

**SOUHEGAN SCHOOL BOARD
FINAL MINUTES**

August 18, 2009

Chairman Steve Coughlan called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m.

**I. CALL TO
ORDER**

Present

Souhegan School Board: Chairman Steve Coughlan, Mary Lou Mullens, Christine Janson, Dana Redmond, Pamela Coughlin, and Dan Foley

Administrative Team: Dr. Mary Jennings, Jim Bosman, Elizabeth Shankel, Renea Sparks, Peggy Silva, Bob Thompson, Colleen Meaney, and Nicole Heimarck.

Minutes Recorder: Heather Loewy Nichols

ATTENDANCE

Kim Roberge explained that she signed up her two children for sports and she was shocked to see the 100% increase in athletic fees. She noted that she did not see any reasoning for the increase in the minutes and that there hasn't been any slow down in the other fundraising and mandatory purchased items. Mr. Coughlan stated there was a discussion at budget time regarding user fees. In response to a question from Mr. Redmond, Ms. Roberge stated that she has two children and they are in three sports each. Dr. Jennings stated that the administration and the Athletic Director can get back to her for a longer discussion and explanation.

II. PUBLIC TIME

Dana Borassa appeared before the Board and explained that the group came to the meeting to show support for the girl's ice hockey coach noting that he has been doing an outstanding job but was terminated this week. He explained that he has been coaching for 33 years, mostly at Milford High School, and he knows that Rick puts good sporting behavior ahead of wins and loses and is a good example for the girls. He asked that whatever the issue is be worked out and that the coach be reinstated.

Courtney Jamison appeared before the Board and explained that she graduated last year from Souhegan. She then read a letter from her mother explaining what that Rick was a good coach.

Andrea Catino appeared before the Board and explained that she also graduated last year and that Rick taught her to keep getting back up.

Dr. Jennings explained that the decision is made by the Principal and the

Athletic Director; if the coach wants to appeal he can do so through the Superintendent.

Rick stated that he does not have an official document that says that he was officially terminated and the specific reasons.

A. Principal's Report

Chairman Coughlan welcomed the new principal. Mr. Bosman stated that his report was included in the Board's packet. He explained that he has been working on a variety of programs and curriculum work with teachers and staff, in particular senior projects, grade 10 exhibition, and learner expectations. He stated that he is ready to meet the staff at the retreat which will be occurring at Rivier College. He stated that the administration is beginning the new comers and intern training next week and noted that there are not many professional staff new comers this year so the training is more focused on interns. He further explained that an administrative off site was held last week and there was discussion regarding supervision and evaluations. He stated that the facilities are in good shape and functioning well and the summer work has included painting, minor repairs, and the gym floor construction which has been completed. He also noted that the grounds crew has done a terrific job. Mr. Bosman noted that he included a portion of his letter to the staff in his report to the Board and that he has felt very welcomed and everyone has been very helpful. He thanked Sally and Rhonda and noted that he is very eager to meet the kids. He also explained that he shared with the staff his personal perspective with regards to how he might be able to help the school, including ways of documenting internal growth and progress. He stated that he would like to make sure that the staff regenerates the spirit of Souhegan as he remembers it. Lastly he noted that he would be happy to assist in finding new leaders for the school.

Mr. Redmond noted that the gym looks good and suggested that Mr. Bosman look into a protective step between the doors and gym floor like rubberized carpeting.

Ms. Janson stated that she has heard many complaints about interns being advisors and asked that the practice be evaluated.

Mr. Bosman explained that a lot of time during orientation is spent on advisory as he thinks it is an important part of the school and he wants the interns to be part of all aspects of the school. He further explained that he thinks that it is important to give the interns as real of an experience as

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

possible. He also noted that he will monitor how they are doing.

Ms. Silva noted that interns are graduate students versus being undergraduates and they receive professional development one or twice a month regarding advisory and attend a graduate course every Thursday at UNH that often discusses advisory.

Ms. Meaney noted that having the interns teach advisory provides a benefit to the whole advisory program because it lowers student numbers in each class.

Ms. Silva stated that Joleen Sawyer is the advisory contact and she will make sure Ms. Sawyer puts an article in the connection.

B. Committee Reports

1. Expendable Trust Fund

Mr. Redmond stated that RFQ's went out, the responses have been received, a meeting has been scheduled to review the responses, the candidates will be interviewed, and then the committee will make a recommendation to the School Board.

2. Communications Committee

Ms. Janson noted that the Communication Committee continues to put something in the Citizen once a month.

In response to a question from Chairman Coughlan, the Board asked that the minutes of June 18, 2009 and August 11, 2009 be pulled from the Consent Agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

The following Consent Agenda items were adopted without objection.

B. Budget

1. Treasurer's Report

a. June 2009

2. Manifest

a. June 2009

b. July 2009

C. Transfer

D. Quarterly Report – Student Activities Fund

E. FY09 Budget – Surplus Spending Report

F. DOE 25/MS25 Reports

A. Minutes

A MOTION was made by Mr. Foley and SECONDED by Ms. Mullens to

Souhegan School Board Meeting Minutes for August 18, 2009

Approved 9/15/09.

approved the minutes of June 18, 2009 as amended.

Voting: 4 ayes; motion carried with Ms. Coughlin abstaining.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Mullens and SECONDED by Mr. Foley to approve August 11, 2009 as amended.

Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

A. FY10 Souhegan Cooperative School District Board Agenda Goals

The Board decided to table this item until the next meeting.

B. Financial Policy Issues

In response to a question from Mr. Redmond, Ms. Shankel stated that the direction the Board has already committed to taking, where each member takes a section of the budget to understand, will be beneficial to the Board. She suggested that the Board go through that process and then if they still need help they can go over another route.

Mr. Redmond confirmed that a Board Member and a Ways and Means Committee member will team up with a section of the budget and then they will meet with the director of that area and review their budget with them so they can bring the knowledge to the Board.

Ms. Shankel stated that she thinks that this process will be very valuable.

Mr. Coughlan asked if there were any other specific areas that Board feels they need more information on.

Dr. Jennings stated that she is very satisfied with the quarterly reports that Ms. Shankel produces and noted that if the Board has questions the administration will provide the back up as necessary.

Ms. Janson noted that the discussion was that the Board is not aware of some items even though they were in the reports. She wondered if there was a way for the Board to be more aware.

Ms. Shankel stated that she will change the format of the report and see if that helps.

A. Tuition Agreement: Proposed Exception

Dr. Jennings explained that there was a concern that the PPC brought to the administration's attention last fall when this policy was enacted and also the staff members were concerned about their rights. She explained that due to the discussions of the legislature regarding non resident tuition for faculty

**V. DISCUSSION
ITEMS**

VI. ACTION ITEMS

members, HB143 was reviewed and sent to committee in January. She further explained that even though the legislature did not act on the bill, but rather sent it to committee, the language in the bill is in the policy that the Board has put in place. When the SAU became aware that a member of the faculty wanted to send her child to the school they spent \$4,500 in legal fees coming up with a model agreement so that the sending district would be comfortable. She further explained that if the Souhegan district finds that the child qualifies for the Special Education then they will allow the sending district to be the LEA, and since the parents agreed to the stipulation, the administration thought the agreement might be a viable option, however the agreement was rejected by the sending School Board, and the parent is asking for an exception as allowed by the policy.

In response to a question from Mr. Redmond, Dr. Jennings explained that if the situation was reversed she would not advise the district to send their student to another district unless the agreement was in place, but if it was in place she would recommend the transfer to the Board.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Ms. Coughlin explained that the bill was laid on the table in the Senate and they still have another year to deal with it before it dies. Mr. Coughlan noted that it probably will not be discussed before January.

Dr. Jennings suggested that perhaps there is need for a different legislation than HB143.

Ms. Sparks noted that the district of residence will always be responsible for a free and public education as this is federal law.

Ms. Meaney stated that it was the Commissioner of Education who said that he felt the receiving district should be responsible but it goes against the federal guidelines.

Ms. Mullens stated that once the district accepts the liability, the liability remains with the district.

In response to a question from Ms. Janson, Dr. Jennings explained that the sending district did not want to accept the liability or be the “test case” for the state as the legislation is still new.

Dr. Jennings introduced Joanne McDeed and her son Patrick noting that he wants to be a 9th grader at Souhegan despite the policy.

Ms. McDeed stated that she has been a math teacher at Souhegan since 1993 and for the past six years she has been the math coordinator. She noted that her daughter Erin was a student at Souhegan and graduated in 2008 when none of these issues existed. She explained that Patrick has grown up knowing that he would go to Souhegan, and looking forward to it, and she has looked forward to him coming also. She thanks the administration for the time and money that has already been spent on their issue, but noted that she feels very disappointed and like they are stuck in the middle.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Foley and SECONDED by Mr. Redmond to make the exception for Joanne and Patrick McDeed.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley as to whether not sending Patrick to Souhegan would create other hardships for her family, Ms. McDeed stated that it would disrupt her philosophy of education and the education she would like him to receive.

Mr. Coughlan stated that he wanted to pursue an agreement because they are working on finding a way to fix a problem that has been brought to their attention and he noted that he went in optimistically believing that a fair and equitable agreement could be made. He further explained that they have bent over backwards because the Board wants the children of their faculty to come here and he advocated for the policy change because he felt it was necessary to protect the district but he also wants to do the right thing for the faculty.

Ms. Mullens stated that she was not a big fan of the policy change and it took a long time to convince her that it was something that had to be done but she is torn because she would love to have all the faculty's kids at the school but she is worried about judging on a case by case basis who they let in and who they don't.

Mr. Redmond stated that it is a shame to put a family in this situation but it is Merrimack's issue; on the other hand the Board would be obligating the town and tax payers, especially if there turns out to be a Special Education issue.

Ms. Mullens questioned whether there was any way that Merrimack could be convinced to change their mind.

Mr. Coughlan stated that the Superintendent and lawyer for Merrimack, and the parents, met with the Board and they were all in favor of the agreement but the Board still voted against it.

Ms. Sparks asked the Board to make sure that they keep the district in a position where they are not discriminating against any student noting that another student may come to the school whom is already has a Special Education plan and the Board may want to be careful that the exception tonight does not create an issue in the future.

Mr. Coughlan stated that he is not sure that the Board would be setting a binding precedent, especially considering that the Boards are always changing depending on the political feel at the time.

Mr. Foley and Mr. Redmond AMENDED their motion adding “without precedent” to it.

Mr. Bosman stated that he can appreciate the Board’s struggle but he thinks one can look at the situation as a potential of a missed opportunity of having a positive influence on the school body. He explained that when one invites a student that really wants to be at the school they typically perform on a high level.

Ms. McDeed noted that Patrick would not be the only student at Souhegan that is a faculty member’s child whom does not live in this district.

Mr. Coughlan noted that the policy grandfathered in current students.

Dr. Jennings explained that the difference between this case and other cases is the Board’s will as a body and they could make the exception based on the fact that they would like to change the will of the legislature.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Ms. Sparks explained that if a student were to be admitted the district would be responsible for the student until they receive their High School diploma or they turn 21 which ever is sooner. She explained that it possible to have issues ranging from a mild issue that the staff can assume without cost to a traumatic brain injury that could result in the district paying for a residential placement until the student turns 21.

In response to a question from Mr. McDeed, Dr. Jennings explained that the district can not have an agreement that says that the parents will pay for Special Education costs because they can not put the cost on the parents. Mr. McDeed suggested that they sign agreement that they will withdraw Patrick if he were to be identified with special needs. Dr. Jennings explained that the old policy says that the parents will either pay or withdraw their student but if

the parent doesn't do either the school is still liable for the costs.

Mr. McDeed noted that the risk is very small because the percentage of students that come from out of district is very small.

Ms. Meaney noted that she has not heard the Board make a fear based decision in a long time.

Voting: 5 nays; motion failed unanimously.

The Board expressed their apologies to the McDeed family.

B. Appointment: Interim Dean of Faculty

Dr. Jennings nominated Peggy Silva for the position of Interim Dean of Faculty noting that the district would be offering her a one year, 205 days, contract for \$85,075.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Mr. Bosman explained that he had intended to meet with the PPC prior to opening the school and after they sent the email questioning the process at the school, he met with them last week. He stated that they discussed the process Dr. Jennings and he had used in coming to the recommend Ms. Silva and he assured them that this is an interim position and that there will still be interviews and such for the final candidate. He further explained that the PPC felt that the communication between them and the Board had been rocky and that they needed to monitor the enforcement of the Board's policies. He stated that after the conversations the PPC felt better and possibly will be coming to a Board with regards to a interim appointment policy. Mr. Bosman noted that he met with the faculty members of the PPC only.

Mr. Coughlan stated that a formal PPC meeting is being schedule for September 27, 2009 and that he is surprised to hear that the PPC feels that there is a communication issue with the Board.

Dr. Jennings noted that including paying the old dean, and the cost of Ms. Silva and her replacement, they are still within budget.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Foley and SECONDED by Mr. Redmond to approved the nomination of Peggy Silva as interim Dean of Faculty.

Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

C. Personnel: Nominations

Dr. Jennings nominated Meghan Libby for the position of Speech and

Language Pathologist and Jeanne Sturgis as Literacy Coordinator.

In response to a question from Mr. Coughlan, Mr. Bosman stated that there are still a couple of paraprofessional positions in the Special Education department but every other position is filled.

Ms. Sparks noted that she has plenty of applications and that the positions will be filled for September.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Foley and SECONDED by Ms. Janson to approve the nominations as recommended by the Superintendent.

Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

D. FY09 Athletic User Fees: Family Caps

In response to a question from Mr. Redmond, Mr. Bosman stated that he will participate in trying to come to a resolution of the Hockey Coach issue.

Mr. Coughlan explained that the Board was considering whether they should cap the athletic user fees.

Mr. Redmond reminded explained that he questioned what the impact of capping the user fees at \$500 per family would be and he found that there are twelve kids that played more than 1 sport for 4 years in High School. He stated that there were 1,046 registrations last year and the athletic department is expecting the same this year. He noted that this is more registrations than he has ever heard of the school having previously. He also noted that families still would not qualify for that cap even if they had two kids in two sports each so it appears that a cap would have a minimal impact on the budget and would show that the Board is trying to prevent any hardship. He recommended the cap and noted that it can be changed next year. He stated that the increase in fees will generate \$45,000 in revenue and the cap will not impact the budget much.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Redmond and SECONDED by Ms. Mullens to cap the athletic fees to \$500 per year, per family.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Mr. Redmond suggested that maybe making the cap a little lower would be a better compromise but noted that it is hard to tell because they do not have hard numbers. He also noted that the lower the cap is the more the impact it will have.

Ms. Shankel stated that she feels it might be fair for this year to have a lower

cap.

Mr. Foley stated that he feels that maybe the Board rushed into the decision to raise the fees and he does not want to rush into a decision again.

Mr. Coughlan explained that it was a budgetary decision to close a hole in the budget and noted that the Board analyzed many areas and decided on this solution to cover the gap in the budget.

Ms. Janson noted that people need to understand that the \$50 or \$100 fee does not cover the cost of the athletic programs.

Ms. Mullens noted that parents expected not to have to do as much fundraising because of the increase in the user fee.

In response to a question from Mr. Coughlan, Mr. Redmond stated that the school is not providing the basic required needs of all the teams.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Ms. Shankel explained that the unreserved fund balance is \$246,000 and with \$40,000 being transfer to the facilities, it leaves a fund balance of \$206,000, which is 28,000 more than the estimate that was given to the tax payers at district meeting. She further explained that this amount was not on the revenue sheet so when it is added the bottom line tax rate should balance out.

Dr. Jennings noted that the district may also have some other surprise costs due to lack of funding.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Foley and SECONDED by Ms. Coughlin to table the issue.

Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

E. Appointment to RSEC Board

Dr. Jennings explained that the RSEC Board governs the alternative schools in the area and the members consist of rotating community members and Board members. She stated that the Board meets a minimum of 6 times a year from 8 am to 10 am so that RSEC staff can make presentations and the Board can deal with items such as setting salaries and hearing grievances. She explained that it is Souhegan and Mont Vernon's turn to have a Board member on the RSEC Board. She noted that Leo White has been appointed from Mont Vernon and that it is a two year appointment.

Mr. Coughlan volunteered to serve on the Board without objection.

F. Proposal for Additional SCSB Work Sessions

Dr. Jennings noted that creating more meetings will take away from the SAU and she would like direction as to what they SAU should not be doing when they are preparing for the meetings.

The Board discussed ways to get items done such as extra work sessions, separate committee work, and action item review.

Dr. Jennings noted that there is a meeting scheduled on September 17th which is back to school night, so the Board decided to have a meeting on September 15th instead.

VII. OTHER

Mr. Bosman also noted that the senior project late starts are also not on the calendar and could possibly be on January 19th and March 2nd.

In response to a question from Dr. Jennings, the Board asked her to put the following items on the next meetings agenda: Agenda goals, athletic presentation, athletic fee cap, expendable trust RFP public hearing, and the opening of school report.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Foley and SECONDED by Ms. Coughlin to adjourn the meeting.

Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

VIII. REVIEW OF MEETING/ ADJOURN

Chairman Coughlan declared the meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1. policy committee to discuss the need for a interim appointment policy*