

1 SAU #39 Reconfiguration Sub-Committee

2 Thursday, June 13th, 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/ MVVS Board Member, Stephen O'Keefe- MVVS Board Member, John
7 Glover- ASB Member, Ellen Grudzien- ASB Member, Laura Taylor- SCSB Member, and David
8 Chen- SCSB Member

9 Meeting Minutes: Danae Marotta

10 Public: Kathleen Peahl, Esq. Wadleigh, Starr and Peters, Manchester, NH, and Kelly Schmidt,
11 Amherst NH Community Member.

12 I. Call to Order

13 **Chair, Ms. Sarah Lawrence, called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.**

14 She then discussed some action items from a previous meeting, first, that her and Superintendent,
15 Mr. Adam Steel, had their meeting with union reps and second, looking at how many students at
16 AMS would come over and take classes at SHS. She noted she has not heard anything further
17 from Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Christine Landwehrle, and will be going with her previous
18 estimates of 17 to 30 students. Additionally, the other question was how many teachers will they
19 need to be more fluid. She added that she does not have any information on that either.

20 Ms. Taylor asked which year are they talking about.

21 Ms. Lawrence replied, it could be 7th or 8th grade going to SHS.

22 Director of Operations for SAU #39, Mr. Porter Dodge, added that they also need to look at
23 Innovation Design areas.

24 Ms. Lawrence added that they met with the union reps today and it was a very positive meeting.
25 Those in attendance were Ms. Mary Epstein, Ms. Sherry Franceour, Ms. Jan Mattie, Mr. Larry
26 Ballard and Superintendent Steel. The Souhegan rep was not at the meeting.

27 She then discussed that at the meeting Mr. Steel summarized where they are now and that they
28 know that both towns want the elementary kids to stay in their own towns. They did talk about
29 knowing that this is not a unique scenario. They used the example of Hollis Brookline and
30 talked about desired outcomes, equity for students and staff and benefits for students. Mr. Larry
31 Ballard, (represents the AEA), asked some questions with his first statement being that SHS was
32 set up to be unique and different.

33 Mr. Chen disagreed in that SHS was not set up to be unique and different. He noted that they
34 picked the selected model.

35 Ms. Lawrence added that it is important to know everyone's view point.

36 She added that Mr. Ballard also asked about the property holdings and how that would be
37 handled. His other concern was space issues and if they needed to renovate, where would that
38 money come from.

39 Mr. O'Keefe asked for clarification on who the people in attendance represented.

40 Ms. Lawrence replied that Mr. Ballard represents the AEA(teachers), Ms. Epstein is the support
41 staff rep for Amherst, Ms. Franceour is a support staff and Ms. Mattie represents the MVVS.

42 She added that Mr. Ballard asked about the custodial staff.

43 Mr. Dodge added that there is also a \$2.00 dollar pay difference for the Souhegan custodial
44 staff.

45 Ms. Lawrence noted that Director of Human Resources, Ms. Carrie James, has a master chart of
46 the comparisons of benefits.

47 Mr. Chen asked if she can envision it happening.

48 Ms. Lawrence replied yes, she can see it happening.

49 Mr. O'Keefe also replied yes. He further explained that municipalities do this all over the State.

50 Mr. Glover asked if they can play it out further in a scenario. He then asked what if there was
51 overstaffing at the HS and if they could apply them where the need is, for example 5th grade.

52 Ms. Lawrence replied from her understanding there would need to be a side agreement.

53 Ms. Kathleen Peal, Esq. Wadleigh, Starr and Peters, Manchester, NH added that it is one of the
54 issues, they would have a non-bargaining unit member performing bargaining unit work. This is
55 not going to be an easy thing to bargain for.

56 Mr. Glover added that this is a seamless movement of labor.

57 Ms. Grudzien added that it can be done but will be more complicated.

58 Ms. Lawrence asked Ms. Peal if she sees any other way to do it.

59 Ms. Peal replied, no, at least in the beginning. The only solution to make this work in a positive
60 way that is not controversial is to say that they will agree to recognize a bargaining unit at AMS.
61 It means that they have to form a new union.

62 The two units (AEA and ASSA for support staff) have been certified by the PELRB and are the
63 exclusive representatives of those employees. You are going to take part of their bargaining unit
64 and move them over and they will be employed by the SCSD. You will continue to have a
65 contract with the, Amherst AEA and the support staff, then you form and hold an election of the
66 middle school staff and then have to vote in a majority called the Souhegan Middle School
67 Education Association or a different name.

68 Ms. Lawrence asked if the existing CBA would roll into that.

69 Ms. Peal replied that is something that they would have to agree to with the union as part of this.
70 They are agreeing to recognize and not challenge the formation of a separate bargaining unit just
71 at the Souhegan Middle School and Middle School Support staff.

72 Discussion ensued.

73 Ms. Peal reminded the committee that they need to have 10 employees to be certified by the
74 PLERB. There would then be two units at Amherst, two units at Souhegan Middle School, one
75 unit in MV and no units at Souhegan. You can simplify your negotiations by keeping certain
76 things identical across the units.

77 One of the first things is to look at the existing agreements and see what MOU's need to say so
78 that you can open the doors on the date that you want it to be effective. She then asked about the
79 time frame.

80 Superintendent Steel replied that they are looking for March 2020 authorization, then start July
81 1st 2021.

82 Discussion ensued.

83 Ms. Peal explained that they need to form, when their employment ends in Amherst on June 30th
84 they would no longer be a part of the AEA. What they are talking about is having a new unit
85 formed July 1, and that unit would agree to, without fighting would only include the middle
86 school. Normally, you would have all of your teachers in one bargaining unit.

87 Mr. Glover asked if it was voted down would that mean it was all over.

88 Ms. Peal replied, yes, and there is a lot of strategy here.

89 Mr. Chen noted that normally they do not have public discussion with the public present.

90 Mr. Glover added that all they are discussing is the different pathways.

91 Ms. Lawrence commented that it is discovery. The whole process is discovery, and they are
92 public meetings.

93 Ms. Kelly Schmidt, Amherst NH Community Member, mentioned that she has attended most of
94 the meetings.

95 Ms. Peal remarked that there may be times where they have a non-public session where they talk
96 about determining what strategies that they want to take.

97 Mr. O'Keefe asked about the costs adding that he would want to map out the structure for the
98 taxpayers.

99 Ms. Peal replied that it would make sense to have some negotiation with the unions before the
100 March 2020 vote. She then added that there are a lot of what ifs, but if they negotiated with the
101 unions first, and had an agreement if they went forward with this plan they would have an AMS

102 unit for teachers and support staff. So they have these side agreements about what they are going
103 to do once the vote happens in March of 2020.

104 Ms. Schmidt asked how binding are those agreements.

105 Ms. Peal replied that the PLERB would probably not certify a unit without having an election.

106 Mr. Steel commented that he is concerned with posting a worst case scenario with the financial
107 costs.

108 Ms. Peal suggested that they sit down with the unions and let them know what they will present
109 to the voters for the March 2020 vote. If you let them know that you are proposing to seek
110 certifications for two units or possibly one with both support staff and teachers, that would be
111 helpful. The Conval District's unit has both paras and teachers. You get that agreement up front,
112 then you can present that cost to the voters. You will honor the Amherst contract through the
113 expiration date. Once you negotiate a new contract you would have to get voter approval for
114 those costs. She noted that it would be better to have these conversations sooner than later.

115 Mr. Glover asked about the enforceability of these side agreements.

116 Ms. Peal replied that she would have to think about that question.

117 Ms. Taylor asked if they can tuition in 6th grade.

118 Ms. Lawrence replied that the cost would be astronomical and the taxpayers would probably not
119 be in support. She added that it might be an interim step, and it might not be viable.

120 Ms. Grudzien added that they are not at that point and they should be careful. She then asked if
121 the tuition agreement goes away.

122 Ms. Peal replied that it will go by student enrollment and property value.

123 Discussion ensued.

124 Ms. Grudzien to say that it will save Amherst money is an unknown and it sounds like MV will
125 really benefit.

126 Mr. O'Keefe remarked that it is an access to services. This building (the MVVS) is in good
127 shape. For him, it is providing the opportunities for their students to make them better learners.

128 Ms. Lawrence added they are still hoping for that fluidity and equity for staff and students.

129 Ms. Grudzien remarked that they are facing space issues with their lower schools.

130 Ms. Lawrence commented they have a couple of minutes left to their meeting and need to come
131 up with action items or concerns for their future meeting.

132 Mr. Chen asked about the State Building Aid Fund for Cooperative School Districts and funding.

133 Discussion ensued.

134 Ms. Lawrence mentioned that she will list that as a concern. She then asked for other
135 concerns/comments.

136 Ms. Grudzien asked for a list of benefits.

137 Ms. Lawrence asked if the committee wanted to see a best case/worst case scenario with
138 calculations.

139 Mr. Chen replied that they need to understand each pathway and the associated costs.

140 Ms. Lawrence asked if that was something that they will need the new Business Administrator
141 for.

142 Superintendent Steel replied yes.

143 Mr. Glover asked about the enforceability of a sidebar agreement.

144 Ms. Peal responded that she will look into it.

145 Ms. Lawrence added that she will add that as an action item.

146 Ms. Taylor asked if verbal agreements were legal in NH.

147 Ms. Peal replied that it is a question whether they can prove it. They have what is called a Statue
148 of Frauds. She clarified that they would not do this by a verbal agreement, any sidebar
149 agreement would be in writing.

150 Ms. Lawrence noted that she would look at clarity on how MV would pay in for their students
151 and the difference with the tuition agreement and how might that payment look like on the
152 Amherst side. They are looking at the financial implications.

153 Mr. O’Keefe noted that they need to start looking at mapping out an outline for the SAU meeting
154 in the fall.

155 Mr. Steel agreed, September or October.

156 Ms. Schmidt asked about the pricing for scenarios. She added that they are looking at all of them.

157 Mr. Glover noted that they can run scenarios easily with the new BA.

158 Mr. Steel mentioned that the first task of the new BA will be the FY 2021 Budget.

159 Mr. Glover asked for a date for the next meeting.

160 Discussion ensued.

161 Ms. Lawrence noted that she will be happy to meet with the BA in July and bring her up to
162 speed. She then asked if the committee would like to meet in August.

163 Discussion ensued.

164 The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Sept 12th 4:00 PM at the MVVS (before the MVVS
165 Regular Board Meeting).

166 The Committee thanked Ms. Peal.

167 II. Meeting Adjourned

168 **Ms. Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 5:40PM**

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