

1 Mont Vernon Middle School Study Committee

2 Wednesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022

3 Meeting Minutes- Not Approved

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5 Attendees: Peter King- Chair, Mont Vernon NH School District Moderator, Craig Wiley- Mont  
6 Vernon, NH, Anne Dodd- Mont Vernon NH and Jennifer Heneberry- Mont Vernon NH.

7 Meeting Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

8 Public: None

9 I. Call to Order

10 **Chair, Mr. Peter King, called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.**

11 **Ms. Dodd motioned to approve the minutes of November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and December 14<sup>th</sup>,**  
12 **2021. Mr. Wiley seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.**

13 Ms. Heneberry commented that someone at the last meeting mentioned renegotiating the  
14 contract.

15 Mr. King noted that he did receive a financial spreadsheet from the SAU and his calculations  
16 were not far off. They are bonding a single project.

17 Ms. Heneberry inquired why are they paying for a huge building cost without ownership.

18 Ms. Dodd noted that Mont Vernon students originally went to the Milford High School, and they  
19 paid tuition without a voice. That is how Souhegan came to be.

20 Mr. Wiley commented on the tuition costs.

21 Mr. King responded that the numbers would go up. He asked if they could renegotiate.

22 Ms. Heneberry asked for additional options.

23 Mr. Wiley referenced Mr. O'Keefe's sentiments at the first meeting. Here is what we are paying  
24 now, it is a lot, and we can build cheaper, do we do it or is it worth staying, is there another  
25 option.

26 Mr. King commented that he was on the school board 10-15 years ago and there were people  
27 with the same sentiments. One the other hand, they are going to miss sports, foreign language,  
28 etc. There is more to the picture than the cost.

29 He asked Mr. Wiley for his idea.

30 Mr. Wiley replied do a survey of the parents in town and ask them if they prefer to go to private  
31 school. It will save them money if more than 10 people opt in.

32 Mr. King asked if that was with the voucher system.

33 Mr. Wiley responded that there is no voucher involved and he looked at local private schools. He  
34 commented that they should renegotiate with Amherst paying the mean of the comparative  
35 private schools.

36 Mr. King added that he does not know if they can do that.

37 Mr. Wiley further explained that they would then reimburse the families up to a certain amount if  
38 their child attended one out of four choices.

39 Mr. King commented that in Warren, NH students are given 4 choices. If they want to attend a  
40 private school, then the families will pay the difference.

41 He explained that they can add that as an option.

42 Mr. King explained that with the voucher system if you send your child to private school then  
43 you can deduct a certain amount of money off of your property taxes.

44 Ms. Dodd added that it was limited to a fixed amount for family income but now they are voting  
45 to remove that cap.

46 Mr. King added that the local school districts will have to raise the extra \$10k per person to give  
47 out as vouchers.

48 Mr. Wiley added that there are not that many private schools and what is to stop them from  
49 accepting that voucher. It may be the wealthier towns.

50 Ms. Heneberry remarked that Mont Vernon

51 Ms. Dodd added that she does not know how it got through the legislature, but it will be  
52 devastating to the school districts. Charter schools and religious schools are included.

53 Mr. Wiley remarked that there may be building aid.

54 Mr. King remarked that there has been no building aid for several years now.

55 Mr. King mentioned that they assumed the number of kids will be the same and the cost has to  
56 do with the balance of kids.

57 Mr. Wiley reviewed the pros and cons.

58 Mr. King added that he would have liked to see a parent of a younger child on the committee  
59 their opinion is different.

60 Ms. Dodd reviewed the build in Mont Vernon options. There would be a delay in building as it  
61 would take time to get a building built here. They would need to hire 4 teachers at a minimum and  
62 expand the roles. They would need a health teacher regardless. They could put it on the ballot  
63 this year but then it would be a delay. They do not have an opinion about how big to build, it  
64 could be 4 classrooms or 8. If they took the MV students out of Amherst they could rent a  
65 building, but nothing is large enough in Mont Vernon.

66 The pros for building are the costs would be better because they own the building, and they could  
67 make it bigger. They would have to increase to full time staff and could attract quality teachers,  
68 there is opportunity for offering advanced classes and the students would have less bus time.

69 The cons for building are that they would lose the middle school with activities and sports. If  
70 they built on the McCollum field, they would lose the field for sports.

71 Ms. Heneberry remarked that if they are in the small setting, they will not get the organization of  
72 skills opportunity.

73 Mr. King asked what could we rent for \$250k.

74 Ms. Dodd commented if there were overruns in elementary school project the second project is at  
75 risk.

76 Ms. Henneberry noted that they should not pay the bond until it actually affects their children.

77 Ms. Dodd remarked that when they were voting on the contract the voters did not have this  
78 information. That is the unfortunate piece.

79 Mr. King added that they are doing a single bond for both projects and then nothing is being  
80 done with that money for 4 years. He inquired if you would take out a loan for a building that  
81 you were not going to build for 4 years.

82 Mr. Wiley added that he can understand the logic with the volatility of interest rates. It is not an  
83 expenditure until you expend.

84 Mr. King noted that they have to pay the bond. He has an issue with them taking out a single  
85 bond for two projects. The initial project has many variables.

86 Ms. Dodd this would give them another opportunity to review the contract. There are quite a few  
87 and with the legislature's action people will see it and ask questions.

88 Mr. Wiley noted that they do have space for an addition here.

89 Ms. Dodd added that they do not know much about this site and the McCollum field creates  
90 complications with losing the field and it would be a problem with administrators in different  
91 locations.

92 Mr. King added that there is a lot of property here.

93 Mr. Wiley commented that on the tax income from other businesses.

94 Ms. Dodd noted that the school board needs to hear all of the options we have explored and  
95 keeping in mind the voucher plan helping.

96 Mr. King asked if there were other options. They can send them to Milford, but it does not make  
97 sense to send them anywhere else and then bring them back to Amherst.

98 Ms. Dodd added that they were giving everything a 15% chance.

99 Mr. Wiley noted that Goffstown is at capacity, he inquired if there is a possibility to create a new  
100 SAU.

101 Ms. Dodd added that they need to express their concerns to the school board about the terms of  
102 the contract. No one anticipated this.

103 Mr. King remarked that he does not know if they are currently paying for a bond.

104 Mr. Wiley asked if it was worth it at that cost with an increase with the bond.

105 Mr. King added that the current tuition rate is \$20k, it is another \$4k per student with the bond.

106 Ms. Dodd mentioned they should be able to amortize their investment over 50 years.

107 Mr. Wiley commented that it says, "all appropriated funds you are able to receive" and that  
108 should include property taxes.

109 Mr. King added that he is not sure that it is property tax. He is thinking that "future" is from the  
110 date of this contract. They asked about expanding the co-op district into the middle school and  
111 found that was not a feasible option.

112 Ms. Dodd noted that the term of this contract ties them to Oct 1, 2025, nothing in this this allows  
113 them to negotiate this contract.

114 Mr. Wiley added that they can break the contract anytime.

115 Ms. Dodd replied that is why it is two years.

116 Mr. King added that is why it would be a decision of the school board.

117 Mr. Wiley referenced the consolidation study a few years ago.

118 Mr. King explained that a few years ago the SAU had a committee to look into consolidating.  
119 They found out it was not feasible and Souhegan does not have a union.

120 Ms. Heneberry commented on the complexities of unions.

121 Ms. Dodd commented that it was easier because Souhegan was a new building.

122 Mr. King mentioned if they were join the new co-op and they would have to bond the cost of  
123 joining the new SAU. If they did have a co-op for a middle school, it will solve a lot of the cons  
124 of no representation and no input.

125 Ms. Dodd agreed with Mr. King.

126 Mr. Wiley added at 10% we will be overruled.

127 Ms. Dodd noted that was the concern at Souhegan, but it has worked.

128 Mr. Wiley inquired how do we present this to the school board and when.

129 Mr. King noted that these options would fit better in an excel spreadsheet, with the different  
130 options, the private school, stipends. He noted that he will not be available on January 13<sup>th</sup>.

131 Ms. Dodd suggested adding the third option of pulling them out and having them go somewhere  
132 else, it satisfies and provides options for people to choose. Forget the state voucher system.

133 Mr. King asked what happens if someone wanted to send their child to a private middle school  
134 and then the funds for a high school of his choice.

135 Ms. Dodd responded that is a state question.

136 Mr. King inquired if it would impact the funding for Souhegan down the line. It would be  
137 interesting how towns like Warren NH to do this.

138 Ms. Dodd noted that they should ask the school board when they would like the results of the  
139 committee.

140 Mr. Wiley suggested they use a decision tree.

141 Mr. King added that he does not want it where they are voting, they will give them the options  
142 and paths that they have looked at. He does not believe that it is their job. They do not know  
143 what it will cost to build a new school.

144 Ms. Dodd inquired about the timeline.

145 Mr. King noted that he would like to have it before the January 13<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting. He would  
146 like to get it out before the voting session starts.

147 The next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> 7:00PM.

148 Discussion ensued about the Deliberative Session dates.

149 Ms. Dodd suggested getting the committee together for one last meeting.

150 Mr. King added that they should stay with the meeting on January 18<sup>th</sup>.

151 Ms. Heneberry commented no to status quo, to renegotiate terms with Amherst. It is not to throw  
152 Amherst out forever.

153 Ms. Dodd remarked that when they had kids in the McCollum building the nurse went back and  
154 forth.

155 Mr. Wiley asked about the previous findings from the reconsolidation committee.

156 Mr. King noted that it would be a problem to merge the elementaries with the different unions.

157 II. Meeting Adjourned

158 **Ms. Dodd motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 PM. Mr. Wiley seconded the motion. The vote**  
159 **was unanimous, motion passed.**