

1 SAU #39 Reconfiguration Sub-Committee

2 Thursday, May 2nd, 2019

3 Meeting Minutes- Not Approved

4 Attendees:

5 Adam Steel- Superintendent, Porter Dodge- Director of Operations SAU #39, Sarah Lawrence-
6 Sub- Committee Chair and MVVS Board Member, John Glover- ASB Board Member, Ellen
7 Grudzien- ASB Member, and Stephen O'Keefe- MVSB Member (via phone).

8 Meeting Minutes: Danae Marotta

9 Public: Dean Eggert, Esq. Wadleigh, Starr and Peters, Manchester, NH, and Kelly Schmidt,
10 Amherst NH.

11 I. Call to Order

12 **Chair, Ms. Sarah Lawrence, called the meeting to order at 4:07 PM.**

13 II. Benefits Comparison- Discussion

14 She then noted that a previous action item was to take a look at the benefits comparison.

15 Superintendent Steel explained health insurance between the three districts. Mont Vernon is
16 75/25, Souhegan is in the middle and Amherst is 90/10, in some cases.

17 For Amherst, if someone picks the HMO plan, the district pays 87.5% for two people/ a family
18 and 92.5% for a single plan. If they pick the more expensive Blue Choice plan, a POS plan, 82%
19 for two person or family and 87% for a single.

20 For Souhegan, if someone takes the least expensive plan the district pays 95% for a single and
21 92% per family. For the Access Blue plan that, is SAU wide, it is 90% for single, 77% for two
22 person or family. Then with Mont Vernon, with Access Blue it is 75/25. They do have the blue
23 choice plan as well.

24 A lot of other ancillary benefits are roughly the same, such as dental. The biggest difference is in
25 retirement severance payments.

26 In Amherst when a teacher retires, if they have been here for a significant amount of time and
27 have been vested in the NH Retirement by Jan 1st 2011, they get a significant retirement package
28 upwards to 80 to 85K.

29 Ms. Grudzien asked if that was consistent with other districts.

30 Ms. Lawrence asked if that will change.

31 Superintendent Steel replied, not that he is aware of and no, that will not change. He then
32 explained that those that are vested in the NH Retirement System, by Jan 1st, 2011 were
33 grandfathered in how their retirement was calculated.

34 Ms. Grudzien asked about the percentage of teachers that would fall into that category in the
35 Amherst district.

36 Superintendent Steel, replied approximately 15-30 people.

37 For Souhegan retirement, it is more modest at \$10 to 15K per employee. He added that he will
38 double check on that but it is a significant difference.

39 Mr. Glover asked if that was a one-time payment.

40 Mr. Steel replied, \$13,500, for two years after their retirement.

41 For Mont Vernon, teachers get a percentage of their salary in the last year, between 12 % to
42 50%, and that can be significant.

43 There are three very different models, Professional Development varies, and the Daily Rate has
44 big differences.

45 Mr. Porter Dodge, Director of Operations SAU #39, explained that it creates a unique situation in
46 the summer when teachers from all three districts attend a PD session. Daily rate is salary
47 divided by school days.

48 Discussion ensued.

49 Ms. Grudzien asked about if there was anything in the different contracts if the district were to
50 reconfigure.

51 Mr. Steel replied, no.

52 Mr. Dean Eggert, Esq. Wadleigh, Starr and Peters, Manchester, NH added that with the case in
53 Exeter, there were 6 factors to consider. It is very likely that any CBA that comes out of
54 Amherst, and goes in by way of employees, that goes into Souhegan Cooperative, it is likely that
55 it would be carried over. In Exeter, they were creating a whole new entity and everyone was
56 going. So it was just assumed that the prior Exeter subset would carry over to the new entity.
57 Although, they can distinguish new facts, it is more probable that if it was in court that the
58 Souhegan Cooperative, when they pick up the middle school they will pick up the CBA.

59 The other thing is the Social Security issue, with Amherst participating and Souhegan not. You
60 would have discussions with the union before you get to the voters.

61 Ms. Grudzien asked for clarification on the amount of possible agreements.

62 Mr. Eggert explained that there would then be 4.

63 Mr. Dodge asked about bumping rights.

64 Mr. Eggert replied, yes, you would have those discussions as a part of restructuring.

65 Amherst Community Member, Ms. Kelly Schmidt, asked if it mattered if a teacher taught in a
66 different grade.

67 Mr. Eggert noted that it was a good question and it would simplify seniority and bumping in that
68 regard. If they wanted to teach at the high school, they have to leave that bargaining unit.

69 Mr. Glover commented that it takes down one wall and builds another.

70 Discussion ensued.

71 Mr. Eggert added that down the road, Souhegan can petition to certify. He then suggested that
72 they think about of what already exists.

73 Ms. Grudzien added that it was about the fluidity of the teachers.

74 Ms. Lawrence asked about the two Mont Vernon teachers.

75 Mr. Eggert replied that two people would be too small to be a unit. The discourse with the union
76 would bypass that.

77 Ms. Schmidt asked what would happen if a middle school teacher got hired in middle of 2020,
78 they are not eligible for the old CBA.

79 Mr. Eggert replied that a lot of this is negotiation. This committee would want to do the leg work
80 on the mechanics, and other educational related reasons to this restructuring.

81 Ms. Grudzien asked what if there is a “No” vote.

82 Mr. Eggert replied, then you just have status quo.

83 Ms. Grudzien asked what if they waited for the CBA to expire.

84 Mr. Glover added that it does not change anything, the CBA stays in perpetuity.

85 Mr. Eggert noted that there are greater educational benefits.

86 Ms. Lawrence added that it sounds like they are solidly in the middle.

87 Discussion ensued.

88 Mr. Eggert commented that it is likely in looking at those 6 factors that a court would consider,
89 you get the unit that comes with these teachers. The other issues is in the educational analysis,
90 and there are benefits with the model. He added that they would also look at the financial benefit.

91 Mr. Glover commented why would they have to look for a financial benefit.

92 Mr. Eggert remarked if they are going to sell this beyond an educational decision then they have
93 to demonstrate a financial benefit.

94 Ms. Lawrence added that the question is why would the voter vote yes for this.

95 Mr. Glover noted that the education benefit is reduced. If labor can't move, then you are creating
96 another wall.

97 Mr. Eggert added that it is something that needs to be discussed with the middle school union
98 already.

- 99 Ms. Grudzien noted that she doesn't see that happening for a Souhegan teacher to go to the
100 middle school, unless there was a RIF.
- 101 Superintendent Steel, added that want to create fluidity for content upon mastery.
- 102 Discussion ensued.
- 103 Ms. Grudzien asked about middle school students taking high school classes.
- 104 Ms. Schmidt added that in her experience she took high school French classes as a middle school
105 student. She noted that they were in the same district and didn't have the same issues.
- 106 Ms. Grudzien added that they are hoping that happens here.
- 107 Mr. Glover noted that the CBA was recently approved by voters. He then asked how can they
108 make this happen and share teachers that are more specialized, for example, Special Education.
- 109 Ms. Grudzien agreed, noting that with special ed, the rates are higher.
- 110 Mr. Eggert added that they would have those discussions once they certify members of the unit.
- 111 Superintendent Steel commented that they need to remember that every dollar that gets spent
112 educationally boils down to two tax rates. There will be a shift somewhere.
- 113 Mr. Eggert added that for MV they get to cancel their tuition agreement that might be a big sell.
- 114 Mr. Steel remarked that a couple of years ago he examined all of the budgets in looking at total
115 consolidation, removing the tuition from MV and the revenue from Amherst, and recalculated
116 and there was about \$300-400K in MV favor. That was two years ago with a different set of
117 assumptions and he is not sure of the accuracy in this scenario.
- 118 Mr. Glover added that they might see savings in not having to do 3 or 4 manifests, or 3 or 4
119 different bus contracts, etc. Doing it for money is not the reason.
- 120 Ms. Lawrence noted that with no payouts, that is a positive thing. She then asked what are the
121 next logical steps.
- 122 Ms. Grudzien added that she is thinking that it will take some time to have discussions with the
123 union.
- 124 Ms. Schmidt asked if they were looking at a full consolidation, would the MV residents be
125 interested.
- 126 Ms. Lawrence replied that she is thinking that a majority of voters would not be in support. MV
127 wants an elementary school here.
- 128 Superintendent Steel commented on the Hollis/Brookline model.
- 129 Mr. Glover asked if they are an SAU and use the same curriculum.
- 130 Superintendent Steel explained the differences.

- 131 Ms. Lawrence noted they have answered all of the questions from the action steps from last
132 week. She then asked if they should talk to union representatives.
- 133 Mr. Glover replied, no.
- 134 Ms. Grudzien commented that they need to back up a little more.
- 135 Ms. Lawrence added that she is in favor of getting the conversation going.
- 136 Mr. Steel added that this committee charge is to report back to the SAU Board in October.
- 137 Ms. Lawrence remarked that it is not making the decision and noting is set in stone.
- 138 Mr. O’Keefe added that they have good momentum and the next logical step is to meet with the
139 two union reps with Superintendent Steel and Ms. Lawrence.
- 140 Mr. Eggert added that almost it is a pre-negotiation.
- 141 Mr. Glover added that he feels that they are not prepared and need a summary of the benefit
142 comparison.
- 143 Mr. Steel added that they are looking for feedback and thoughts and to have early in the process.
- 144 Mr. Eggert noted that they need to talk about some of the benefits and recommended that they
145 come up with a list of educational benefits.
- 146 Ms. Lawrence having a list and then having a conversation with all players at the table.
- 147 Mr. Eggert added that they need to deal with the issue of Social Security. That could be the deal
148 breaker, the easiest fix is would they be willing to go with a letter of understanding and they no
149 longer pay Social Security.
- 150 Mr. Glover asked if they could do joint negotiations at the same time.
- 151 Mr. Eggert replied, bear in mind, they do not have a road map to follow. He then added that Ms.
152 Kathleen Peal, specializes in negotiations and suggested that she attend these meetings.
- 153 Ms. Lawrence suggested Mr. Glover send her an email if there is anything else he wants to
154 capture.
- 155 Ms. Schmidt asked if legal counsel would be there.
- 156 Mr. Eggert added he does not see the need to deviate from the usual practice and have
157 discussion.
- 158 Ms. Schmidt asked if they would be public meetings.
- 159 Mr. Steel replied that it would be private.
- 160 Mr. Eggert added that if you have a good list of articulated educational outcomes, they can
161 certainly brainstorm. It is a common educational model.
- 162 Mr. Glover added that they have to remember that it is a two-way street.

- 163 Mr. Dodge remarked that there are a lot of advantages.
- 164 Ms. Lawrence added that their next meeting is Monday May 13th 4PM at SHS.
- 165 Mr. Glover asked for a draft list of the educational goals to be sent to the members of the
166 committee and a single point of contact.
- 167 Ms. Lawrence added that she will start drafting the list and put it on the Trello Board.
- 168 Ms. Grudzien noted that they need to have a Souhegan rep at these meetings, that is really
169 important.
- 170 Mr. Steel added that May is a very busy time with the end of the school year.
- 171 Ms. Lawrence finalized that she will follow up with Mr. David Chen and Mr. Steve Coughlan.
- 172 III. Meeting Adjourned
- 173 **Ms. Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 5:40PM**