

1 Souhegan Cooperative School Board

2 Wednesday, January 11, 2017

3 Public Hearing Meeting Minutes

4 Attendees:

5 Administrative Team: Peter Warburton – Superintendent, Adam Steel – Business Administrator,  
6 Rob Scully- Principal SHS, Christine Landwehrle- Director of Curriculum and Professional  
7 Development, Meg Beauchamp- Director of Student Services, John Robichaud- Director of  
8 Buildings and Grounds, Bruce Chakrin- Director of Technology, Kathy White- Dean of Faculty  
9 at SHS, and Peter Gagnon- Dean of Students.

10 Souhegan School Board- Chair- Mary Lou Mullens, Vice Chair- Howard Brown, Pim Grondstra-  
11 Secretary, Steve Coughlan, Peter Maresco and Dwayne Purvis.

12 Minute Taker: Danae Marotta

13 Public: Lisa Eastland- Chair Advisory Finance Committee Amherst NH, Jeanne Ludt, Past  
14 Souhegan School Board Member, Amherst, NH, Maggie McCabe- Amherst NH, Frank Brown-  
15 Amherst, NH, Richard Szum- Amherst NH, Amy Hanson- Clark/Wilkins Teacher, and Amherst  
16 NH, Mike Akillian- 10 Old Mont Vernon Road, Sue Birchard 6 Alden Lane Amherst NH, and  
17 Lynn Brinks- Amherst NH.

18 I. Call to Order – Chair Mary Lou Mullens

19 **Chair Mary Lou Mullens called the Public Hearing to order at 6: 02PM**

20 She then welcomed everyone and introduced the Board Members and Superintendent  
21 Warburton.

22 Superintendent Warburton thanked everyone for coming out and introduced Principal Rob  
23 Scully and other District Administration.

24 He noted that this meeting is Live Streamed for everyone at home. *See ([www.sau39.org](http://www.sau39.org)  
25 >Livestream>SAU 39 Video on Demand Library>Souhegan 01/11/2017)*

26 Ms. Mullens then introduced Ms. Lisa Eastland as the Chair of the Advisory Finance Committee.

27 Ms. Mullens noted that they value public input and that is the intention of this presentation.

28 II. Public Hearing

29 Ms. Mullens discussed the strategic direction of the Souhegan School District.

30 She then reviewed some highlights of SHS such as Interdisciplinary Learning/ Integrated  
31 Instruction, Competency Based Education, High Quality Instruction, and personalization among  
32 other features.

33 She then discussed who we are, the student experience, staffing requirements, fixed costs,  
34 discretionary items and then the budget. She added that the Budget undergoes several drafts that  
35 are carefully scrutinized before this public hearing.

36 Ms. Mullens then reviewed Warrant Article #2 about the proposed FY' 18 budget.

37 Article # 2. "Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District raise and appropriate as an  
38 operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other  
39 appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or  
40 as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling eighteen  
41 million, fourteen thousand, six hundred and fifty-two dollars (\$18,014,652)? Should this article  
42 be defeated, the default budget shall be seventeen million, nine hundred and three thousand, one  
43 hundred and seventy-seven dollars (\$17,903,177), which is the same as last year, with certain  
44 adjustments required by previous action of the Souhegan Cooperative School District or by law;  
45 or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and  
46 XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only? Majority vote required.

47 She then showed the pie chart of the Budget and noted that the largest piece is staffing and  
48 benefits making up 69%.

49 Ms. Mullens explained the overview of the general fund. She noted that right from the beginning  
50 they had increases of almost 1 million (Non-Discretionary Items add \$960,492 to the budget).

51 She then discussed the mandatory increases of Health Insurance \$265,519 1.50%, Special  
52 Education Tuition \$254,178 1.44%, Transportation \$186,318 1.06%, New Hampshire  
53 Retirement \$162,490 0.92%, PPC Step Increase \$ 59,719 0.34%, and SAU Apportionment \$  
54 32,268 0.18%, for a total: \$ 960,492 5.44%

55 She then reviewed the discretionary impacts noting, Staffing Reductions: (\$607,976) -3.44%  
56 Paving moved to warrant: (\$150,000) -0.85%, Technology Infrastructure: \$ 80,165 0.45% and  
57 All other impacts: \$ 83,101 0.47% Totaling net reduction (\$594,710) -3.37%

58 She then discussed the breakdown of staff reductions and based on the decrease in enrollment.  
59 She noted the decrease in enrollment from this year to the projected FY' 18.

60 She noted the FY' 18 changes in personnel, eliminate 4.0 teaching positions, reduce  
61 administrative position to half-time, eliminate 1.0 facilities position, and to eliminate 1.0  
62 paraprofessional position. She then noted the cost savings and that they reduced 26 positions in  
63 the last 4 years.

64 She then discussed the overall impact of FY' 17 adopted budget: \$17,648,870, mandatory items:  
65 \$ 960,492 and the discretionary items: (\$ 594,710) for a total of: \$18,014,652

66 She then introduced Mr. Steve Coughlan.

67 Mr. Coughlan discussed the two different views of the budget. He noted that salaries and  
68 benefits are the largest part, he then noted transportation as second. He then noted that the  
69 categories fall down from there.

70 He then noted the second way to look at the budget as a budget overview by function. He added  
71 that you can look at it one way or another.

72 He then discussed the cost per pupil, and that they use the State's computation. He added that  
73 the State tells them the way to do it and it helps them do comparisons. He then discussed the  
74 trend of cost per pupil from 2001. He then discussed the trend over time. He then noted that the  
75 2% increase impacts almost all of the state. He added that SHS is not alone in the increases.

76 Mr. Coughlan then discussed the Cost per Pupil Comparison.

77 He concluded with the Projected Cost per Pupil forecast. He noted that it is a range and  
78 computed at the end of the year, how much money they really spent and the per pupil varies due  
79 to people coming and leaving.( FY'16 CPP was \$18,267, FY'17 CPP projected between  
80 \$17,800 - \$18,100, and FY'18 CPP projected between \$19,200 - \$19,600)

81 He then introduced Ms. Mary Lou Mullens again.

82 Ms. Mullens then noted that there is time now for public comment

83 Ms. Jeanne Ludt, 3 School Street, Amherst NH, commented that she is concerned that FY' 18  
84 budget is too tight. She noted the current budget freeze and does not want the same situation  
85 next year.

86 Ms. Mullens noted that it was going to be tight but didn't expect it to be this tight.

87 Mr. Steel, Business Administrator, replied that they are confident that they budgeted more  
88 appropriately for the ensuing fiscal year.

89 Ms. Maggie McCabe, Amherst NH, commented that she is refuting this and noted that she  
90 believes that they are less efficient then at their peak enrollment and it keeps going down. In  
91 respect to ratios, she believes that 10 more staff should come out and that they are over staffed  
92 and haven't addressed it. She further added that she believes that they are going to be over  
93 \$23,000 per student.

94 No other public comment.

95 Mr. Coughlan then discussed the additional 3 warrant articles.

96 He then discussed Warrant Article #3 Impact of contractual agreement with teachers and support  
97 staff.

98 He explained that it is a one year agreement only and the incremental cost is \$94,534. He added  
99 that this was one of the most difficult negotiations and the reason was that they started off the  
100 year with uncontrolled increases from other things. He then discussed the fixed \$750 raise for all  
101 teachers on the scale and off the scale \$375. He noted the support staff would get a 2.0%  
102 increase on the scale and off the scale a 1% increase.

103 He noted the healthcare costs and encouraged staff members to move to a lower cost Lumenos  
104 health plan. He then remarked about the continued work next year to address critical issues and  
105 the structural change to career growth resulting in savings of 18-27%.

106 Mr. Coughlan then discussed Warrant Article #4 Contribution to Facilities ETF.

107 He added that the expendable trust that they use for maintenance and unexpected emergencies.  
108 He added that every year they ask the voters for sixty-five thousand dollars (\$65,000) from the  
109 year-end unassigned fund balance (surplus) if available to be added to the expendable trust fund.  
110 He then mentioned if there is more left over that amount is eligible to be returned to the tax  
111 payers.

112 He then noted that what is in the expendable trust fund now is just about \$175,000 and the past  
113 target was \$200,000 and then new target is \$250,000. He added that it was recommended that  
114 \$250,000 be in there now due to things costing more and having an older building.

115 Lastly, Mr. Coughlan reviewed Warrant Article #5 Paving.

116 He then added that the last major item is the repaving which is a three year phased approach. He  
117 noted that last year was phase one. He added that phase two is now a warrant article.

118 He then discussed the estimated tax impact if the FY' 18 budget and three warrant articles are all  
119 adopted. He noted that Amherst would see a \$172 increase and Mont Vernon would see a \$309  
120 increase. He added that it is based on the average home values in Amherst and Mont Vernon.

121 He then introduced Ms. Mullens again for Public Comment.

122 Mr. Richard Szum, Amherst NH, added that he would like more information on the state  
123 mandated increases. He asked if they can say no.

124 Ms. Mullens replied, no, they cannot control that. He then asked about lowering the default  
125 budget.

126 She discussed that it is a calculation by the State.

127 Mr. Coughlan then explained the default budget.

128 He explained that it is mechanically produced number, which would be last year's budget, then  
129 things that are obligated by contract or law (either up or down) and then reduced by one time  
130 expenditures. He then noted the two one-time expenditures as being the storage facility and the  
131 paving. He added that they even reduced the number of staff. He added that everything else is  
132 going up, gas, health insurance, NH retirement, ect. He added that is how you get to the default  
133 budget.

134 Mr. Szum noted that he finds that it is hard to understand why the FY'18 budget can't be \$15  
135 million then the default would be \$14.9M. He then asked why you can't take more out of it.

136 Mr. Coughlan then discussed SHS student to teacher ratio.

137 Mr. Szum then noted that he believes that the budget is out of control and not getting any better.  
138 He remarked that tying these rates to the house value is ridiculous.

139 Ms. McCabe asked about the \$15,000 in related to food services. She noted that they have been  
140 taking money out of the general fund and transferring it to food service. Her second question is

141 related to the PPC. She then asked if the warrant articles could be split, one for the staff and  
142 another for the support staff.

143 Mr. Coughlan replied that Amherst has it split. He further mentioned that they would have to  
144 choose to negotiate with each group separately.

145 Mr. Steel replied that the food service budget is different in that it was not meant to affect taxes.

146 Ms. McCabe then remarked that she took the warrant articles added them, then divided by the  
147 projected student enrollment of 775 the amount would be \$23,644 per student. She then added  
148 that is what private school costs.

149 Mr. Szum then asked for 10% off the budget.

150 Mr. Maresco noted that by reducing the budget by 10% or \$1.8M it would have devastating  
151 effects and lower the quality of education. He added that they would have loved to have kept it  
152 the same but there were mandated increases.

153 He further stated that Mr. Szum needs to understand the budget process.

154 Ms. Mullens added she could not tell him exactly where the 10% decrease would come from.  
155 She noted that they carefully look at the budget.

156 Mr. Maresco noted that they have a class size that they keep in mind. He added that they have a  
157 budget process and cannot go into what will be affected because they do not know.

158 Mr. Mike Akillian, 10 Old Mont Vernon Rd. Amherst, NH asked for the vote of the Board  
159 Members.

160 Ms. Sue Birchard, 6 Alden Lane Amherst NH, remarked that the Board Meetings are open to the  
161 public and suggested going to the Board Meetings in person throughout the year or watch them  
162 over Livestream.

163 Ms. Lynn Brinks Amherst NH, commented that it is the job of the School Board to lower costs.

164 Mr. Frank Brown, Amherst, NH commented that Bedford and Hollis have lower costs and a  
165 greater teacher/ student ratio and their educational quality is better.

166 Ms. Mullens replied, thank you Mr. Brown for your opinion.

167 Mr. Brown answered, that it was a fact.

168 The Board thanked the public for their comments.

169 III. Close Public Hearing

170 **Chair Mary Lou Mullens closed the Public Hearing at 7:02PM.**

171 (Reconvene to SHS Main Office Conference Room)

172 **Mary Lou Mullens** called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M.

173 **Present: Souhegan Cooperative School Board: Mary Lou Mullens, Howard Brown, Pim**  
 174 **Grondstra, David Chen, Steve Coughlan, Peter Maresco, Dwayne Purvis**

175 **Minutes Recorder: Pim Grondstra**

176 IV. Action

177 1. FY18 Warrant Articles

178 **Mary Lou Mullens** led a discussion on tonight's Public Hearing and items that were raised that  
 179 should be answered. Questions on the budget will be sent to Peter Warburton, Adam Steel and  
 180 Rob Scully.

181 **ARTICLE 2**

182 *"Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget,*  
 183 *not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted*  
 184 *separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of*  
 185 *the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling eighteen million, fourteen thousand,*  
 186 *six hundred and fifty-two dollars (\$18,014,652)? Should this article be defeated, the default*  
 187 *budget shall be seventeen million, nine hundred and three thousand, one hundred and seventy-*  
 188 *seven dollars (\$17,903,177), which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by*  
 189 *previous action of the Souhegan Cooperative School District or by law; or the governing body*  
 190 *may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of*  
 191 *a revised operating budget only?"* **Majority vote required.**

192 **Voting on this article is postponed until January 23, 2017, in order to have additional**  
 193 **questions answered.**

194 **ARTICLE 3**

195 *"Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District vote to approve the costs included in the*  
 196 *agreement between the Souhegan Cooperative School Board and the professional and support*  
 197 *staff of Souhegan Cooperative High School which calls for the following increases in salaries*  
 198 *and benefits at current staffing levels:*

199 *Year Estimated Costs*

200 *2017-2018 \$94,534*

201 *and further to raise and appropriate the sum of ninety four thousand, five hundred and thirty-*  
 202 *four dollars (\$94,534) for the 2017-2018 school year, such sum representing the additional costs*  
 203 *attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits over those of the appropriation at current*  
 204 *staffing levels?"* **Majority vote required to pass.**

205 **A motion made by Steve Coughlan to place on the warrant, Article 3 as presented at the**  
 206 **Public Hearing. Peter Maresco seconded motion. No discussion. Motion unanimously**  
 207 **passed (7-0-0).**

208 **ARTICLE 4**

209 *“Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District raise and appropriate up to sixty-five thousand*  
210 *dollars (\$65,000) from the year-end unassigned fund balance (surplus) if available on June 30,*  
211 *2017, to be added to the expendable trust fund known as the School Maintenance Fund,*  
212 *previously established in March, 2005?”* **Majority vote required to pass.**

213 **A motion made by David Chen to place on the warrant, Article 4 as presented at the Public**  
214 **Hearing. Peter Maresco seconded motion. No discussion. Motion unanimously passed (7-**  
215 **0-0).**

216 **ARTICLE 5**

217 *“Shall the Souhegan Cooperative School District raise and appropriate one hundred and fifty*  
218 *thousand dollars (\$150,000) for the purpose of paving part of the Souhegan driveways and*  
219 *parking spaces?”* **Majority vote required to pass.**

220 **A motion made by Steve Coughlan to place on the warrant, Article 5 as presented at the**  
221 **Public Hearing. David Chen seconded motion. No discussion. Motion unanimously passed**  
222 **(7-0-0).**

223 **VOTE TO SUPPORT WARRANT**224 **ARTICLE 2 (Motion Tabled)**

225 **A motion was made by Steve Coughlan to support Article 2 as presented at the Public**  
226 **Hearing. Peter Maresco seconded motion. Motion passed unanimously (7-0-0).**

227 **ARTICLE 3**

228 **A motion was made by Steve Coughlan to support Article 3 as presented at the Public**  
229 **Hearing. Peter Maresco seconded motion. Motion passed unanimously (7-0-0).**

230 **ARTICLE 4**

231 **A motion was made by Steve Coughlan to support Article 4 as presented at the Public**  
232 **Hearing. Peter Maresco seconded motion. Motion passed unanimously (7-0-0).**

233 **ARTICLE 5**

234 **A motion was made by Steve Coughlan to support Article 5 as presented at the Public**  
235 **Hearing. Peter Maresco seconded motion. Motion passed unanimously (7-0-0).**

236 **V. REVIEW OF MEETING/ADJOURNMENT**

237 **8:20 P.M. Dwayne Purvis** motioned to adjourn the meeting. **Seconded by Steve Coughlan.**  
238 **Motion passed unanimously (7-0-0).**