

**Amherst & Mont Vernon
VOTERS' GUIDE
to the
Deliberative Session
of the
Souhegan Cooperative School District
(Grades 9 - 12)**

February 3, 2020

7:00 p.m. – Souhegan High School Auditorium

Officers and Agents of the School District

Souhegan Cooperative School Board

Amherst Representatives

**Jim Manning, Chair
Laura Taylor, Secretary
David Chen
Stephen Coughlan
Amy Facey**

Mont Vernon Representatives

**Pim Grondstra, Vice-Chair
George Torres**

School District Moderator

George Bower

School District Clerk

Christine Janson

School District Treasurer

Catherine Jo Butler

Souhegan Finance Committee

**Martin Goulet- Chair
John Bowkett- Alternate
Howard Brown
Joel Gordon
Peggy Harris
Jeanne Ludt
John Stover
Dan Veilleux-Alternate
Mark Vincent- Alternate
Charles York**

Office of the Superintendent

**Adam Steel, Superintendent of Schools
Christine Landwehrle, Assistant Superintendent
Michele Croteau, Business Administrator
Meg Beauchamp, Director of Student Services**

School Administration

**Bill Hagen, Interim Principal
Kathy White, Dean of Faculty
Kelly Driscoll, Dean of Students
Natalie Berger, Dean of Faculty**

A Message from the School Board Chair

The FY2021 budget we will present tonight, is a straight-forward budget and seeks to address three main objectives. These include:

1. Pass a budget that supports our strategic efforts
2. Support a 4-year teacher agreement that solves competitive imbalances
3. Pass the 1st year of a multi-year Capital Maintenance Plan

First, with respect to passing a budget that supports the strategic efforts of both Souhegan and SAU39, I'd ask you to consider the current strategy for our schools. That strategy is to create a school system that offers a personal learning pathway to every student. Reaching this destination will be a multi-year process as we move from a traditional educational model, to a Mastery Learning model, which we believe is not only essential to creating personalized learning pathways, but is also a New Hampshire state regulation. No new major investments are required to support the curriculum component of our plan, but as we transition to this new model we need to strike a balance between investing in our teachers and staff, and working to achieve greater efficiencies in our overall cost structure to prepare for potential future investments. We have also worked more closely with the other SAU39 school districts to budget collaboratively, working to shift budget increases or decreases in any one year from one school to the other, depending on the greatest need, in an attempt decrease the overall burden to taxpayers. Therefore, we are making additional staffing reductions totaling \$485,000 to address this, as well as projected enrollment estimates. These reductions were made possible through course scheduling efficiencies and an early retirement program for staff. The biggest increase in our FY2021 budget will be in Special Education, which represents a 16.34% increase, or \$598,349. Were it not for the increase in Special Education, our budget would be down -2.05%. Therefore, the board has placed Article 2 on the ballot, recommending a 1.54% budget increase to \$18,377,407. Given we have already made significant cuts in one-time expenditures, the proposed default will be \$18,371,651, or a difference of \$5,756.

Second, with respect to the proposed 4-year teacher agreement, the board is attempting to rectify imbalances in competitive pay between new, tenured and highly experienced staff. Currently, Souhegan's starting teacher pay is competitive with benchmark districts. We sought no change to the compensation for teachers in this range. The same can be said for highly experienced teachers. Our concern is for teachers with 10 or more years of experience. These teachers are compensated below the competitive benchmark at other school systems. Given these are our future, highly experienced teachers at Souhegan, and given they will bear the greatest responsibility for implementing the transition plan to Mastery Learning, it is the board's recommendation that we move to correct this imbalance in the Article 3, PPC Agreement. The proposed agreement is structured as follows:

FY2020-2021 Estimated Increase: \$299,102
FY2021-2022 Estimated Increase: \$298,994
FY2022-2023 Estimated Increase: \$298,133
FY2023-2024 Estimated Increase: \$298,656

Therefore, the board recommends to raise and appropriate the sum of \$299,102 for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

Lastly, by FY2021, the Souhegan facility will be approaching 30 years. As such, the board has asked the Superintendent to develop a long-range Capital Maintenance Plan to stay ahead of any planned and unplanned capital expenditures. As part of the analysis, the Superintendent has determined that ~\$685,000 will be required every year across all SAU39 schools to support this maintenance plan, in order to load level the impact to taxpayers and make that tax impact more consistent and predictable. We currently have ~\$250,000 in

the Souhegan Capital Maintenance Fund and recommended our contribution be to add \$100,000 to that fund this year in anticipation of future capital maintenance expenditures. It's important to note, these funds are not part of the proposed Souhegan 2.0 Project, which would constitute a significant and comprehensive capital reinvestment in the entire Souhegan plant site at a future date.

As always, the Souhegan Cooperative School Board, with guidance and oversight from the Advisory Finance Committee, sought to present a budget that is fair and equitable to all stakeholders in our communities at large. We also realize that your vote matters, and that without support from the communities of Amherst and Mont Vernon, Souhegan Cooperative High School and the young people it serves, cannot thrive. Souhegan has served as a distinctive point of pride in this community for a quarter-century and represents one of the biggest investments. We believe this budget respectfully and responsibly reflects those considerations.

Respectfully submitted,
James Manning
Chair, Souhegan Cooperative School Board

SOUHEGAN COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD

Amherst Representatives

Jim Manning- jmanning@sprise.com
Laura Taylor- ltaylor@sprise.com
David Chen- dchen@sprise.com
Steve Coughlan- scoughlan@sprise.com
Amy Facey- afacey@sprise.com

Mont Vernon Representatives

Pim Grondstra- grondstra@sprise.com
George Torres- gtorres@sprise.com

Two-Part Voting Procedure for Souhegan Cooperative School District Annual Meeting

The Senate Bill 2 official ballot voting procedure is in effect for the Souhegan Cooperative School District.

Voting to adopt or amend Souhegan Cooperative School District warrant articles takes place at the February 3, 2020 Deliberative Session. Final ballot voting on the articles that emerge from the Deliberative Session takes place at the polls on Election Day, March 10, 2020 as shown below.

Voting is a Two-Step Process

Deliberative Session- February 3, 2020

7:00 p.m.
SHS Auditorium

Ballot Vote- March 10, 2020

6:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
SHS Gymnasium
for Amherst Voters

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Mont Vernon Village School
for Mont Vernon Voters

In many ways the Deliberative Session resembles District Meetings of years past, but with one fundamental difference. Discussion and voting at this meeting will focus on the *wording* of the questions to be placed on the March 10th ballot, *not* on voting whether the budget, bond, or other warrant articles pass or fail. The wording of a warrant article can be amended to change the dollar amount and/or the wording; this is important to know. In recent years towns and school districts have seen warrant articles amended at the Deliberative Session to \$0.00, thereby defeating the original intent of the article. In other instances, the wording of an article has been amended to completely reverse the petitioner's intent. Simply stated, it is important to attend the Deliberative Session and vote on Election Day for the full effect of your vote to be felt.

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The following pages contain the wording of the warrant articles, which will be presented at the Deliberative Session, plus school board commentary (noted in italics). A detailed report of recommendations by the Advisory Finance Committee follows these articles and commentaries.

**Souhegan Cooperative School District
Annual Meeting Warrant
February 3, 2020 and March 10, 2020
Amherst and Mont Vernon, New Hampshire**

To the inhabitants of the Souhegan Cooperative School District, consisting of the towns of Amherst and Mont Vernon, in the County of Hillsborough, and State of New Hampshire qualified to vote in District affairs:

You are hereby notified of the following Annual School District Meeting schedule:

First Session of Annual Meeting (Deliberative)

You are hereby notified to meet at the Souhegan High School in said District on the 3rd day of February 2020 at 7:00 p.m. This session shall consist of explanation, discussion, and debate of warrant articles 2 - 4. Warrant articles may be amended subject to the following limitations: (a) warrant articles whose wording is prescribed by law shall not be amended, (b) warrant articles that are amended shall be placed on the official ballot for a final vote on the main motion, as amended, and (c) no warrant article shall be amended to eliminate the subject matter of the article.

Second Session of Annual Meeting (Official Ballot Voting)

You are hereby notified to meet on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 for official ballot voting on warrant articles numbered 1 through 4. The polls for official ballot voting will be open as follows:

- Voting for Amherst residents: Souhegan High School from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Voting for Mont Vernon residents: Village School from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Article 1. Election of Officers (voting by official ballot March 10, 2020)

To the following school district offices:

- a. To choose two (2) school board members from Amherst for the ensuing three (3) years; and,
- b. To choose one (1) school board member from Mont Vernon for the ensuing three (3) years.

**Souhegan Cooperative School District
Annual Meeting Warrant
February 3, 2020 and March 10, 2020
Amherst and Mont Vernon, New Hampshire**

Article 2. Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling eighteen million, three hundred and seventy-seven thousand, four hundred and seven dollars (\$18,377,407)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be eighteen million, three hundred and seventy-one thousand, six hundred and fifty-one dollars (\$18,371,651), which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Souhegan Cooperative School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only? Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Souhegan Cooperative School Board (6-0)
Recommended by the Souhegan Cooperative School District Advisory Finance Committee (6-0-1)

Estimated tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.58 per thousand for Amherst and \$0.00 per thousand for Mont Vernon.

Estimated tax impact of not passing this article is: \$0.58 per thousand for Amherst and \$0.00 per thousand for Mont Vernon.

*NOTE: Warrant Article 2 (operating budget) does not include appropriations proposed in any other warrant articles.

Article 3.

Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District vote to approve the costs included in the agreement between the Souhegan Cooperative School Board and the professional and support staff of Souhegan Cooperative High School which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at current staffing levels:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Estimated Increase</u>
2020-2021	\$299,102
2021-2022	\$298,994
2022-2023	\$298,133
2023-2024	\$298,656

and further to raise and appropriate the sum two hundred and ninety-nine thousand, one hundred and two dollars (\$299,102) for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits over those that would be paid at current staffing levels?

Majority vote required

Recommended by the Souhegan Cooperative School Board (6-0)
Recommended by the Souhegan Cooperative School District Advisory Finance Committee (6-0-1)

**Souhegan Cooperative School District
Annual Meeting Warrant
February 3, 2020 and March 10, 2020
Amherst and Mont Vernon, New Hampshire**

Estimated tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.15 per thousand for Amherst and \$0.15 per thousand for Mont Vernon.

Article 4.

Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to be added to the School Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund previously established in March 2005?

Majority vote required

Recommended by the Souhegan Cooperative School Board (6-0)

Recommended by the Souhegan Cooperative School District Advisory Finance Committee (7-0)

Estimated tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.05 per thousand for Amherst and \$0.05 per thousand for Mont Vernon.

Given under our hands as said Amherst, New Hampshire, on the 21st day of January 2020.



Amy Facey

James Manning


Pim Grondstra




Laura Taylor



George Torres

David Chen



Stephen Coughlan

**Souhegan Cooperative High School Advisory Finance Committee
Report to the Souhegan Cooperative School District
FY21 Budget Deliberative Session**

SAFC Votes

- On the FY 2021 Operating Budget, the SAFC recommends unanimously approving this budget by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
- On the PPC governing policies with respect to pay for SHS professional employees, the SAFC recommends unanimously approving this budget by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
- On the Warrant Article to fund \$100,000 for SHS maintenance items, the SAFC recommends unanimously approving this budget by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

SAFC Findings

- Looked at from a year-on-year perspective, this a responsible budget. The changes seem to reflect the priorities that were stated by the Board and the Administration. There remain questions about whether all of the priorities were articulated, or if they are fundamentally competing.
- The SAFC remains concerned that without the existence of a multi-year, strategic plan, it is difficult to assess how the current budget can ensure a clear and efficient path toward its execution, and what the financial impact will be over time.
- The SAFC believes that attention needs to be paid to ensure that strategic priorities articulated in prior years (e.g. recent year security funding decisions) continue in this and future budgets.
- The SAFC unanimously supports Warrant Article 4 regarding the funding of a School Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, but notes that the universe of projects included in the long term plan may not include all items that are needed to be addressed in the coming years (e.g. Turf field life-span and replacement funding plans, other capital replacement needs). Although we recognize and appreciate that this funding methodology is designed to levelize the annual tax impact on the taxpayers of Amherst between the needs of the Amherst School District and the Souhegan School District, it is unclear what criteria will be used to apply this methodology to Souhegan vis-à-vis Amherst and we urge the Board to redouble their efforts in this area.

-The Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee

Martin Goulet (Chair), John Bowkett, Howard Brown, Joel Gordon, Peggy Harris, Jeanne Ludt, John Stover, Dan Veilleux, Mark Vincent, and Charles York

Proposed Operating Budget

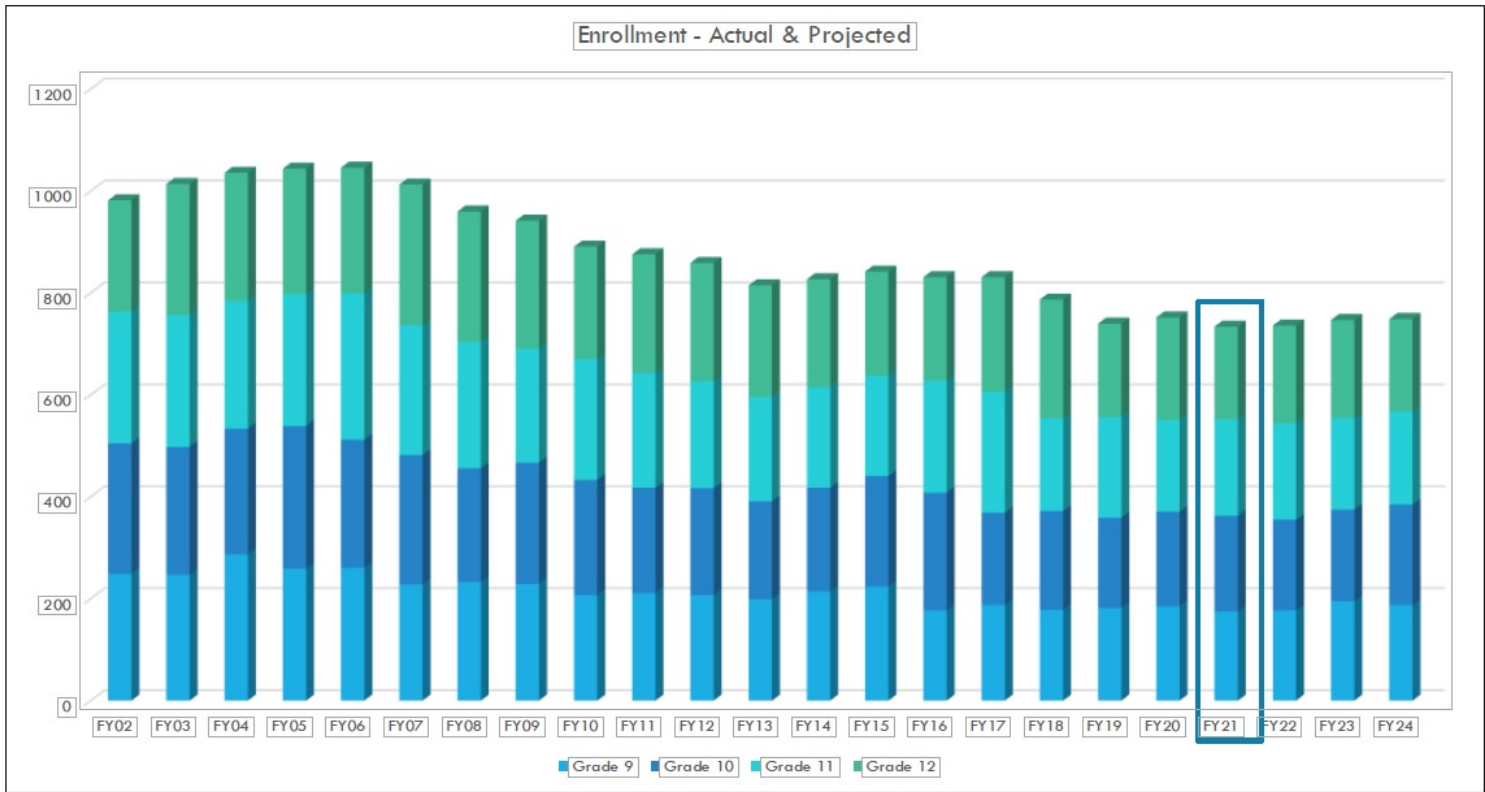
Budget by AFC Category

<u>Sub-Committee</u>	<u>FY20 Budget</u>	<u>FY21 Proposed</u>	<u>Change</u>
Curriculum	\$7,234,428	\$7,028,383	-\$206,045
Special Education	\$3,660,992	\$4,259,341	\$598,349
Athletics	\$693,729	\$727,074	\$33,345
Administration	\$2,979,881	\$2,921,289	-\$58,592
Technology	\$920,213	\$796,988	-\$123,225
Facilities	\$1,447,653	\$1,442,433	-\$5,220
Food/Transportation	\$1,161,393	\$1,201,899	\$40,506
<u>Total</u>	\$18,098,289	\$18,377,407	\$279,118

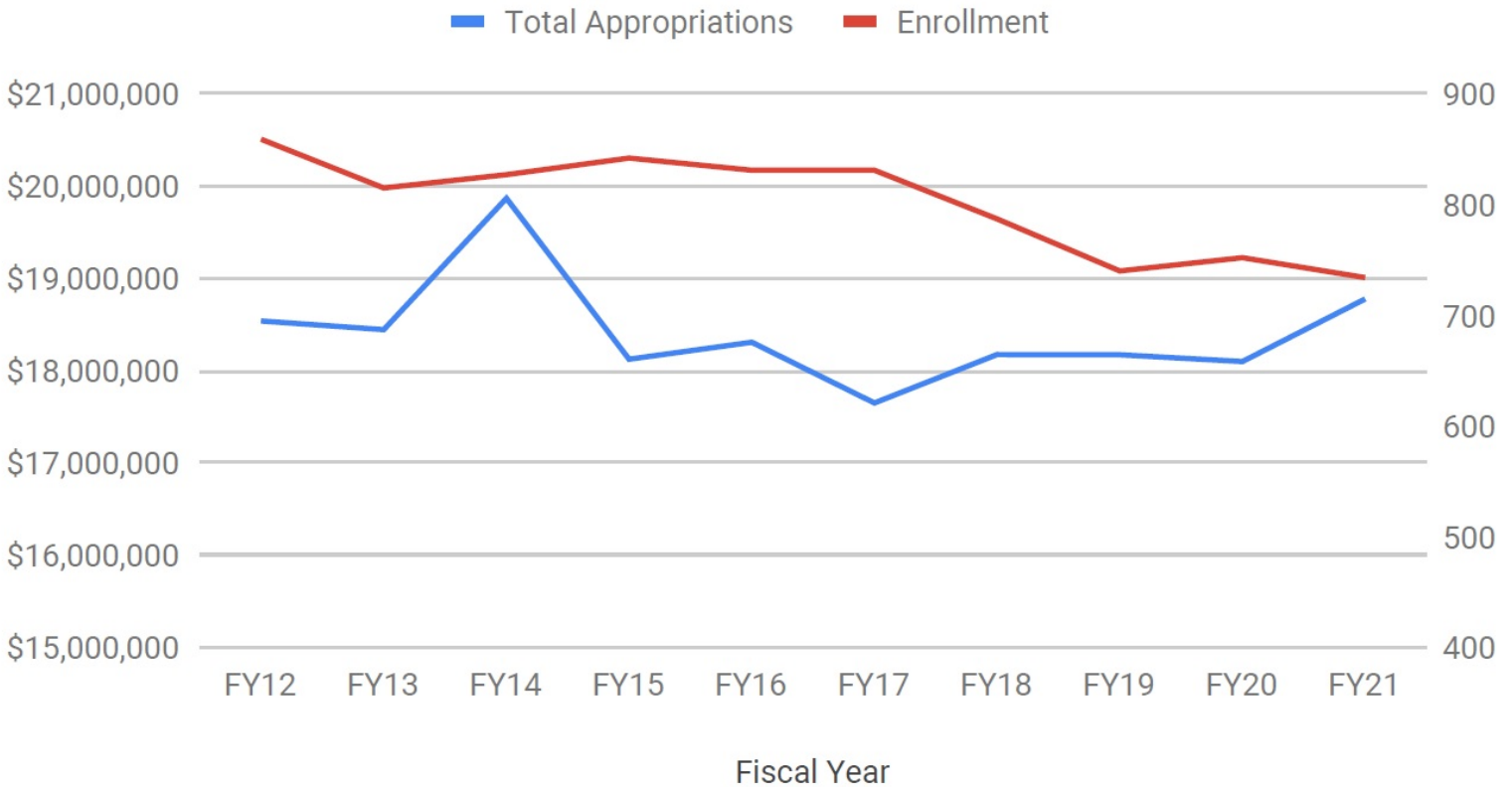
Budget Calculation

FY20 Budget	\$18,098,289	% Change
Special Education	\$365,374	2.00%
Employer Paid Benefits	\$187,201	1.00%
Facilities	\$31,175	0.20%
Food/Transportation	\$17,315	0.10%
SAU 39 Assessment	-\$15,965	-0.10%
Everything Else	-\$46,271	-0.30%
Technology	-\$99,050	-0.50%
Curriculum	<u>-\$166,417</u>	<u>-0.90%</u>
Total Changes to default:	\$273,362	1.50%
<u>FY21 Default Budget</u>	<u>\$18,371,651</u>	
Total of all changes to proposed:	\$5,756	
<u>FY21 Proposed Budget</u>	<u>\$18,377,407</u>	<u>1.50%</u>

ENROLLMENT



Total Appropriations and Enrollment



**SOUHEGAN COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT
2020 DELIBERATIVE SESSION
AMHERST AND MONT VERNON, NEW HAMPSHIRE
RULES OF ORDER**

1. Smoking is prohibited on school property.
2. Every resident who wishes to vote must have checked in with the Supervisors of the Checklist outside the auditorium door, and have a LIGHT BLUE dot visible on their clothing.
3. Each voter has a LIGHT BLUE card. At the call for any votes required, please hold up your card and indicate your aye or nay vote, respectively.
4. **This meeting is subject to the state Right to Know/Public Meeting law and as such we are required to maintain a complete and accurate record of all actions of the meeting. To ensure the accuracy of the record, each speaker is required to begin any and all comments by stating their name and address. Each member of the meeting making a motion must begin by stating their name and address and each member seconding a motion must do the same. This procedure will enable the moderator and clerk to maintain an accurate record and for viewers of the live or recorded broadcast to follow the actions of the meeting.**
5. There are two microphones on the floor – no speaking from your seat, please. **Please remember to get close to the microphone and state your NAME & ADDRESS.** Either microphone may be used to discuss the article and/or to amend the articles, call the question, etc.
6. **All motions must be presented in writing to the Moderator and must include the name and address of the voter making the motion.**
7. The moderator will not accept amendments to amendments. The meeting will vote on one amendment at a time. All amendments must be submitted in writing.
8. There will be a three minute time limit to state your opinion at the microphone.
9. The Moderator will recognize District employees who might not be residents to speak on matters of their expertise at the request of the Board. All other non-residents may only speak with the consent of the body.
10. No one may speak a second time until all who wish to speak a FIRST time have done so.
11. **Any Motion from the floor to call the question will be recognized ONLY after those at the microphone at the time of motion have had their turn to speak...or if they wish, of their own volition, to relinquish the right to speak.**

12. If there is a request for a vote by secret ballot, voters will proceed to the lobby. The voter will then present the Assistant Moderator on duty with the voter card given to them when they initially checked in. The Assistant Moderator will provide a ballot and mark the voter card to indicate that the voter has received a ballot. The voter will then vote and deposit the paper ballot in the voting box and return to their seat. This same procedure will be followed for each secret ballot vote taken during the evening.
13. At the close of discussion and voting for each warrant article, the moderator will put the warrant on the ballot and accept a motion to "Restrict Reconsideration of the WORDING of that article". This is for your protection. After you restrict reconsideration, should someone request reconsideration at a later hour of an article whose wording was previously approved, it cannot come up again.
14. The moderator will ask the meeting to revisit "Where we are" insofar as finishing the agenda at 10:45pm and based on the will of the body, accept a motion to recess or continue until completion.

George Bower
Souhegan Cooperative School District Moderator

NOTES