J. Butterfield and the Athletic Director on the pay to play.

3. Education Committee: J. Carnie reported the Education Committee met and discussed the qualifications for graduation, the issue of walking with the class. The committee received a high school principal update and a literacy update. N. Moriarty informed the Board about the Kahn Academy.

4. Facilities Committee: E. Stanley reported the committee met and had a presentation from James Grady on the energy savings proposal for the MS/HS. The Mt. Caesar sprinkler system has not been signed off by the Chief yet. The grandstands have not come back yet. The flower beds and vegetable beds will be put in on Sept. 26, 2011. The electrical work is on schedule. The next meeting is on Sept. 23, 2011.

5. Policy Committee: It was reported the committee met and discussed cell phone use and reviewed policies required by law. The next meeting is on October 3, 2011. They will be discussing the internet use policy.

6. Budget Committee Rep.: E. Stanley reported the Budget Committee will be meeting on Sept. 27, 2011 at 7:00 PM at the high school.

7. Negotiations/Human Resource Committee: P. Bauries reported the unions have scheduled meetings with the committee but there is no report as of yet.

8. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Update on High School Accreditation: J. Butterfield reported the High School report is due on Feb. 1, 2011. We need to do work to show progress on that report.

2. Other Old Business as may come before the Board:

9. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Motions from Facilities Committee:

2. Motions from Policy Committee:

3. Motions from the Education Committee:

4. Motions from the Finance Committee:

- a. Action on the Manifest: MOTION:** B. Barlow **MOVED** the manifest in the amount of \$1,892,253.58 **SECOND:** P. Bauries. **VOTE:** 11.551/0/1.058/2.391. **Motion passes.**

5. Other New Business as may come before the Board: The Board will hold an SAU #93 Board Meeting on October 11, 2011 at 7:00 PM.

10. Setting the next agenda:

1. Budget 4% issue

11. Public Comments: E. Kaplan commented on the Kahn Academy. He commented it is a good idea but will require resources and teacher training. There will be costs in the face of a 4% cut.

J. Carnie informed the Board the Ed. Committee discussed the Kahn Academy. R. Thackston commented the Board should look at this issue. J. Labadie commented Kahn Academy has been working with on line classes for her children. M. Blair commented the Board should have this discussion. K. Craig commented choices for the kids are important. Classrooms and teachers are very important. D. LaPointe commented this discussion should start soon because next year is the tech phase on the renovations. T. Kennett commented he has done this in the past and it should be reviewed on what the program is and the cost. D. Mousette commented the decision should include the education. What we need for the education of the students?

12. 9:45 PM Enter into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3 II-Hiring, Firing or compensation of a public employee: MOTION: E. Jacod **MOVED** to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II Hiring, Firing of compensation of a public employee. **SECOND:** B. Barlow **VOTE** W. Wright, M. Blair, W. Felton, B. Barlow, M. Morrison, E. Stanley, J. Labadie, P. Peterson, P. Bauries, J. Carnie, E. Jacod and R. Thackston. **VOTE:** 11.916/0/.693/2.391. **Motion passes.**

13. Return to Public Session: P. Bauries commented on the School Board giving a positive impression. She explained her three children attended Monadnock and had a great education. We have a great management team who are dedicated professionals. The staff and the sports programs are on the upswing and it greatly disturbs her that a School Board Member believes it is her mission to downgrade any good work and talk against the school. She would like to ask J. Labadie to stop bashing the Board, the School District and the administration. We have all come together in a civilized manner. **MOTION:** P. Bauries **MOVED** a vote of censure against J. Labadie. **SECOND:** E. Jacod. **DISCUSSION:** J. Labadie commented that she does not bash this Board and where does the Board get off saying that she is bringing down the Board. R. Thackston commented that there is so much that J. Labadie does not know. This Board has been struggling with the inheritance of the past. He takes offense with J. Labadie saying that he is a member of the Monadnock Taxpayers Assoc. He said in an open meeting she had insulted the staff, students and administration. He said this motion is the last resort. E. Jacod commented that there are 14 other members who are happy with the results of the District. He had heard J. Labadie degrade one School Board Member. The rest of the School Board Members who were present spoke on the motion. **VOTE:** 10.858/.693/1.058/2.391. **Motion passes.**

14. Motion to adjourn: MOTION: J. Carnie **MOVED** to adjourn the Board Meeting at 10:15 PM. **SECOND:** **VOTE:** 12.609/0/0/2.391. **Motion passes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Laura L. Aivaliotis
Recording secretary