

1 Joint Facilities Advisory Committee Meeting

2 Thursday, April 1st, 2021

3 Meeting Minutes- Approved 05 13 2021

4 Attendees Via Webinar:

5 Administrative Team: Adam Steel- Superintendent, Michele Croteau- SAU #39 Business  
6 Administrator, Roger Preston- SAU #39 Director of Facilities and Amy Facey- SAU #39  
7 Business Administrator.

8 Committee Members: Shannon Gascoyne-JFAC Chair, Amherst NH, Tom Gauthier- ASB  
9 Member, Amherst NH, Stephanie Grund- SCSB Member, Amherst NH, Pim Grondstra- SCSB  
10 Member Mont Vernon NH, George Torres- SCSB Member, Mont Vernon NH, Jeanne Ludt,  
11 Amherst NH, Brian Coogan, Amherst NH, John Bowkett, Amherst NH, Christine Grayson,  
12 Amherst NH, Victoria Parisi- Amherst NH, and Mr. Steve Berube, Amherst NH.

13 Meeting Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

14 Public: None

15 I. Call to Order

16 Superintendent Steel noted that he is serving as ex-officio Chair of the JFAC. Ms. Amy Facey  
17 has gone on to serve as the Business Administrator of the SAU #39. In his role as ex-officio  
18 member, they will go through the process of taking nominations for a new Chair of the JFAC.

19 He explained the process for nominating a Chair.

20 He accepted nominations at this time.

21 **Ms. Christine Grayson nominated Ms. Shannon Gascoyne as Chair of the JFAC.**

22 Mr. Steel inquired for further nominations.

23 There were no other nominations.

24 He questioned Ms. Gascoyne, if elected, would she serve in that role.

25 Ms. Gascoyne replied, yes.

26 He noted that he will call on people in the order that they appear.

27 **Grayson- Yes, Bowkett- Yes, Grund- Yes, Gauthier- Yes, Torres- Yes, Ludt- Yes,**  
28 **Grondstra- Yes, Parisi- Yes.**

29 **The motion carries unanimously. Ms. Shannon Gascoyne is now the Chair of the Joint**  
30 **Facilities Advisory Committee.**

31 Ms. Gascoyne thanked Ms. Facey for all of her leadership and work.

32 II. Minutes Approval

33 **Mr. Gauthier motioned to approve the 03 18 2021 Draft Minutes.**

34 There was no discussion.

35 **Motion passed.**

36 • Facility Project Committee Update

37 Mr. Steel discussed that they have engaged with the company of Tighe and Bond, Portsmouth  
38 NH. They are ready to do the first phase of work prior to the bond vote. They have agreed to do a  
39 number of tasks but primarily to give them advice on their existing site plan and building plans,  
40 completing test pits, borings as needed and wetland delineation. There are a few other things that  
41 they will be doing but their work is to validate the work done so far and advise if they need to  
42 make significant shifts.

43 Typically, when there is a bond vote they get a lot of questions about septic, traffic and bus  
44 loops, etc. and the architect is not really the person to validate those questions. Tighe and Bond  
45 will do that on their behalf. This is a fixed length contact with this company to do this  
46 preliminary work.

47 Ms. Gascoyne asked if there were further questions. She appreciated all of the participants  
48 adding that the meeting is a little earlier than expected.

49 There were no questions.

50 • Historical District Committee

51 Mr. Steel commented that, Clark and Wilkins are in the Amherst Village District. The Historic  
52 District Commission is a group that they should engage with right away. As a school, they are  
53 not subject to the zoning laws but should show goodwill and gather feedback. They should also  
54 meet with the Zoning Board of Adjustment after the project is approved and they have their  
55 plans. It is great to gather feedback from elected officials as well.

56 Ms. Parisi gave her support. They have had some meetings with the Town and the Clark School  
57 Exploration Committee. They are starting to make those steps and is pleased that JFAC will  
58 make those connections.

59 Ms. Ludt commented that she would be interested in the feedback from the Historical District  
60 Committee.

61 Ms. Gascoyne inquired if there was someone in the JFAC that had connections with the HDC. It  
62 would be good to have someone as the point person on that.

63 Mr. Bowkett added that as a past member of the Historic District Commission and a past  
64 member of the Planning Board he will help with those discussions.

65 Ms. Gascoyne gave her appreciation.

66 • Finance Committee Update

67 Ms. Facey added that they had a great meeting with the NH Municipal Bond Bank and the  
68 USDA Rural Development. The NH Municipal Bond Bank is a non-profit agency that provides  
69 long- term tax exempt financing. They pull loans into municipal bonds to sell on the market.

70 Some of the benefits are that they have a simple application process, low cost issuance and  
71 provide a fixed rate during the life of the loan. The rates are competitive rates and the voters  
72 would need to approve their bond through the warrant. The USDA Rural Development has a  
73 program that they are looking into taking advantage called the Community Facilities Direct Loan  
74 Program. It is a federal program designed to assist communities. They are eligible for this  
75 program. They have the ability to reduce the loan even if the funds are obligated and if their  
76 costs decrease.

77 The discussion that they had that they suggested is possibly financing a third of the project  
78 through the NH Municipal Bond Bank and then two thirds through the USDA program. They  
79 are planning with board approval, to apply for this year's funds by submitting a skeletal  
80 presentation by 04/16. They definitely are looking for projects to finance. The USDA did provide  
81 them with a road map that will help them with the application process, a guide to prepare the  
82 Architectural Feasibility Report as well as contact information from a school in Vermont that  
83 utilized their program. They need to do some due diligence so that they understand all of the  
84 requirements. The benefit is locking in a favorable rate for a large portion of the project prior to  
85 the vote which would go a long way with the voters. It is potentially a positive opportunity.

86 Ms. Croteau added that with the USDA program you can pay down the debt which is not  
87 possible with the bond bank. Partnering with both of them would really provide a nice  
88 opportunity for the district.

89 Mr. Steel noted that he is intrigued and interested to understand the regulations that go along  
90 with that. They have mentioned that they have their own architects and engineers on staff that  
91 will review their plans and he is aware of potential regulations. The upside is very financially  
92 lucrative, it is worth exploring.

93 Ms. Facey added that the ASB will take a vote, but they do need to have some information in  
94 their application.

95 Mr. Gauthier added that he and Mr. Conklin were also in the meeting representing the school  
96 board and the JFAC. He would like to bring it to the board on Monday and get the finer details.

97 Ms. Parisi inquired if it was used in New England.

98 Ms. Facey asked Ms. Croteau if there were other schools that have used this funding method in  
99 New England.

100 Ms. Croteau replied that she is not sure but knows of one district. Their focus had not been  
101 school districts in the past. They have increased and shifted their funding. This is a new  
102 opportunity.

103 Ms. Ludt added if Clark became a community center the Town should have the ability to make  
104 those changes and renovations.

105 Ms. Facey noted that community facilities were definitely suggested.

106 Mr. Torres inquired about the differences between the two programs.

107 Ms. Facey replied that the USDA will potentially allow them to obligate the funds prior to a  
108 bond approval.

109 Mr. Torres asked if they would lock in a rate at that point.

110 Ms. Facey replied, yes.

111 Mr. Torres commented that the sooner they lock in a rate, the better the taxpayers are going to  
112 be.

113 Ms. Grund asked if the lock in is for a certain period of time and what happens is the voters do  
114 not approve it on the ballot.

115 Mr. Steel explained that the lock is through next March when they go through bond voting. If  
116 voters do not approve, it is possible that they would lose that rate lock, but even they sounded  
117 unsure about whether they would be able to keep it for another year. It sounds to him that with  
118 the federal programs, when the money is budgeted and then gets allocated, that money does not  
119 go anywhere until it gets spent or returned. They did not provide a clear answer. The easiest is to  
120 get this passed next March.

121 Ms. Gascoyne added that Mr. Steve Berube is on the call. She noted that she appreciates all of  
122 his work.

123       • Cost Committee

124 SAU #39 Facilities Director, Mr. Roger Preston, noted that as a committee they don't really have  
125 an update on cost because they have not gone back through those numbers yet. Internally, they  
126 have had meetings with AMS and CW administration and are really diving back in to where this  
127 started about the purpose and evaluating where they are. They are printing out the conceptual  
128 designs and have a Wilkins meeting this Friday.

129 Ms. Ludt asked if raising the Clark School building and creating green space is an obligation of  
130 the ASD and will it be part of the bond and costs associated.

131 Ms. Gascoyne replied that it has to be determined. She then asked Superintendent Steel to  
132 respond.

133 She noted that Mr. Steel was having internet issues, they will circle back.

134 Mr. Gauthier added that they will have discussions about that building. They will also need to  
135 use that building until the other building is completed and possibly for the AMS renovation.

136 Ms. Gascoyne added that the plan would be that the group would bring back their research to this  
137 group. They would then take it back to the school board. A new timeline would need to be  
138 developed. She asked Ms. Parisi for further comments.

139 Ms. Parisi remarked that they need to expect a lot of questions because there are a lot that are  
140 coming out.

141 Mr. Steel noted demolition costs are not as expensive as construction costs but yes, there would  
142 have to be funding available.

143 Ms. Gascoyne mentioned that there was a concern that after the Clark swing space is utilized that  
144 the school board would come back to the residents.

145 Mr. Bowkett noted that he thought that one of the options was to sell it to the town and they can  
146 use it as a community center.

147 Ms. Gascoyne replied that right now, everything is on the table. The ASB would like them to get  
148 a pulse of the community. The question was if the school were to be demolished who would pay  
149 for it and when.

150 Mr. Bowkett questioned if the ASD owns the building.

151 Ms. Gascoyne replied, yes.

152 Mr. Bowkett added that a he believes that a community center is a great idea.

153 Ms. Gascoyne agreed. She added that the next is update is for the Clark Exploration Committee.

154 • Clark Exploration Committee Update

155 Ms. Parisi discussed that they are in the midst of holding 10 meetings, 2 every day, with many  
156 groups in town. At the meetings, they give a timeline of JFAC and then they have discussions.  
157 They have provided an exit survey, with open ended questions to get lots of different ideas. Next,  
158 they will meet next week to go over the survey results, with possible fine tuning of the questions,  
159 and then they will be rolling it out publicly. Their plan is to come back in May and have  
160 thoughtful discussion. She noted that if anyone wants to give feedback there is a comment box  
161 on the JFAC website.

162 Ms. Gascoyne inquired about the different community groups that they have invited.

163 Ms. Parisi replied that they have reached out to groups such as the PTA, Amherst Junior  
164 Women's Club, Lions Club, Garden Club, Independents, Republicans and Democrats. They are  
165 at the very beginning. People have been very respectful and there have been many perspectives.

166 Ms. Ludt noted that everyone appreciates the opportunity to get in on the very beginning of the  
167 conversations. Ms. Parisi runs a very respectful meeting. She comes away feeling really good  
168 and that they care about the future of the Clark School.

169 Ms. Gascoyne asked for questions for the Clark Exploration Committee.

170 Mr. Bowkett inquired about the meeting next Friday at the Brick School.

171 Mr. Preston replied that they are meeting next week, internally, with the building principals to go  
172 over the plans.

173 Mr. Bowkett added that he would like to be at that meeting.

174 Ms. Gascoyne asked when will the Cost Committee meet again.

175 Mr. Preston replied not until they have an architect on board.

176 Ms. Ludt mentioned that Mr. Preston led them on a group tour of the Clark School the other  
177 night. It was helpful for her to see the condition of the building.

178 Ms. Gascoyne noted that there are a lot of positive things but it does need maintenance.

179 Ms. Parisi added they had a variety of different town representatives and it was a great first step.

180 Ms. Gascoyne asked for questions for the Clark Exploration Sub-committee.

181 There were no further questions.

182       • Public Relations Committee

183 Ms. Gascoyne noted that they have been very busy. She did share the informational postcard in  
184 the slack channel, and it will go to every home in Amherst.

185 Mr. Gauthier added that he will share the first video in a series of videos. It is a brief review of  
186 the schools and the issues that they face. The first video is a brief introduction and about 9  
187 minutes long. If there are any non-factual or legal things, please let them know ASAP. They will  
188 continue to do a video series every couple of weeks, with different people and different topics.

189 Ms. Gascoyne inquired about anything from a board perspective, and the Souhegan 2.0  
190 subcommittee.

191 Ms. Grund noted that Ms. Parisi has volunteered to join the Souhegan 2.0 subcommittee. She  
192 noted that they will let everyone know as they hear more.

193 Ms. Gascoyne inquired about a May meeting and if it was on the calendar.

194 Mr. Steel replied that he is not seeing that on his calendar at this time.

195 Ms. Gascoyne noted that April 15<sup>th</sup> is on the calendar and they can wait for the larger group  
196 meeting.

197 Mr. Gauthier added that the only thing that will change is if they apply for the USDA program.  
198 They can share that in the slack.

199 Ms. Facey inquired about the collaboration of board meetings going forward.

200 Ms. Gascoyne replied that they will be a presence at the board meetings going forward and  
201 collaborating.

202 Mr. Berube inquired about the next meeting.

203 Ms. Gascoyne noted that he will receive an email inviting him to join the slack channel.

204 Mr. Preston replied that he does not have anything for the Cost Committee at this time.

205 Mr. Berube added that he does building assessments as part of his job and would like to see the  
206 building.

207 Ms. Gascoyne thanked all of the participants.

208 III. Meeting Adjourned

209 **Ms. Gascoyne adjourned the meeting at 6:53PM.**