

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm

Present:

- John Harmon, School Board Chair
- Tony Clements, School Board Vice Chair
- Joseph Saulnier, School Board Secretary
- Cindy Bennett, School Board Member
- Stephen Scarfo, School Board Member
- Terry Leatherman, Superintendent
- Marjorie Whitmore, Business Administrator
- Peter Dannible, Raymond High School Principal
- Tom Waldron, Iber Holmes Gove Middle School Principal
- Jessica Benson, Lamprey River Elementary School Principal
- Tasha Ball, Director of School Nutrition Services

Proof of Posting: It was noted that the meeting was properly posted.

Pledge of Allegiance: All those in attendance stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Input: Public input was opened at 6:02pm. John Harmon noted that public input would be open for 30 minutes. If anyone arrives within that timeframe and would like to speak, they will be allowed to do so.

James McLeod who is on the Planning Board but is speaking as a resident, wants to bring to the board's attention RSA 674:54 - Governmental Land Uses, which gives government agencies and school boards/districts the ability to do projects without having to meet all of the standards that a normal developer would, however there are exceptions and Mr. McLeod believes the solar panel project would fall under such exceptions as installation of solar is not required by statute and is not a traditional school district function. Mr. McLeod stated that he feels this is something the board should look into as he does not believe the solar panel project is protected by this RSA, and if it is; written notice containing plans, specifications, and explanation of changes has to come to the governing body and/or the planning board.

Gwen Clark suggested that the board create a PowerPoint that includes what the planning is going to be, where the panels will be located, which neighbors to the school will be affected and the pros/cons of having a solar panel system, and share this PowerPoint with the public - so they will have more information to go on and feel more aware.

Three emails were received and read into record. A copy of these emails are attached to the end of these minutes.

Email 1 is from Raymond resident Jeff Roy - who would like to point out that under RSA 198:4 – school districts are allowed to appropriate money that appertains to expenses such as heating systems - and agrees that the middle and high school boilers need replacing; however, he feels it surprising and not a necessity to add a 2 or 3 acre solar panel field at the additional cost of 2+ million dollars onto the plan for new boilers. Mr. Roy does not feel it is the right time for this type of investment, as the citizens of the town are already struggling financially and there are still unanswered questions about safety, replacement, disposal, and chemicals that may leach off the panels and contaminate the soil.

Email 2 is from Owen McGhee - a concerned tax payer of Raymond, writing in regards to the 4 million dollar 20-year loan for the project that includes the solar panels. Mr. McGhee feels there must be a way to replace the school boilers without the additional expenses and does not feel the addition of a “solar farm” enhances or advances the education of students, especially when teaching resources are being reduced or paused. Mr. McGhee is also concerned about the solar panels causing erosion of soil due to runoff, and feels this decision should be on the ballot for voters to decide rather than being made by the school board.

Email 3 is from Julie Laughner, a Raymond resident - who is writing in opposition of the solar panel project and would prefer a more traditional approach for the new boilers instead. Ms. Laughner pointed out that disposal of panels is still unknown and that taxpayers voted no on this project in 2020. Ms. Laughner also has questions regarding the 25% health insurance cost increase in teacher contracts for the 24-25 school year and would like to know if it is possible and/or would make sense to raise teacher salaries and reduce the insurance benefit.

Our Students/Our Schools: The LRES Grade 3 Chorus students, along with Music Teacher Alison LaCasse, were present to talk about and answer questions about their time spent with recorders. Students present had to participate in both session 1 and 2, as well as performing with recorders for the monster concert.

Students Present: Aiden Ducharme, Cory Lemons, Quinnylynn Wormald, Nora Dargie, Sadie Johnston, Alanna Totte, Camden Parks, [name withheld], and Rylee Johns. Students individually answered the following questions –

1. What did you like best about the LRES Chorus program?
2. What was the hardest part about being in the Chorus program?

3. What part of this program surprised you the most?
4. What part of being in the Chorus program made you the proudest?

Following the questions, board members asked the students some questions of their own, including:

Are you interested in playing instruments in grade 4 – asked by Mr. Saulnier. Each student said yes and went on to share which instrument they were most excited to play. All students were interested in singing in chorus next year as well.

Mr. Scarfo congratulated students on doing such a good job at the concert.

Ms. Bennett thought they did a great job with the recorder as well.

Student Representative to the School Board Report: The Student Representative to the School Board was not present this evening.

Student Meal Survey:

Director of School Nutrition Services Tasha Ball proposed, on behalf of the Wellness Committee, a school lunch survey for students. In the pursuit of trying to increase the wellness of the community schools, Ms. Ball created an opt-in meal survey for students to participate in. Ms. Ball then asked the board for permission to move forward with the created survey and if they had any questions.

Discussion:

Mr. Saulnier asked if it would be better to have an “other” option on the survey for meals that are favorites, such as pizza - presented as multiple choice so younger children can just check off their favorite.

Ms. Ball stated there is current internal data already factored in, as far as which meal days are the highest, and that she is hoping the survey will lend more of what children are looking to see offered that currently is not.

Mr. Clements asked if we could survey students on whether they buy lunch or not and what would make them buy it, if they don't currently? Ms. Ball stated she would absolutely add that question onto the survey.

Ms. Bennett asked how this survey will be sent out to students? Surveys will be sent to parents first, so they can grant permission for participation, after which surveys will be disbursed to students.

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Mr. Clements to accept the lunch survey questions. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

RHS Grading Committee:

RHS Teachers Kim Moyer and Christina Pauli presented a 100-point grading scale presentation. The Grading Committee was tasked by administration to revise information in the student handbook. The committee began this project in January 2024 by collecting and reviewing grading handbooks of area schools in all divisions, with major focus on schools in our division. In February the committee completed their final draft. A presentation was made to the staff and a survey was conducted. Taking all feedback, in March the committee met with administrative members to come up with that they felt was the best practice for our students at Raymond High School. In April, the committee met with Site Council – which consists of students at the high school – and ran this grading proposal by them. The students were amazing with their feedback and it was a great, productive meeting.

The committee proposed a detailed outline of the new 100-point grading scale to the board and asked for permission to move forward with changes. The proposed new scale for the 2024-2025 school year will eliminate all D letter scoring and anything less than 70% will be considered Non Yet Competent.

95% of staff surveyed supported the 70% and above scale. 70% is also the required passing minimum on the State Civics exam that all students are required to take to earn a High School Diploma.

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Mr. Scarfo to approve the competency grade scale to 70% and above. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

Discussion:

Mr. Harmon asked if a grading scale range for grades 6th through 12th should be 0-100 or 50-100. The board and Grading Committee agreed that it would make grading and transitioning to high school easier if they were on the same scale already.

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Ms. Bennett to have a grading system for grades 6th through 12th be on a 0-100 grading range. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

Discussion:

Mr. Harmon asked if grades less than 70% should be called NYC (Not Yet Competent) or F. The committee felt the wording of NYC was just a gentler warning whereas Mr. Clements felt it didn't drive home the fact that you are failing.

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Ms. Bennett to have letter grading scale of A through C with no D, but including F (to replace NYC). Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

LRES, IHGMS, & RHS Principals' Reports:

Mr. Waldron reviewed the Iber Holmes Gove Middle School report, including highlights, acknowledgements, updates, challenges, discipline and enrollment information, student achievement, and upcoming events.

During discussion it was noted that the middle school is currently short a full time educator in grade 6, in need of a long term sub for 4th grade team manager, a title one math tutor, and are always in need of substitutes. The next upcoming Principal Coffee Hour is Tuesday, May 14th. Step-up day for 3rd grade will be Friday, June 7th.

Ms. Benson reviewed the Lamprey River Elementary School report, including highlights, acknowledgements, updates, challenges, discipline and enrollment information, student achievement, and upcoming events.

During discussion it was noted that there is a shortage of substitute teachers. The SELT partnership is going to be continued next school year as Forest Fridays on school campus. Kindergarten teacher Jessica Coughlin was nominated to be considered for teacher of the year for 2025. It was suggested to implement a full time substitute teacher position for the next school year.

Mr. Dannible reviewed the Raymond High School report, including highlights, acknowledgements, updates, challenges, discipline and enrollment information, student achievement, and upcoming events.

During discussion it was noted that the high school is short staffed on substitute teachers, in need of an athletic trainer, paraeducator and social worker. Prom is May 10th at the country club in Portsmouth. The senior class trip is May 17th-19th, Graduation is June 7th, and the last day for students is June 17th.

Study Hall during school for athletes has now been implemented into practice schedules for athletes to get schoolwork done.

School Board Summer Meeting Schedule:

Due to June 5th being Class Night for the seniors, the board would like to reschedule that night's board meeting to May 29th with the following June meeting to be June 19th.

Mr. Saulnier proposed consolidating summer meetings into 3, rather than 5.

The Board agreed to consolidate, and there will be one meeting in July – July 24th, and two meetings in August – August 14th and August 21st.

Nominations/Resignations:

Jenna Holden - Middle School Math Lab Teacher, resignation effective June 30th, 2024

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Mr. Scarfo to accept Jenna Holden's resignation effective June 30th, 2024. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

Jennifer Schaeffer – High School Math Teacher, resignation effective June 30th, 2024.

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Mr. Clements to accept Jennifer Schaeffer's resignation effective June 30th, 2024. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

Ellie Samuelson – Middle and High school Music Teacher, resignation effective June 30th, 2024.

MOTION: Mr. Scarfo moved, seconded by Mr. Clements to accept Ellie Samuelson's resignation effective June 30th, 2024. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

2022/2023 Audit Review:

Ms. Whitmore reviewed the audit pages with the board and noted that nothing was found out of order. However, due to unclear information on page 2 of the audit – she is unsure what they are referring to in regards to “significant risks identified” and plans to call for clarification.

Monthly Financial Update:

Ms. Whitmore shared financials through March 31st and noted that she expects a shortfall of Medicaid reimbursement of \$100,000, the Special Education Aid is expected to be received, as well as Building Aid, she made a significant deposit this week for Before School Programs, which may reflect a shortfall of about \$7,500 before the end of the year, we will be receiving preschool tuition before the end of the year, and no impact fees are expected for the rest of the year. Ms. Whitmore also noted that salaries have been reconciled through 3/31, and all health, dental and life and disability insurances are reconciled through April. There will be a savings of \$166,000 for professional services for students, and student transportation is in the red \$515,000 still.

Staff are being asked to put in their purchase requisitions for the end of the year as of April 30th so spending can be finalized for the year.

2024/2025 Grant Program Assurances:

Mr. Leatherman reviewed the 2024/25 Grant Program Assurances document with the School Board. These assurances will provide the grant assurances document to the New Hampshire DOE, assuring

them of meeting certain requirements of grant funding and that documents just need to be signed by the Superintendent.

Energy Projects Lease:

At the last meeting, the school board authorized Mr. Leatherman to negotiate terms of the lease for the energy projects. Our attorneys advised that the motion should specifically authorize Mr. Leatherman to sign a lease or sign an agreement with the bank, so that we can move the process forward. Right now the current rate is 4.98%. Mr. Leatherman went over some details in the Friday memo – noting that we can agree to a “pay up to” if there is a surplus one year – the school would notify the bank on a specific date that we could pay an extra \$250,000. \$250,000 cannot be exceeded. The first payment would be July 15th, 2025 and when a grant is received for the solar panels, we can pay at any time.

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Mr. Scarfo to allow Mr. Leatherman to sign the energy projects lease agreement. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

Committee Reports:

Mr. Scarfo stated that we need someone for CIP - a chair, vice chair and secretary were all chosen, as well as meeting dates determined to be the second Tuesday of every month. The next meeting will be May 14th.

Ms. Bennett stated that the Cable Committee met and that the Board of Selectmen is looking at rules for use of content generated with AI.

Superintendents Report:

Mr. Leatherman noted that Patricia Blanchard, 89 - a long-time employee - recently passed away on April 7th, 2024. She worked for 30 years as a Raymond School District lunch lady and retired as a manager of the program. She was also a charter member of the Rainbow Girls in Exeter, was on the advisory board in Candia for Rainbow Girls and received the Grand Cross of Color, was a member of the American School Force Food Service Association, and a member of the Order of Easter Star in Derry. Mr. Leatherman expressed condolences to Ms. Blanchard’s family.

Mr. Leatherman shared that a team of 20 people are going to the restorative practice training with Suffolk University. This team will be our lead team that will come up with an implementation plan. Plans are being made to bring Suffolk University on the admin retreat – being held in August.

The mock drill went well, despite some hiccups that we were able to recover from – each student was found, recovered, accounted for and ended up in the high school gym and everybody was safe.

Correspondence/Other:

Mr. Clements would like to acknowledge and congratulate Clark Brooks, a Raymond High School student – who went to the New Hampshire Motor Speedway on Sunday and the Northview Classic, competing against some of the best drivers in the Northeast.

Mr. Scarfo pointed out that Nature’s Classroom and the DC Trip are typically paid for by fundraising, but might it be possible for the board to talk about subsidizing these programs to some degree – in an effort to help make it more affordable and attainable to all students. A discussion for this topic will be on a future meeting’s agenda.

Manifest Signing:

Accounts Payable: 699,151.46

Payroll: \$500,553.00

Total: \$1,199,704.46

A quorum of the Board signed the manifest.

Approval of Minutes:

The following amendments were suggested for the April 3, 2024 minutes: page 7, correct to “Rafflemania”; page 5, start second to last paragraph with “Mr. Harmon clarified that the motion....”; page 7, under Committee Reports, start with “Mr. Scarfo stated that...”; page 3, fifth paragraph, correct to \$150,000; page 1, Student Representative Report, correct “Height” to “HYPE (Hosting Young Philosophy Enthusiasts)”.

MOTION: Mr. Clements moved, seconded by Ms. Bennett to approve the April 3rd, 2024 meeting minutes, as amended. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Mr. Scarfo to amend the minutes for April 3rd, 2024 to include when we exited the second non-public, to unseal April 30th, 2024. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

MOTION: Mr. Saulnier moved, seconded by Mr. Clements to approve the non-public minutes of April 3rd, 2024 to be kept sealed until April 30th, 2024.

Non-Public Session: MOTION: Joseph Saulnier moved, seconded by Stephen Scarfo, to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (m) "Consideration of whether to disclose minutes of a nonpublic session due to a change in circumstances under paragraph III." Upon the Board members being individually polled, the motion was voted in the affirmative by Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Cindy Bennett, Stephen Scarfo, and Tony Clements. The Board entered into non-public session at 9:42 PM and resumed public session at 9:51 PM. Other than the vote to exit this non-public session (which was moved by Joseph Saulnier, seconded by Stephen Scarfo, and upon the Board members being individually polled, was voted in the affirmative by Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Cindy Bennett, Stephen Scarfo and Tony Clements), no motions were voted during this non-public session.

MOTION: Joseph Saulnier moved, seconded by Tony Clements, to unseal the following non-public minutes: April 13, 1998, June 4, 1998 5, June 18, 1998 3, September 3, 1998 1, September 17, 1998 1, 2, 4 and 5, October 15, 1998 5, February 4, 1999 1 and 3. Upon the Board members being individually polled, the motion was voted in the affirmative by Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Cindy Bennett, Stephen Scarfo and Tony Clements.

Adjournment:

MOTION: Joseph Saulnier moved, seconded by Stephen Scarfo, to adjourn the meeting. Voted unanimously in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned at 9:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Celina Lloyd,
School Board Clerk

The following emails were read during this evening's public input:

*Good evening school board members,
I request that my letter be read aloud tonight at the school board meeting and placed into the record. The discussion regarding the replacement of the high school and middle school boilers has been going on for quite some time. It is indeed a fact that the boilers are coming to or are at their end of life, that is not debatable. The fact that we have a twenty five year old oil tank that requires removal is also not up for debate. Under RSA 198:4 school districts are allowed to appropriate money for appurtenances. An example of such an item would be a heating system. With that said, it was surprising to see the school board make the decision to add a solar project into the mix on top of a new boiler replacement proposal. I will not question the validity of the LED light upgrade, I will not question the validity of the boiler replacement however I will question the necessity of installing a two to three acre solar panel field at the additional cost of two plus million dollars in a town that it's citizens are hurting financially.*

I have heard the arguments for the solar project. one is "Estimated" savings, the other "after 11 years they have paid themselves off" great attempts to get people on board. But we are talking about today and our current financial situation. I am not entirely opposed to the idea of solar. It's just not the right time for this type of investment. I just don't think tax payers should be forced into paying for them over twenty years when there are unanswered questions about the safety, replacement and disposal of the panels now and in the future. What type of chemicals leach off these panels and contaminate the soil? Lead and cadmium are harmful to humans and the environment. How will this project affect runoff, drainage and erosion? I was told this will be built near the schools well. This is concerning. Currently, there is no special procedure for recycling solar panels. It is estimated that with the increase in solar energy, millions of panels will be hitting their end of life and littering our landfills in the coming years. At one point in time, asbestos was considered safe and was banned in 1989. To this day, daily there are commercials advertising class action lawsuit payouts for asbestos exposure, are we prepared for the possible costs down the road to dispose of them? Will it negate the possible savings created if those savings are actually realized?

Where do we get the money? Perhaps we obtain grant money or a back end rebate but that still leaves us a few million short. My least favorite option, put off hiring a language teacher in the middle school. Yes, that position the school board created last year when they were looking at budget cuts and laying off teachers. They created this position and now, they want to not fill it to reallocate the money. Are we more concerned with educating our children or heating the school? Good news, we can do both by dropping the solar portion of this project. I still can't understand why it came to a school board vote regarding getting a quote on just the boiler replacement, LED upgrades and tank removal as opposed to the boiler, LED upgrades, tank removal with solar project. Do the citizens of Raymond not deserve to know what the cost difference is? We are the ones who will be paying for it the next 20 years. At this point in time, I'm ok with just doing what needs to get done and saving an estimated \$2 million dollars and I think most people feel the same. There's a saying about people with short arms but at this point, we all have holes in our pockets from digging so deep and coming up with lint in our pockets. Cut us some slack.

*Respectfully,
Jeff Roy.*

*Honorable School Board Members,
Please read my email into the official record.*

My name is Owen McGhee, I've been a taxpaying resident of Raymond for over 12 years at 18 Pamela Lane.

I'm writing today, as one of many concerned tax payers, regarding the \$4MM, 20 year loan that you are considering to obligate the town of Raymond's taxpayers to.

I understand the school boilers MUST be replaced. It's part of normal building maintenance. There must be a way to replace the boilers in the school without all the other "efficient" expenses. I understand the "payback" for these panels is estimated at 15 years. That's just shy of the expected life of the panels. No private business would consider a project with a ROI (return on investment) over five years. Are there plans and funds for disposal of the old panels, and replacing with new? Will the solar company be around to honor any warranty? Many solar panel companies have gone out of business, or declare bankruptcy and re-open with a new name.

How does spending an additional \$2MM on a solar farm enhance or advance the education of even ->ONE<- high school student? Especially when we must reduce (or pause) teaching resources to pay for this solar farm. I thought the mission of the school board was to improve education in our local schools, not generate and sell electricity. These solar panels feel more like we're satisfying one or more of the board member's green, pipe dream at tax payer and the Childrens' expense.

Also not discussed, in detail, is the impermeable surfaces of the solar panels. One member stated that it's "Just like a roof" which is technically correct. However, an impermeable roof has gutters and other engineered draining to direct the water and minimize/eliminate erosion. The 2-3 acres required by this solar farm will remove CO2 removing, oxygen generating plant life and erosion resistant root systems from the absorbent soil. The erosion caused by solar panel runoff has led to disastrous erosion in local New Hampshire communities. With the school property abutting the Flint Hill Conservation area, I can only imagine the damage that might be done.

Currently, the high school rates 72 out of 84 in the state (per US News). Less than 25% of the students are proficient in Math and Science and fewer than 50% are proficient in reading. It seems like we should be addressing these issues BEFORE considering expenses like solar panels. It really seems like something with this large a price tag and a 20 year commitment should be on the ballot for voters to decide. I also think the \$484,000 set aside for special education should be reserved for special education expenses.

It's estimated that a family of four is spending an additional \$1,000 per month just to continue the lifestyle they had prior to 2020. Money is very tight and tax payers are already burdened with all the town expenses, like the water towers that continue to drain resources.

I know all the board members are volunteers, and your tireless efforts are deeply appreciated. I hope you'll reconsider this expenditure.

*Kind regards,
Owen McGhee*

Good evening Chairman Harmon and School Board members,

I apologize I can not make the meeting in person tonight. I am writing to oppose the solar project and the new wood boiler. Solar panels take up a lot of space and I have not been able to confirm if they can be recycled at the end of their life. The taxpayers also voted no on this project in 2020. I do understand the high school needs a new boiler but would prefer a traditional approach.

Also, I have a question regarding the teacher's contracts. Since the health insurance costs for 2024-25 are projected to increase up to 25%, is it possible and/or would it make sense to raise the teachers salary and reduce the insurance benefits? That way you would have more control over costs.

Thank you for your time.

*Sincerely,
Julie Laughner
Raymond Resident*