

1 Mont Vernon Middle School Study Committee

2 Wednesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

3 Meeting Minutes- Approved 11 30 2021

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5 Attendees: Stephen O’Keefe- Mont Vernon School Board Member, Dagmar Vlahos- Mont  
6 Vernon, NH, Jennifer Heneberry- Mont Vernon NH, Charline Brown- MVVS Teacher (non-  
7 voting member), Howard Brown- Mont Vernon NH (non-voting member), Craig Wiley- Mont  
8 Vernon, NH, Autumn Grdina- Mont Vernon NH, Anne Dodd- Mont Vernon NH, and Peter  
9 King- Mont Vernon NH School District Moderator.

10 Meeting Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

11 Public: John Quinlan, Mont Vernon NH, and Bonnie Angulas, MV Town Library Director, Mont  
12 Vernon NH.

13 I. Discussion

14 Mr. King noted that this information is on the website under SAU #39 Committees. Last week  
15 they got started and introduced each other. Mr. Stephen O’Keefe, MVSB Member, reviewed the  
16 three options in relation to the Amherst School District’s proposal to build a new school and  
17 renovation. The three options were 1. Do they keep with the current tuition agreement, 2. Do  
18 they bring the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students back to Mont Vernon, or 3. Do they do something  
19 different. They will outline the challenges for the school board, so they have the information in  
20 February.

21 He added that they will keep the previous minutes in draft form at this time and he will email  
22 out the minor changes.

23 Ms. Vlahos commented that she will do a quick recap of the last meeting. They have their Rules  
24 of Engagement as well as the Customers and the Stakeholders. They identified the Customers as  
25 the Mont Vernon School aged residents; both homeschool and the Mont Vernon Village School  
26 Children. They have listed those here underneath, this was pretty comprehensive list.

27 Mr. King inquired about the stakeholders being customers.

28 Ms. Vlahos replied that customers are always stakeholders, stakeholders are never customers.

29 She added that there were three options that were presented at the last meeting, to continue with  
30 AMS and continue with the capital costs or bring the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students back to MVSD,  
31 have it be a K-8, take the money saved on tuition and incorporate that into the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade  
32 MVSD or whatever other idea that they could come up with.

33 As they are considering the needs, keep in mind the objective: Considering the needs of our  
34 Mont Vernon School aged residents this committee will collaborate to determine future  
35 recommendations (solution) to be presented to the school board as Amherst ventures into a  
36 capital management project for Amherst Middle School expansion.

37 She noted that she can export this and possibly upload this to the SAU #39 website. This is a  
38 working document. She knows that a lot of the information is captured in the minutes.

39 Mr. King responded that he does not believe that they have to post a working document.

40 Ms. Vlahos remarked that with discovery, they want to look at the current landscape of today so  
41 they can all be considering that, it is normal for people to want to go to solutions.

42 She requested guidance from the committee to think about where to focus.

43 One area that they could focus on is the AMS, how much are we paying, how many students  
44 have they sent there in the past and the forecast. Additionally, if they want to discuss the  
45 transition. She also wanted to get information about the Mont Vernon Village school, space,  
46 capacity, numbers of students, and potential new construction and if there are projections out  
47 there. They can also do a side note of things that need to be researched.

48 Mr. Wiley asked what is the problem that Amherst is trying to solve so that they are looking at it  
49 holistically.

50 Ms. Vlahos asked if they could change the verbiage to Amherst Middle School.

51 Mr. King noted there are two parts, and they are reconfiguring the grade structure going from a  
52 5-8 to a 6-8 grade structure.

53 Mr. Wiley asked if the \$35m is for Amherst Middle School.

54 Ms. Dodd mentioned that there is a small addition for a secure front entrance. If you look at the  
55 JFAC (Joint Facilities Advisory Committee) website, they are going to place a warrant article for  
56 \$83m for both new construction at Clark/Wilkins and renovation at Amherst Middle School.

57 Mr. King added that they a lot if it is reworking the middle school, removing the triangular  
58 classrooms and they have \$3m add on for solar.

59 Mr. Wiley asked about their extra capacity.

60 Ms. Dodd remarked that the calculation is based on the number of students that they will send. It  
61 sounds like they are stressed for capacity. They have building plans that are available.

62 Mr. King added that the cafeteria is too small, they do not have storage, no space for Specials.

63 Mr. Wiley commented that there can be universal preschool.

64 Mr. King noted that after the last meeting he asked for the plans for this building, the state  
65 minimum requirements for 7 and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, what kinds of programming would the children need,  
66 what special instruction types and how many hours would it take for teachers to do that, and  
67 would they need additional nurses, custodial services etc. the administration will look at that.  
68 Also, what programs does middle school offer.

69 The final thing he asked for was the prior Amherst and MV tuition agreements. He believes that  
70 they carved out capital costs specifically in the past.

71 Ms. Bonnie Angulas, Mont Vernon NH Town Librarian, asked about the costs.  
72 Ms. Dodd replied that it was \$30.8 for AMS and \$52.2m for CW.  
73 Ms. Angulas asked if ASD was going to add just one warrant article.  
74 Ms. Dodd replied that is what it says on the website as this time.  
75 Mr. Wiley added that they are also in a state of flux.  
76 Ms. Dodd noted that they have solar upgrades, \$1.8m for Wilkins and \$1.5m for AMS as an  
77 alternate warrant article.  
78 Mr. King mentioned that he and Ms. Dodd were at the public forum.  
79 Ms. Dodd added that there were 6 people from Amherst at the last public forum.  
80 Mr. Stokingier asked if they have capital obligations that they pay.  
81 Ms. Dodd replied that it was described in the tuition agreement in 2012.  
82 Ms. Heneberry asked if MV has any input in the plans for the middle school renovation.  
83 Ms. Dodd replied no because they do not own that building.  
84 Mr. King added that it is different from Souhegan because the MVSD co-owns that building.  
85 Mr. Stokingier asked for the interest rate on the previous debt and the interest rate on the new  
86 debt. The costs can be massively different.  
87 Ms. Vlahos asked if it was approximately 60 students that they were sending to AMS. She asked  
88 if they had projections.  
89 Ms. Brown remarked that when she started here in 2007 for several years, they had over 50 per  
90 grade. That class was 25-26 students. The current freshman class they only sent 24 over. The  
91 numbers are starting to climb. When she started here, they had about 243 students, they were  
92 down in the 170's, they projected 200 and are at 214 as of this morning.  
93 Mr. Wiley asked about the kindergarten enrollment.  
94 Ms. Brown remarked that there was no change, they are in two separate classes all day.  
95 Ms. Grdina asked if they have been seeing an uptick with kindergarten enrollment.  
96 Ms. Brown replied yes, although, their current 4<sup>th</sup> grade is the largest in the school.  
97 Ms. Dodd added that they have to account for homeschool students.  
98 Mr. King remarked that he will ask the district for enrollment projections, the district has done it  
99 for them in the past. Not everyone goes to kindergarten. As the grade moved up, they added a  
100 student. It is the nature of this town.

101 Ms. Brown added that they had one student go to ASD (Academy of Science and Design). There  
102 is one student that is rostered for VLACS.

103 Ms. Dodd remarked that it may get to a point where a parent cannot handle the curriculum in the  
104 4<sup>th</sup> grades and up.

105 Ms. Grdina inquired about the homeschool students accessing specials at the middle school.

106 Ms. Brown replied that it is not an option for them because they do not pay their tuition.

107 Mr. King added that they draw the line for enrollment on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

108 Ms. Grdina asked for future projections.

109 Ms. Brown remarked if they are at 214 and if that trend continues that they could send 70-80  
110 students to AMS.

111 Mr. Stokinger inquired who issues the debt.

112 Ms. Dodd responded that they do not own anything and cannot have title.

113 Mr. King added that there is no bond for us.

114 Ms. Vlahos asked about the costs.

115 Ms. Dodd remarked that the \$1.4m will decrease as the bonds get paid off. They will still have  
116 an existing cost for tuition.

117 Mr. Stokinger inquired about the bond being amortized and a fixed payment.

118 Ms. Dodd remarked as an example, the first year is short but the next year is \$900 for an average  
119 home and then decreases over the 30 years.

120 Mr. King asked if they were bonding for 50 years.

121 Ms. Dodd replied that the bond duration is 30 years.

122 Ms. Grdina remarked that the 50 years in the tuition agreement is an example.

123 Mr. Stokinger noted that if they add the solar, then that takes away the fuel variability, what else  
124 is a variable.

125 Ms. Brown replied the teacher agreements. What sidelined the consolidation is that there is a big  
126 discrepancy between the Amherst teachers and the Mont Vernon teachers.

127 Mr. King mentioned that it sounds like they do not understand either the tuition or how the bond  
128 will play into it. He inquired if they have to pay for their solar.

129 Mr. Stokinger noted that they were upgrading the HVAC.

130 Mr. King commented on the other items they need for the committee as well as the projections  
131 for students.

132 Ms. Brown asked about the educational landscape, Mont Vernon is now 71% proficient in math.

133 Mr. Quinlan remarked that AMS is the weak part of the system.

134 Mr. King asked if ASD has more world language than the MVSD.

135 Ms. Brown replied that C/W never had world language, for ASD foreign language starts in 5<sup>th</sup>  
136 grade. AMS does have two specials a day, here we have one special a day. That goes to the  
137 educational landscape with their core classes being shorter.

138 Ms. Dodd added that MV has very small class sizes, and it is something that they should be  
139 proud and the effect that it has.

140 Ms. Brown added that gym is the same.

141 Mr. Stokinger asked for the class sizes at AMS with the projected grades, what is it now and  
142 what would it be.

143 Ms. Brown responded that they are at 25-27, they both experienced the enrollment dip at the  
144 same time they are recovering fast, and Amherst is recovering faster. All of their classes have  
145 more than 20 students even in kindergarten. ASB tried to bring it before the voters to hire  
146 additional teachers and that was voted down, it is not only space issues but there is nowhere to  
147 put them at this point.

148 Mr. King added that if they pulled out the 5<sup>th</sup> grade from the middle school that alleviates some  
149 space.

150 Ms. Dodd mentioned that they will be doubling the size of Wilkins adding 73,500 square feet. It  
151 will be on the same footprint.

152 Mr. Quinlan added that there sounds like there will be a lot of portables.

153 Mr. King noted that the MPR will stay.

154 Ms. Dodd remarked that the ages will be from 3- 10, preschool to grade 5.

155 Ms. Vlahos questioned the advantages of the Amherst Middle School.

156 Mr. Wiley remarked that from what he has heard, it was a huge social components.

157 Ms. Grdina replied that there is a level of independence.

158 Ms. Brown added that they have more extra-curricular activities, and they have resources, Maker  
159 Space, and band.

160 Ms. Angulas asked if the committee thought that ASD would start the elementary facilities  
161 project and then come back for the AMS renovation in a few years.

162 Ms. Dodd remarked that much of the video that was shown at the JFAC public forum about the  
163 middle school was surrounding deferred maintenance and poor planning with a room full of  
164 reams of paper.

- 165 Mr. King asked if there was anyone on carts in the MVVS.
- 166 Ms. Brown replied no.
- 167 Ms. Dodd mentioned that from what she has seen from the JFAC meeting they have not made  
168 their case for the facility projects.
- 169 Ms. Brown mentioned that there is an uproar on social media about the cost. They are also at an  
170 impasse with their teachers' union for several months and are now going to mediation.
- 171 Ms. Dodd remarked that interest rates are low, but the price of materials are so high now.
- 172 Ms. Vlahos asked for other ideas that they were considering.
- 173 Ms. Dodd responded the extra activities, and the social pieces are important
- 174 Ms. Vlahos asked if there was anything that they were missing.
- 175 Mr. King noted that if they had a middle school here, they may not be able to participate with  
176 towns such as Milford because they would not have enough students.
- 177 Ms. Vlahos added that she put "sports programs" up top.
- 178 Ms. Grdina asked if MV students were able to participate in AMS sports programs.
- 179 Ms. Brown replied that she believes they can, it is on page 16 on the tuition agreement and is  
180 equitably prorated. This is the first tuition agreement that fully transitions the students.
- 181 Ms. Grdina added that even if the children did stay here in MV they could participate in the  
182 afterschool clubs and curriculars. It would be something that they would have to tuition into.
- 183 Ms. Dodd remarked that it wouldn't have to be Amherst programs.
- 184 Ms. Vlahos added that her son participated in Milford Recreation.
- 185 Ms. Angulas asked what would be the advantages to staying with current tuition agreement with  
186 Amherst Middle School.
- 187 Ms. Brown remarked that it will boil down to what is the priority. As a community member, she  
188 has felt that for a long time they did not keep an eye on the tuition agreement. There is waste in  
189 the Amherst Budget.
- 190 Ms. Grdina mentioned that it establishes the students to play with peers that they will be with in  
191 high school.
- 192 Ms. Angulas added that there are also club sports.
- 193 Mr. Wiley commented it is the team camaraderie that you feel being with your classmates on a  
194 school team. He asked what do we come up with as a number if we bring the students back to  
195 MV.

196 Ms. Vlahos commented that brings us back to our objective. If they lay out the different options  
197 and back it with the value to the students, they can come up with several recommendations. That  
198 is why she wanted to consider everything, and they are truly thinking about it from a student  
199 perspective.

200 Ms. Dodd added that they could offer some of Amherst students to come up here if they built  
201 their own middle school.

202 Mr. King remarked that they did that with K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students a few years ago.

203 Mr. Wiley added that the tuition cost could be offset.

204 Ms. Brown noted that it is cheaper to educate a student here than in Amherst.

205 Ms. Dodd mentioned that they do not know that for the older students.

206 Mr. King noted that it is something that the committee should ask.

207 Ms. Angulas asked for an expiration date on the tuition agreement.

208 Ms. Dodd replied it was approved by the voters in June 2021 and lasts 5 years.

209 Ms. Brown noted that other than sports they do have intramurals and they have a wide variety of  
210 clubs that are not offered here.

211 Mr. King noted that he also requested the list of clubs.

212 Ms. Vlahos asked about the capacity for students here in this building.

213 Ms. Dodd noted that the capacity is 280.

214 Mr. Wiley clarified that they are at capacity for the number of classes.

215 Ms. Brown explained that their Music class is on the stage because there are no other available  
216 rooms.

217 Ms. Angulas suggested that they do a space assessment with the true numbers.

218 Ms. Brown added that when they did to two full time kindergartens that is when we lost that  
219 great big art and music room. All of the other rooms, for OT or PT are very small rooms.

220 Mr. Wiley added that there could be universal preschool in the future.

221 Ms. Dodd remarked if it becomes a law then there will be federal money that comes along with  
222 it.

223 Mr. King noted that they could not add middle school in this building without an addition.

224 Ms. Vlahos asked about the land, would the town have to purchase land.

225 Ms. Dodd replied that she believes that they do own the land that is why they asked for a site  
226 plan.

- 227 Mr. King noted that MVSD owns the baseball field.
- 228 Ms. Angulas remarked that the town mows it.
- 229 Ms. Dodd asked if they added on the list for accepting Amherst residents.
- 230 Ms. Dodd remarked that the transportation is a problem, the parents would have to drive the  
231 students themselves.
- 232 Ms. Brown noted she looked into the requirements, but it does have specific requirements for  
233 teachers in that most are certified K-6 only. Veteran teachers were certified under K-8 but there  
234 were changed specifics over how long you are teaching a certain subject. There are 5 teachers  
235 that are certified K-8.
- 236 Ms. Angulas remarked that she is envisioning a far superior curriculum that Amherst 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>  
237 grade students would love to come up here. You would need to have those teachers already on  
238 staff additionally, can you share the lunchroom or the gymnasium.
- 239 Mr. King asked about Art or Music.
- 240 Ms. Brown added that their Art teacher is a 0.4 FTE, Spanish teacher is 0.6 FTE, Gym teacher is  
241 0.6 FTE and Music teacher is a 0.4 FTE.
- 242 Ms. Vlahos asked for the school day schedule.
- 243 Ms. Brown replied that they start at 7:45 and end at 2:15. A few years back they had snow days,  
244 they took the 10 minutes off of their contract because they could not get the busses here. If they  
245 have a snow day, Mont Vernon makes it up but not the other elementary school in the SAU #39.
- 246 Ms. Vlahos asked about the start and end time of the high school.
- 247 Ms. Brown replied 8:30.
- 248 Ms. Dodd remarked this is the first year that they flipped the times.
- 249 Mr. King remarked that they are not running two busses.
- 250 Ms. Vlahos noted that if they can get the information for the next meeting, she is thinking that  
251 they can start strategizing. They can do it as a big group or smaller group, and she can bring flip  
252 charts.
- 253 Mr. King noted that he will ask for the information again.
- 254 Ms. Angulas inquired about the timeline.
- 255 Mr. King replied that they have full transparency to JFAC, school boards and will be presenting  
256 this information in January.
- 257 Ms. Angulas noted the high cost of the Amherst facilities projects, the amount would cover all of  
258 Mont Vernon's town items.



259 Mr. King remarked that he understands where Ms. Angulas is coming from, but they are still  
260 working on the foundation.

261 Ms. Angulas added that she is at the end working backwards.

262 The committee thanked the public for their attendance.

263 II. Meeting Adjourned

264 **Mr. Stokinger motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:37PM. Ms. Vlahos seconded the**  
265 **motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.**

266