

SOUHEGAN SCHOOL BOARD

April 16, 2009

Chairman Steve Coughlan called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Present

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

Administrative Team: Scott Prescott, Bob Thompson, Dr. Mary Jennings, Elizabeth Shankel, and Nicole Heimarck.

Minutes Recorder: Heather Loewy Nichols

ATTENDANCE

Chairman Coughlan called for public comment and heard none.

II. PUBLIC TIME

A. Principal's Report

Chairman Coughlan stated that the Board received the principal's report in their packets and asked if the Board had any questions or comments. They did not.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

B. Community Council Report

David Brundage, Community Council Liaison, explained that the Council has recently held first class forum meetings and has almost finished the proposal regarding food options in the cafeteria. He also explained that they are almost done considering Bob Thompson's proposal to revoke off campus privileges if the substance abuse policy is violated. He noted that soon they will be holding elections and discussing filming their meetings. He also noted that they recently dealt with several funding requests.

C. Space Needs

Ms. Ludt explained that the Board approved a Space Needs/Usage Committee that originally she thought would not need to be formed until later but she now thinks it may be wise to get the committee started in order to complete an assessment of the two buildings for a baseline comparison later on. She also suggested that the entire Board go on a tour of the buildings. She reviewed the committee make up for the Board noting that they still need to appoint two faculty members.

D. Policy

Dr. Jennings stated that the Policy Committee did not meet because they are still waiting for one of the Boards to appoint a representative.

Ms. Ludt explained that after research was conducted by Community Council, the Council is considering suggesting reinstating the sale of coffee, however the current wellness policy restricts the sale of coffee while the USDA model, which is the required guideline, is less restrictive. She submitted a proposed policy amendment to the Board.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Shankel stated that since the students are buying their coffee elsewhere they are also buying their breakfast foods elsewhere.

Chairman Coughlan suggested putting this item on the next agenda for a first reading.

E. Communication Committee

Ms. Janson explained that she, Mr. Foley, Ms. Ludt, and Dr. Jennings met to discuss ideas as to what the Communication Committee should be doing such as approaching the Amherst Citizen to get some dedicated space to communicate the happenings at the Board meetings. She also explained that they discussed the need for someone to communicate information from the High School such as a public relations person. She further noted that they discussed how they could better use the website to make it more user friendly and the possibility of assigning someone with the responsibility of posting to the website.

In response to a question from Chairman Coughlan, the Board asked that the minutes be pulled from the consent agenda. Chairman Coughlan noted that Mr. Prescott's resignation package is included in the consent agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

The following Consent Agenda items were adopted without objection.

B. Budget

1. Treasurer's Report

a. March 2009

2. Manifest

a. March 2009

C. Transfer

D. Retirements

E. Resignation Letter

A MOTION was made by Ms. Mullens and SECONDED by Mr. Redmond to approve the minutes of March 19, 2009 as amended.

Voting: 6 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

A. FY10 Proposed Budget

Mr. Prescott explained that the NECAP's are taken by Juniors in the fall and include a reading and math section which determine Adequate Yearly Progress. He explained that not making Adequate Yearly Progress two years in a row will mean that the school or district is designated as a "School In Need of Improvement". He further explained that Souhegan did not make Adequate Yearly Progress in the educational disability sub group in both reading and math. He then reviewed the results including those of feeder elementary schools which also did not make Adequate Yearly Progress in their educational disability subgroups.

Mr. Prescott introduced Susan Grant. Ms. Grant stated that the school looks at data and utilizes it well by using the tests results to look at weaknesses and to try to determine if there is a pattern showing instructional issues versus special education issues. She reviewed a tiered math group program that the school will be implementing next year which will be self paced and individually driven. She also noted that that a learning specialist has been placed in each of the grade levels and that Souhegan has a literacy team in place currently. She further explained that this year the school has put a lot of emphasis on reading in particular because quite a few students were struggling with it which not only affects the schools scores but also makes it difficult for these students to access data. She stated that they have been looking at researched based programs and have visited other schools to get more ideas about facilitating improvements. She stated that they would like to start a RTI reading program in the summer and to be able to look further at the assessment data. She stated that they would like to look at differentiation through more training and focus and would like to add a math continuum for Special Education students and more support for students that are struggling, specifically during the last block of the day.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Heimarck stated that she has tracked a significant achievement gap between the other subgroups and the educational disabled students and it is a bigger gap than in the comparison districts.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Mr. Prescott stated that the PSAT, NWEA , and NECAP's include break outs into similar strands and they are seeing issues on all the tests in the similar strands.

**V.
PRESENTATIONS/
DISCUSSION
ITEMS**

Ms. Heimarck stated that evaluation of the data is showing that students in the individual schools of the SAU are gaining significantly from proficient to proficient with distinction but the students at the lower levels are not seeing those same gains.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Ms. Heimarck stated that the feeder schools have been focusing on giving early intervention to students in need of it.

B. Discipline Report

Mr. Thompson stated that one of his focuses is on attendance because he feels that the school offers great programs but they are of no use if students are not attending school, so he has been working on increasing communication with parents in dealing with truancy, class cuts, and tardiness. He also explained that he has spent a lot of time with guidance to identify absentee issues and create interventions. Mr. Thompson also explained the Administrative No Credit consequence where a student who is out more the seven days has to create a plan to make up work and correct the absentee situation in order to get credit for the course. He also explained that he has been increasing the use of school and community service as a consequence. Mr. Thompson stated that the school tardy policy needs to be reconsidered as it currently allows classroom teachers to create their own tardy policy which may or may not be appropriate. He noted that Souhegan has a 96.2% attendance rate which is one of the highest in New Hampshire.

With regards to theft, Mr. Thompson stated that the number of incidents has increased, especially since December. He stated that he meets with the School Resource Officer to try to pinpoint areas of concern, time of day, and type of item. For instance the locker rooms were previously an issue and therefore the locker doors now stay locked. He also explained that they have been having class forums and discussing how the school community needs to own the issue and send a message that these behaviors are not what their school stands for. With regards to vandalism, Mr. Thompson explained that they have been looking at the data to try to be as proactive as possible.

Chairman Coughlan introduced Officer Smith and Officer Knox, the School Resource officers from the Amherst Middle School and Souhegan.

In response to a question from Mr. Prescott, Mr. Thompson stated that the major type of vandalism is tagging and that there is a group of students who believe that this vandalism is a form of art and they have been researching

tagging and practicing it on the school. Mr. Prescott noted that 90% of the vandalism issues are tagging.

In response to a question from Mr. Redmond, Mr. Thompson stated that he feels that there are a number of proactive steps that can be taken before falling to the last resort of installing camera, rather he feels that the students need to be educated and motivated.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Mr. Thompson stated that the expectation has now been communicated to the teachers that the administration needs to know what students are absent at the beginning of the day not the end of the day as was happening previously.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Officer Smith stated that he has been at the school five years. Mr. Prescott noted that the number of thefts increased the first year that the Resource Officer was on duty probably due to increased ability of students to report a theft.

In response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Mr. Thompson stated that he feels that the class forums are an effective beginning in involving Community Council in the process.

In response to a question from Dr. Jennings, Mr. Thompson stated that he sees the new Judiciary Board as a still unfolding but powerful tool.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Mr. Thompson explained that certain items like theft and alcohol abuse must be reported to the Amherst Police Department through the Special Resource Officers.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Mr. Prescott stated that the funding for the Special Resource officers from the town of Amherst has not been decided on yet.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Mr. Thompson stated that they could put tagging type art in the Scribe and also noted that often the offenders are required to complete community service with the Art teacher which often leads to a more appropriate outlet.

Officer Smith stated that the existence of cameras creates a deterrent and noted that a lot of the vandalism is the exact same tag in different locations all around the school and if they can catch the one person early then it would reduced the problem. He stated that the same situation holds true with theft issues. He also noted that 98% of the students are making good choices and

that only 2% are making bad choices but the students are not willing to give him any information so he feels that they need to rely on technology.

Mr. Redmond pointed out that some of the acts may have been perpetrated by adults in the school in the evening.

Kim Parent stated that recently her daughter came home and four of her friends had had things stolen from the locker room and now the locker rooms are being locked but her daughter is often late to class because she can not get her belongings out of the locker room. She also stated that a major cause of the thefts a lack of sufficient locker space because the lockers are not big enough. She noted that kids didn't used to bring such expensive toys to school. She stated that the administration needs to figure out how to give students a place to lock up their stuff.

Officer Smith stated that there are 1100 lockers, 650 of which are in use, and noted that they have contemplating renovating the lockers to create better spaces and removing the island of lockers as it creates hiding places. Mr. Prescott stated that Ms. Parent had a valid point but that it would cost tens of thousands of dollars to replace the lockers not including removing the island of lockers.

C. FY09 3rd Quarter Report

Ms. Shankel explained that the report she submitted to the Board was through March 31st. She stated that the local revenue is under budget mostly due to a lack of interest revenue but that the SPED revenue from Catastrophic Aid and Medicaid have been increased due to a different allocation in reporting and the steps Ms. Sparks has taken to maximized the return so the overall revenue is \$70,000 over budget.

Ms. Shankel further explained that there have been some large unanticipated out of district placements making Special Education \$200,000 over budget but noted that there is a surplus of over \$200,000 in the benefits area. She stated that adult education is over budget because there is an expense that was not budgeted but that is offset by revenue. She stated that there was \$12,000 in unanticipated legal fees and transportation costs are under budget by \$39,000, so overall the district is within 1% of the budget.

A. Appointment of School District Officials

Chairman Coughlan stated that the current Clerk is Nancy Baker and she is willing and able to be reappointed.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

A MOTION was made by Mr. Redmond and SECONDED by Ms. Janson to appoint Nancy Baker as Clerk to the Souhegan School Board.

Voting: 6 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Coughlan stated that Anne Logan is the current Treasurer and she is willing and able to be reappointed.

A MOTION was made by Ms. Ludt and SECONDED by Mr. Redmond to appoint Anne Logan as Treasurer.

Voting: 6 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

The Board thanked both Ms. Logan and Ms. Baker for their continued service.

B. Principal Search Process

Dr. Jennings explained that the SAU is in the full swing of looking for a principal for Souhegan and that the process must be an inclusive one so that the new candidate has the support of as many people as possible. She reviewed a proposed process that concluded with a nomination being presented to the Board during the week of June 8th. She noted that the SAU has already starting advertising and has sent an email to faculty, regarding ideas for inclusion, which has been responded to. She noted that the main committee members will need to commit 24 hours to the process and the satellite members would need to commit to 5 hours.

In response to a question from Ms. Janson, Dr. Jennings explained that the satellite committees are a way to allow more people to be involved.

In response to a question from Mr. Redmond, Dr. Jennings stated that each group will have a predetermined list of question that they created so that each candidate will get the same questions.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Dr. Jennings stated that traditionally the outgoing person does not get a say in his predecessor and noted that most of the candidates will want to talk to him.

In response to a question from Ms. Mullens, Dr. Jennings explained that she is part of the screening teams so she will be involved the entire way and the individual interview may just be about contract issues and any outstanding questions that may remain. She noted that usually there are very few questions left. Also she will be responsible for checking confidential references.

Ms. Ludt expressed her concern about the make up of the committee and suggested that the Superintendent should not be as involved in the process

until the end. Dr. Jennings explained that because this process is so short it would be helpful for her if she is involved in the semi-finalists' interviews so that she does not have to ask the same questions that were already covered.

Mr. Coughlan stated that Dr. Jennings being on the committee provides the opportunity for a more thoughtful opinion on her part.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley, Dr. Jennings explained that she personally calls at least three references.

In response to a question from Mr. Foley regarding general public communication, Dr. Jennings explained that until May 26th and 27th the process is confidential so there will be no public communication up until that point.

In response to a concern expressed by Ms. Mullens, Dr. Jennings agreed that the Board will want to have a back up plan if they do not find the right candidate.

After discussion, the board decided to leave Dr. Jennings on the committee.

Chairman Coughlan noted that he will appoint applicants from the community, including members of the satellite committee, on April 23rd.

Community Council will work with their liaison and the administration to select student members.

C. Late Start Recommendation

Ms. Ludt noted that Ms. Mullens and Ms. Coughlin are also on the Alternate Start Time Committee. Ms. Ludt explained that the committee is close to making a recommendation after a yearlong process. She stated that they started by doing research to understand the impact of early start times on students and a survey that was circulated indicated that 87% of students are not getting the required 8 to 10 hours of sleep. She explained that they looked at swapping start times with the elementary schools but this created a series of issues so they considered starting everyone later by 30-45 minutes. She explained that the committee is leaning towards starting 30 minutes later as more than 30 minutes created issues. She stated that the committee has asked the principals and they support starting 30 minutes later but the teacher representatives were not as enthusiastic. She also noted that the group considered implementation in September of 2009 instead of September 2010 but they received a lot of resistance so they are no longer pursuing a

September 2009 implementation.

The Board decided to present the information at the next SAU meeting.

A. Television

Ms. Ludt stated that at the last meeting she was confused about where in the budget money was set aside for broadcasting. She stated that there was \$5,000 in last year's budget and this year it was put in the library portion of the budget under educational television with a notation of "annual subscription". She questioned whether there was a better place in the budget to place the expense.

Ms. Shankel explained that two years ago the money was put in the budget and then pulled out and a grant was used to purchase the equipment. She noted that other equipment has been purchased since then for school events.

Mr. Prescott stated that he thinks the funds which Ms. Ludt is referring to is for school related activities and not for the broadcasting of Board meetings.

In a response to a question from Ms. Ludt, Ms. Shankel stated that no money is in the budget or has been in the budget for the last two years to televise Board meetings, as a grant covered the expense.

Mr. Foley thanked Crystal Miller, Pat Miller, and Dwight Brew for volunteering their time.

In response to a question from the Board, Ms. Shankel stated that the bus company is still working on the bus routes but they have indicated that they will be reducing the number of routes.

Mr. Foley noted that he is pursuing getting the Amherst Board meetings broadcasted in Mont Vernon but it is a slow process.

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

Voting: 6 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Coughlan declared the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

**VII. DISCUSSION
ITEMS**

VIII. OTHER

**IX. REVIEW OF
MEETING/
ADJOURN**