

1 Joint Facilities Advisory Committee Meeting

2 Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021

3 Meeting Minutes- Approved 02 18 2021

4 Attendees Via Webinar:

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

7 Committee Members: Amy Facey- SCSB Member/ JFAC Chair, Shannon Gascoyne-JFAC Vice  
8 Chair, Amherst NH, Victoria Parisi- Amherst NH, Jeanne Ludt, Amherst NH, Brian Coogan,  
9 Amherst NH, John Bowkett, Amherst NH, Brian Coogan- Amherst NH, Pim Grondstra- SCSB  
10 Chair and Lisa Eastland, Amherst NH.

11 Meeting Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

12 Public: Elizabeth Kuzsma- Amherst School Board Chair, Josh Conklin- ASB Member, Anne  
13 Ketterer- Lavallee Brensinger Professional Architects, Manchester NH.

14 I. Call to Order

15 **Chair of the Joint Facilities Advisory Committee, Ms. Amy Facey, called the meeting to**  
16 **order at 5:03PM.**

17 II. Minutes Approval

18 **Ms. Gascoyne motioned to approve the 12 17 2020 Draft Minutes. Ms. Gruzdien seconded**  
19 **the motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.**

20 There was no further discussion.

21 III. School Board Update

22  
23 • Amherst School Board

24 Ms. Facey noted that at the last Amherst School Board meeting the Board voted not to put  
25 forward the bond for the facilities project. She wanted to spend time during this meeting to  
26 discuss it and hear directly from the Board.

27 She opened the floor to the Ms. Kuzsma.

28 Amherst School Board Chair, Ms. Elizabeth Kuzsma, thanked the JFAC for all of the work they  
29 have done. The Board is 100% behind this and it has come down to timing. Hearing from  
30 members of the community, it has been a hard year economically and this is a big ask. They are  
31 in a race against time with construction rates increasing, rates of the bond and putting money into  
32 a building that they might want to tear down, going between those was not an easy call.

33 Additionally, they need a huge amount of support that would have been really hard to get. They  
34 need to convince the seniors, and those without kids to get behind this. For every “no” vote they  
35 need two “yes” votes.

36 They already have plans to work collaboratively with JFAC on communication with the public  
37 and getting people engaged. From here on out they will be working with them.

38 Ms. Facey asked for questions for Ms. Kuzsma and the Board.

39 Ms. Parisi commented that they want to make sure that the Board knows that they were operating  
40 as a subcommittee that was commissioned by the SAU #39 Board. They were doing what they  
41 thought they supposed to be doing and answering questions from anyone who asked them  
42 questions. She was shocked at the presentations that they gave to the ASB when they did not  
43 receive a lot of questions back. She was part of the PR subcommittee and she does not believe  
44 that they were ever asked to submit a formal plan of their subcommittee.

45 Ms. Kuzsma inquired if it was a question or statement.

46 Ms. Parisi replied that it was a statement.

47 Mr. Coogan asked what transpired over the last few weeks. He thought they were going to move  
48 forward, the ASD Ways and Means supported it unanimously. He wanted to understand what the  
49 factors in that decision were.

50 Ms. Kuzsma replied that her job is to hear from the public and what was heard from the  
51 community was a lack of support. There was a lot of feedback gained that this is not the year  
52 from a financial standpoint. There were a lot that were in support but needed more information.

53 Ms. Gruzdien added that she has voted against removing this. There have been a lot of  
54 challenges in front of them. You cannot educate the public unless you have a warrant article to  
55 share. They have articles posted in the Amherst Citizen and the JFAC meetings are listed on the  
56 SAU calendar.

57 Ms. Grund added that there is a lot of distraction from Covid. The last thing people are doing is  
58 paying attention to this group. There is a lack of connection if they are not on social media and  
59 watching the videos. There does not need to be a single blame and it is a very hard year. Moving  
60 forward is the right way to go.

61 Ms. Ludt remarked that she was very disappointed. She gave her support for Mr. Gauthier’s  
62 presentation at the Public Hearing. She is on a fixed income but believes that it is the best thing  
63 for Amherst and the students. They did not get a chance to convey that message. If they put it  
64 forward this year, chances are it would not have gotten passed but would be a time to start the  
65 education process. Now, it will take another full year. Mr. Whitehead and Ms. Ketterer  
66 mentioned that they could help them with PR plans.

67 Ms. Kuzsma remarked that they have heard the message that the Board needs to own this. The  
68 Board is 100% behind it but when it came down to hearing from the public, they heard it was not  
69 the year for various reasons.

70 Mr. Coogan asked to better understand the reasons not to put it on the warrant. If it gets voted  
71 down, then it does not get passed but you would get a sense of the voting public. How do you  
72 what the town is thinking unless you put it on the ballot. You probably heard from a vocal  
73 minority and made decisions based on that and taken away the opportunity for the public to put  
74 their votes for or against these efforts.

75 Ms. Kuzsma replied that one of the aspects was that there is a lot of political capital that goes  
76 into this.

77 Mr. Coogan questioned why.

78 Ms. Kuzsma added that there are known risks and when it is the wrong time and still brought  
79 forward can prevent it from happening at all. She does not want the entire project to suffer.

80 Mr. Coogan remarked that they have been discussing this for 2 ½ years. This board got funds  
81 approved to hire consultants to assess the facilities, make a recommendation on what they should  
82 do next and what is end of life. The taxpayers have paid for that work to be done. Now you have  
83 chosen to remove that opportunity to vote in favor or against and you have delayed the process  
84 again.

85 Ms. Kuzsma replied that they are certain that they are going to put it on the ballot for FY 22.

86 Mr. Coogan noted that Ms. Gruzdien was the only one who supported it.

87 Mr. Conklin added that they do own the blame. There was clear support among the Board for the  
88 project and his and they are disappointed for where they are. He is trying to look forward as the  
89 needs have not changed. Whatever bridges that they need to repair, they need the support of the  
90 JFAC. He gave his apologies.

91 Mr. Gauthier mentioned that his gut reaction is that he does not think it is time. He does support  
92 the project, although in the end, he could not sway himself.

93 Ms. Gascoyne added that last March there was a lot of enthusiasm especially in the parent  
94 community. There is a lot of everyone's plate right now. The need is not going away, and the  
95 cost are escalating.

96 Ms. Facey added that there is disappointment and disappointment in the community, as well. She  
97 hopes that this work will continue, they know what the solutions are and hopes that they can rally  
98 and move forward. She asked if the ASB is still planning on moving forward.

99 Mr. Bowkett commented that he believes that they are doing it in reverse. He believes that they  
100 need a letter or word that they still would like them to continue their work.

101 Ms. Facey agreed that as a committee they need something from the Board to continue their  
102 work. That the scope of the project and the financing plan is in fact staying intact and being  
103 delayed a year.

104 Ms. Kuzsma replied that they were 100% happy with the plan that was offered. She will bring it  
105 up at the February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting. She asked if they can hand out a pamphlet on election day.

106 Superintendent, Mr. Adam Steel, replied that they can. You need to be outside and not in the  
107 polling place.

108 Mr. Coogan mentioned that he is hearing that the Board is in full support. He inquired if is a  
109 scope issue or cost issue.

110 Ms. Kuzsma replied that they will vote on a full articulation of what the end goal is.

111 Ms. Ludt gave her support for explaining what changed at the Deliberative Session. She  
112 encouraged the Board to take that opportunity to educate the public.

113 Ms. Kuzsma added that they were going to do both, something at the Deliberative Session and  
114 something for the voters to take home.

115 Ms. Gruzdien commented that it seems like there is a concern about the size of the bond. She  
116 encouraged JFAC to hit the ground running with communication to the community. Let's hear  
117 from the community. It is a large bond and will be higher because they postponed. She would be  
118 more comfortable if it was coming from JFAC and not the ASB.

119 Ms. Parisi inquired about the contract with Lavallee Brensinger. She thought they were nearing  
120 the contract at the end of December and is now hearing that they can help them with a PR plan.

121 Ms. Anne Ketterer, Representative from Lavalee Brensinger replied that even though it is  
122 delayed a year they will be there to help them.

123 Ms. Parisi remarked that she is not sure what she thought the PR subcommittee was going to  
124 create vs what Lavallee Brensinger was going to create. There is still a lot of work to do and  
125 then it is back to the money question.

126 Mr. Steel replied that \$150k was budgeted and only \$100k was spent. They can certainly spend  
127 those funds.

128 Ms. Facey added that they have a really active PR subcommittee and can work with LBA to  
129 determine the roles and responsibility. They can meet as a subcommittee to get the finances  
130 squared away.

131 Ms. Gascoyne added that the direction needs to come from the Board.

132 Ms. Facey agreed that they need to have the vote from the ASB.

133 Mr. Bowkett recommended Mr. Steel look for an extension with the contract with LBA and have  
134 the ASB approve the funds.

135 Ms. Facey noted that they can wait for the vote and plan the timing so that they don't lose any  
136 time.

137 Ms. Gascoyne replied that they have a JFAC meeting scheduled for Feb 18<sup>th</sup>.

138 Ms. Facey commented that the sooner that Ms. Kuzsma can get back to her the better.

139 Ms. Gascoyne mentioned that the website is live. She asked if it was ok to be left open.

140 Mr. Gauthier replied that he believes that the website is ok to be left open and change it to the  
141 Future Amherst Schools.

142 Ms. Ludt suggested that they hear from the public about the suggestions or concerns. She would  
143 like to put a survey out there for people to make comments.

144 Ms. Gruzdien thanked Amherst Community member, Mr. Tim Atkins, for all of his work with  
145 the website.

146 Ms. Facey finalized the meeting by adding that they all believe in the mission and are a group of  
147 dedicated people. They want to make this a reality for their community. She will be in touch via  
148 Slack.

149 IV. Meeting Adjourned

150 **Ms. Facey adjourned the meeting at 5:57PM**