

## SAU #39 Board

Friday, March 13, 2020

Meeting Minutes- Approved 04 13 2020

## Attendees:

Administrative Team: Adam Steel- Superintendent, Christine Landwehrle- Assistant Superintendent, Michele Croteau- Business Administrator, and Dan Wyborne- SHS Athletics Director.

Souhegan Cooperative School Board: Jim Manning- Chair (via phone), Pim Grondstra- Vice Chair, Laura Taylor- Secretary, Amy Facey, Steve Coughlan, George Torres (via phone) and David Chen (via phone).

Mont Vernon School Board: Sarah Lawrence- Chair, Peter Eckhoff- Vice Chair, Jessica Hinckley- Secretary (via phone) and Tom Driscoll (via phone).

Amherst School Board: Elizabeth Kuzsma- Chair, Terri Behm- Vice Chair, John Glover- Secretary, and Ellen Grudzien.

SHS Student Videographer: Shannon Hargraves

Board Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

Public: Delaney Facques, SHS Community Council Liaison, Tony Labranche, 63 Merrimack Road, Amherst, John D'Angelo, 99 Woodland Drive. Amherst, Megan Murray, State Representative for Amherst, 2 Steeple Lane, and Community Members.

## I. Call to Order

**Chair of the SAU #39 Board, Ms. Amy Facey, called the meeting to order at 4:00PM.**

She added that this emergency meeting was called due to the potential disruption in schools due to the health concerns with (Covid- 19) Coronavirus.

## II. Discussion

Superintendent, Mr. Adam Steel, added that there are several board members that were not able to be here in person and are attending via phone.

He noted those board members are Mr. David Chen, Mr. George Torres, Mr. Jim Manning and Mr. Tom Driscoll. He asked them if it was unreasonable for them to be here and if they were alone.

The Board Members replied, yes.

Mr. Steel noted that the purpose of this meeting was for the Board to provide him authorization as Superintendent, to make changes to their school calendar and for any disruptions that may

34 occur to their schools as a result of the (COVID- 19) Coronavirus crisis. There is already  
35 authority for him to make changes to their school calendar, however, the Board felt that it was  
36 important for the community to hear that the Board and administration were all on the same  
37 team.

38 They have sent out several communications over the last few weeks regarding the pandemic.  
39 Yesterday, they announced that they were restricting the schools to outside agencies and groups.  
40 Also, on Monday they have decided that Professional Development as a result of the COVID-19  
41 pandemic. He further noted that he is looking for a motion and then will answer any questions.

42 Ms. Facey commented that she was advised by NHSBA (the New Hampshire School Board  
43 Association) for each board to make a separate motion rather than making a motion as an SAU  
44 Board.

45 **Ms. Elizabeth Kuzsma motioned to authorize the Superintendent to take any actions he**  
46 **deems reasonability necessary to address the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus to our**  
47 **students, staff, and community including but not limited to, modifying the SAU's Calendar**  
48 **and/or the manner of delivery of educational services, and consistent with all applicable**  
49 **statutes, rules, and regulations. Ms. Terri Behm seconded the motion.**

50 Ms. Kuzsma noted that Mr. Gauthier questioned if school was disrupted if Superintendent Steel  
51 would give parents sufficient time.

52 Mr. Steel replied that he hopes so. There are a few ways that school could be disrupted. First, the  
53 Commissioner of the DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) could declare a Public  
54 Health Emergency and close schools. Second, he as Superintendent can make those changes as  
55 well as the Governor or the Legislature. It is his hope to give families at least a 24 to 36-hour  
56 notice.

57 Mr. Glover asked if the language in the motion was drafted by the administration or NHSBA.

58 Mr. Steel replied, NHSBA.

59 Mr. Glover questioned when does this motion terminate and what are the limits.

60 Mr. Steel replied that he has the ability to make these changes without the Board. They did this  
61 because they wanted the community to know that we are all on the same page. There is no  
62 expiration to that motion. As it relates to the budget and resources, the school board has  
63 oversight. If there were significant expenditures over and beyond what was budgeted, then the  
64 Board would be needed to authorize those expenditures.

65 Mr. Chen asked if the motion included school requirements.

66 Mr. Steel replied that the State Board of Education passed an emergency rule yesterday (ED  
67 306.18 (a) (7). The State withdrew the previous 5-day limit and 80% participation rate of  
68 distance learning.

69 Mr. Torres asked about federal funding for expenditures that are associated.

70 Mr. Steel replied that it is not clear at this point.

71 Ms. Kuzsma re-read the motion.

72 Ms. Taylor inquired if they can limit in any way the modification of the SAU calendar since they  
73 are relinquishing control of the calendar. It affects a lot of families in the districts.

74 She asked for the specific RSA to suspend school and the limitation on the motion.

75 Mr. Coughlan added that it expires or reoccurs when COVID- 19 comes around, depending. That  
76 is how he is interpreting it.

77 Ms. Facey asked for questions from the board members on the phone.

78 There were no questions.

79 **Ms. Kuzsma called for a roll call on the motion. Kuzsma- Yes, Glover-Yes, Behm- Yes and**  
80 **Grudzien- Yes. Motion passed.**

81 **Ms. Sarah Lawrence motioned to authorize the Superintendent to take any actions he**  
82 **deems reasonability necessary to address the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus to our**  
83 **students, staff, and community including but not limited to, modifying the SAU's Calendar**  
84 **and/or the manner of delivery of educational services, and consistent with all applicable**  
85 **statues, rules, and regulations. Mr. Steven O'Keefe seconded the motion.**

86 Mr. Eckhoff commented that he has full confidence in Superintendent Steel and his Team. He  
87 further stated that Mr. Steel will do what's best for students, faculty, and community and keep  
88 them informed that he always has. You can't have an end date on this motion, you can't do that,  
89 no one knows what this end date is. He is comfortable with the decisions they will need to make  
90 day in and day out. They are in uncharted waters.

91 Ms. Lawrence asked if either Ms. Hinckley or Mr. Driscoll have any questions (via phone).

92 Mr. Driscoll questioned why wouldn't we just add to the motion "for the remainder of the school  
93 year" to bound it.

94 Mr. O'Keefe commented that they can consider a motion to rescind that authority to make that at  
95 any school board meeting.

96 **Ms. Lawrence called for a Roll Call: Eckhoff- Yes, Lawrence- Yes, O'Keefe- Yes, Hinckley-**  
97 **Yes (via phone) and Driscoll-Yes (via phone). Motion passed.**

98 **Mr. Jim Manning motioned to authorize the Superintendent to take any actions he deems**  
99 **reasonability necessary to address the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus to our students,**  
100 **staff, and community including but not limited to, modifying the SAU's Calendar and/or**  
101 **the manner of delivery of educational services, and consistent with all applicable statues,**  
102 **rules, and regulations. Mr. David Chen (via phone) seconded the motion.**

103 Mr. Manning asked for discussion.

104 There were no questions or comments.

105 **Mr. Manning called a Roll Call: Grondstra-Yes, Facey-Yes, Coughlan-Yes, Taylor- Yes,**  
106 **Chen- Yes (via phone), Torres- Yes (via phone) and Manning- Yes (via phone). Motion**  
107 **passed.**

108 Ms. Facey noted that she will open up the discussion for further questions.

109 Mr. O'Keefe mentioned that he understands the regulatory reason why they did this tonight. To  
110 create an environment where there is no question about authority, permission, or consent over the  
111 next few weeks. He then thanked Superintendent Steel for the effort and the language he has  
112 shared. He asked what is his worst-case scenario for students, parents, and faculty members.

113 Mr. Steel responded that the worst-case scenario would be that the school year is significantly  
114 disrupted starting next week. Teachers will have to change how they teach and instruct. Moving  
115 from direct to remote instruction involves internet, video conferencing, and possibly even paper.  
116 It is not as good as being all together in the same room. Definitely a unique challenge. They are  
117 investigating the possibility of some special programs remaining open. During a time where the  
118 rest of school will be disrupted. For parents, it will be a childcare expectation that they don't  
119 normally have. Students will be home and will need supervision.

120 Mr. O'Keefe noted his concern about students on an IEP. He asked if he feels confident with the  
121 tools and resources that they need to implement this emergency disruption.

122 Mr. Steel responded that he feels confident as they have been working on this for several weeks  
123 now. The only issue that could be of concern is about is a reliable internet and device for  
124 families. There might be some expense associated with that and they know that already.

125 Mr. O'Keefe asked if there is a reason why they are not closing immediately rather than  
126 deferring and waiting from guidance from the State.

127 Mr. Steel replied that he has been communicating with the DHHS and the Federal Government  
128 and they have that decision to make for their own community. Right now, it is his preference that  
129 they have at least one more day with their students to get the materials that they need. That may  
130 not be possible.

131 Mr. O'Keefe asked about the prospects of extending the school year.

132 Mr. Steel replied that there is a current State Law that prohibits them from extending the school  
133 year past June 30<sup>th</sup> and it would have to be modified. He has not heard of any school districts  
134 that are extending. Activities may not happen until the school year has officially ended. He  
135 would expect a waiver from the Department of Education, on the number of days and academic  
136 hours, but they haven't done that yet.

137 Ms. Grudzien asked about instruction for K-3.

138 Superintendent Steel replied that it's going to be very different for our younger learners.

139 Ms. Grudzien asked about school lunch still being provided. She encouraged the District to put  
140 information on the SAU #39 website.

141 Mr. Steel replied that the State of NH has applied for a waiver from the USDA. Right now, they  
142 are only allowed to serve food that is eaten on site. They are looking at delivering food to  
143 students with that need. Their Food Service Team is meeting on Monday to discuss how they can  
144 still prepare, deliver, and provide food to those families in need.

145 Mr. Grondstra noted that the NHSBA sent out guidance today on making decisions. He  
146 commented that it was well put together and questioned whether they are using that guidance.

147 Mr. Steel explained that the Federal Government has a guide on school disruption including  
148 some of the factors that the NHSBA referenced, one is the attendance rate. Our rate has dropped  
149 during the week. That is one of the many factors in the decision weighing process.

150 Ms. Taylor inquired if they were closing the buildings completely during this time.

151 Mr. Steel replied that they will weigh those factors and consider a balance. The Town of  
152 Amherst had a meeting to discuss what places will be open around town. It will be a dynamic  
153 situation.

154 Ms. Taylor asked about AP standardized testing and Athletics.

155 Superintendent Steel noted that it is good that they are in between athletic seasons. It is possible  
156 that the NHIAA looking to push the season. He then referred to SHS Athletics Director, Mr. Dan  
157 Wyborney, in the audience for a comment.

158 Mr. Wyborney remarked that the is expecting that the NHIAA will decide by the end of the  
159 weekend.

160 Mr. Steel added that the Department of Ed. is looking at NHSAS testing and SAT testing and  
161 how it will work.

162 Mr. O'Keefe noted that for the Town of Mont Vernon residents there are resources. First, is the  
163 Welfare Department and Neighbor to Neighbor; with Comcast there are discounted rates for  
164 internet service. The Town of Mont Vernon has a Health Officer and suggested that residents  
165 check his website for a health status. He encouraged residents to stay tuned to the SAU #39  
166 Facebook page and Twitter.

167 He then thanked Superintendent Steel and his team for their efforts and the information he is  
168 sharing today and online over the past few weeks. It is good to know that this in the front of his  
169 mind and they are ready to make a decision.

### 170 III. Public Comment

171 Mr. Tony Labranche, 63 Merrimack Road, Amherst, questioned what education will look like  
172 online for students.

173 Superintendent Steel replied that will look different for every school and ages. Expectations will  
 174 be finalized on Monday, it will most likely be an asynchronous method. Attendance will be  
 175 completed the best that it can happen.

176 Mr. John D'Angelo, 99 Woodland Dr, Amherst, Board of Selectman Liaison commented that  
 177 there is an emergency meeting Monday afternoon to coordinate town and school. They want to  
 178 make sure we aren't working cross purposes.

179 Ms. Megan Murray, State Representative for Amherst, 2 Steeple Lane, commented that she is  
 180 here on behalf of NH State Representative, Ms. Shannon Chandley, that could not be here. She  
 181 is here to listen to the Administration and Board and provide any resources that they can.

182 Mr. O'Keefe inquired about keeping track of the expenses and being reimbursed for them. He  
 183 then asked about freezing the budget.

184 Superintendent Steel replied that SAU #39 Business Administrator, Ms. Michele Croteau, is  
 185 already taking care of that. They are not buying anything else for the school year at this time.

186 He noted that there are two questions from online participants.

187 First, what is the likelihood that the planned 6th grade Ecology Trip will be rescheduled.

188 Mr. Steel replied that the NHDOE recommended no out of state field trips. It is highly likely it  
 189 will be canceled or rescheduled.

190 A second question online is what is likelihood that school will be disrupted.

191 He responded that it is highly likely that school will be disrupted.

192 Ms. Facey then thanked Superintendent Steel and his team for all of their work during this time.

193 Mr. Steel added that there was another question about if they will they be given step by step  
 194 directions on how to support their child at home.

195 He then replied, yes.

196 IV. Meeting Adjourned

197 **Ms. Kuzsma motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:46pm. Ms. Terri Behm seconded the**  
 198 **motion. Kuzsma- Yes, Glover-Yes, Behm- Yes, Grudzien- Yes, Grondstra-Yes, Facey-Yes,**  
 199 **Coughlan-Yes, Taylor- Yes, Chen- Yes (via phone), Torres- Yes (via phone), Manning- Yes**  
 200 **(via phone), Eckhoff- Yes, Lawrence- Yes, O'Keefe- Yes, Hinckley- Yes (via phone) and**  
 201 **Driscoll-Yes (via phone) motion passed.**

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