

## 1 Amherst School Board

2 Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> 2017

## 3 Public Hearing Meeting Minutes

## 4 Attendees:

5 Administrative Team: Peter Warburton- Superintendent, Adam Steel- Business Administrator,  
6 Gerry St. Amand- Principal Clark/Wilkins, Porter Dodge-Principal AMS, Christine Landwehrle-  
7 Director of Curriculum & Professional Development, Meg Beauchamp- Director of Student  
8 Services, John Robichaud- Director of Buildings and Grounds, and Bruce Chakrin- Director of  
9 Technology

10 Amherst School Board: Amy Facey- Chair, Jim Manning- Vice Chair, Galen Tremblay and  
11 Elizabeth Kuzsma.

12 Minute Taker: Danae Marotta

13 Public: John Glover- Co-Chair Amherst Ways and Means Committee Amherst NH, Mr. Frank  
14 Brown, ASD Ways and Means Committee Co-Chair, Terri Behm, Ways and Means Committee,  
15 Larry Ballard- 14 Windsor Dr. Amherst NH, Maggie McCabe- Amherst NH, Lisa Eastland 19  
16 River Road Amherst NH, Amy Hanson- Amherst NH, Richard Szum- Amherst NH

17 I. Call to Order – Chair Amy Facey

18 **Chair Ms. Amy Facey opened the Public Hearing at 7:10 PM.**

19 She then noted that the Board needs to discuss the default budget a bit further. She added that  
20 they need further analysis. She noted how they calculated the default budget as RSA 40:13 IX  
21 (b). She added delaying action on this change until they conduct further analysis.

22 Mr. Jim Manning, Vice Chair, then commented that they discussed the default calculation and in  
23 discussing with the members of the Souhegan Board, it is in the best interest to do the default  
24 calculation in the way they have always done it.

25 Mr. Paul Prescott then commented that they made the decision based on the strict adherence to  
26 the RSA and that they received consult from at least 2 different attorneys. He added that it makes  
27 sense based on Souhegan's default budget that they move forward to calculating in the traditional  
28 sense. He then proposed that they get the findings in writing by the end of April long before they  
29 start for the following year.

30 Ms. Tremblay noted that she agrees with Mr. Manning and Mr. Prescott and they make a  
31 decision sooner than later.

32 Ms. Facey noted that in April they will have a new Board and suggested May.

33 Mr. Prescott suggested before they begin the summer session. He added that it is about  
34 investigating further and getting the legal findings in writing.

35 **Mr. Paul Prescott made a Motion that they ask the Administrative Business Officer to**  
36 **receive written legal opinion of the Default Budget RSA and to present how the Default**  
37 **Budget is calculated and what those findings are to the School Board by the end of May for**  
38 **the Board to vote on for the FY' 19 Budget. Mr. Jim Manning seconded the Motion. The**  
39 **vote was unanimous, Motion passed.**

40 II. Public Hearing

41 Ms. Facey then opened the Public Hearing again and welcomed the public.

42 Ms. Facey then introduced the other Board Members.

43 Superintendent Warburton then noted that the meeting is Live Streamed and will be on the SAU  
44 website. *See ([www.sau39.org](http://www.sau39.org) >Livestream>SAU 39 Video on Demand Library>Amherst*  
45 *01/11/2017)*

46 He then introduced SAU personnel, Principal St. Amand, Principal Dodge and Business  
47 Administrator Mr. Adam Steel.

48 Ms. Facey thanked the Ways and Means Committee for their time and commitment.

49 Ms. Facey then noted some highlights. She then noted the 5 Strategic Pillars of Advance,  
50 Connect, Invest, Streamline and Unite.

51 She then discussed some of the Advance highlights such as the implementation of Full Day  
52 kindergarten, S.T.E.M, Preparing to Launch Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS),  
53 Summer Math Institute to Further Improve Implementation of Math Curriculum, Literacy, the  
54 Summer Literacy Institute to Recreate a Rigorous and Engaging Curriculum Delivery  
55 Framework and several different Assessments such as PACE-Tier 2, NWEA, and SBAC also  
56 known as Smarter Balanced.

57 She discussed Connect and the opening of the Makerspace at Amherst Middle School noting that  
58 it is a community member collaboration and that classes are open to the public. She added that  
59 this is the first community makerspace in a public school with no tax impact. She then noted the  
60 repurposing of the Baboosic Lake Road Property with the Pump Track opening spring 2016 and  
61 Disc Golf Course opening spring 2017.

62 Ms. Facey then reviewed the Invest pillar, noting ASD's top administrative and educator talent,  
63 the transformation of the industrial arts wing into an Innovation and Design Lab, the  
64 implementation of a teacher mentoring program, expanded athletic and co-curricular activities,  
65 and facilities updates over the past few years.

66 She then reviewed the Streamline pillar.

67 She explained the recent exploration of the consolidation of districts within SAU 39. She noted  
68 the diverse committee of public, staff, board members and administrators. She added that they  
69 will be getting more feedback from the public and determine a course of action. She then  
70 discussed the State of NH DOE mandated a 10% increase of Special Education for out of district

71 placement. She then noted that they received approval from NHDOE for Special Education  
72 Programs. This will lower the cost to the District and improve educational quality.

73 Lastly, Ms. Facey discussed the Unite pillar.

74 She discussed the following topics of improved execution of the Teacher Leader Effective and  
75 Evaluation Program, the launch of the Assessment, Grading, and Reporting Committee and  
76 ongoing collaboration during in-service days, summer work, and SAU Committees.

77 Ms. Facey then noted the contract negotiations between the Amherst Support Staff Association  
78 (ASSA) and the Amherst Education Association (AEA). She added that The Amherst School  
79 District and the Amherst Support Staff Association agreed to suspend negotiations. She  
80 remarked that discussions ended amicably and this was a mutual decision based on the priorities  
81 of both parties. Negotiations will resume next year with a working session to begin late summer.

82 She then mentioned that in regards to the AEA, there will be no warrant article and the second  
83 year they could not reach an agreement. She then discussed the Board's priorities of current  
84 retirement Benefits and health care costs.

85 She then noted the problem, assuming every teacher retires at age 65, the District has a liability  
86 of over \$10,000,000 in severance payments. Plus, costly annual severance payments limit the  
87 number of teachers the District can afford to retire annually. Also, the current structure of the  
88 retirement program inhibits the natural attrition of teachers.

89 She concluded that the Board proposed a solution to address the retirement benefit issue as well  
90 as an interim proposal to work jointly towards a mutually agreeable solution. She then discussed  
91 the public statement at the end of this program, and are hopeful that an agreement will be  
92 reached.

93 She then noted the new initiatives for 2017, including the refinement of the mission and vision,  
94 determining measures outcomes and the new Data Dashboard. She added that the challenge is to  
95 find balance between high quality education at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers.

96 She then introduced Mr. Jim Manning, Vice Chair to review the Budget.

97 Mr. Jim Manning, Vice Chair, then noted the change in presentation from a strategic budget to  
98 more of a maintenance budget. He then discussed the operating budget warrant article #12. He  
99 then noted that if the operating budget is defeated then it goes to the default budget. He added  
100 that the default budget is higher than the operating budget. He further stated that the default  
101 budget calculation is the way they have been calculating it for 13 years.

102 He then discussed how they come to the budget, by the enrollment and staffing trend. He then  
103 noted that it levels out around FY 24.

104 Mr. Manning then discussed the budget composition. He noted that there are a lot of moving  
105 factors and that it is wrapped up in people with 76% in salaries and benefits. He noted that they  
106 are locked into a contractual agreement. He added the second piece is non-salary obligations  
107 such as transportation 19% and the remaining 5%, unfettered discretion, is a place to work in.

108 He then discussed the FY'18 budget story noting that non-discretionary items increase the  
109 budget by \$1,032,293 (+4.19% ), discretionary items reduce the budget by \$251,774 (- 1.02% ),  
110 for a total increase of \$780,519 (+3.17%).

111 Mr. Manning then reviewed the non-discretionary highlights of: Health & Dental insurance: \$  
112 329,746, Retirement: \$ 291,136, Special Education tuition and services: \$ 245,271,  
113 Transportation contracts: \$ 190,336, and all other non-discretionary impacts: (\$24,196) for a  
114 total of: \$1,032,293.

115 He then covered the discretionary items of: equipment: (\$125,017), staffing changes (\$159,901),  
116 science textbooks: \$ 60,700, and all other impacts: (\$ 27,556) for a total of: (\$251,774).

117 He then explained the discretionary decision points further by discussing the staffing changes.  
118 He noted the following changes: eliminate preschool coordinator position, eliminate 0.6 FTE  
119 position at AMS in Special Education, reduce tech support at AMS, required increases in  
120 paraprofessional support and AMS Nursing, and change to delivery of SPED services resulting  
121 in savings of at least \$76k. He added that what people do not know is that when they have a child  
122 that needs Special Education, that they will tuition them out of the school district. He added that  
123 Ms. Beauchamp and the Administration are looking for ways to bring them back to the school  
124 system.

125 Mr. Manning then discussed the FY'17 adopted budget of \$24,647,380, the non-discretionary  
126 items of \$ 1,032,293, discretionary Items: (\$ 251,774), and then the FY'18 Proposed Budget of  
127 \$25,427,899.

128 Mr. Jim Manning then introduced Mr. Paul Prescott.

129 Mr. Paul Prescott then explained that School District budgets are prepared as required by RSA  
130 32:5: He added that it is a gross budget where expenditures and revenues are budgeted. He then  
131 noted that revenues include: local revenues, State revenues, Federal revenues and Adequacy Aid.

132 He then discussed that revenue projections are flat and that assumes the following: a modest  
133 unassigned fund balance, slightly higher adequacy aid and slightly conservative local revenues.  
134 He then explained the Tax Rate Impact: \$0.48 / per thousand valuation, with the average  
135 Amherst NH home value of \$352,000 and the average tax increase of \$168.96.

136 He then discussed the tax impact comparison and the Total Tax Impact of \$808,777 or \$0.48 per  
137 thousand.

138 Mr. Paul Prescott then introduced Ms. Beth Kuzsma.

139 Ms. Beth Kuzsma then discussed the default budget.

140 Ms. Kuzsma stated that the default budget calculation is defined by RSA 40:13 IX (b) which is  
141 based on last year's budget with adjustments for one-time expenditures (there were none this  
142 year) contractual obligations, and debt service (a decrease). This default budget calculation is  
143 \$25,573,646, which is more than the proposed budget.

144 Ms. Beth Kuzsma then introduced Ms. Galen Tremblay.

145 Ms. Galen Tremblay then discussed Article #13. “Shall the Amherst School District raise and  
146 appropriate up to fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) from the year-end unassigned fund balance  
147 (surplus) if available on June 30, 2017, to be added to the Amherst School District fund for  
148 educating students with disabilities, previously established in March, 2014? Majority vote  
149 required. Ms. Tremblay noted that \$150,000 in the fund right now which is to educate students  
150 with disabilities. She then mentioned the target amount of \$250,000.

151 Ms. Tremblay then asked a representative of the Ways and Means Committee for their  
152 comments.

153 Mr. John Glover, ASD Ways and Means Committee Co-Chair, noted that they have not taken  
154 any vote on the budget because there is no budget yet. He noted that the process was very  
155 collaborative with Administrators and School Board Members. He added that staffing is a huge  
156 driver in respect to teachers.

157 The Board thanked Mr. Glover.

158 Ms. Facey then asked for public comments.

159 Mr. Frank Brown, ASD Ways and Means Committee Co-Chair noted that the benefits are  
160 becoming a burden. He explained that the costs are adding up and there are ways to reduce them  
161 without eliminating people.

162 Mr. Larry Ballard, 14 Windsor Dr. Amherst NH, asked about the enrollment at AMS yet the  
163 Administration is reducing of staffing.

164 Ms. Lisa Eastland, 19 River Road, asked a question about the \$60,000 increase in science  
165 textbooks. She commented that she believes that it is more of a strategic curriculum based  
166 initiative.

167 Mr. Manning replied, they need the science books anyways. He then noted that \$60,000 is not a  
168 strategic spend.

169 Ms. Maggie McCabe, Amherst NH, asked about the old default budget formula.

170 She then commented that she is in favor of an inverse class size, the smaller the child the more  
171 attention they need. She then suggested that they reduce the 21 classroom paras due to their high  
172 benefits.

173 Principal St. Amand then replied 6 are in Kindergarten, library, and then with special education.

174 Ms. McCabe then asked if they need full time paras. She then suggested part-time paras with no  
175 benefits. She then noted that they are insuring their whole family and it is a tax payer burden.

176 Principal Dodge then replied that 5 or 6 years ago they were at 20 in a homeroom, and now at 22  
177 average class room size.

178 Ms. McCabe then asked if they do an analysis of who is not going to SHS.

179 Principal Dodge replied, it is not a survey but information that is gathered from the parents. He  
180 added that some move out as well.

181 Mr. Richard Szum, Amherst NH, asked about the non-discretionary items.

182 Mr. Manning noted that retirement will probably increase. He then suggested Mr. Szum to talk to  
183 the State Legislators.

184 Ms. Amy Hanson, Amherst NH, commented that the Kindergarten teachers are great and  
185 emphasized the need for paraprofessionals. She added that she was nervous with the amount of  
186 students in full day Kindergarten but they handle it well and need the paraprofessionals. She  
187 added that they do not get paid enough with what they deal with. She further suggested Ms.  
188 McCabe spend some time in the classroom.

189 Ms. McCabe refuted Ms. Hanson's comments. She commented that she believes that a  
190 professional teacher can handle 16 students with parent volunteers. She then asked Mr. Steel  
191 about the default budget.

192 Mr. Steel replied that debt service has gone down and food service shows a modest reduction.

193 Mr. Mike Akillian commented that he is trying to understand the ecosystem that the School  
194 Board is dealing with.

195 Ms. Facey noted the public statement that they have prepared will be available after this meeting.  
196 She noted that there will be further discussion at the deliberative hearing.

197 He then asked about the severance.

198 Ms. Facey then explained that it is a payout upon retirement.

199 Mr. Larry Ballard, Amherst NH, commented that he believes that some details are incorrect and  
200 that he strenuously disagrees with. He added that this forum is not the place to discuss these  
201 details.

202 Mr. Manning discussed that the pie chart is about people and not to be taken lightly.

203 Mr. Mike Akillian commented that the Board has done a good job with staffing and enrollment.  
204 He added that it would be a shame to start cutting staff. He noted that the elephant in the room  
205 are the contractual obligations that make up a big percent of the budget. He added that the voters  
206 need to understand the situation.

207 Ms. Terri Behm, Ways and Means Committee, noted that they were given full access and great  
208 transparency. She added that science books falling apart is not a want but a need. She added that  
209 Ms. Hanson's comments are great. She noted that finding qualified volunteers would be  
210 extremely hard and that paraprofessionals do not get paid enough. She also added that volunteers  
211 do not always show up.

212 The Board thanked the public for their comments.

213 III. Close Public Hearing

214 **Ms. Amy Facey closed the Public Hearing at 8:35PM**

215 **(reconvene the meeting)**

216 **Chair Amy Facey called the meeting to order at 8:45 PM**

217 Attendees: Peter Warburton, Superintendent and Adam Steel, Business Administrator

218 Amherst School Board: Amy Facey, Chair, Jim Manning, Vice-Chair, Galen Tremblay,

219 Elizabeth Kuzsma and Paul Prescott

220 Minute Taker: Paul Prescott

221 IV. Action Item

222 1. FY18 Warrant

223 **Article 12.** “Shall the Amherst School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget,  
224 not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted  
225 separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of  
226 the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling twenty-five million, four hundred and  
227 twenty-seven thousand, eight hundred and ninety-nine dollars (\$25,427,899)? Should this article  
228 be defeated, the default budget shall be twenty-five million, five hundred and seventy-three  
229 thousand, six hundred and forty-six dollars (\$25,573,646), which is the same as last year, with  
230 certain adjustments required by previous action  
231 of the Amherst School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting,  
232 in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget  
233 only?” Majority vote required.

234  
235 **A motion was made by Elizabeth Kuzsma to place on the warrant, Article 12 as presented**  
236 **at the Public Hearing. Galen Tremblay seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed**  
**(5-0-0)**

237

238

239 **Article 13.** “Shall the Amherst School District raise and appropriate up to fifty thousand  
240 dollars (\$50,000) from the year-end unassigned fund balance (surplus) if available on June 30,  
241 2017, to be added to the Amherst School District Capital Reserve Fund for educating students  
242 with disabilities, previously established in March 2014?” Majority vote required.

243

244 **A motion was made by Galen Tremblay to place on the warrant, Article 13 as presented at**  
245 **the Public Hearing. Elizabeth Kuzsma seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed**  
**(5-0-0)**

246 V. Non-Public Session RSA 91-A: 3 II. (a) (b) (c)

247 **At 8:55 PM Galen Tremblay made a motion to enter into Non-Public Session RSA 91-A: 3**  
248 **II. (a) (b) (c) to discuss a personnel matter, Jim Manning seconded the motion.**

- 249 Roll Call vote to enter nonpublic session.
- 250 Members present:
- 251 Galen Tremblay-Yes, Paul Prescott-Yes, Elizabeth Kuzsma-Yes, Amy Facey- Yes, Jim  
252 Manning- Yes
- 253 Entered nonpublic session at 8:57 PM.
- 254 Other persons present during nonpublic session: Peter Warburton, Superintendent and Adam  
255 Steel, Business Administrator.
- 256 Discussed personnel matter  
257
- 258 **A motion was made to exit non-public session by Amy Facey and seconded by Galen**  
259 **Tremblay.**
- 260 Roll Call to exit nonpublic session:
- 261 Galen Tremblay-Yes, Paul Prescott-Yes, Elizabeth Kuzsma-Yes, Amy Facey- Yes, Jim  
262 Manning- Yes
- 263 At 9:05 PM the Board resumed public session.
- 264 VI. Review of Meeting/Adjourn
- 265 **Paul Prescott moved and Galen Tremblay seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion**  
266 **passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.**