

1 Souhegan Cooperative Board Meeting

2 Monday, March 2nd, 2020

3 Meeting Minutes- Approved 03 23 2020

4 Attendees:

5 Administrative Team: Adam Steel- Superintendent, and Michele Croteau- SAU #39 Business
6 Administrator.

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

9 SHS Student Videographer: Shannon Hargreaves

10 Board Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

11 Public: Delaney Facques, SHS Community Council Liaison, Dwayne Purvis, 145 South Hollis
12 Road, Amherst NH, Stephanie Grund, 5 Colonel Wilkins Road, Amherst NH, Courtney Vore,
13 Amherst NH.

14 I. Call to Order

15 **Chair of the Souhegan Cooperative School Board, Mr. Jim Manning, called the meeting to**
16 **order at 5:01 PM.**

17 II. Superintendent's Report

18 Superintendent, Mr. Adam Steel, noted that he has a number of items for the Board.

19 Covid-19/Corona Virus Update

20 Superintendent Steel noted that he had sent out a lengthy communication to parents this past
21 Friday of what they are doing internally. Since that time, there was a school sponsored trip to
22 South East Asia and at the last minute the sponsorship was pulled back based on the concerns
23 with the situation there. Most of the students and staff still attended as they had paid privately.
24 There is nothing that they can do to prevent them from going. Now that they have returned to the
25 U.S., they are being asked to self-quarantine, per the 14-day recommendation from the NH
26 Department of Health and Human Services.

27 In addition, they had one student and one staff member that traveled, separately, to Northern
28 Italy and they have asked them to self-quarantine for 14 days. They are engaging in custodial
29 training procedures this week and are going to need to hire some temporary additional custodial
30 support to make sure that they are doing the extra necessary precautions. SAU # 39 Business
31 Administrator, Ms. Michele Croteau, is handling that at this time.

32 They are consolidating the attendance to keep track of spikes and will report to the State students
33 with flu like symptoms.

34 They have Wintercession for sophomores coming up in two weeks, with places of travel such as
35 Quebec and Washington D.C. They are going to follow the CDC's recommendations for travel

36 advisories, and they will be going on those trips and will adjust as needed. They will work with
37 families that do not want to go but may not be able to refund them.

38 They have a trip scheduled over April vacation to Italy, similar to last week, and are looking into
39 it, investigating it and taking it very seriously. It is something to keep in mind.

40 There is a Statewide call for all public agencies tomorrow that DHHS is hosting and he will
41 know more about the State and their response to what is happening. On a longer-term basis, they
42 are working on a plan if school cannot be held for a longer amount of time. He has pulled
43 together a task force, for this specific purpose, and there will be more communication going out
44 to the community soon.

45 He then paused his Superintendent's Report for Board comments or questions.

46 Ms. Taylor asked if that was his only topic for report.

47 Superintendent Steel replied, no, he was pausing for questions.

48 SHS Principal Search Committee Update

49 He remarked that he, Ms. Facey and Ms. Facques serve on the Souhegan Principal Search
50 Committee. The process is open, and they are still receiving applications. There is one person
51 moving towards the third round and two others that are in the second round. Next Wednesday,
52 they will have at least one person come into the school and meet groups of parents, students,
53 teachers and community members. He encouraged anyone that is interested to let him know and
54 he will make sure to include them in the process based on the space that they have available.

55 Ms. Facey asked Superintendent Steel to clarify the process.

56 Mr. Steel explained that they first, completed a screening round, as an introduction. The second
57 round was a one-hour in-person formal interview. The third round is introducing them to
58 different groups and getting feedback. They will then decide if they have a finalists.

59 Fang Fest Update

60 He noted that with Fang Fest there were positive things and challenges. It ended positively and
61 applauded the students and staff. He then asked SHS Community Council Liaison, Ms. Delaney
62 Facques to add her comments.

63 Ms. Facques agreed that Fang Fest ended on a good note.

64 Mr. Steel noted that he has further comments for later in the evening, however, that is the end of
65 his Superintendent's Report.

66 Ms. Facey noted that it is Chairman Manning's last Board Meeting. She thanked him for his
67 many years of service on the Board and multitude of committees.

68 Superintendent Steel then presented Mr. Manning with a gift of appreciation.

69 Mr. Manning thanked the Board and Superintendent Steel for their gifts.

70 The Board thanked Superintendent Steel.

71 III. Public Comment

72 No Public Comment

73 IV. Community Council Update

74 Ms. Facques remarked that they had a school come from Middletown, Connecticut to learn more
75 about Community Council. They are also looking at the bylaws and voting on changes. They will
76 have a Constitution Committee Rep. voted on in the Spring. Lastly, they are wondering when a
77 transcript will be available for review.

78 Ms. Facey added that there is a draft on the website, but she is not sure when it will go to
79 Community Council for review.

80 Superintendent Steel noted that he was going to bring it forward for their review tonight.

81 The Board thanked Ms. Facques.

82 V. Consent Agenda

83 Ms. Taylor pulled the Minutes from the Jan 27th, 2020 Meeting.

84 She noted the correction to the names "*Matt Leighton and Catie Dodge*".

85 Ms. Taylor noted a change in Line #116:

86 *From "Ms. Taylor remarked that she is having a hard time linking the scores to the*
87 *competency."*

88 *Changed to: "Empower does not link between the assignment and the grade for the score that*
89 *you are getting. There is a miscommunication within the Empower software that does not make*
90 *that connection for the student or the parent.*

91 She next noted the change in line #192:

92 *From: "Ms. Facey asked for clarification"*

93 *Changed to: "Ms. Facey noted that students should be able to earn a "4" and was supportive of*
94 *that effort".*

95 Ms. Taylor added a line to #228:

96 *(It was part of a slide show that was not part of the minutes) "70% of the 490 students were*
97 *against changing the start times and only 30% were in favor. 70% of the students play sports and*
98 *50% have clubs. 25% have daily jobs and other commitments after school".*

99 **Mr. Grondstra motioned to accept the Consent Agenda items 1. Draft Minutes 12 17 2019,**
100 **2. Draft Minutes 01 06 2020, 3. Draft Minutes 01 27 2020, as amended, 4. Draft Minutes 02**
101 **03 2020-Before Deliberative Session, 5. Unanticipated Revenue \$2,250, and 6. Policy JIH-**
102 **Student Searches and Their Property- From Dec 2019 Meeting. Ms. Facey seconded the**
103 **motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.**

104 Mr. Manning questioned Mr. Chen (via phone) if he was alone and if it was unreasonable for
105 him to attend the meeting in person.

106 Mr. Chen replied, yes, to both questions.

107 VI. First Reading- KFA and JIC

108 Superintendent Steel remarked that they have been reviewed by the Policy Committee and were
109 at the SAU Board. He asked for questions or feedback.

110 Mr. Manning asked everyone on the Board if they had reviewed them and if there were questions
111 or comments.

112 There were no questions or comments.

113 VII. Grading and Reporting Update

114 Superintendent Steel noted that Principal Hagen was out for some time and just got back today.
115 He wanted to confirm the dates of the Parent Meetings. He will send out the electronic version of
116 this update as there is a link to the sample progress report. It explains how Honor Roll will be
117 calculated for grade 9 students in June and the same criteria will be used as with grades 10-12
118 students. The Class of 2023 transcript is posted to the website. The working draft transcript for
119 the Class of 2024 is also posted. He reviewed the timeline and asked for questions or comments.

120 Ms. Taylor inquired if they had reached out to 5th and 6th grade parents.

121 Superintendent Steel agreed and noted that they can do that.

122 Mr. Grondstra suggested that they add in MV.

123 Ms. Facey asked about students in 10th-12th are they being graded using maximum achievable
124 scores. How does that align.

125 Superintendent Steel replied, yes and most of their teachers are going the extra mile. One teacher
126 in particular, has graded every assignment with the old grading system and then the new grading
127 system. They feel pretty good in that it works out and it is as a part of the transition process.

128 Mr. Chen asked why are they all not doing that.

129 Mr. Manning asked if they have training for best practices.

130 Mr. Steel replied that everything that the high school administration is doing is supporting
131 teachers, whether it is Empower training, or specific grading support. It is the number one issue
132 that they are focusing on. There is more consistency now than in the beginning of the school year
133 and it is getting better all the time. It is a transition process.

134 Ms. Facey added that she is concerned with the accuracy of the grades.

135 Mr. Chen asked what is the motivation for the one teacher that is grading everything both ways.

136 Superintendent Steel responded that this particular teacher felt like she wanted to do a fidelity
137 check for her own reassurance.

138 Mr. Chen added that he is hoping that it can be put into practice for other classes. He realizes that
139 it is a lot of work and this is a big change.

140 Mr. Steel commented that he does not disagree, and he will look into that for other departments.

141 Mr. Chen added that they need to have validation and it is a very big change. His hope is that
142 they can get it right the first time.

143 Mr. Steel agreed.

144 Mr. Manning asked for comments or questions.

145 Superintendent Steel added that grade 9 students were given access to the portal in December
146 and received training with their team teachers. Parents of students in K-9 were given access via
147 email on January 30th, 2020. Grade 10 students were given access to Empower and provided with
148 training on Friday, Feb 21st, 2020 in their team classes.

149 There are three more Parent Grading and Reporting Sessions:

- 150 1. Thursday, March 12th at 7:30 am
- 151 2. Saturday, March 14th at 9:00 am
- 152 3. Thursday, March 19th at 7:30 am

153 Teacher training sessions are listed for reference.

154 Mr. Chen asked about the training in place for teams and how that accelerates the learning for
155 individuals. Second, heterogeneous groupings do not let the kids accelerate with CBE
156 (Competency Based Learning).

157 Mr. Steel replied that those are larger topics and grading and reporting is the first step. They are
158 doing this to have that platform.

159 Ms. Taylor asked if they are evaluating other systems other than Empower for next year. As a
160 parent, she is familiar with Empower and she does not like what she is seeing. It is a tool for
161 documenting student progress. She asked what other programs are out there and do they require
162 the level of detail that Empower seems to burden the teachers with.

163 Mr. Steel commented that he has surveyed staff throughout the entire SAU and explained the
164 responses.

165 Ms. Taylor questioned the number of responses.

166 Mr. Steel replied, 111 and from Souhegan, 60. The conclusion that he can draw is that the faculty
167 believes that they are on the right path with CBE, not everyone but a vast majority and second,
168 they are on the wrong path with the tool. He believes that is also what they are hearing from
169 students and some parents.

170 In the Spring, he is pulling together a group to investigate and look at the right grading platform.
171 It is possible that they will circle back to Empower and use it a different way. Second, if they
172 move to something different, it does not mean that they will switch to it next year if they don't
173 have time to get everyone trained. One software tool they are investigating is Schoology,

174 <https://www.schoology.com/> which is part of PowerSchool platform. They are very early in the
175 process and he has met with the Faculty senate and has talked to many, many teachers. There
176 were extensive comments, positive, and negative.

177 Mr. Grondstra asked about general timelines.

178 Mr. Steel replied he would like to have this work done in 6 weeks, by April vacation the latest.

179 Ms. Facey noted if they are not able to make the change then they need to look at the issue of
180 students receiving grades at the end of the semester when they have not technically completed
181 the course.

182 Mr. Torres inquired if they are proposing other options and asked it is a training issue.

183 Superintendent Steel remarked that is why this committee needs to be open to every possibility.

184 Mr. Manning asked if it was possible that the complexity of CBE inputs into Empower caused a
185 lot of the issue.

186 Mr. Steel replied, yes, they need to bifurcate between the software platform and how they are
187 using it.

188 VIII. Public Comment

189 Mr. Dwayne Purvis, 145 South Hollis Road, Amherst NH, thanked Chairman Manning for his
190 years of service. He then noted his concern about putting limits on students in regard to
191 achievement.

192 Ms. Stephanie Grund, 5 Colonel Wilkins Road, Amherst NH, commented that they should put
193 more emphasis on Mastery Based Learning first.

194 Ms. Courtney Vore, Amherst NH, remarked that she has done a lot of research on Competency
195 Based Learning across the U.S. and the number of schools that have implemented it and then
196 rolled it back. She is preparing to share that information at some time. They have rolled it back
197 almost universally at high school level as it does not work. In the elementary and middle school,
198 it works well. At the high school, level it is too high stakes and does not belong in their high
199 school.

200 Mr. Manning closed the Public Comment.

201 IX. Non-Public Session

202 **Mr. Pim Grondstra motioned to enter into Non-Public Session RSA 91 A:3 II (a) and (c) at**
203 **5:50 PM. Mr. Steve Coughlan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, motion**
204 **passed.**

205 **Mr. Manning called a Roll Call: Manning- Yes, Grondstra- Yes, Taylor- Yes, Torres- Yes,**
206 **Coughlan-Yes and Chen- Yes.**

207 **Mr. Coughlan motioned to exit Non-Public Session at 6:10 PM. Mr. Pim Grondstra**
208 **seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed (7-0).**

209 **Mr. Torres motioned to seal the minutes Mr. Grondstra seconded the motion. The vote was**
210 **unanimous, motion passed (7-0). Reason: “ adversely affect the reputation of any person**
211 **other than a member of this Board”**

212 **Mr. Manning called a Roll Call: Manning- Yes, Grondstra- Yes, Taylor- Yes, Torres- Yes,**
213 **Coughlan-Yes and Chen- Yes.**

214 X. Meeting Adjourned

215 **Mr. Grondstra motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:10PM. Mr. Coughlan seconded the**
216 **motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed (7-0).**

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