

1 Joint Facilities Advisory Committee Meeting

2 Wednesday, May 13th, 2021

3 Meeting Minutes- Approved 06 10 2021

4 Attendees Via Webinar:

5 Administrative Team: Michele Croteau- SAU #39 Business Administrator, Mr. Roger Preston-
6 Director of SAU #39 Facilities and Amy Facey- SAU #39 Business Administrator, Elect.

7 Committee Members: Shannon Gascoyne- JFAC Chair, Amherst NH, Victoria Parisi- Vice
8 Chair, Amherst NH, Stephanie Grund- SCSB Member, Tom Gauthier- ASB Member, Ellen
9 Gruzdien- ASB Member, Jeanne Ludt, Amherst NH, Brian Coogan, and John D'Angelo-
10 Amherst Board of Selectmen

11 Meeting Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

12 Public: Ingrid Nichols and Brad Prescott. Banwell Architects

13 I. Call to Order

14 **Chair of the Joint Facilities Advisory Committee, Ms. Shannon Gascoyne, called the**
15 **meeting to order at 6:02PM.**

16 II. Approval of Minutes

17 **Ms. Parisi motioned to approve the minutes of April 1st, 2021.**

18 **Ms. Grund motioned to approve the minutes of May 5th, 2021.**

19 Ms. Grund commented that she was not in attendance at the May 5th 2021 meeting.

20 **There were no questions or comments. Motion passed.**

21 III. Subcommittee Updates

22 Ms. Gascoyne noted that they will have an update on the site and civil work taking place. She
23 asked SAU #39 Facilities Director, Mr. Roger Preston to update the committee.

24 Mr. Preston added that they had Tighe and Bond come down and they did some test pits at Upper
25 Wilkins Field. They worked with the Recreation Department to find a good spot in the field to
26 see what is the subsurface to see what potentials are up there. They did 4 borings on the Lower
27 Wilkins Field just again to see what type of subsurface is underneath. They are waiting for the
28 results.

29 Ms. Gascoyne asked for further questions.

30 She inquired what is the wait time on those items.

31 Mr. Preston replied at least a couple of weeks.

32 Ms. Gascoyne commented as you recall they made a recommendation to the ASB in selecting an
33 architect. She is pleased to announce that the ASB approved the hiring of Banwell Architects.
34 She introduced Ms. Ingrid Nichols and Mr. Brad Prescott.

35 Ms. Nichols added that they are very excited to be here. She noted that she is the owner and
36 President of Banwell Architects. They have done hundreds of schools in NH and love doing
37 educational facilities.

38 Mr. Prescott noted that he is very excited about this project. There is a lot of information here to
39 start with and this is exciting to be a part of.

40 Ms. Gascoyne asked for Ms. Nichols and Mr. Prescott about their thoughts on coming in at this
41 point.

42 Ms. Nichols replied they have started by analyzing what they have done to date. They have
43 talked to Tighe and Bond, have analyzed their programs and the needs, wishes and wants of the
44 administration. They really want to look at all of the options. The train is moving, and they are
45 trying to get up to speed in the next three to four weeks.

46 Mr. Prescott added in the meantime they are meeting with educators, stakeholders and
47 administrators. They are getting into the weeds and where are the disconnects, areas to improve
48 on and the things you would like to leverage from the lot.

49 Ms. Nichols noted that hopefully they can engage the students. When she was in middle school,
50 she was exposed to an architecture project and that is what got her interested in architecture.

51 Ms. Gascoyne commented that she appreciated how they have hit the ground running. She asked
52 the committee if they had any questions for Ms. Nichols or Mr. Prescott.

53 Ms. Parisi noted her excitement. She was part of the process and is confident that they are the
54 right fit for Amherst.

55 Mr. Coogan noted that the people on the call have been actively involved for about almost three
56 years now. They have done a lot of groundwork and have a good understanding of the
57 community. He asked how can they help them accelerate their work.

58 Ms. Nichols replied that they are going to help throughout the process. It is really about getting
59 the word out, the truth and the facts out to their different networks in town.

60 Mr. Prescott added that they already have a terrific website and that is a benefit. It is looking at
61 the channels and make sure that they have saturated the community with messaging. He added
62 that is it, how many ways do they want to connect with the community, how many public
63 meetings do you want to have and how many mailers do you want to mail.

64 Ms. Gascoyne added that they have several different subcommittees. They will make certain that
65 the committee chairs have your information so that they can work together. They will be
66 checking in with them to make certain that the information is where they are and as they evolve.
67 They want to put forward the correct pieces of information.

68 Ms. Ludt inquired about the design that was created. Are they starting from scratch.

69 Ms. Nichols replied yes and no; they are not completely starting from scratch. They are
70 reopening the design option as they need more input from the end users.

71 Ms. Grudzien encouraged Ms. Nichols and Mr. Prescott to sit down and talk to the more
72 experienced teachers. She would put teachers at the top of the list.

73 Ms. Nichols responded that they have those meetings scheduled.

74 There were no further questions for Ms. Nichols and Mr. Prescott and the committee thanked
75 them.

76 IV. Souhegan 2.0 Subcommittee Update

77 Ms. Grund noted that they are reconvening and had a meeting with SHS Principal, Mr. Mike
78 Berry. Their subcommittee includes, Ms. Ludt, Ms. Lisa Eastland, Ms. Christine Grayson and
79 she has asked new SCSB member Ms. Christie Peters to be involved as well. They asked
80 Principal Berry about the science programs and he gave them the green light to meet with Mr.
81 Preston and SHS Science Teacher, Mr. Nathan Carle. They will be going through the chemistry
82 and physics labs as well as any of the science classrooms in the main building. Mr. Berry is
83 happy to hear that they are addressing the outdated equipment. They want to put together a
84 whole plan. There may be different needs and they want to address them all in one program.

85 Mr. Dan Veilleux is one our Amherst Representatives and he is working on the county budget.
86 They are getting \$46m from the government and they want to spend it across the county on
87 students. She reached out to Superintendent Steel and SAU#39 Business Administrator Elect,
88 Ms. Amy Facey and they will start the process of applying for funds.

89 Ms. Gascoyne asked if there were any questions for Ms. Grund.

90 There were no further questions.

91 V. Finance Subcommittee Update

92 Ms. Facey noted that last time they met she gave a brief update on building aid, since then
93 nothing has changed. They did have the MV Tuition Agreement presented and will be voted on
94 in June. The calculation for what MV would provide for capital improvements has stayed the
95 same. There were other changes to the agreement but not with that. Once they have a number
96 that they feel comfortable they can do some projections on what that number would be.

97 She added that she and SAU #39 Business Administrator, Ms. Michele Croteau, met with Mr.
98 Nick Strong at the Town of Amherst to discuss impact fees. They are starting to get an
99 understanding of how that process works. The impact fees are published and there is information
100 in the zoning ordinance that speaks to it but there is not necessarily an outlined process. They
101 would need to demonstrate that there was a relationship between growth in our community that
102 would make us eligible to gain access to those impact fees. It is up to the Selectmen upon their
103 request for those fees to make the determination whether they would be eligible. The fees sit in a
104 fund for 6 years and if they are not used get returned to the developer.

105 She asked Mr. John D'Angelo, Selectboard Member for his comments.

106 Mr. D'Angelo added that the Board of Selectmen has passed the appropriate ordinance to allow
107 the planning board to assess and collect impact fees. Once they are collected, they do not have a
108 process to allocate them out to the School Districts or the Town, that has to be written, that is the
109 planning board's job. Once they have done that they will come back to the Board of Selectmen
110 and ask do you have a problem with this, and the response will be no as they will most likely
111 have run a draft.

112 Once the process is in place, if we charge impact fees to a development and if it is a 55+
113 community there is probably not going to be a lot of money going to the schools from that. On
114 the other hand, if there is a development that has small children, with 3 and 4 bedrooms, there
115 could be quite a bit that goes to the schools. Again, that is a process that has to be written and
116 Mr. Strong has to do. I am quite sure that once it is written and they have a process for
117 distributing them, if you are entitled to your portion, they can certainly give them to you as soon
118 as you ask for them.

119 Mr. Coogan asked if it has to be only on projects that were voted on by the public.

120 Mr. D'Angelo replied not quite. That the way it works is from the time we make it possible for
121 the planning board to assess impact fees all developments from that point forward can be
122 subjected to impact fees. It does not require approval of the voters of the town to do anything. It
123 is not likely to collect enough impact fees to build a bridge or replace 2 miles of road or anything
124 like that. They will make a contribution towards town or school expenses but all they can charge
125 is for the incremental impact. They cannot charge for existing students, populations, existing
126 roads and the condition they are and so on. They cannot charge for existing infrastructure and
127 demand on the schools or demand on the town.

128 Mr. Coogan remarked that said, you can't charge an impact fee for schools right now, but you
129 could once the voters approve funding to build a new school. You could then use the impact fees
130 for new development after that.

131 Mr. D'Angelo replied that is not correct, they can collect the fees as of today and then decide the
132 justification for it later.

133 Mr. Coogan asked about the calculation if you do not have a line item.

134 Mr. D'Angelo replied that they have the planning board to do that, there are impact fees by
135 category. There is a template in place

136 Ms. Facey asked if it was posted on the Town website.

137 Mr. D'Angelo replied yes; it is on the Town website.

138 Ms. Facey asked if it is based on their narrative of growth and how they can explain that it is an
139 incremental charge that they would be entitled to.

140 Mr. D'Angelo replied that you do have to have some hook to hang your charges on. If you are
141 building 60 new homes for families, you know three or four bedrooms, that would seem to be

142 incremental growth for both the town, the school systems and so on. If it is a replacement of an
 143 existing structure, that is not really a change. Any new developments, or housing should create
 144 an incremental demand on the town and or the schools for which we can charge.

145 Ms. Ludt asked shouldn't every developer be charged impact fees.

146 Mr. D'Angelo replied that is not the way it works; it is at the discretion of the planning board.

147 Ms. Ludt added that the public should put pressure on the Planning Board to put impact fees
 148 forward.

149 Mr. D'Angelo replied yes, since the Planning Board is now elected. It used to be that the
 150 Selectmen would pick the Planning Board members. We were therefore indirectly responsible
 151 for their performance. The voters have now chosen to do that, so the voters are now responsible
 152 for monitoring the Planning Board.

153 Ms. Gascoyne asked for questions for Ms. Facey or if there were any other updates.

154 Ms. Facey replied that at the next meeting they should have an update on the USDA application.
 155 She and Ms. Croteau will be meeting with them to make sure that they are not losing any
 156 opportunity to submit anything. They have submitted an initial application.

157 VI. Public Relations Subcommittee

158 Ms. Gascoyne noted that they continue to meet weekly. There is going to be a table set up on
 159 June 8th outside of Souhegan for Town Voting Day. At this point in time, they are planning on a
 160 flyer for residents to follow them, similar to the postcard that was already mailed. Ms. Gruzdien
 161 is our Facebook person, and trying to keep people engaged there. They are working on video
 162 series #2 that will be coming out next week. They will be meeting tomorrow to go through
 163 questions before they make that video.

164 Ms. Gruzdien inquired about the meetings being viewed.

165 Ms. Gascoyne replied that she will make sure that it gets posted to the website.

166 VII. Clark Exploration Subcommittee Update

167 Ms. Parisi noted that this is a lengthy presentation. She is planning on asking for questions and
 168 comments at the end.

169 The group is made up of herself, Ms. Ludt, Ms. Grayson, and Mr. Conklin. Tonight, they will
 170 review the process, survey questions, results and recommendations.

171 First, they connected as a subcommittee, connected with town representatives and visited Clark
 172 School, connected with Clark neighbors and community members, explored community centers,
 173 attended a Board of Selectmen meeting, conducted a survey with The Amherst Citizen, review
 174 survey results and present to JFAC.

175 Ms. Parisi read the Mission Statement: *"To gather input from experts and community*
 176 *stakeholders on possible ways to utilize the Clark School building and site should the proposal*

177 *by the Amherst School District to build a new elementary school to house Pre K thru 5th grade*
178 *be approved by the voters in the future.”*

179 They were fortunate to meet with the Town Representatives, Board of Selectmen, Town
180 Administrator and various members of Town Commissions. They had a zoom call with them
181 discussing what the school is thinking to open the conversation regarding the Clark School.
182 When it came to the neighbors, the created a flyer which is meant to be a conversation starter. It
183 is difficult with neighbors not knowing their email addresses. They left a flyer on everyone’s
184 door with an invitation to attend the Zoom Meetings. They only scheduled the Clark School
185 neighbors for certain nights so they could focus on their input.

186 With community members, they reached out to community leaders of various organizations, such
187 as the Amherst Garden Club. They reached out to over 10 groups in town. A few of their
188 committee members went to community centers that would have been schools in other towns.
189 This was to get an understanding of what the possibilities are. With all of our zoom meetings
190 there were surveys at the end.

191 When their group got together, they talked and listened to each other. The possible uses fell
192 under several columns such as sell for residential use, sell for commercial use, raze the lot for
193 green space, and for the property to be sold to town/foundation.

194 Regarding the survey, they first had to create the survey questions. They wanted to make sure
195 that they were gathering a variety of information. The survey was about 8 questions, however,
196 could be a little longer if you answered “yes” to a question. It went to Zoom meeting
197 participants, The Amherst Citizen, through Nixle JFAC Channel, Facebook and their website.
198 They have reviewed the survey results and are now ready to present their results.

199 Ms. Parisi reviewed the targeted questions *“Would you be interested in future communications*
200 *about the work of the JFAC? (Provide email)”* and *“If you are passionate about a targeted path*
201 *for Clark's future, would you be interested in participating in a grassroots effort for that cause?”*
202 The first question allows them to collect the participant’s email address and the second question
203 allows them to wait and see what the path for Clark becomes. If a certain path is chosen by the
204 ASB, they know the people to get back in touch with.

205 She noted the multiple-choice questions as they wanted to get information for JFAC. They set
206 out with the mission to gather information for Clark. They wanted to find out where people heard
207 about the facility projects and what community needs could be met through the use of the Clark
208 School and/or site and they wanted them to rank the 4 options with (1 as most desired).

209 Finally, these are open ended questions designed to elicit feedback and further questions to
210 consider *“Please note any thoughts about why you ranked the options in the way that you did,*
211 *and What questions do you still have about this process?”* and *“Is there anything else you think*
212 *the committee should be considering?”*

213 She has the results for the survey responses, multiple choice questions, and highlighted the pros
214 and cons by conversations for each of the 4 options. In total, there were 172 total respondents,
215 155 emails gathered, and received 211 items of open-ended comments provided. The open-ended

216 comments have been compiled and have been shared with the facility project team. They will be
217 talking about those at their future meetings. That group includes administration, herself and Ms.
218 Gascoyne and the ASB Chair, Ms. Elizabeth Kuzsma. They are definitely being reviewed by
219 multiple people.

220 The first question of *“Where have you heard about the Amherst Facility projects?”*. The top
221 responses were The Amherst Citizen, postcard mailing and word of mouth. It is kind of what
222 they would have thought. She loved that the postcard mailing drove some people to this, and it is
223 great to see that they are gaining popularity with their Facebook page and website.

224 The next question of *“What community needs do you think could be met through the use of the
225 Clark School and/or site?”* drove a lot of the conversation. When they first met with everyone,
226 they gave them an overview of JFAC. Once they got through the history and where they are at, a
227 majority of people understood and were ready for discussion. A lot of the data speaks for itself.
228 The top responses if Clark was not a school are, a community center, a meeting space and
229 recreation class space.

230 The next question is to rank the 4 or 5 options. For the first 43 meeting attendees they had 5
231 options. This is what their subcommittee had first come up with. At first, they thought that there
232 should be a difference in how people wanted the future in terms of selling the building and site to
233 the town or foundation and using the entire building versus a partial tear down. They have
234 separate parts of the building that are important to many different people. They have the historic
235 Library on the left side, they also have the area in the middle where children are educated and
236 then the right side, which was raised by community funds and in memory of a teacher in town.
237 They realized as a JFAC group or the ASB, if they were to hand over control to the town or a
238 foundation then they would lose control of what would happen.

239 The first round included responses from the first 43 meeting attendees. These included 5 options:
240 raze the building, residential sale, commercial sale, sold to town/foundation entire building used
241 and partial tear down/green space.

242 Responses from the second group included 4 options: Raze the building, Residential Sale,
243 Commercial Sale, and Sold to town/foundation for future use to be determined.

244 Sell to Residential pros include the following, maintain residential neighborhood, less impact to
245 traffic and financial offset from sale and residential tax income. Cons include risk of unknown,
246 long lasting construction impact, and lose the property for town use.

247 Sell to commercial pros include, community serving business to bring people together, could be
248 done well with Historic District Commission and Planning Board to oversee commercial use in
249 line with The Village area, and gives businesses opportunities in Amherst. Cons include, risk of
250 unknown, potential for traffic increase throughout the day and evening, and again lose the
251 property for town use.

252 In terms of razing the building for green space the pros include, green space is good for the
253 environment, Historic Amherst Village has unique charm with quaint areas like open green
254 spaces and some liked this option over outside sale as it remains in town/school control. Cons

255 include, ruining a perfectly good building is not environmentally friendly, cost to raze the
256 building impacts taxpayers and it doesn't address town's need for additional meeting space.

257 When it comes to selling to the Town or Foundation the pros are, historic building to remain an
258 integral part of the Village, the ability to benefit the most members of the community, and most
259 environmentally friendly choice. The cons are evening use could impact neighbors, this does not
260 provide revenue and there is a possibility of changing traffic patterns.

261 What they would suggest is continued communication is essential, keep conducting surveys for
262 various aspects of proposal, follow the data that you collect, and establish the criteria which the
263 choice will be based upon.

264 One of the responses that they received was "*All options are reasonable provided we maintain*
265 *the charm and character of the Village*". That really summed it up so nicely. This is going to
266 take several years and talking about it is important to do now. Additional subcommittee work
267 will be done as Clark's future use progresses over several years.

268 Additional questions are the following "*Is there interest on the part of the town/foundation to*
269 *take over the property? ,What is the maintenance plan/ownership if razed to green space and*
270 *What are the residential and commercial sale pricing details?*".

271 Ms. Parisi noted that was the end of her presentation and she is happy to answer any questions.

272 Ms. Gruzdien commented that razing for green space is not environmentally friendly. Keep in
273 mind that they will be losing another playground, which is a big con. She noted that they should
274 open discussion with the town and get a committee together.

275 Ms. Parisi replied that they have had the conversation with the BOS. It is something that they can
276 discuss more formally. When she and Ms. Gascoyne go to the BOS meeting, they will bring it up
277 again. They are waiting to make sure these are the options that make the most sense.

278 Ms. Gascoyne added that this is the premiere of the Clark School subcommittee. They will then
279 take this to the ASB since ultimately, they have the decision with the land. They are on the BOS
280 agenda in May.

281 Ms. Ludt mentioned that one of the outcomes of zoom conversations is opening the minds of the
282 BOS. The zoom meetings included important conversations. There was not a single person that
283 did not support a new elementary school because they were taking the time to really fill them in
284 on how they got to this point. They should keep the conversation going, the more they can spread
285 the message the better.

286 Ms. Grund added that they need to get information to the ASB as there are long term capital
287 maintenance needs. It is part of the cost of everything and it makes sense to have a plan.

288 Ms. Parisi replied that she agrees. She asked for other questions or thoughts. She added that there
289 were people that discussed the playground and that it was a community build.

290 Ms. Gruzdien added that playgrounds are vitally important to families, it is where you meet your
291 friends. The inside of that building could be used for a million things. This could be a vital
292 question for a BOS candidate.

293 Mr. Coogan noted that all of the town offices need to get together and figure out how to optimize
294 the needs of the community. He emphasized that it is a community.

295 Ms. Parisi agreed and noted that there are ways to use that site for multi-generational use.

296 Ms. Gruzdien asked if they can push out the survey again to get a larger sampling. She would be
297 happy to help with that.

298 Ms. Parisi replied, yes, of course.

299 Ms. Gascoyne added that it is still on the website.

300 Ms. Gruzdien noted that they can link the survey.

301 Ms. Gascoyne mentioned that she will add this to the next agenda, about how they can push
302 surveys out and opportunities.

303 Ms. Ludt noted that the property is zoned residential and they are dealing with a neighborhood.
304 They need to keep the neighbors in mind.

305 Ms. Gascoyne added that she is appreciative of everyone's work. They are a diverse group
306 making sure that everyone is represented. They are getting there and taking the steps to try to
307 connect everyone. More communication and more surveys is what she is hearing. She asked for
308 further questions or comments.

309 Mr. Coogan asked if they are allowed to do an exit poll at voting day.

310 Ms. Gascoyne replied that she does not have that answer but they can reach out to the Moderator.

311 Ms. Grund mentioned that they can reach out to Moderator, Mr. Steve Coughlan.

312 Ms. Ludt gave her support for the exit poll.

313 Ms. Facey commented that asking students would also be an idea.

314 Ms. Grund gave her support for the paper questionnaire.

315 Mr. Coogan noted that you are saying to the community that they care about what they think. It
316 is easier to have a strong connection in person; it makes a difference.

317 Ms. Parisi mentioned reaching out the library and adding something in print. Not having the
318 paper version of the Amherst Citizen is a loss for their community.

319 The committee thanked Ms. Parisi.

320 VIII. Amherst School Board Update

321 Ms. Gruzdien noted that she does not have anything at this time.

322 IX. Souhegan School Board Update

323 Ms. Grund noted that there isn't anything that is JFAC focused.

324 X. Next Steps

325 Ms. Gascoyne noted that their next meeting is June 10th. If there is anything that comes to mind,
326 please reach out and she will be happy to respond.

327 Ms. Gruzdien added that after the vote she will not be checking her SAU email as much, please
328 use her business email.

329 XI. Meeting Adjourned

330 **Ms. Gascoyne adjourned the meeting at 7:27PM**

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332