

1 SAU #39 Reconfiguration Committee Meeting

2 Thursday, October 10th, 2019

3 Meeting Minutes- Not Approved

4 Attendees:

5 Adam Steel- Superintendent, Director of SAU #39 Operations- Porter Dodge, Sarah Lawrence-
6 Reconfiguration Subcommittee Chair/MVSB Chair, Stephen O'Keefe- MVSB Member, Laura
7 Taylor- SCSB Member, and David Chen- SCSB Member.

8 Committee Minutes: Danae Marotta

9 Public: Kelly Schmidt- Amherst NH Community Member.

10 I. Call to Order

11 **Chair of the SAU #39 Reconfiguration Subcommittee, Ms. Sarah Lawrence, called the**
12 **meeting to order at 4:00 PM**

13 II. Discussion

14 She then remarked that for today's meeting they will review the draft report and see if anyone
15 has any questions before they present their recommendations at the next SAU Meeting.

16 Ms. Taylor asked about the Pre-K being included.

17 Mr. Steel replied that technically, they are Pre-K and age 21 to some students.

18 Mr. Chen asked about the MV 6th grade.

19 Ms. Lawrence replied that they are open to moving the 6th grade and it has been floated in the
20 community for years.

21 Mr. O'Keefe added that the 6-12 option could certainly happen as long as they get through labor
22 issues. The K-12 option could be a huge barrier with everything that they are doing in the SAU,
23 later start times, strategic vision, etc.

24 Ms. Lawrence mentioned that from the last meeting her understanding was that the full
25 consolidation is the best option even though it is the more difficult of the two. She can make the
26 case for either. It loses clarity to say that they are both great recommendations.

27 Mr. Chen remarked that the 6-12 option is more practical the K-12 is a more ideal solution.

28 Mr. Lawrence respectfully disagreed. Based off of what they have gone over they would be
29 adding more issues than what they had.

30 Mr. Chen added that they are fragmenting the union.

31 Ms. Lawrence remarked that you are adding another bargaining unit.

32 Mr. Steel added that it could be in perpetuity.

- 33 Ms. Lawrence then read from the September 12th 2019 minutes.
- 34 Mr. Dodge added that he believes that the 6th, 7th and 8th grade teachers would still want to
35 continue with the AEA.
- 36 Mr. Chen added that Souhegan has career development. He noted that it adds an additional 1/3
37 every year.
- 38 Mr. Dodge asked Ms. Taylor if she knew the top salary at SHS.
- 39 Mr. Chen then explained that the Souhegan model is more of a 3 dimensional model.
- 40 Mr. Steel noted that it is on the salary table.
- 41 Mr. Chen added when you compare the salaries you can't compare the two.
- 42 Mr. Dodge remarked that he is thinking pure numbers.
- 43 Mr. Chen added when you look at the salary structures you don't see it.
- 44 Mr. Steel added that they do have it with the Step table. It takes longer at Souhegan; the highest
45 salary is just under \$91,000.
- 46 Mr. Chen remarked that there is a difference between the salary and the cost to the Town.
- 47 Mr. Dodge mentioned that he reads it differently.
- 48 Ms. Lawrence added that the important part is to figure out what they are recommending. It is a
49 good conversation. She wants to make sure that they are on the same page.
- 50 Mr. O'Keefe noted that he is not in the position to recommend the K-12 consolidation. He then
51 noted that they will not be successful.
- 52 Ms. Lawrence then asked the other committee members to look at the first page of the report.
- 53 Mr. Dodge then read the reasons for full K-12 Cooperative.
- 54
- 55 • Best educational experience
 - 56 • Equity of opportunity and experience for students and staff
 - 57 • Greatest ability to leverage resources: flexibility with materials, staffing and buildings.
 - 58 ○ Ability to respond to population shifts, special education needs and enrichment opportunities
 - 59 • Streamlines SAU and administration/governance and aligns with Vision and Mission
 - 60 ○ 1 Ballot
 - 61 ○ Streamlined Board process
 - 62 ○ Provides clarity of Vision- One set of Board Goals rather than 3.
- 63 Ms. Lawrence noted that maybe they can say that the 6-12 as a practical step. With the caveat
64 that K-12 is best, with aligning with the mission and vision of the SAU.
- 65 Mr. Steel added that the third option would be to use the existing structure more effectively. He
66 then discussed how they can restructure their board meetings.

67 Mr. Chen mentioned that he initially proposed the idea of unified budget for the SAU with the
68 districts inside of it. He then saw the complications with the laws and regulations, etc. That is
69 why he came up with thinking of it a unit and then implementing it locally. He is in support of
70 the way Superintendent Steel is proposing, although does not think it is practical. The halfway
71 step that he described is just that.

72 Ms. Lawrence added that the budgets will still be separate. They could not shift funds with the
73 budget.

74 Mr. Chen noted that dilemma creates a tension. He noted with the buildings you plan it as one
75 organization. It makes the case that a unified district would be better for the whole student.

76 Ms. Taylor asked what support they would have for the budgeted line items. They will be more
77 support for the budget if there are smaller more segmented budgets.

78 Mr. Steel added that there still will be.

79 Mr. Chen then gave some examples noting that the whole idea is to show that you can think
80 globally.

81 Ms. Kelly Schmidt, Amherst NH Community Member, remarked that there is a desire to think
82 globally but what it comes down to is that pocketbooks speak louder than desire.

83 Mr. Steel remarked that the one caveat, is if it means that they can keep their local elementary
84 school.

85 Mr. Chen remarked that if you look at the Souhegan Board Meetings you do not know who is
86 from MV.

87 Ms. Lawrence added that as long as you have the same vision.

88 Ms. Schmidt mentioned that for a lot of people their priority is their wallet.

89 Ms. Lawrence added that if they have more flexibility and you can forecast easier

90 Mr. Chen remarked that, in general most people of all age groups, want to see the school system
91 better. If they have that then people won't complain.

92 Mr. Steel mentioned that seniors are very supportive of the school districts.

93 Mr. Chen added that he would not go through that categorization that easily. A motivating factor
94 is selling their house to a family with a good school district.

95 Ms. Lawrence then asked the committee what direction they are going in.

96 Mr. Steel remarked that this committee has done an exhaustive job at looking at a 5/6-12 option
97 and relooking at the K-12 again. They have further explored the legal, financial and union issues
98 to a level of depth with good counsel, and have eliminated those as viable options. He further
99 discussed his thoughts to redeploy resources for more alignment throughout the SAU and
100 structures.

101 He reminded the committee about the time they hired the three ASD Facilities employees
102 explaining that they are shared resources. Perhaps there is more of that they can spend their time
103 and attention on. That is something that they can achieve now and suggested that they focus on
104 what they can do.

105 Mr. Chen asked how would they redeploy staff.

106 Mr. Steel remarked that it comes down to retirement, those things would have to be worked out
107 through negotiation.

108 Mr. Chen asked if there was a way to have a two tiered system for existing staff.

109 Ms. Lawrence asked if the unions can share information.

110 Superintendent Steel replied that noting is prohibited if both parties agree.

111 Mr. O'Keefe asked if they can clarify a MOU for sharing between the three districts and asked if
112 that was too much for the administration.

113 Mr. Steel replied that there are some times when they have a 0.2 Occupational Therapist here,
114 0.4 in ASD and a 0.4 at SHS and the cost of contracting is very expensive. The easiest way of
115 working it out is a K-12 consolidation. He wishes that the K-12 option could be possible and the
116 5/6-12 option adds more complication.

117 Mr. Dodge remarked that there was a precedent where the sharing did happen.

118 Mr. O'Keefe noted that with the K-12 option, it lets them know that they are moving in a new
119 direction.

120 Ms. Taylor remarked that if they went K-12 and Amherst and MV were combined, could they
121 build one school and have everyone go to it.

122 Ms. Lawrence replied, not unless there was something built into the Articles of Agreement that
123 there would always be local elementary schools.

124 Mr. Steel remarked that a K-12 would not be on the ballot unless there was something in the
125 Articles of Agreement that stipulates that the MVVS school cannot be closed unless the MV
126 voters decide.

127 Ms. Taylor asked what would protect the students.

128 Mr. Chen asked would the Articles of Agreement be approved by the voters.

129 Mr. Steel explained that with a Cooperative their constitution is an Articles of Agreement.

130 Mr. Chen asked how could AMS be written into the Articles of agreement.

131 Mr. Steel noted that it could be written into it.

132 Mr. Schmidt added that she is thinking that they cannot solve the issue with the MV students
133 playing athletics.

- 134 Mr. Steel noted that they can expand the tuition agreement to AMS.
- 135 Mr. O’Keefe added that it would be very expensive. He then asked about the space for the
136 students.
- 137 Mr. Steel replied that they could take the 6th grade but not both the 5th and 6th grade from the
138 MVVS.
- 139 Mr. Chen asked about the threshold of students at the MVVS.
- 140 Mr. O’Keefe mentioned that it took them 6 years to get to two teachers in each grade.
- 141 Ms. Lawrence added that they have prioritized the lower grades to have two teachers.
- 142 Mr. Chen asked if a MV student wanted to attend AMS.
- 143 Mr. Steel remarked that additionally both School Boards have to agree and they would have to
144 pay tuition.
- 145 Mr. O’Keefe then noted the three different choices. 1. status quo with a focus on MOU
146 opportunity/more experience, 2. 6-12 consolidation with pluses and minuses and 3. K-12 full
147 consolidation.
- 148 Mr. Chen asked about the benefits.
- 149 Mr. O’Keefe noted that this committee brought forward the labor issues and he believes that they
150 are not insurmountable.
- 151 Mr. Chen noted that they do number 1 and gain the experience and then move to number 2 or
152 skip to number 3. Act as if they are one unified district.
- 153 Ms. Lawrence added that is what Superintendent Steel is essentially proposing.
- 154 Ms. Taylor asked about the budget and she is thinking of how it will work out.
- 155 Ms. Schmidt noted that they both might have passed.
- 156 Mr. Steel explained that right now they have 4 different boards with each of them meeting. The
157 way a K-12 would work there would be subcommittees that would report to the big board. When
158 it comes to the budget, it would be one budget, one set of CBA’s, and one set of voters. The
159 bridge for him is that the SAU board starts acting as a big board and looking at budgets,
160 curriculum and assessments holistically. Then these boards look at their own local budgets, etc.
- 161 Mr. O’Keefe asked, legally, can they take an OT or PT and put them in the SAU budget.
- 162 Mr. Steel replied that RSA 195 defines an SAU. If he wanted to put an OT in the budget it would
163 have to be in the Amherst, Mont Vernon and Souhegan ballots for X amount of dollars.
164 Additionally, Amherst has to be one of the districts that it has to pass.
- 165 Mr. O’Keefe asked if they test this new option.

166 Mr. Steel remarked that three years ago with the Amherst facilities employees, then contracted
167 with Souhegan completely separate from the SAU. Mont Vernon can rent the employees.

168 Ms. Taylor asked did it not pass on the ballot.

169 Mr. Steel explained that they were not on the ballot.

170 Ms. Schmidt remarked that an OT is different type of position.

171 Mr. Steel added additionally they have to apportion their time.

172 Ms. Schmidt noted that the needs would probably be different as well.

173 Mr. Steel remarked that some SAU's make their Superintendent account for their time.

174 Mr. Chen added that the problem is that with shared personnel.

175 Mr. Steel remarked that principals are certified K-12.

176 Mr. Dodge explained that as they are requiring more people then and Meg is right.

177 Mr. O'Keefe asked if they want to take a vote.

178 Ms. Lawrence then summarized the options, K-12 third, 5/6-12 option second, then
179 Superintendent Steel's reprioritization first (the SAU Board to take a more global and focused
180 role and acting as if they are a more cooperative unit as many ways as possible as defined by
181 law).

182 Ms. Taylor noted that she is not a big fan of the SAU reprioritize plan. If she had to choose
183 between the two, she would choose the 6-12 with the Amherst 5th grade at Wilkins.

184 Ms. Lawrence noted that she will give a summary of the three models that they discussed and it
185 sounds like they are thinking of a better name.

186 Mr. Steel noted that he would call it a bridge to a K-12 model.

187 Mr. Chen added that they should rebrand it.

188 Ms. Taylor remarked that the application of a K-12 is difficult to control on a broad scale.

189 Ms. Lawrence added that it would keep that control locally. It's just about equity of experience.

190 Ms. Taylor noted that there are different things at different levels and she is unsure if they can
191 give adequate attention.

192 Mr. Steel explained the process during a K-12 school district in a board meeting.

193 Mr. O'Keefe asked about Peterborough.

194 Mr. Steel replied that he believes that they are a K-12 Cooperative.

195 Mr. O'Keefe noted that the ideal situation in a perfect world would be a full K-12 consolidation.
196 There are a lot of barriers at this point in time. He then suggested that they come up with this
197 hybrid model to test it and see where the push back is, see that for a few years and then transition

198 the 5/6 grades and then finally all three districts into one. It will be a long time, over 15 years.
199 This construct has been around for a long time and they are ready for a new change.

200 Discussion ensued.

201 Ms. Lawrence remarked that she ranked K-12 third, 6-12 second and then the hybrid option first.

202 Mr. Chen suggested a name that was much more educational than “hybrid”.

203 Ms. Lawrence added that they will be presenting at the next SAU meeting on Thursday, October
204 22nd.

205 She then thanked the committee for all of their work.

206 III. Meeting Adjourned

207 **Ms. Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 5:30PM.**