

1 **Minutes**
2 **Deliberative Session Meeting for Souhegan Cooperative School District**
3 **February 4, 2019**
4 **Souhegan High School Theater**
5 **Amherst, New Hampshire**
6

7 **Minutes Written and Submitted by Christine A. Janson, Souhegan Cooperative School District Clerk**
8

Christine Janson
3/21/19

9 Attendance:

10 Moderator: George Bower

11 Souhegan Cooperative School Board Members: From Amherst: Steve Coughlan, Dwayne
12 Purvis, Amy Facey, Jim Manning, Chair. From Mont Vernon: Pim Grondstra, Howard Brown

13 Administration: Adam Steel, Superintendent; Christine Landwehrle, Assistant Superintendent;
14 Rob Scully, Principal of Souhegan High School;

15 Attorney for the District: Gordon Graham

16 Clerk: Christine Janson

17 Souhegan Cooperative School District Advisory Finance Committee: Martin Goulet, Chair; Ellen
18 Grudzien, Peg Harris, George Torres, John Stover, Jeanne Ludt (Alternate)
19

20 The number of voting attendees: 61 from Amherst and 8 from Mont Vernon for a total of 69
21 checked-in voters.

22 Moderator of the Souhegan Cooperative School District, George Bower, called the 2019
23 Souhegan Cooperative School District Deliberative Session to order at 7:00 PM pursuant to RSA
24 40:13, also known as Senate Bill 2.

25 The Moderator began by inviting Arielle Zlotnick to lead the meeting in the Pledge of
26 Allegiance. After the Pledge of Allegiance, the Moderator said that part of the core mission of
27 public education is to prepare students for participation and leadership in our democratic
28 society, and that Arielle is an example of the success that schools can achieve. She has been a
29 member of and officer of National Honor Society. She has excelled in her academic program
30 and has achieved success as a runner and has competed at state, regional and national level.
31 She has been recognized for her accomplishments academically and athletically by being
32 recognized by Senators Shaheen and Hassan and Representative Annie Kuster with an
33 appointment to the U.S. Military Academy. The Moderator asked those present to vote a
34 motion that recognizes Arielle's accomplishments as a student and an athlete at Souhegan High
35 School.

36 **Steve Coughlan, of Eaton Rd in Amherst, made a motion to recognize Arielle Zlotnick's**
37 **accomplishments as a student and athlete. Motion was second by Anthony Nino, Zero**
38 **Willow Lane in Amherst. Moderator asked those present to approve the motion by**

39 **unanimous consent. Seeing no objections, Moderator cast one vote in favor of the motion**
40 **and declared it approved by unanimous consent.**

41 The Moderator welcomed everyone to the meeting. He also welcomed those watching on cable
42 TV and those who will watch as a rerun on Channel 20 between now and March 12, the date of
43 the election. The Moderator said that the broadcast is also available on demand from the SAU
44 39 website. He noted that there are copies of the warrant available at the entrance to the
45 theater. The Moderator said that during the evening, those present would be asked to
46 deliberate on the articles and amend and approve Article 2 to be placed on the ballot for the
47 March 12 election. He said that ballot voting would be held at Souhegan High and Mont Vernon
48 Village School. Voters will then approve, or not, the Article.

49 The Moderator introduced Souhegan Cooperative School Board Chair, Jim Manning, who
50 introduced other Board members: Steve Coughlan, Dwayne Purvis, Howard Brown, Pim
51 Grondstra, and Amy Facey. Mr. Manning noted that Board member, David Chen, was not
52 present, as he had been involved in a skiing accident but was now resting and recovering at
53 home. Mr. Manning recognized Superintendent Adam Steel and his staff, Christine Landwehrle
54 and Rob Sully for their work supporting the budget and budget process. Mr. Manning also
55 thanked Martin Goulet and the rest of the Advisory Finance Committee for their work on the
56 budget.

57
58 Mr. Manning said that the Board recognizes the challenges that lie ahead for Souhegan High
59 School. He said that things are changing rapidly and that there are people who have already
60 had their children go through the public schools and are perhaps now on fixed incomes.

61 Mr. Manning said that can create a challenging situation in regard to taxes. On the other side,
62 he said, are young families with young children who moved to Amherst with the promise of
63 good schools, and then there are all the people in between. He said that the Board is trying to
64 improve the quality of education at Souhegan High School while also looking at, at least short-
65 term, declining enrollment and the best way to manage costs.

66 Mr. Manning displayed a photo depicting schools in the 1980s, showing a traditional classroom
67 with students at desks in rows and a teacher at the front. Mr. Manning said that schools were
68 set up in that manner because schools were preparing students for jobs in an economy that
69 look a lot like that, such as assemblers at a factory. Mr. Manning noted that this is not the case
70 anymore for workplaces, so there is a need to create classrooms to deal with today's and
71 tomorrow's economy and jobs. He then showed a picture of forensic technicians working at a
72 crime scene in the field, depicting a much more typical job today. Mr. Manning said that
73 schools today need classrooms that look different from yesterday's classrooms.

74 Mr. Manning showed a bar graph comparing needed workplace skills in 2014 and 2030. He said
75 that as the School Boards are working on a Strategic Plan, they are considering these. Much
76 needed skills will be critical thinking, problem solving, written communication, science and

77 math. He used the field of accounting as an example. He said that in 2030, accountants will
78 spend more time communicating, learning, and problem solving and less on math. He also
79 spoke about the health care profession. They will spend less time on foundational skills such as
80 using math and science and more on enterprise skills and verbal communication to engage
81 patients and listen and to do complex problem solving. Mr. Manning said that these are the
82 skills that will drive workplaces of the future and even today, workplaces look different. He
83 displayed a slide showing workers in a relaxed, collaborative atmosphere. He said classrooms
84 need to look more like something that mimics the collaborative, active workplace. Mr.
85 Manning displayed images of students working together in a classroom of round tables, and
86 some out in the field learning vocational skills.

87 Mr. Manning then asked what this means for the direction of Souhegan High and the budget
88 being presented. He said that the Board knows there are big challenges. He said they are
89 dealing with something that looks more like a chess game where you try to anticipate what will
90 happen in the future, given changes in workforce, changes in schools, and cost constraints. He
91 said that the reality is that the Board does not yet have solid answers because solutions are not
92 simple.

93 Mr. Manning asked what his presentation thus far had to do with this year's budget. He
94 displayed a chart showing teachers and total salary by experience, which demonstrated that
95 Souhegan High has a lot of very experienced, highly paid teachers and not a lot of new teachers.
96 Mr. Manning noted that some systems, like Bedford, with new schools, hire a lot of people with
97 less experience, and lower salaries. Over time, however, teachers there will become more
98 expensive, most likely all at once. He said that Souhegan High is just getting through that and
99 moving to the other side. He noted that these costs are hard to manage.

100 Mr. Manning displayed a pie chart which showed that almost 75% of the budget is salary and
101 benefits for employees. 5% is for transportation. He said that all those costs are contractual. He
102 questioned how to control costs where, so little is non-contractual. He said a plan to move
103 forward is needed and the Board is working with the Superintendent on a Strategic Plan. Mr.
104 Manning said that today, the only the way to control costs is by cutting personnel, and in this
105 budget, headcount is reduced. He noted that the Board debated how much is enough and how
106 much is too much to cut. He said that the Board does not really know because the concept
107 today is still education in a box which means that students move from classroom to classroom
108 or box to box, so the budget is also structured in a box.

109 Mr. Manning noted that the most wiggle room is only the 9% of non-contractual parts of the
110 budget. He said the Board is trying to bridge the gap between young families who move here
111 for excellent education and those who are on fixed incomes. Mr. Manning said that this needs
112 to be addressed and that the Board does not have all the answers but is committed to getting
113 answers. He said some of that will come through a forward-thinking Strategic Plan and working
114 together.

115 Mr. Manning turned the presentation over to Superintendent, Adam Steel, who introduced his
116 staff, including Christine Landwehrle, Assistant Superintendent; Porter Dodge Director of
117 Operations (not present); Meg Beauchamp, Director of Special Services (not present); and Rob
118 Scully, Principal of Souhegan High and NH Principal of the Year. He also introduced Souhegan
119 High School administration including Kathy White and Natalie Berger, Deans of Faculty; Karen
120 Chininis, Director of Guidance; Kelly Driscoll, Dean of Students (not present); Dan Wyborny,
121 Athletic Director (not present); and Jenn Huard, Special Education Coordinator.

122 Mr. Steel noted that US New and World Report ranked Souhegan High School #7 in NH. He said
123 that he finds Souhegan High students to be respectful trustworthy, and courageous, which
124 follows the motto of Souhegan High. Mr. Steel said he has worked in four high schools and
125 there is something different in students at Souhegan High. He said that other schools would be
126 afraid of an open campus where students can come and go as they please and manage their
127 own academic affairs, but at Souhegan High, it is expected of the students.

128 Mr. Steel displayed slides showing achievement data in reading and math based on the NWEA
129 assessment, the largest globally normed test in the world. He said that the data shows students
130 in our K-12 system do very well. And 9th and 10th grade students perform substantially above
131 average. He displayed a chart showing student growth year over year, which demonstrated a
132 challenge. Mr. Steel said that the norm is that 50% of the time, students should hit their growth
133 target. In our system, the lowest performing students meet that growth target over 74% of the
134 time. The middle achieving students meet the growth target 52% to 57% of the time, but the
135 highest performing students do not meet the 50% growth target. He noted that this represents
136 about 40% of our students. He noted that this is a challenge and underscores the idea of value
137 in the system; are we challenging our students enough?

138 Mr. Steel said that he and the Boards are looking at Strategic Planning because the world is
139 changing. He noted that Souhegan High was founded with core values such as collaboration,
140 working in teams, and working on problem solving. He said that today, expectations are
141 different and Souhegan High must evolve and be relevant to have the value citizens want in
142 their school system. He then displayed a slide of what skills industry expected of students in
143 2015 versus 2020. He concluded saying that we have a strong school system but there is more
144 to do. The character of the students and academic achievement is fantastic, but we need to do
145 more to challenge students, while addressing property tax bills.

146 Mr. Manning then began talking about operating budget of \$18,098,289, and if defeated, the
147 default budget shall be \$18,070,534. He noted some highlights of the proposed budget. He said
148 that the goal was to bring the budget in line with enrollment. He said that the Board was able
149 to reduce the overall budget by \$289,000 by addressing salaries, benefits, transportation, and
150 food costs; however, due to the addition of some special education students, the special
151 education part of the budget is up \$215,000, leaving a net reduction of \$73,000. He then
152 displayed a slide of Budget by Category and noted a decrease in Curriculum of 1.9%; Special
153 Education up 6.25%; Athletics up 3.01%; Administration up 0.80%; Technology down 3.13%;

154 Facilities down 7.97%; and Food and Transportation down 3.14%; resulting in a net decrease in
155 the overall budget of 0.04%.

156 Mr. Manning displayed a slide showing enrollment over time, noting that FY19 and FY20
157 enrollments are about the same. He said enrollment should decline over next four years, but by
158 FY25, enrollment will start increasing again, based on present enrollment in lower grades. Mr.
159 Manning said that the Board removed three positions but needed to add personnel in Special
160 Education including a case manager, behavior specialist, and instructional assistants. Mr.
161 Manning displayed a slide showing the budget calculation for the default and proposed FY20
162 budgets.

163 Mr. Manning introduced Board member, Dwayne Purvis, to present a dissenting opinion on the
164 budget. Mr. Manning noted that the Board voted in favor of the budget by a vote of 6-1 and
165 Mr. Purvis was the dissenting vote.

166 Mr. Purvis spoke about cost per pupil data, displaying data from the NH Department of
167 Education website. Mr. Purvis noted that Souhegan's cost per pupil looks out of whack when
168 compared to the state average for high schools as well as comparable schools including Bow
169 High School, Windham High School, Hollis-Brookline High School, and Bedford High School. Mr.
170 Purvis said he chose these schools because these towns have similar social and economic
171 demographic to Amherst and Mont Vernon. He said there are other indicators that suggest
172 these same schools are doing as well as Souhegan High. He said that we are in business of
173 education, and over the last few years, it has been agreed that we are spending too much. He
174 said that over the last three years, he has studied the Curriculum part of the budget which is
175 40% of overall budget and 90% of that is salary and benefits. He said that if there is to be
176 savings, it must come from there. He said that with enrollment falling 91 students over two
177 years, there must be adjustments in teaching levels.

178 Mr. Purvis displayed a chart with the same four schools and their changes in enrollment. He
179 noted others are trending up while Souhegan is trending down. He also noted the numbers of
180 teachers and number of classes at Souhegan High in 2017, 2018, and 2019. He said that the
181 number of Regular Education teachers has been reduced but how we allocate our resources is
182 of note. He noted that the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) recommends student-teacher
183 ratio of 80:1 but many Souhegan High teachers see less than 80 students per day. Mr. Purvis
184 also noted the number of classes with less than 15 students. He said that it would be good to
185 look at other well performing schools. He concluded by saying that given the numbers, he
186 cannot support the budget.

187 The Moderator thanked Mr. Manning and Mr. Steel for setting the stage for public's role in the
188 meeting. The Moderator asked Martin Goulet to introduce members of the Advisory Finance
189 Committee (AFC), charged with conducting a third-party review of the budget. The Moderator
190 noted that this year, there was a qualified group to do that.

191 Martin Goulet introduced his committee: John Stover, George Torres, Peggy Harris, and Ellen
192 Grudzien, Lisa Eastland (not present), Charlie York (not present) and alternate Jeanne Ludt. Mr.
193 Goulet noted that the AFC is a group of volunteers and serves much like a Ways and Means
194 committee. He said that the AFC looks over the budget and provides the Board, town, and
195 taxpayers, with feedback and recommendations. Mr. Goulet said that the way the AFC did that
196 was to divide the budget into seven sections and each member of the AFC “owns” a section of
197 the budget for detailed understanding and analysis and feedback. They meet with members of
198 the administration and Board to ensure they understand and get questions answered. The AFC
199 looks at changes year over year, looks at alignment with core educational principles, and tries
200 to decide if we are over or under spending. He said one can think of the AFC as another set of
201 eyes. Together, the AFC discusses each section of the budget and votes on recommendations to
202 the Board. He showed a slide to with budget section assignments of AFC and Board members.

203 Mr. Goulet described how the AFC does its ‘reasonable-ness’ tests. He said they look at multi-
204 year trending. He said that this year, the Board did a better job of looking at financial realities
205 and other metrics such as enrollment and closely matching those. He said that they wanted to
206 make sure that the budget was matching the enrollment decline. He said that the AFC discussed
207 questions such as: Are we pushing hard enough to keep costs down? On the other hand, are we
208 sacrificing core educational objectives? Mr. Goulet said that there is nothing new in this budget;
209 it is a status quo, roughly flat budget with no new initiatives. He said that with coming
210 enrollment declines, it will become more difficult to maintain a status quo budget or fund any
211 new initiatives that a Strategic Plan may recommend or envision. He said the challenges are not
212 getting easier. Mr. Goulet said that the AFC voted unanimously in favor of the budget and ask
213 the voters to support it. He also said that the AFC is a volunteer organization and each member
214 serves roughly three years. There will be openings next year and he invited folks to see him or
215 the Moderator if they are interested in serving.

216 The Moderator thanked Souhegan High staff members Jackie Bower and Stan St. Onge who
217 were responsible for the technology and Brad Freeman and Bruce Chakrin for their assistance
218 with the video.

219 The Moderator said two actions could be taken by the meeting: maintain the original wording
220 of the Article and place it on the ballot for March 12 election or the meeting may amend the
221 wording and if the amendment is approved then the amended Article will be placed on the
222 March 12 ballot. He said that the work is to decide the wording and it is not the prerogative of
223 the meeting to change the intent of the Articles. Those rules are established by RSAs that
224 govern the rules of order. He said that the rules of order were available as part of the handouts
225 for the meeting and he invited those attending to read them. He said that the green dot given
226 to voters as they checked in for the meeting identify registered voters. The blue cards that were
227 given to voters will be used when a vote is taken. Vote will be by raising the blue card. The
228 Moderator said he will accept amendments to the Article but not accept an amendment to an
229 amendment; amendments on the floor must first be voted on before moving on to another

230 amendment. If the need arises, the Moderator will recognize members of the administration
231 who may not be citizens of either Amherst or Mont Vernon. He said this will be done to provide
232 information about specific questions; otherwise, only registered voters are permitted to speak
233 unless granted authorization by the meeting itself. He said that if there is an amendment, the
234 person proposing it must go to the microphone, make the amendment, have the amendment
235 written with name and address and bring it to the Moderator. That ensures the specific
236 language for the amendment. At the completion of discussion, the Moderator will close
237 discussion and ask for a motion to restrict reconsideration of the Article. Once that motion is
238 passed, the Moderator will instruct the clerk to put that Article on the ballot. The Moderator
239 asked that anyone who makes a motion, come to the microphone and state his or her name
240 and address and that no motions should be made from the seats. He said the same rules will
241 apply to seconding a motion. This is done for a positive record and so that those watching
242 online or television will know who made and seconded motions.

243 The Moderator began with Article 1, election of district officials. He said to be elected are: two
244 school board members from Amherst for three-year terms, one school board member from
245 Mont Vernon for a three-year term and a Moderator for a three-year term. He reminded the
246 audience of the date, time, and place to vote in Amherst and Mont Vernon.

247 **The Moderator instructed the clerk to place Article 1 on the ballot.**

248 The Moderator read Article 2: Operating Budget

249 *Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget,*
250 *not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted*
251 *separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote*
252 *of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling eighteen million, ninety-eight*
253 *thousand, two hundred and eighty-nine dollars (\$18,098,289)? Should this article be defeated,*
254 *the default budget shall be eighteen million, seventy thousand, five hundred and thirty-four*
255 *dollars (\$18,070,534), which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by*
256 *previous action of the Souhegan Cooperative School District or by law; or the governing body*
257 *may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a*
258 *revised operating budget only? **Majority vote required.***

259 *Recommended by the Souhegan Cooperative School Board (6-1)*

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

261 *Estimated tax impact of passing this article is: \$0.11 per thousand for Amherst and \$0.58 per*
262 *thousand for Mont Vernon.*

263 *Estimated tax impact of not passing this article is: \$0.09 per thousand for Amherst and \$0.57*
264 *per thousand for Mont Vernon.*

265

266 **The Moderator recognized Mr. Manning to move Article 2, the operating budget. Mr.**
267 **Manning moved Article 2. Martin Goulet seconded the motion.**

268 The Moderator asked Mr. Manning and Mr. Goulet if there was further comment on the article.
269 There was none. The Moderator opened the floor for comments and questions from the public.

270 Jeanne Ludt, 3 School Street, Amherst, said she appreciated the description about challenges
271 the School Board is facing in creating a budget that is mindful of the taxpayers as well as
272 ensuring that the quality of education is maintained. She asked the Board how they measure
273 the impact of a reduction of staff which the Board indicated was three this year, in terms of the
274 gaps it creates and pressure it puts on faculty and whether it reduces quality in any way. Mr.
275 Manning replied that when the Board looked at the original budget from the administration, it
276 came with a reduction of two staff members so as not to affect quality of education. The Board
277 thought that they were comfortable with reducing by a third staff person. He said that one
278 reason is that there are several classes that are not up to the maximum class size of 22. He said
279 that the Board felt they needed to cut deeper partly based on cuts not made in previous years
280 but did not have enough insight to know exactly what that number should be. He noted that at
281 last year's Deliberative Session, Board Chair Howard Brown said that he hoped that by last June
282 there would be a Strategic Plan in place to guide the decision making around these tradeoffs.
283 Mr. Manning said that the challenge is that they are trying to accomplish something that is not
284 easy but very challenging. The way education is structured, the Board can only cut heads. He
285 said that in the future, the Board will be looking at efficiencies while simultaneously increasing
286 quality. Mr. Manning said a strategy is needed and that is not there yet. In reply to Ms. Ludt's
287 question, he said that the staff cuts were a gut level check; something that he Board felt was
288 right.

289 Anne Dodd, 36 Mason Rd, Mont Vernon asked about the last clause of the Article beginning "or
290 the governing body may hold one special meeting...." She asked about the intent of that clause
291 and if there was any intention of exercising that or if it is boilerplate. The Moderator said it is
292 boilerplate but that it gives the district the option to hold a special meeting should the budget
293 fail. Ms. Dodd asked if the clause is always part of the warrant article and asked if it had ever
294 been exercised. The Moderator said it is standard language and he believes it has not been
295 exercised in any of the Mont Vernon, Amherst, or Souhegan districts. The Moderator
296 recognized Superintendent Adam Steel who said that the language is required by statute. The
297 Moderator recognized Steve Coughlan who added that the clause means a complete cycle of
298 another Deliberative Session and full voting day. It would be a big deal and the Board would
299 only ask for it if there was a significantly different budget.

300 Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Rd, Amherst, addressed Mr. Manning and said that the way
301 Mr. Manning had characterized residents of the community makes it sound like there are
302 people on fixed incomes and then everyone else. He said that there are young families moving
303 to the community who are probably in the early cycles of their salaries and do not have a lot of
304 disposable income and are probably like those on fixed incomes. Mr. Akillian also observed that
305 in April 2013, the schools and town government embarked on Strategic Planning. By August
306 2013, all the departments in municipal government were presenting their strategic plans to the

307 select board so that the 2014 budget could serve as the first year of a multi-year view over time
308 of initiatives and outcomes. He said that the School Boards took a different approach and it has
309 been six years of planning on the part of the schools, with probably thousands of hours on the
310 part of citizens, teachers, administrators, and Board members, and today, the Board cannot
311 name a single measurable outcome that it has been working towards on the part of either the
312 taxpayers or the students. Mr. Akillian continued by saying that last year, Howard Brown said
313 vote for the budget because in May or June when the Strategic Plan is competed, voters will see
314 how everything fits together. Mr. Akillian said there was no plan in May or June and there is still
315 no plan. He said that for six years, the Board has been saying they are working on a Strategic
316 Plan. In the meantime, between the Souhegan Cooperative School District and the Amherst
317 School District, the budgets are up to 80% of tax dollars with 20% for municipal government. He
318 said that in most communities it is more like two thirds, one third. He said the schools are
319 taking a bigger and bigger chunk. Mr. Akillian noted that Mr. Manning said that this year the
320 Board is trying to adjust for decrease in enrollment. Mr. Akillian said the Boards never made up
321 for decreasing enrollment in past years which accounts for the \$5,000-\$7,000 per person per
322 student extra cost because the Boards never adjusted over the years. He said that the Board is
323 now promising again to being close to a Strategic Plan. He noted that there is only a \$27,000
324 difference between the default and proposed budgets, so there is no real difference this year.
325 He said he hopes the Board abandoned what was done in past years. He said that according to
326 the state, the Board has three jobs: develop a Strategic Plan with measurable outcomes of what
327 it wants to achieve on behalf of those it represents. He said that one of the reasons things are
328 where they are is because the Board abdicated its responsibility to the Superintendent. He said
329 the role of the Board is to figure out the plan, and the role of the Superintendent is to
330 determine the system of schools to put in place to achieve the goals. For example, what are the
331 curricula, program of study, to achieve the goals. He said that there is not much difference in
332 how one votes this year, but he hopes that the Board takes seriously their role in being able to
333 convey why it being worth 80% of tax dollars to pay \$5,000-\$7,000 more here with the same or
334 sometimes less results as other districts. Mr. Akillian said that the last he looked, Souhegan had
335 35 more fulltime people on their payroll than Hollis-Brookline. He noted that when the Board
336 talks about cutting three or four heads, he is thinking about why not 17. He said that the Board
337 has no rationale as to why they are cutting as they are.

338 Ellen Grudzien, 18 Buckridge Drive, Amherst said that since 2010, there have been 33
339 headcount cuts. She has been on the AFC for three years and sees how difficult it is and there
340 are no easy answers. She said she owns a preschool in town with kids who will attend Souhegan
341 High at some point and she asked that the Strategic Plan be such that the district continues to
342 offer a great quality high school.

343 Karen Tuthill, Hollis Rd, Amherst, said that rumor has it that \$600,000 is going to be returned to
344 the taxpayers and she asked when and if that is going to happen. She said she is concerned it
345 has been six years waiting for a Strategic Plan and she does not understand why we are at 80%
346 for the schools. She said that three heads were cut, and three heads were added so we are

347 even. She noted that she heard that Special Education at the high school has been cut. She said
348 there is an issue with letting all the taxpayers know what goes on, and she noted that here
349 were very few in attendance and there is a need to get the word out as to what is going on. She
350 said that she owns her own business and her employees pay for half the cost of their benefits.
351 She said she understands that there is a union but that her tax dollars are paying for that, and
352 the school employees need to pitch in more. She said that the teachers work for the citizens.
353 She noted that if there are teachers who should retire or are not performing well, it is showing
354 up in math scores and other areas. She noted that her son had a mediocre experience at SHS.

355 John Dowd, 46 Courthouse Rd, Amherst said he has been at Souhegan High since it opened. He
356 said he has a 10th grader and a ninth grader next year. He said that the town has a very highly
357 educated people who want to give their children very interesting lives. He said that if the school
358 was not doing a good job with people's children, the room would be packed and if kids were
359 not impressing their parents with what they are doing, there would more people at this
360 meeting. He said he knows he is prejudiced but he sees his own children and see the
361 relationships they have with their teachers and he knows the relationships he has with students
362 and asks why the room is not packed. He said that if people were not happy about the
363 experience their children were having, the room would be packed.

364 Anthony Nino, Zero Willow Lane, Amherst asked why Mr. Manning's signature was not on any
365 of the three handouts. Mr. Manning replied that he was traveling on business when the
366 signatures were collected and only a quorum of signatures is needed. Mr. Nino then asked to
367 see the slide showing enrollments. He noted that in 2003-2007 there were over 1,000 students
368 at Souhegan High and since 2007, there has been a 25% reduction in students. The Moderator
369 said it is closer to 20%.

370 The Moderator asked Mr. Steel if the slides would be available for download from the SAU
371 website. Mr. Steel replied that yes, they would. The Moderator told those present that they
372 could download slides from the SAU 39 website. Mr. Steel said they would be available the
373 following morning.

374 Martin Goulet, 22 Veterans Rd, Amherst added that the AFC struggled with enrollment decline
375 versus staffing versus total cost of teachers. He said that the AFC's quantitative analysis showed
376 that the cost of headcount did not fall with enrollment since 2010, but the headcount numbers
377 were falling at the same rate as enrollment. He said that coincides with what Mr. Manning
378 spoke about earlier with the distribution of teachers and their tenure and that often the more
379 expensive teachers are not the ones being cut. He asked how many you can squeeze to reach a
380 dollar value as opposed to doing something reasonable for keeping your educational value
381 intact.

382 John D'Angelo, Woodland Drive, Amherst asked to see Mr. Purvis' slides. He said that if the
383 standard for CES is 80 to 1, and we have not come up to 80:1, that is unfortunate. He said he is
384 drawing the conclusion there should have been three people cut last year. He said that Mike

385 Akillian made the point that previous Boards have shirked the responsibility of reducing the
386 headcount as enrollment goes down and part of the problem is that we have expensive,
387 experienced people. He noted that it is easy when you are growing but a tough job when
388 decreasing. He said previous Boards should have been responsible for cuts in previous years. He
389 also asked why the dissenting Board member was the only one who gave any cost numbers in
390 the presentation. He said he is glad to see lowest performing students meeting their growth,
391 but there should be some comparative cost numbers in the presentation, even if they are not
392 flattering. He suggested that cost metric be included in the future because taxpayers are being
393 asked to fund the costs.

394 Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Rd, Amherst said that CES' model and underlying philosophy
395 was to teach students to learn how to learn which requires a higher headcount for personalized
396 learning. He noted that the tradeoff was supposed to be that it would be more expensive than
397 other systems and built into the model was that CES schools would limit the array of offerings
398 so that the cost did not exceed 10% of comparable schools. Souhegan High has exceeded those
399 costs well above 10% for many years. He said that the reasons for that are that over time,
400 Souhegan High has evolved into a very expensive hybrid school and over time, the Board has
401 approved AP course after AP course and thus a more traditional model. He said this may be due
402 to families coming in not being educated on the CES model or possibly parents have a case to
403 be made that colleges need a way to benchmark Souhegan kids against those taking AP
404 courses, which also saves tuition dollars. Mr. Akillian said that over time, we have a very
405 expensive CES model, but the cost structure and organizational model is still the CES model
406 with many traditional course offerings. He suggested that maybe move learn how to learn to the
407 lower grade and then by the time the kids are at Souhegan High, there are robust course
408 offerings but not with the 80:1 ratio. He said he hopes that all three districts are working
409 together on the Strategic Plan so that there is a clear, solid rationale.

410 Jeanne Ludt, 3 School Street, Amherst said she wanted to make sure that people realize that
411 there has been a reduction to accommodate decreases in enrollment since at least 2009. She
412 said she was on the Board for 13 years and there were years when the number of staff was
413 reduced by five, and we are up to 33 including this year. She wanted to make sure that people
414 understand that the Board has been responsible, and they do have to make tough decisions and
415 it is not fair to criticize them for not making tough decisions.

416 Karen Tuthill, Hollis Road, Amherst commented on Mr. Dowd's comments about why not more
417 people were attending the meeting. She said she does not agree that the room is not filled
418 because the school is doing a phenomenal job, but rather people do not think things will ever
419 change. She said that most people work, and it is difficult to attend meetings. She said she
420 believes the lack of attendance is because people do not think that they can make a difference.
421 She said it seems that the same people are on the AFC and there is never anyone new. She said
422 It seems that everyone supports the budget each year and she cannot afford her taxes to
423 increase every year. She said she came to town because 20 years ago the school system was the

424 best and she is unimpressed with the high school, but very impressed with the elementary and
425 middle schools. She said the high school seems to be a separate entity and she agrees with
426 Mike Akillian that the system should start in the lower grades and it should all flow together,
427 and the math scores will go up.

428 **The Moderator said that saw no one else who wanted to speak, so he closed discussion and**
429 **he instructed the clerk to place Article 2 on the ballot as presented.**

430 **Moderator took a motion to restrict reconsideration.**

431 **Martin Goulet, 22 Veterans Road, Amherst moved to restrict reconsideration. Motion was**
432 **seconded by Steve Coughlan, Eaton Road, Amherst. A vote was taken by voters holding up**
433 **their blue cards. Motion passed.**

434 The Moderator asked if there was any other business to come before the meeting. Seeing none,
435 he closed with a reminder that the Deliberative Session for the Amherst School District was
436 scheduled for the following evening at 7 PM and the Town of Amherst Deliberative Session was
437 scheduled for Wednesday, February 6 at 7 PM, both at the Souhegan High Theater. He asked
438 those present to attend.

439 The Moderator reminded the meeting of the date and times and place of voting on March 12.

440 **The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 PM.**