



## Joint Town Council and School Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 14, 2016, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Harrington called the joint meeting of the Town Council and School Board to order at 7:00 p.m. Present at the meeting were Councilor Boyd, Councilor Dwyer, Councilor Flood, Councilor Vaillancourt, School Board Chairman Shannon Barnes, School Board Vice Chairman, Andy Schneider, School Board Members Cinda Guagliumi, Davis Powell, and Michael Thompson, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel, and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali. Vice Chairman Rothhaus and Councilor Koenig were excused.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Harrington led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Comments from the Press and Public** - None

### **Items of Discussion**

#### **1. Polling Location Discussion**

Submitted by Town Council Chairman Nancy Harrington

Town Council and School Board to discuss the potential polling locations for upcoming elections.

Chairman Harrington stated the Town Council is responsible for municipal elections. During the last election, with a single polling place established, a great deal of difficulty was experienced. As a result, the Council requested various departments gather information and provide data to be considered when discussing how to avoid similar difficulties in the future. The data provided was shared with the School Board. Included with the data was a historical perspective on elections conducted from 2000 to 2016, e.g., type of election, voter turnout.

On June 10<sup>th</sup> the Town Council conducted its Annual Retreat/Worksession during which a discussion ensued around possible polling locations. The Council reviewed all of the data, and requested the School Board consider allowing use of the James Masticola Upper Elementary School (JMUES) and the Middle School as polling locations. The Town has also requested and received permission to utilize Saint John Neumann.

Chairman Harrington informed the viewing audience no formal decisions would be made at this time. The intent of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the School Board to pose questions to the Council and the Council to question the kind of resources that would be necessary in order for the request to be accommodated.

School Board Chairman Barnes stated, after receiving the request, she spoke with the School Administration, specifically with regard to the Middle School. When it comes to the JMUES, with such a long history of use there are no particular concerns. There was the need for consideration of the logistics associated with the use of the Middle School. Time between the request and this meeting allowed for a meeting with the Middle School leadership, the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and the Superintendent's Office.

1 Marge Chiafery, Superintendent, stated she, Mark Doyle, Chief, Merrimack Police Department, Lynn  
2 Christensen, Town Moderator, Diane Trippett, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Brenda DuLong, Deputy  
3 Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Adam Caragher, Principal, Middle School, Matt Shevenell, Assistant  
4 Superintendent for Business, and Tom Touseau, Director, Maintenance met to discuss the issue. The  
5 group spent over an hour just looking at the site to determine all of the factors that need to be  
6 considered if using the facility as a polling location. They went into the meeting with an open mind,  
7 and in the end, determined there isn't anything that they could not make work and that there is almost a  
8 need to go through the process to test it out.

9  
10 Superintendent Chiafery stated the most critical partners in such an endeavor are the Police. There is a  
11 need for their presence not only for traffic flow, but also within the building as school would be in  
12 session. The All Purpose Room is believed to be the best location for polling in the building as it can  
13 be accessed from a parking lot, and therefore be kept separate from the rest of the building. Use of that  
14 room for polling would result in lunches being produced there and delivered to another part of the  
15 building. That is an adjustment that also occurs at the JMUES when that facility is utilized for  
16 elections. Experience gained at the JMUES will be helpful when implementing that at the Middle  
17 School.

18  
19 The group discussed how the room would be configured to best accommodate voting. Superintendent  
20 Chiafery requested Chief Doyle and Assistant Superintendent Shevenell weigh in on traffic flow, e.g.,  
21 parent pick-up and drop-off.

22  
23 Assistant Superintendent Shevenell stated one of the things that has really made elections at the  
24 JMUES successful over the years has been the availability of auxiliary parking; the Legion has been  
25 gracious enough to allow staff to park there thus opening up the church parking lot for voters. None of  
26 the other schools have that luxury. However, in reviewing the Middle School, Bishop Field could be  
27 cleared out and maintained for staff parking. Shuttle buses would be used to transport staff back and  
28 forth.

29  
30 There is the need for Police presence particularly to regulate outside traffic and then to secure the  
31 building from the inside. Chief Doyle provided diagrams depicting the a.m. and p.m. drop-off flows.  
32 He remarked it is believed more important to accommodate the traffic flow as opposed to keeping it  
33 the same and trying to manipulate it. The reason being as you pull into the Middle School and  
34 immediately turn to the right where the voter parking would be, that lot will be vacant because all of  
35 the faculty and staff will have parked at Bishop Field. That first parking lot on the right would be the  
36 main voter parking location.

37  
38 They wanted to push the traffic in one way and have it exit out the same direction; travel westerly in  
39 the back of the school around to the west end of the school, and then back down and exit out the front  
40 of the school. That eliminates any crossover that would have occurred if the traffic pattern had been  
41 left the same. Because of the number of Police Officers that would be present at the school, they will  
42 be able to communicate at both ends of the school to allow each officer to understand available  
43 parking.

44  
45 Buses will flow around to the back of the school and then make their drop-off at the west end of the  
46 school. There is an entrance at the far west end of the school and a number of parking spaces at the  
47 west end of the school that will be vacant. Buses will pull in there, drop off, kids will enter the west  
48 end of the school, and then the buses will exit through the front of the school and back out onto  
49 Madeline Bennett Drive. Parent drop off will run similarly; they will follow the same bus route in.

1 Voters will be able to pull in and park. There will be an officer stationed at the main entrance to the  
2 school All Purpose Room/Café, he/she will be available to stop vehicles and help people cross. There  
3 will also be an officer at the immediate turn on the right hand side of the entrance into the voter  
4 parking area. There will be an officer at the west end of the school as well to monitor the bus drop off  
5 and help buses move back out into the flow of traffic.  
6

7 Chief Doyle remarked the expectation is that in the a.m. there would be a considerable waiting line.  
8 There will be plenty of police presence to ensure pedestrian safety.  
9

10 Town Manager Cabanel remarked it is important to remember the intent would be to utilize three  
11 polling locations for every election.  
12

13 Councilor Vaillancourt questioned if there would be two-way traffic going around the school in the  
14 afternoon, and was told that is correct. She pointed out that visitors/parents have a tendency to park  
15 near the front doors, which is something that cannot be allowed to occur.  
16

17 Assistant Superintendent Shevenell stated his recollection the group reached consensus that in the  
18 afternoon the buses would be kept against the building, and any cars that would have to leave would be  
19 on the outside to avoid children crossing in front of cars to get to the buses. He stated his belief it  
20 would be best for the same traffic pattern to be utilized for all elections.  
21

22 Chairman Harrington commented it is likely each citizen will receive a postcard indicating which  
23 polling place to utilize. At the Middle School, a special note could be added identifying the times of  
24 drop off and pick up to make people aware of times when traffic will be heaviest. Assistant  
25 Superintendent Shevenell suggested, prior to the election, he may want to send notification to parents  
26 requesting they minimize the drop-off, e.g., if possible have child take the bus.  
27

28 School Board Vice Chairman, Andy Schneider, commented of all of the schools, the Middle School  
29 parking lot is probably the most fragmented. There is the entrance on the end where voters would be,  
30 which is sort of a squared off parking lot, but there are not a ton of spaces there. In the diagram  
31 provided it indicates using the lot across the street from the entrance, which will have people dodging  
32 traffic going across, the spaces down by where the buses will drop at the far end of the building, and  
33 the spaces in the upper field by the Grater Woods trails. He stated concern with the distance voters  
34 would have to walk; particularly in times of inclement weather.  
35

36 School Board Member Powell was pleased with being able to see the plan on paper. He stated he feels  
37 comfortable with the plan that has been laid out. He echoed the concerns about the fragmented  
38 parking. He questioned if there was discussion of a delayed opening to minimize the early day rush,  
39 and was told there was not. Superintendent Chiafery stated her preference to handle the first election  
40 as has been described, and work on any changes once it is known where they may be needed. School  
41 Board Member Powell questioned how afterschool activities would be addressed. Superintendent  
42 Chiafery responded once the governing bodies come to a decision, the Administration can talk to the  
43 tri-county league and request an away game on a given date. However, that has to be able to be done  
44 with some advance notice.  
45

1 School Board Member Powell commented when the High School was made available care had to be  
2 taken with the gymnasium floors, and questioned if there are similar concerns with either of the other  
3 two locations being proposed. Superintendent Chiafery responded there are none. The thing they are  
4 most concerned about is the gym floor because of the expense of maintaining that. But for the All  
5 Purpose Room there is no concern.  
6

7 School Board Member Powell commented on the kitchen, and asked if the meals for the satellite  
8 school would be able to be provided with the proposed setup. Assistant Superintendent Shevenell  
9 stated he spoke with David Dziki, Director, Food Services. He would have to have some assistance  
10 with getting the vans out to make the deliveries to the satellite school. As far as lunch being served, it  
11 would be delivered to the classrooms. With the two doors in the back of the kitchen, they wouldn't  
12 have to go out into the voting area to push the food out.  
13

14 School Board Chairman Barnes stated her belief what is being discussed for the Middle School is to  
15 have roughly 5,000 registered voters assigned to that facility. Moderator Christensen responded there  
16 would be somewhere in the 6,000 - 7,000 range. School Board Chairman Barnes commented looking  
17 at the data for the September State primaries it runs upwards of 20%. Were there a 25% turnout, it  
18 would result in perhaps 1,500 voters in total for the day at that facility. She noted school would be  
19 closed during the November election. With an expectation of 80% turnout, there would be approx.  
20 4,500 coming to that location on that day.  
21

22 Moderator Christensen commented it doesn't matter if you have everybody going through a very large  
23 site or smaller numbers going through three smaller sites, during times of larger elections, any site is  
24 going to be busy. School Board Chairman Barnes remarked when looking at a 12-hour voting cycle,  
25 4,000 voters at the site on a day when teachers and students are not present would be more palatable.  
26

27 Councilor Boyd asked for clarification buses arrive at the Middle School between 7:00 – 7:20 a.m. and  
28 in the afternoon there is a 2:00 p.m. release and a 4:00 p.m. late bus. Assistant Superintendent  
29 Shevenell stated that to be correct.  
30

31 Councilor Boyd questioned if a Police Officer would be deployed at the southwest and southeasterly  
32 side of the site to accommodate the a.m. traffic for people that might want to use the overflow parking  
33 where buses would be dropping off kids, and likewise in the p.m. Chief Doyle stated there would be  
34 two at that particular location; one at the corner where the buses come up and make the right where the  
35 voters will come up in the morning and make that right. There will also be an officer at that location in  
36 the afternoon. The officer would have to hold a few vehicles in queue to make sure that not everybody  
37 that is going to pick up will be queued up in front of the school at the same time. There will also be an  
38 officer at the far west end. He/she will be there to monitor the traffic and allow the cross traffic not to  
39 get into each other's way. There is plenty of room to accommodate the free flow of traffic in both  
40 directions.  
41

42 Councilor Boyd questioned if it would be fair to presume parking would not be permitted on Madeline  
43 Bennett Drive. Chief Doyle stated that to be correct. He added in the afternoon buses queue up on  
44 Madeline Bennett Drive. It is still wide enough to accommodate traffic going past the buses as well as  
45 emergency vehicles.  
46

47 School Board Member Schneider commented anyone who has had a child at the Middle School knows  
48 that when you have activities outside of the norm occurring, parents use Madeline Bennett Drive as the  
49 short-cut to do what they need to do and then do a U-turn in the middle of the road. He commented his

1 question was answered with the Chief's statement that no parking would be enforced on that road  
2 during elections. Chief Doyle stated that to be correct. He added there will be an officer at the  
3 intersection of McQuestion Road and Baboosic Lake Road, there will be an officer and/or a volunteer  
4 in the parking lot at Bishop Field, and an officer inside the venue at the All Purpose Room. Currently,  
5 they are looking at a total of 8 officers onsite during school hours. There will be less during the  
6 General Election and after school hours.

7  
8 School Board Member Thompson commented he feels comfortable with the information that has been  
9 provided, and expressed appreciation for the thorough review that has occurred. He questioned ADA  
10 compliance at the Middle School. Moderator Christensen responded that was reviewed, and there are  
11 no issues.

12  
13 School Board Member Guagliumi stated she is comfortable with the information provided, and  
14 expressed her gratitude for the work that has been done. She stated particular appreciation for the  
15 increased police presence. She questioned pedestrian traffic. Moderator Christensen stated there to be  
16 one door to the All Purpose Room from the parking lot. It is that door only that would be used for both  
17 entering and exiting. None of the doors into the corridors would be used except for by election  
18 workers headed to one of the restrooms. There will be police presence there to ensure the individual is  
19 an election worker and the restroom is the destination. School Board Member Guagliumi suggested  
20 the use of an electronic sign indicating where voters should enter. Moderator Christensen stated there  
21 to be voting signs that are used at all locations.

22  
23 School Board Vice Chairman, Schneider remarked in the past, the Moderator has stated concern with  
24 separate entrances and exits and places for queueing to occur. He remarked even at the JMUES there  
25 has been a separate entrance and exit. He questioned the challenges of a single entrance/exit.  
26 Moderator Christensen responded people are just going to have to be polite. There is no other  
27 alternative if you are not using any of the corridors in the school, which she would not find acceptable.  
28 Same day registration will be pushed to the far end of the room so that there is room to queue in the  
29 line. If it rains on Election Day, voters should remember to bring their umbrellas.

30  
31 School Board Member Guagliumi asked if students are dropped off early for band and chorus.  
32 Superintendent Chiafery responded the group was solely focused on the September 13<sup>th</sup> election,  
33 although it is understood the desire would be for all elections. During the September election band and  
34 chorus would not be an issue. That is something that will have to be considered for future elections.

35  
36 Councilor Vaillancourt expressed gratitude to all parties for working together to make this work for the  
37 citizenry. She commented there is no perfect solution. She is pleased to see a solution that does not  
38 require the closing of schools. She stated her belief using the Middle School will be a stretch, and  
39 there will be some glitches. She added the point about fragmented parking is a good one, but it is one  
40 of the only locations with the option of auxiliary parking.

41  
42 Superintendent Chiafery commented one of the things Moderator Christensen offered up as she talked  
43 with Principal Caragher was engaging the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. The students study American History.  
44 She stated she would be pleased to speak with the students about the process, and that there might be  
45 some students who would be able to participate. She remarked she sees that as a benefit that came  
46 about through conversation.

47  
48 Councilor Boyd spoke of voter access to the All Purpose Room. Moderator Christensen stated there to  
49 be one entrance to the All Purpose Room from the outside. Councilor Boyd stated his understanding

1 only one classroom would be involved were voters to exit out to the corridors, make a left, and exit out  
2 onto the street through those doors. Moderator Christensen stated there to be several classrooms.  
3 Councilor Boyd questioned the opportunity for the Administration to consider relocating classes for  
4 that particular day to provide for improved pedestrian flow. Moderator Christensen stated her opinion  
5 that would be asking more of the school than is reasonable, and she believes the one entrance/exit can  
6 be accommodated.

7  
8 Chairman Harrington restated a decision is not being reached at this time, and that is something that  
9 could be reviewed. Councilor Boyd responded he simply wished to add that to the conversation.  
10 Moderator Christensen noted that was specifically discussed, and eliminated as a possibility. School  
11 Board Member Powell stated agreement with Councilor Boyd, and requested a second look be taken.  
12 He stated his belief there is a set of crash doors at the bottom of the stairwell. That might provide for a  
13 circular flow if voters were to enter through the All Purpose Room and exiting out the crash doors on  
14 the front of the building, and into the parking lot.

15  
16 Superintendent Chiafery remarked at the time the group was discussing the issue, the desire was to  
17 avoid any co-mingling of students. The Music Room is in that particular area as is Family &  
18 Consumer Science and Tech Ed. The doors alluded to are on the front of the building, but visitors  
19 would have to come out into the hallway. The way they looked at furniture placement in the room was  
20 to create a natural barrier with some of the election equipment, etc. School Board Member Powell  
21 remarked he had forgotten about the second door for the Family & Consumer Science classroom.  
22 Superintendent Chiafery stated another look can be taken, but to give the impression that it is  
23 immediately doable might not be in everyone's best interest.

24  
25 School Board Vice Chairman Schneider commented hearing all of the discussion and understanding  
26 the group has considered every conceivable issue, he has no trouble supporting this for the September  
27 election. He has his doubts about the General Election, even with the schools all closed. He  
28 commented that will be the real test; with all schools closed and three polling locations.

29  
30 Chairman Harrington commented she does not believe anyone should perceive this as an easy solution  
31 and one that will not have difficulties. There will be difficulties. This is a Town that is going to have  
32 traffic issues, particularly in November. There needs to be an understanding that there will be pivotal  
33 times where traffic will be increased. Voters should do their best to avoid those times if possible.

34  
35 Councilor Dwyer commented for anyone asking themselves why the Middle School, it was really  
36 about the geography of the Town. It is important to separate the locations. He spoke of the traffic  
37 congestion, on any given day, between the Common Man Restaurant and the Library during the hours  
38 of 4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. It is a long ride on D.W. Highway and Route 3. With the General Election  
39 and the possibility of 15,000 voters, the desire was to break that up evenly between the locations.

40  
41 Chairman Harrington remarked how it is broken up is up to the Town Moderator and Town Clerk.  
42 Two and a half months' time is needed for the voter checklists to be revised. Once that is determined,  
43 there is also the need to notify the citizenry. She noted that to be one of the reasons she would request  
44 the School Board reach a decision as soon as possible.

45  
46 School Board Chairman Barnes noted the item is on the School Board's agenda for its June 20<sup>th</sup>  
47 meeting. Moderator Christensen requested if a decision could not be made during this meeting that  
48 one is made as quickly as possible.

49

1 Councilor Dwyer spoke of absentee ballots, and stated he would stress that at every meeting from now  
2 until the election, and may go on local television to stress that as well. He suggested there to be no  
3 reason why there could not be an increase of 10-15% of absentee ballots. Town Clerk/Tax Collector  
4 Trippett cautioned there are limited reasons why a voter could obtain an absentee ballot, and that a  
5 ballot can be challenged and not counted. Councilor Dwyer stated he would meet with her to discuss  
6 that further. Moderator Christensen stated, at the last Presidential Election, absentee ballots were still  
7 being processed at 10:00 p.m. She requested citizens be cautious and judicious about requesting an  
8 absentee ballot.

9  
10 School Board Vice Chairman Schneider remarked there are probably people at home wondering why  
11 the Reeds Ferry School is not being considered, and stated one of the reasons to be there is no entrance  
12 available to the building while school is in session to allow this sort of scenario to occur.

13  
14 Moderator Christensen added parking at either of the Ferry schools is a bigger challenge than at the  
15 Middle School. At the Middle School you have a flow through, e.g., vehicle traffic comes in one way,  
16 if there isn't parking, it continues to the next lot, to the next lot, and the exit. Moderator Christensen  
17 stated her belief the ability to isolate voters from the students is the biggest reason for using the Middle  
18 School. School Board Vice Chairman Schneider stated agreement.

19  
20 Councilor Boyd noted under RSA 657:7, to satisfy the requirements for an absentee ballot voters need  
21 to; be absent from the town or city where registered, cannot appear in public because of observance of  
22 a religious commitment, are unable to vote in person by reason of a physical disability or are unable to  
23 appear at the polls at any time during polling hours because an employment obligation requires you to  
24 remain physically at work or to be in transit to or from work from the time the polls open until after the  
25 polls close.

26  
27 Chairman Harrington questioned on what basis the assignments would be distributed. Moderator  
28 Christensen stated that would be based on the capacity of the various rooms that would be used; will  
29 not be an equal distribution of voters. She added there was mention of using Saint John Neumann, and  
30 that might not necessarily be true. She spoke of a conversation with Merrimack Valley Baptist  
31 Church. They have agreed and are thrilled that the Town would like to use their facility for the  
32 November election. They have also discussed the Presidential Primary. They have said they are  
33 willing to cancel school. They have a phenomenal facility; good entrance, good ADA access, etc. She  
34 suggested the Merrimack Valley Baptist location be used for the November and the Presidential  
35 Primary and Saint John Neumann's for the other smaller elections.

36  
37 School Board Chairman Barnes stated the decision of the School Board will be relayed to Chairman  
38 Harrington, via email, the evening of June 20<sup>th</sup>.

1 **2. Other**

2 Submitted by Town Council Chairman Nancy Harrington

3

4 Chairman Harrington remarked, in the past, the Town Council and School Board have had discussions  
5 of the tennis courts on O’Gara Drive and the Council’s decision not to replace them. The Town has  
6 been waiting for a letter from the State of New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic  
7 Development, Division of Parks and Recreation, declaring the tennis courts obsolete so that some  
8 action could be taken. That letter has been received.

9

10 Although the tennis courts cannot be used by the School District until after July 30, 2018, the Town  
11 can take action to improve the site. At this time, the Town Council is in need of official notification  
12 from the School Board as to what the board would like to see occur on that site, e.g., take down the  
13 fence, replace pavement with grass, etc.

14

15 School Board Chairman Barnes responded the School Board recently charged its Planning & Building  
16 Committee with objectives that included discussion of an engineering study on that site as a way of  
17 identifying possible uses, e.g., what is appropriate, the needs of the District, etc. The intent of the  
18 School Board is to have an engineer visit the site and be able to provide input to the Planning &  
19 Building Committee. The committee has a deadline for completing its work, which will allow the  
20 School Board to respond to the Council with a reasoned and well thought out expectation of what they  
21 wish the property to be used for long term.

22

23 Chairman Harrington questioned if the Council is required to take a position on the School Board  
24 having an engineering study completed. Town Manager Cabanel stated her belief that would not be  
25 necessary.

26

27 *Chairman Harrington questioned if any member of the Council had objection to the School Board*  
28 *arranging to have an engineering study completed. No objection was stated.*

29

30 School Board Member Thompson questioned if the tennis courts are in use, and was informed they are  
31 not. School Board Chairman Barnes stated with the engineering study the Board will understand the  
32 potential uses for the property. She commented the Board would not look to the Council to come up  
33 with a beautification plan in the 23<sup>rd</sup> month, but they also would not want to move forward with tasks  
34 such as removal of the footings of the electrical poles without understanding what the long-term plans  
35 are. Although they don’t like the look of it either, they want to ensure a plan is in place before moving  
36 forward.

37

38 **Comments from the Press** - None

39

40 **Comments from the Public** - None

41

42 **Comments from the Council**

43

44 Chairman Harrington thanked the School Board for working with the Council on these matters.

45

46 **Comments from the School Board**

47

1 School Board Member Powell echoed Chairman Harrington’s sentiment, and added he is pleased the  
2 two boards and staff have been able to come together to resolve the issue. He stated his hope this is the  
3 genesis of very productive joint interactions between the two boards in the future.

4  
5 School Board Chairman Barnes stated agreement. She remarked there is a good deal the two boards  
6 have in common, and there is a lot they can accomplish together.

7

8 **Adjourn**

9

10 **MOTION made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by School Board Member Powell to adjourn**  
11 **the meeting. MOTION CARRIED 10-0-0**

12

13 *The June 14, 2016 joint meeting of the Town Council and School Board was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.*

14

15

16

17 Submitted by Dawn MacMillan

