

1 Reconfiguration Committee Meeting

2 Thursday, September 12th, 2019

3 Meeting Minutes- Not Approved

4 Attendees:

5 Adam Steel- Superintendent, Director of SAU #39 Operations- Porter Dodge, Michele Croteau-
6 SAU #39 Business Administrator, Sarah Lawrence- Reconfiguration Subcommittee Chair and
7 MVSBS Chair, Stephen O'Keefe- MVSBS Member, Laura Taylor- SCSB Member, David Chen-
8 SCSB Member, Ellen Grudzien- ASB Member, and John Glover- ASB Member.

9 Public: Kathleen C. Peahl, Esq. Wadleigh, Starr & Peters, P.L.L.C., 95 Market St. Manchester,
10 NH 03101, and Kelly Schmidt- Amherst NH Community Member.

11 I. Call to Order

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13 **Chair of the Reconfiguration Subcommittee, Ms. Sarah Lawrence, called the meeting to**
14 **order at 4:01 PM**

15 II. Discussion

16 She then noted the action steps from the June meeting was to understand each pathway and SAU
17 #39 Business Administrator, Ms. Michele Croteau does have some preliminary information.

18 In looking at the worst-case scenario, if all staff K-12 unionize under the AEA contract it will
19 cost approximately \$145K to move all MVEA staff to the AEA contract and then \$294K to move
20 all Souhegan staff to the AEA contract. If they only move MVEA 6th grade, the cost is roughly
21 \$5-20K depending on which staff moves. As an interim step the cost is minimal.

22 The best-case scenario with the least lucrative contract, is if all staff, K-12, moved to the MVEA
23 agreement, there is negligible difference in moving the Souhegan staff given the spread in salary
24 impact. Moving all AEA staff to the MVEA Agreement, would save around 800K. This is a
25 scenario that will probably not happen.

26 She then added if the numbers above were, K-12 with only a minor modification, if it is only 6th
27 grade from MVEA moving.

28 Ms. Taylor asked if that was an annual cost and does it factor into other years.

29 Ms. Kathleen C. Peahl, Esq. of Wadleigh, Starr & Peters, P.L.L.C., replied; she will have to
30 confirm.

31 Ms. Taylor asked if it was support staff as well.

32 SAU #39 Business Administrator, Ms. Michele Croteau, replied that she believes that it was just
33 the teachers.

34 Mr. O'Keefe noted that the better of the two contracts that absorbs the greater percentage of the
35 people.

36 Ms. Peahl added that if you are talking about moving the Souhegan staff into a CBA, they will
37 not have any interest in taking a step back.

38 Ms. Grudzien asked about losing the tuition agreement and if there was any impact to the ASD
39 budget.

40 Superintendent Steel replied that he did a proforma about two years ago, looking at expenses,
41 tuition agreement out of the picture. He then applied the apportionment formula with 50% on
42 students and 50% based on in two towns and compared that on the two tax rates. It was about a
43 250-300K MV saved and ASD expended. That was full consolidation. Things have changed
44 since then with teacher agreements and addition of students.

45 Ms. Grudzien asked about further impact with just the 6- 12.

46 Ms. Lawrence remarked that she would like to see the class size impact.

47 Mr. Glover emphasized that he is excited to hear about full consolidation.

48 Ms. Lawrence replied that as a part of this committee's task is looking at all scenarios.

49 Ms. Grudzien asked about having a third scenario and a thought about going to two districts. It
50 may be a conversation worth having.

51 Superintendent Steel replied that added that it might be politically untenable at least at first.

52 Ms. Grudzien noted that she recognizes that, and that meeting may not have shown how others
53 feel.

54 Superintendent Steel added if you can solve that, then you could have full consolidation.

55 Ms. Lawrence asked for other comments.

56 There were no other questions or comments.

57 Ms. Lawrence remarked that the 2nd action step was about the oral agreement with the existing
58 entity vs when the new unit is certified.

59 She added that there would be some negotiations with the union before the March vote. If they
60 go forward with this plan, they would have by agreement, a middle school unit. Let the union
61 know that their plan is to put forward to the voters on March 20th this reconfiguration. They will
62 by agreement, seek certification of 2 middle school bargaining units. They will present it to the
63 voters with that they are going to honor this CBA until its renegotiated. Negotiations would
64 begin at the middle school July 1st, 2021 anyways.

65 She noted that when they present this to the SAU Board, she wants to be clear.

66 Ms. Peahl clarified that 6-12 that is the most complicated scenario in terms of collective
67 bargaining obligations. You are still going to have an ASD and a MVSD. The AEA would
68 continue to exist and the middle school employees would move to a new employer. It is likely
69 that the PLERB, says that they have a right to remain represented.

70 It really depends on what position the union takes in terms on which direction it goes. If the
71 union wants to represent the only the middle school employees. It is a little unusual with one
72 school that is represented and one that is not, although, it is legally possible. They will have to go
73 to the PLERB to get their approval. If the union agrees to that and the Souhegan Cooperative
74 Board is now your new employer for that group and the union agree the PLERB would probably
75 go along with it. The question is if an election is required. There are some things that they would
76 want to iron out early on in this process if they can.

77 She then suggested that they get the union's position and if the cooperative board wants to go
78 along with whatever approach the union wants.

79 Ms. Peahl noted that there are a whole lot of timing that will go into this.

80 Director of Operations for SAU #39, Mr. Porter Dodge asked wouldn't that be a gamble. He
81 added that the numbers could dissolve their union.

82 Ms. Peahl replied; it would be very strategic on both sides. She added that she is unsure if there
83 were any union discussions since June.

84 Ms. Lawrence replied, no, there have not been any union discussions since June.

85 Mr. Chen asked if the vote would depend on where the 5th grade students would go.

86 Mr. Dodge replied that regarding staff, there might be more people Pre-K to 12th. He added that
87 he has thought about it many ways.

88 Mr. Glover commented that their primary goal is to share resources between the high school and
89 the middle school. The issue is that the two separate bargaining units is hindering that.

90 Ms. Peahl added that she agrees. If you end up with just a middle school bargaining unit it is
91 going to be very difficult to do creative things with moving staff between the two schools. The
92 middle school will have a contract and it will most likely be limiting and requiring negotiations.
93 Your co-op will be two schools and your hands will be tied at one of them.

94 Ms. Lawrence asked about the K-12 scenario.

95 Ms. Peahl replied the only solution is one bargaining unit to represent everyone. It would make
96 no sense to combine K-12 and then carve out separate bargaining units. She then suggested that
97 they sit with the PLERB Executive Director early on in this process and get clarification with
98 what the PLERB is likely to order. It is very unlikely that they would say yes, form a new union
99 and you can represent everyone without an election.

100 Mr. Glover asked if that was an election among the employees.

101 Ms. Peahl replied, yes.

102 You would have a new unit and new union, and then sit down and negotiate a new contract for
103 everyone. There would be some obligation in that you cannot reduce pay or benefits during that
104 time.

- 105 Mr. Chen asked about moving teachers around during that period.
- 106 Ms. Peahl replied, probably not without some discussion from the union. The real focus is the
107 middle and the high school and they would have to look at the middle school contract.
- 108 Ms. Grudzien asked about sharing of resources, for example a para. She added that their goal
109 here is to have more fluidity.
- 110 Ms. Peahl replied, potentially not for staff, if they are getting the same pay and benefits. Worst
111 case scenario is that you are doing Impact Bargaining. It should not prevent you from making
112 those types of changes.
- 113 Mr. Chen asked if there are any things that would hold this up longer than one year.
- 114 Ms. Peahl replied, yes, noted that Collective Bargaining Agreements can take a few years.
- 115 Mr. O’Keefe remarked that they have talked about labor issues since May and with each meeting
116 it occupies a lot of time. He then asked if it is more important to find the direction that they want
117 to go in, go to the taxpayer, or do they negotiate, get it in place with that direction in mind and
118 then go to the taxpayer.
- 119 Ms. Peahl replied that they should not go to the taxpayer without knowing as much as you can
120 about what the labor situation will be. There are a lot of employees that live in these two
121 communities. They are not going to be supportive without not knowing.
- 122 The first decision is to figure out what makes the most sense for the two districts. It is to become
123 a K-12 consolidated, or 2 elementary districts and then expand the co-op to the middle school.
124 They need to think about what makes the most sense educationally. Once you know that, then
125 you sit down with the union and let them know this is the direction that the board wants to go.
- 126 Mr. O’Keefe asked about the process, they are required to report to the SAU Board in October.
127 He then asked if they would hire her.
- 128 Ms. Peahl replied that the administration would be more of the project managers.
- 129 Mr. O’Keefe added that this is a big job and probably not for administration at this time.
- 130 Superintendent Steel suggested hiring an outside project manager.
- 131 Ms. Croteau asked that if it was a consolidation K-12, would theoretically everything fold into
132 Souhegan.
- 133 Ms. Peahl replied, yes, that you would have a new set of articles.
- 134 Ms. Croteau asked if the biggest hurdle is the elementary physical location and governance. She
135 then asked if that could be carved out and identified in the Articles of Agreement.
- 136 Ms. Peahl added that was Superintendent Steel’s idea.
- 137 Ms. Schmidt reminded the committee that in the past MV taxpayers would not be happy with
138 paying for facilities that need repair such as AMS.

139 Ms. Lawrence noted that brings them to the risks and benefits to both models.
140 If they did K-12, there would be infrastructure concerns for both.
141 Superintendent Steel added that the MVVS is in excellent shape but there will be needs down the
142 road.
143 Ms. Lawrence asked about potentially, adding provisions within the Articles of Agreement and if
144 they can be specific.
145 Ms. Peahl noted that there would be a question for allocating expenditures for certain things.
146 Superintendent Steel it is easier to understand if it is related to debt issuance, capital expenditure,
147 under RSA 33. There is logic there and they should explore it.
148 Mr. O’Keefe remarked that the MVVS is used for everything in the Town of MV. It is a very
149 serious concern for the people in this community.
150 Ms. Lawrence asked if the building can be leased.
151 Ms. Peahl added that there is a creative way of doing it.
152 Discussion ensued.
153 Ms. Lawrence asked what other risks should they look at for the K-12 model.
154 Mr. O’Keefe replied, control of where students go to school.
155 Mr. Glover mentioned that another scenario could be that MV becomes Pre-K-2nd or something
156 like that.
157 Ms. Peahl added that one can be easily dealt with in the Articles of Agreement.
158 Mr. Glover asked if they could freely move resources and students.
159 Superintendent Steel replied that it would have to be debated and structured.
160 Ms. Lawrence remarked that they need to outline the rules of the flexibility.
161 Ms. Croteau asked if the structure of the agreement permit the moving.
162 Ms. Grudzien added that it could be parent motivated, whether it is childcare or necessities.
163 Ms. Lawrence asked for other risks in the K-12 model.
164 Mr. O’Keefe replied, the weighted vote, that was when Ms. Kim Roberge was on the MVSBB.
165 Ms. Peahl added that exists already.
166 Mr. Glover added the likely labor costs, and there must be some administrative efficiency.
167 Superintendent Steel remarked that he had done calculations 4 years ago, and there is between
168 200K and 500K in total savings.

169 Ms. Lawrence asked for risks with the 6-12 model.
170 She then mentioned that voting issue, board structure, flexibility-with the goal of staffing moving
171 between the high school and middle school.
172 Mr. O’Keefe added that he is viewing the flexibility of staffing as temporary.
173 Ms. Lawrence remarked that it might never be resolved.
174 Ms. Grudzien added that it is potentially a risk.
175 Mr. O’Keefe remarked they will have that resolved before they go to the voters.
176 Mr. Peahl commented that they can begin the impact bargaining stage if they know what they
177 want.
178 Ms. Schmidt mentioned that the biggest issue right now from the Amherst taxpayer is trust.
179 Ms. Grudzien asked if it was possible if middle school students could take a class at the high
180 school.
181 Superintendent Steel replied that it requires approval on a case by case basis from the Souhegan
182 Board.
183 Ms. Lawrence asked for benefits of the 6-12 model. She noted that a first benefit is that the
184 students can access resources in both schools.
185 Mr. O’Keefe replied, sports for their students.
186 Ms. Lawrence asked for taxpayer benefits in the 6-12 model.
187 Ms. Croteau will investigate that.
188 Mr. O’Keefe noted that MV pays a premium tuition as it includes an upkeep of the building.
189 Discussion ensued.
190 Ms. Lawrence asked for any other benefits from the 6-12 model.
191 Mr. Steel remarked that the cooperative board would become the main board of the SAU. You
192 would also have the elementary board. There are more complexities at the secondary level. He
193 emphasized that they would not be less important.
194 Mr. Chen asked about the Tri-State League.
195 Mr. Dodge added that the MV students can not because they are not apart of the ASD.
196 Ms. Lawrence remarked that she added Sports to the list of consideration.
197 Mr. Glover asked wasn’t the notion ASD 5th and MV 6th. Additionally, couldn’t MV come into
198 5th at some point.

- 199 Ms. Lawrence asked for benefits for the K-12 model. So far, she has students can access
200 resources in both schools, staff flexibility in all schools and potentially an administrative savings.
- 201 Ms. Croteau noted that you would have one organization with one ballot.
- 202 Ms. Grudzien added that it is the sharing of all resources in a streamlining of an organization.
- 203 Mr. Steel replied more clarity of vision and goals. There will be one set of school board goals and
204 not three.
- 205 Ms. Lawrence clarified; you would have more full alignment.
- 206 Mr. Glover noted that you might still have different areas of focus, elementary, secondary.
- 207 Mr. Steel added equity of opportunity for faculty.
- 208 Mr. Glover to what extent are numbers to share with the rest of the board.
- 209 Ms. Lawrence noted that it is being worked on.
- 210 Superintendent Steel noted that it will be very complex.
- 211 Mr. Glover make sure the number includes assumptions and limitations.
- 212 Mr. O'Keefe asked for a finite timeline. They will clearly need a chunk of the SAU Board
213 meeting time for discussion.
- 214 Superintendent Steel noted that they will also be talking about school start times and budget at
215 the October meeting.
- 216 Ms. Lawrence suggested that they have one more meeting in Sept.
- 217 Ms. Croteau asked if the committee is making a recommendation or preparing a report.
- 218 Ms. Lawrence both, and recommending on which is the better option.
- 219 She then added that her action steps are to get all this information together, get it out to everyone
220 here, making sure that it is accurate and then take a vote at the next meeting about what their best
221 recommendation would be.
- 222 Mr. Glover asked if they are going to do a committee update at the next SAU Meeting on the
223 19th.
- 224 Ms. Lawrence replied, yes, a quick update to remind the SAU Board that they have continued
225 their work.
- 226 The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 10th, 2019 4:00PM here at the
227 MVVS.
- 228 Ms. Lawrence noted that she will be in touch with Ms. Grudzien in case she cannot be in
229 attendance.
- 230 III. Meeting Adjourned

231 **Chair of the Reconfiguration Sub Committee, Ms. Sarah Lawrence, adjourned the meeting**
232 **at 5:30PM.**

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