

**SOUHEGAN SCHOOL BOARD  
FINAL MINUTES  
November 17, 2009**

Chairman Coughlan opened the public hearing at 6:00 p.m.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**Present**

**ATTENDANCE**

Souhegan School Board: Chairman Steve Coughlan, Vice Chair Jeanne Ludt, Mary Lou Mullens, Christine Janson, Pamela Coughlin, and Dan Foley.

Administrative Team: Dr. Mary Jennings, Jim Bosman, Elizabeth Shankel, Colleen Meaney, and Bob Thompson.

Minutes Recorder: Heather Loewy Nichols

Ms. Shankel explained that the district has been offered a \$12,000 donation to be used in the area of special education. She explained that the donation comes from a family that in the past has given to the Amherst district but now their child is in the Souhegan district and they would like to make a donation in appreciation of the team's effort.

**II. PUBLIC HEARING**

Mr. Bosman stated that he met with the parents and they are very appreciative of the progress their son has made. They felt very supported and had a really good year so they have decided to continue their tradition of donating to the school their child is in. He stated that he has considered purchasing a laptop cart for the academic support program as the parents would like the money to support the programs that benefitted their son last year.

Chairman Coughlan called for public comment and heard none.

Chairman closed the public hearing at 6:15 p.m.

**Regular Meeting**

Chairman Coughlan called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**Present**

**ATTENDANCE**

Souhegan School Board: Chairman Steve Coughlan, Vice Chair Jeanne Ludt, Mary Lou Mullens, Christine Janson, Pamela Coughlin, and Dan Foley.

Administrative Team: Dr. Mary Jennings, Jim Bosman, Elizabeth Shankel, Colleen Meaney, and Bob Thompson,

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**A. Principal's Report**

Mr. Bosman introduced Wally, coordinator of the Sabers for Habitat Program.

Wally stated that he was really honored to attend the National Habitat Youth Conference in Chicago, and noted that when he shared his experience with others they were surprised that Souhegan has no affiliation and is still able to involve approximately 75 students a year. He explained that great things happen during the trips as the students explore the idea of hope and empowerment and issues of poverty housing through building a home. He stated that it is rich learning experience.

Jessica Courkey, a senior, stated that when she was a sophomore she wanted to go but was not chosen however this year her name was drawn. She explained that this was her first experience leaving the coast and going south and also seeing poverty she had never seen before. She stated that it was a whole new world in post Katrina Louisiana. She stated that they met with Katrina victims and heard the story of the home owner which made it more worthwhile. She stated that building a home meant a lot to the families and them as a group. She stated that the group talks everyday about how much they miss it and for her it was great timing because it allowed her to take a break from the stresses of schools and to see a different side of the country that changed her life. She stated that it means a lot that as students they have an opportunity like this.

Mr. Bosman presented a Spirit of Souhegan award to the Sabers of Habitat for helping others build a better future.

In response to a question from Mr. Coughlan, Wally explained that this year was the first time that he had less students than slots but the last four or five years he had 50 people for 15 slots. He explained that he has tried to put together a local day but it is harder to organize. He stated that there are four trips currently for the winter session but there is always the opportunity to do more. He stated that there is a high level of desire but they have to continue offering more local experiences for affordability and more away trips as they seem to provide a deeper experience.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Wally stated that he would like to try to maintain affiliates but sometimes they run out of work, however the affiliate Louisiana would be ideal for a longer term relationship because they

**II.****ANNOUNCEMENTS**

will be rebuilding for years to come. He also noted that another factor in deciding is how able they are to put up 15 to 18 people. He explained he and the students were warmly welcomed and the kids felt highly respected by the adults running the habitat affiliate.

Mr. Bosman stated that he included his report in the Board's packet and explained that they have introduced senior projects and were successful in the football tournament. He stated that they had a speaker in to speak about Darfur and the kids are back into classes and working hard. He also noted that an evening and day of parent conferences was well attended as were two parent coffees that were held. He stated that a contingent of teachers went to the Fall Forum in New Orleans and were able to converse with other coalition schools. He further noted that the PTSA is scheduling parent to parent support groups and another round of admin coffees after the holidays.

#### **B. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Jennings explained that yesterday Renee Sparks was largely responsible for planning the H1N1 clinic that the district will be hosting on Dec 19<sup>th</sup>. She stated that they will be sending a survey through the school email to find out how many people would be interested in attending. She noted that they will be providing the location but the emergency preparedness people will largely be responsible for running the clinic.

Dr. Jennings stated that the recovery plan team that presented last month at the SAU meeting will be meeting tonight at 7:00 with representatives as chosen by the different boards. She noted that the Souhegan Board appointed Howard Brown.

#### **C. Community Council Report**

Julie, from Community Council, explained that they ended the discussion about the late start proposal, and are talking more about the cell phone proposal. She noted that one advisory has brought an amendment to the proposal.

Lisa Kershaw, of Mont Vernon, explained that her son goes to Souhegan and she has two children in the middle school and after the recent tragedy her and other parents created a petition to get a security system put in the school, in the parking lot, and outside the school. She questioned if the group raised the money if the Board could support the system. She stated that she has 60 to 80 people on board to hold a fundraiser. She stated that Officer Smith is in favor of the system but was unable to be at the meeting. She further explained that

### **III. PUBLIC TIME**

she was able to obtain 67 signatures in 4 days on a petition to have the School Board to start the process.

Mr. Coughlan stated that he was happy to accept the petition and that the Board will probably discuss the issue on a later date.

Gregory Wall, a Senior, stated that he remembers when they put the cameras in the school it was an issue but does not think that this is bad as he thinks that the students should be able to see that it is a good thing. He thinks that cameras in the parking lot would also help with issues that occur.

#### **A. Principal Search Timeline**

Dr. Jennings presented a time line for the principal search and explained that she talked with the PPC at the High School and will be talking to the administration but she feels that the search needs to be started as soon as possible. She explained that after this Board meeting she will begin posting the job description as written last spring online and then in local papers. She stated that in December she will place the ad in the Sunday and national papers and the Board will need to identify the search committee and the satellite committees. She explained that the Board will have to decide if they want to use the same search committee, or a new one. She further explained that the search committee would screen paper applications the first week in January. During the second week interviews for the semifinalists would be scheduled and during the third week the candidates will be interviewed. Dr. Jennings stated that maybe 10 finalists would be interviewed and after that they would get permission to check references and then interview the final candidates in the first week of February. She explained that this process could be slowed down a bit but she suggested that they have one candidate a day, come for a meet and greet on campus, satellite interviews, lunch, then an interview with the search committees, and another meet and greet in the evening. Dr. Jennings suggested that committee narrow it down to three to five people for the final interviews so that it would allow for a non rushed way for the candidates to be here and for the faculty and students to have ample opportunity to meet the candidates. She explained that after they conduct site visits the search committee will select a finalist who will then be interviewed by the Superintendent and she would give the recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Coughlan asked if the Board was happy with the process.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Dr. Jennings stated that with this

#### **IV. PRESENTATIONS**

schedule they will place them ahead of the game but Conval has also opened up their search in this time line so the district will be competing with them. She also noted that most people are obliged to tell their current employers they are leaving by April.

In response to a question Dr. Jennings, the Board discussed whether they would want to use the same search committee again.

Mr. Coughlan stated that his impression was that last time the committee did an excellent job and now that they have experience they could be better the second time.

Ms. Ludt suggested that the Board ask back the same people and then fill any empty sports new people. She also stated that she thought that the committee could use another classroom teacher.

In response to a question from Dr. Jennings, Ms. Meaney stated that the faculty held nominations and both support staff and faculty members voted who they would like to represent them.

Dr. Jennings explained that the Dean of Faculty will be advertised in the same papers, but the due date for the Dean of Faculty would be one month later. She further explained that the time line would be one month later allowing for whomever they hire as Principal to participate in the hiring of the Dean of Faculty.

#### **B. NEASC Report**

Mr. Bosman stated that NEASC sent a team in 2007 to the school and they filed a report with a number of recommendations. He further explained that the school is required to file a progress report two years later and it is included in the Board's packet.

Ms. Silva explained that a two year progress report is a requirement of NEASC including the list of recommendations and whether they have been met or are still in progress. Then they are required to further review and divide the requests into two categories; ones that require extensive reporting and ones that do not. She explained that since the school now has goals that use internal ALE's, it was fascinating when they wrote the report to see how that was part of the progress they were making. She explained that there were lots of questions as to what progress has been made and in some of the later recommendations regarding the facilities it was nice to be able to say that the district had just hired a firm that would evaluating the facilities and making

recommendations. She also noted that a lot of the work has been completed but a lot is still in progress, as it is the nature of the work, which she noted is not a negative.

In response to a question from Ms. Janson, Ms. Silva stated that “at risk” is an umbrella term. Ms. Meaney explained that it can mean academically, socially, developmentally, or behaviorally at risk.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Silva stated there is no dead line when the remedies have to be completed and a five year status report is required.

Mr. Bosman explained that accreditation is a 10 year cycle and Souhegan is not at risk of losing accreditation as long as it is working towards solving any issues. He explained that he would not anticipate that the NEASC would have any issue with continuing accreditation.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Silva explained that they rejected the recommendation that they needed more opportunities for non college bound students as they felt that it was an erroneous finding and that there is ample evidence that they include all students in the learning process.

Mr. Coughlan recognized Peggy’s contribution in stepping up to work on this project.

### **C. FY11 Budget - 1<sup>st</sup> Draft**

Mr. Bosman recognized the tremendous help from Rhonda and Betty with working on the budget.

Mr. Bosman explained that the proposed budget will support programs that enable the school to attempt to meet their goals and meet increased salaries and benefits costs, support related services, and maintain the commitment to teaching loads of 80 to 1. He explained that little or no change is predicted in enrollment for next year but enrollment has decreased by 9% since 2007-2008 and staffing has decreased by 8%. He stated that the total staff count for next year is 164.

Mr. Bosman explained that the proposed budget includes funding for the technology plan, to continue to support special education, level funding for professional and curriculum development, to continue to support the literacy initiative and support curriculum review and implementation. In addition to including the interscholastic program, the budget continues to provide

replacement of carpet, roof repairs and grounds maintenance. He also noted that benefits are projected to increase by 22% and the food service will continue to strive to reduce deficit and transportation is level funded.

Mr. Bosman then reviewed the technology budget, and noted that next year there is a decrease in the amount of money and this will impact the cycle for replacement and purchasing new equipment. He stated that the school will have equipment that is 6 to 7 years old.

Mr. Bosman reviewed the interscholastic budget noting that there will be no increase in stipends but they will maintain the uniform replacement cycle. He also noted that there is an increase in officiating and registration fees and in rental fees for swimming, track, and hockey. He explained that there is an increase in dues and fees as mandated by the state and a slight increase in transportation in order to help fund preseason games. He noted that the teams will remain dependent on fundraising to meet their financial needs.

Mr. Bosman explained that they decreased the Special Education professional staff by .5FTE and decreased a paraprofessional by one FTE as a result of someone aging out of the system. He stated that he is recommending a decrease in the out of district placement and related services and an increase in psychological services for at risk students.

Mr. Bosman stated that he is proposing reducing two positions from the regular education.

Mr. Bosman then presented an analysis of the budget growth and explained that this budget as proposed is an increase of 2.4% at \$18,204,777 and it includes no new initiatives, purchases, or building but is driven by salaries, benefits, and retirement contributions.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Mr. Bosman explained that there is a proposal for psychological services to increase the monthly consultant with some of the special education services. He noted that the amount includes funds for the emergency needs of at risk students and two summer programs run by the Special Education Department. He noted that Ms. Sparks thinks that most of the cost will be covered by the IDEA grant.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Mr. Bosman stated that the budget does not include money for increases in the securities area but they have begun some conversations around looking at what could be done. He explained that the Board asked in 2006 for a security review and he has asked

the same individual to look at the security report and update it. He gave the review to Bob Thompson who is in the process of looking at a list of things that might be accomplished and the associated costs. He also noted that they have looked at the locker situation and have locked the unsecured entryways including the maintenance loading dock. He also noted that the administration is attending a variety of conferences to see what is going on on a national level with regard to safety issues. There is however nothing in the budget right now to address these items.

\*\*In response to a request from Ms. Ludt, Mr. Bosman stated that he will come to the December meeting with proposals and associated costs.

Mr. Coughlan stated that it might be worthwhile asking Officer Smith to update his past security camera proposal.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Mr. Bosman explained that \$14,000 for a cart for Science and English has been removed from the budget. He also noted that the donation will not affect the budget.

In response to a question from Ms. Janson, Mr. Bosman stated that the seven administrators include the Principal, two Deans of Faculty, a Dean of Students, the Athletic Director, Director of Guidance, and the Special Director. ,

In response to a question from Ms. Janson, Mr. Bosman stated that if the insurance costs were not increasing much he would not suggest cutting two staff but in order to present a budget that was receptive to the communities he chose a target of 2.5% increase and he couldn't get there without cutting staff.

In response to a question from a member of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Bosman explained that transition services is one of the schools targeted Special Education programs.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Mr. Bosman explained that some of the testing is provided by the school psychologist but they need to do more and typically it has been the desire of the Board to contract those services out. He stated that he does not think that adding an in house provider would save money in general because the needs change yearly.

In response to a question from a member of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Bosman stated that he has not finalized where he will reduce the staff but it will increase class sizes. He stated that he will try to minimize the effect on

the program by looking at which courses are typically under enrolled that perhaps could be targeted to be cut, or he could reduce the number of teams. He stated that he will most likely increase class sizes as he is hoping to avoid the elimination of programs.

Ms. Shankel explained that she is attempting to mitigate the insurance issue and earlier today the Human Resources director was speaking with the insurance carrier about the districts claims history and she was told that last year at this point the district had \$600,000 in claims but this year it is \$1.2 million.

Ms. Shankel explained that between now and December 11<sup>th</sup> the budget will be reviewed by the Board Members and the Ways and Means Committee.

In response to a question from a member of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Coughlan explained that the stimulus money is not meant to reduce the budget but is meant to give the district a boost with onetime expenses such as training or technology. However, he noted, a big portion went to the state and it allowed them to fund their responsibilities to the schools.

#### **A. Accept Donation**

**A MOTION was made by Ms. Coughlin and SECONDED by Ms. Mullens to accept the donation of \$12,000.**

**Voting: 6 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

#### **V. ACTION ITEMS**

#### **A. Advisory Update – Lisa Kent**

Lisa Kent, Advisory Coordinator, explained that last year in June she met with the Board and left with a list of action items and she started September of 2008 with that focus. She explained that at Souhegan Advisory has the job of educating the whole student and creates a community like culture at the school. She explained that they have a mission statement they adhere to as well as the overall mission statement of the school. She also explained that they have three goals that they renew every three years. She stated that in year one she took feedback and then she created roles and responsibilities for the advisors, called it the Advisor's Conscience and then used it as the focus of the professional development throughout last year. She then evaluated how the advisors had done on the roles and responsibilities through the "conscience," "pulse," and student and parent surveys. Ms. Kent noted that she surveys parents and students on alternating years.

#### **VI. DISCUSSION**

Ms. Kent reviewed the results of the Conscience, which is a survey completed by the advisors , and noted that on average 72% of the advisors who

completed the surveys fulfilled each of the roles and responsibilities assigned them. Those advisors who did not completely fulfill their roles or responsibilities stated that they were not able to do so due to a lack of time management for planning or because they did not know how. Ms. Kent reviewed the results of the “pulse” survey and noted that all the results were the same or better as the year before.

Ms. Kent explained that last year she tried to reach the adult population and this year she is trying to make the purpose of Advisory more transparent to the students.

Ms. Kent stated that the Fall Forum was an enlightening experience and she found that Souhegan is still on the cutting edge and the only ones having done it for 18 years. She stated that they have a solid structure in place and they were the only one with specific goals and gathering data from the three markets of share holders in order to drive the next year.

Ms. Kent explained that in response to the recent events the advisors were provided a power tool so that within 30 minutes all the students got all of the information at the same time. She also explained that the advisors were debriefed so they knew what to look for, how to help, and what supports and resources are in place. She stated that parents can be guaranteed that their children are being cared for by an adult who knows them well and Advisories removed the social boundaries that could be destructive in situations like this when dealing with assumptions and rumor by stopping the wide spread of misinformation.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Ms. Kent explained that the surveys come in to her as the coordinator but not to the evaluators and she takes note as to what advisors she may need to check in on. She explained that she does not necessarily report those issues formally but she does use the samples to create her agenda for the professional development training each month and when she goes into the advisories. She further explained that she does not formally call in advisors unless the issue continues but the small number of advisors that have had an issue respond well to her assistance.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Ms. Kent stated that the survey question that received a low response was “My Advisory program helps my parents be part of the school.”

Ms. Ludt stated that she appreciates Ms. Kent’s commitment and questioned whether the time of day is important for Advisory. Ms. Kent stated that she is

most adamant about Advisory taking place in the middle of the day. She explained that when an Advisory program fails it is overwhelmingly because it is at the end or the beginning of the day. She stated that Advisory is seen as more of an option and students tend to treat it as unimportant and easy to interrupt if it is at the beginning or end of the day.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Kent stated that when teachers first are hired they do a week of training and everyone receives two hours of Advisory training every year as part of the faculty retreat. During the year staff receive one hour a month of professional development and new comers receive additional training. She noted that, specifically because they are advisors and not councilors, they are told not to be councilors and trained as to the indicators to look for and where to send the students for help. She further noted that the importance is stressed that they very quickly get the student to the appropriate resource. She also noted that her role is to bring guidance into the Advisory so they can see the students for themselves.

In response to a concern expressed by Ms. Janson regarding the use of interns as advisors, Ms. Kent explained that when people are deemed as rookies they are more susceptible to criticism and she noted that interns are teachers; they do teach but they are not left to their own devices. She further explained that they are monitored in several ways such as they have a mentor and a buddy advisor and the advisor coordinator is checking in. She also noted that they receive training as both advisors and new comers and she would contend that there are veteran teachers who one could argue do not do as great a job as some interns. She stated that she has not found a trend that interns do not make good advisors and it is unsettling that this is the first time she has heard of a long complaint about a person. She stated that the intern probably wants the help and there are channels such as a student or parent speaking to the advisor or coming to see her.

Ms. Janson stated that she is concerned about a new student having a new teacher and Ms. Kent noted that Division 1 is a team approach.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Kent stated that if she is aware of the issue she guarantees that she will take care of it because she is here to fix and address any problems.

Ms. Mullens stated that she thinks that the misconceptions by parents need to be addressed as she thinks Advisory is a great program but if the information is not out there the program is more likely to be attacked. The Board

concurred.

Chairman Coughlan submitted a list of actions that might be done as a result of the non public session meeting from 10/22/09 as follows: **VII. OTHER**

- 1.) have the policy committee review the polices regarding pubic complaints and school personnel and public comments,
- 2.) modify existing administrative policy or practice regarding complaints about coaches from parents or athletes
- 3.) create a handbook for parents and coaches to see for code of behavior and guidelines for making complaints

**A MOTION was made by Ms. Coughlin and SECONDED by Ms. Ludt to adjourn the meeting.**

**Voting: 6 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

Chairman Coughlan declared the meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

**VIII. REVIEW OF  
MEETING/  
ADJOURN**

***ACTION ITEMS:***

- 1. Mr. Bosman stated that he will come to the December meeting with proposals with associated costs.*
- 2. Ms. Kent will email the original PowerPoint presentations to the Board.*