

Souhegan Cooperative Board Meeting

Monday, October 26th, 2020

Meeting Minutes- Approved 11 30 2020

Attendees:

Administrative Team: Adam Steel- Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent-Christine Landwehrle, Michele Croteau- SAU #39 Business Administrator, Mike Berry- Principal SHS, Meg Beauchamp- Director of Student Services, and Roger Preston- Director of Facilities.

Souhegan Cooperative School Board: Pim Grondstra- Chair, Amy Facey- Vice Chair, Stephanie Grund- Secretary, Steve Coughlan, Laura Taylor, David Chen.

Board Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

Public: Delaney Facques- SHS Community Council Liaison and Mr. John Glover- Souhegan Coop. Board Member (Elected 10 26 2020)

I. Call to Order

Chair of the Souhegan Cooperative School Board, Mr. Pim Grondstra, called the meeting to order at 6:07PM.

Today, we will be conducting a School Board meeting of the Souhegan Cooperative School Board.

Before we get started, I'll read through a checklist to ensure that the meeting that we are holding is in compliance with the Right-to-Know Law.

As chairperson of the Souhegan Cooperative School Board, I find that due to the state of emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order Number 12, pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 and its extensions, this public body is authorized to meet electronically. Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order.

In accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that:

1. We are providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possible by video and other electronic means. We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the committee and selected legislative staff have the ability to communicate contemporaneously in this meeting through this platform. And the public has access to contemporaneously watch and or listen to the meeting on Zoom and via phone by following the directions and links provided on our website: www.sau39.org.

- 38
39 2. We have provided public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting.
40
41 3. We are providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting
42 if there are problems with access. If anyone has a problem, please email
43 awallace@sau39.org.
44
45 4. In the event the public is unable to access the meeting will be adjourned and
46 rescheduled.
47
48 5. Please note that all votes taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.
49
50 6. Finally, let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states
51 their presence please also state where they are and if anyone else is in the room with you
52 during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know Law.
53

54 Mr. Grondstra called a roll call: Grund- Home and alone, Taylor- Home and alone, Facey- Home
55 and alone, Torres- Home and alone and Grondstra- Home and alone.
56

57 II. Public Comment I of II
58

59 No Public Comment
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61 III. Consent Agenda
62

63 **Ms. Grund motioned to approve the Consent Agenda Items 1. 09 14 2020 Draft Minutes 2.**
64 **Transfer Approval \$500, and 3.August 2020 Treasurers Report. Ms. Facey seconded the**
65 **motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed. (5-0)**

66 **Mr. Grondstra called a Roll Call: Grund- Yes, Facey- Yes, Taylor- Yes, Torres- Yes and**
67 **Grondstra- Yes.**

68
69 IV. Superintendent's Report
70

- 71 • Joint Facilities Advisory Committee Update
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73 Superintendent, Mr. Adam Steel, discussed that the Joint Facilities Advisory Committee is a
74 Subcommittee by the SAU #39 Board. They will be giving their presentation to the SAU Board
75 this Thursday and it is a substantial report and they have done a wonderful job. The JFAC has
76 requested that he give a preview to the SCSB because this board will not meet until late
77 November.
78

79 As you remember, the purpose of the JFAC was to coordinate the long-term facility plan for
80 Amherst and Souhegan while keeping the tax rate consistent. They have facility projects at three
81 of the schools and wanted to find a way to sequence those projects. They are recommending for
82 all three facilities projects to move forward. They are suggesting to prioritizing the Amherst
83 projects and then to allow for the Souhegan 2.0 project after but to prioritize the upgrade of the
84 science classrooms and securing the entrance of Souhegan HS. They will be looking to fund that
85 through UFB or a Warrant Article in March. He added that if they were to do the HVAC, they
86 would have to take out ceilings, lights, fire suppression systems and they are doing what they can
87 with controls until they are able to sequence the Souhegan 2.0.

88

89 Ms. Facey added that a third project was to look at the lockers.

90

91 Ms. Grund mentioned that that there will be a discussion in later November.

92

93 Mr. Grondstra commented that it makes financial sense in how they projects are planned out. He
94 believes that they did a great job.

95

96 Ms. Facey added that members of the committee are planning on attending the individual board
97 meetings to have a more in-depth conversations. She encouraged anyone with questions to reach
98 out to her.

99

100 The Board thanked Ms. Facey

101

- 102 • Math and Math Scores

103

104 Also Thursday at the SAU Board Meeting, he will be discussing on forming a specialized
105 committee to do an in-depth analysis on Math instruction in the SAU and to do an even better job
106 than they have been doing. He thanked Mr. Chen and Mr. Steve Frades for their time on this
107 topic. It is the structure, curriculum and resources with Math and not with their teachers.

108

- 109 • Thank you to Mr. David Chen

110

111 Mr. Steel gave his great appreciation for Mr. Chen's work and time as a SCSB Member. Mr.
112 Chen was someone that was fair, honest and always had the students best interests in mind.

113

114 Mr. Grondstra added that he also had some kind remarks for Mr. Chen and he will save them for
115 the end of the meeting.

116

117 Ms. Taylor questioned the HVAC costs in the Manifest.

118

119 Mr. Steel replied that the control system and unit ventilators were approved in May.

120

121 Ms. Grund asked about the Empower and grading and reporting transcripts.

122
123 Mr. Steel requested that Principal Mr. Mike Berry, get information out to parents.
124
125 Ms. Grund inquired about the use of Empower.
126
127 Mr. Steel replied that they are piloting TeacherEase and hope to switch to that next year.
128
129 Ms. Facey asked if everything was all set for Seniors. She would like an overall update so that
130 the students are not negatively impacted.
131 Mr. Steel suggested that Principal Berry have a communication with the parents this week.
132
133 Principal Berry replied that he will do that.
134
135 Mr. Grondstra asked Mr. Coughlan where he was and if he was alone.
136
137 Mr. Coughlan replied that he is home and alone.
138
139 Ms. Taylor mentioned that there was a disconnect last year between the competencies and
140 Empower. She inquired if it will be available to parents and what progress has been made.
141
142 Mr. Steel suggested that she have a conversation with Ms. Landwehrle.
143
144 The Board thanked Superintendent Steel.
145
146 V. First Reading Policies- From SAU 09 14 2020 Meeting
147
148 Mr. Grondstra noted that if they are particular questions around RSA items to go to the Policy
149 Committee.
150
151 Ms. Grund commented on policy GCEB- Administrative Staff Recruiting. She does not
152 understand why they have to change this.
153
154 Mr. Coughlan added that Mr. Chen was unhappy with the process of hiring the SHS Principal.
155 They have taken this back to the Policy Committee and tried to find a compromise. In July, they
156 figured out this compromise wording. This policy allows for debate and discussion.
157
158 Ms. Grund remarked that she is looking at it as a long-term policy.
159
160 Mr. Coughlan mentioned that there has been a spirit of discussion of compromise and this policy
161 relies on that tradition. The district will be a greater challenge if they do not continue with that
162 spirit going forward.
163

164 Ms. Taylor commented that she agrees with Ms. Grund and that the Superintendent has brought
165 this forward and it gives him more power than State Law.

166
167 Mr. Grondstra inquired if it should go back to the Policy Committee.

168
169 Mr. Coughlan replied that it should not, Ms. Taylor was a part of the Policy Committee.

170
171 Mr. Grondstra inquired if this is going to all of the individual boards.

172
173 Mr. Coughlan replied, yes.

174
175 Ms. Grund suggested that they add the word “approve”.

176 Mr. Steel replied that State Law is crystal clear. Only one person can choose, teachers, and
177 principals in a SAU, to be hired and that is himself. State Law makes it very clear that he is the
178 only one that can nominate anyone to a school board to be hired with a teaching certification or
179 an administrative certification.

180
181 The Board hires a Superintendent to make the day to day operations from the school. If the Board
182 cannot trust that person, then they should find a different Superintendent. They can talk to the
183 NHSBA attorneys and they will say the same thing. The Board can either approve or reject. In
184 most districts there is no policy it is assumed and well known. In other states, there is even less
185 authority. Although State Law does not require it, he has, and this is one of the very few things
186 that he feels strongly about.

187
188 At the end of the day, it should be the Superintendent’s decision. He has made a compromised
189 position with the policy, but he is not comfortable with the Board approving the process.

190
191 Mr. Grondstra remarked that he is in agreement. There has been compromise already reached.
192 Superintendent Steel is solely responsible for hiring and he suggested that it get moved to a
193 second reading.

194
195 Ms. Taylor remarked that they are part of a district that joins with other districts to create their
196 SAU. Each individual district should be part of the selection of such an important position as the
197 Principal.

198
199 Mr. Grondstra replied that it is just as it states. He has included Board Members and community
200 members to be on the selection committee. He would like to know what RSA Ms. Taylor she is
201 referring to.

202
203 Ms. Taylor replied that was referring to Souhegan as a District. The SAU# 39 hires the
204 Superintendent. She is in support of the Principal Berry and she would like to make that clear.
205 The Board should play an important role.

206

207 Ms. Facey added that it is the school board's responsibility to either approve or disapprove as a
208 point of check and balance.
209

210 Ms. Taylor mentioned that in the case of Mr. Berry, he was presented at the 11th hour. It is not
211 about Mr. Berry and not about Superintendent Steel.
212

213 Ms. Taylor inquired about IKA- Grading and Reporting, on page 97. She is concerned about the
214 direct connection between assignments, competencies and the State standards have not been
215 disclosed to parents.
216

217 Mr. Grondstra asked if this was discussed during Policy Committee meetings.
218

219 Ms. Taylor replied, yes. The high school was not referenced.
220

221 Mr. Grondstra questioned about Souhegan specific items.
222

223 Ms. Taylor replied that it does not include promoting students when they have achieved mastery.
224

225 Mr. Coughlan added that there is another policy that address promotions.
226

227 Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Christine Landwehrle added that that she cannot recall but there is
228 another policy about promotion.
229

230 Mr. Grondstra commented that they should figure out what the other policy is and if this needs to
231 go back, they will make that determination at the next meeting.
232

233 Ms. Grund added that it is IKE- Promotion.
234

235 Ms. Facey mentioned she remembers discussing it at the SAU meeting.
236

237 Mr. Grondstra remarked that this is just a first reading.
238

239 Ms. Taylor questioned the wording "inimical" in Policy GBGA- Staff Health it is an optional
240 policy. She suggested using a better term.
241

242 Mr. Grondstra inquired if this was discussed at the Policy Committee.
243

244 Ms. Taylor replied, yes.
245

246 Mr. Grondstra added that these are policies that they are tying to standardize across the districts.
247 They can add language as it pertains to the high school. They are solving the problems ahead of
248 time instead of discussing them tonight.
249

250 Ms. Taylor replied that she did bring these concerns up at the Policy Committee. She has brought
251 this to an attorney, and they agreed with her as well. She even brought that up to the Policy
252 Committee.

253

254 Mr. Coughlan countered that this is from the NHSBA and it is the recommended language. It
255 comes from their attorneys.

256

257 Ms. Grund mentioned that she believes that Ms. Taylor's concern is that it is touchy to evaluate
258 someone's mental health.

259

260 Mr. Grondstra added that the Superintendent would not be indiscriminately send someone to get
261 checked out.

262

263 Mr. Coughlan commented that the Doctor gets to call it physical or mental, not the board.

264

265 Ms. Taylor mentioned that this is an optional policy and not supported by law. It is not a position
266 that they should be putting the SAU in.

267

268 Mr. Grondstra replied that you vote against it but for now it should stay in. You can bring it up if
269 there are policy discussions.

270

271 Ms. Taylor reminded the Board that 7 of them have been elected to represent the high school.
272 The other board members were elected to represent their schools. She just wants to make that
273 clear.

274

275 Mr. Grondstra replied that they will vote on it at a second reading.

276

277 Ms. Taylor mentioned that she does not believe that it was the right time for IMGAA- Therapy
278 Dogs. She added that with policy JICD- Student Discipline, Section F she would like to strike
279 that particular statement.

280

281 Mr. Grondstra asked if she had brought it up at the Policy Committee.

282

283 Ms. Taylor replied, no, she just ran across it now.

284

285 Ms. Grund asked when is the Policy Committee Meeting.

286

287 Mr. Steel replied not until next spring when they go through the next batch of policies. It can
288 move forward and be revised. He clarified that more often than not, a Board Member/s may
289 have a conflict with that particular case being brought forward. It is to ensure that there is Board
290 representation in case of conflicts.

291

292 Mr. Coughlan added that they had a hard time trying to pull together a quorum Board Member
293 availability in a timely manner.

294

295 Mr. Grondstra suggested that it go to a second reading.

296

297 Ms. Grund returned to the Policy IMGAA- Therapy Dogs. She questioned if they want to
298 continue or pull it out of the packet.

299

300 Mr. Coughlan noted that the policy is enabling. He suggested to pass it in this round then they
301 can have a motion not to enact it this year.

302

303 Ms. Taylor added that this policy was drafted by a person promoting therapy dogs. She believes
304 that it was not reviewed by legal counsel.

305

306 Mr. Coughlan replied that there was another school district that has been using this for a few
307 years.

308

309 Mr. Steel clarified that it was indeed reviewed by legal counsel.

310

311 VI. Community Council

312

313 Ms. Delaney Facques, SHS Community Council Liaison, added that they have not gotten to any
314 proposals. She would like to discuss more about what she plans on doing this year. There were
315 some concerns last year about full student input. She plans on taking notes, so the Board knows
316 real time student input.

317

318 She encouraged the Board to please reach out to her for any specific information.

319

320 Ms. Facey congratulated Ms. Facques. She has had some great conversations and they discussed
321 adding items into the packet ahead of time. She is very excited to have her.

322

323 Mr. Grondstra also welcomed Ms. Facques back and congratulated her. They look forward to
324 increased communications.

325

326 Ms. Taylor remarked that she has attended a Learn Everywhere conference and she will forward
327 him information.

328

329 Mr. Grondstra thanked Ms. Taylor for that information.

330

331 VII. FY' 22 Budget

332

333 Mr. Steel added that tonight is a preview of the Budget, to outline the priorities and starts the
334 process that ends with the Deliberative Session in February and then Town voting in March.

335 They anticipate having the Budget on the ballot in March as well as a possible contribution to the
336 Capital Reserve Fund for long term maintenance. They may have another Warrant Article for the
337 Locker Rooms. Science Labs and Main Entrance. That is based on Board decisions.

338

339 He is projecting a normal school year next year and that is a big assumption at this point. As they
340 go down the pathway, they may decide to add Covid related expenses.

341

342 The proposed budget is an increase of \$975,563 with a difference of \$123,015 between the
343 default and the proposed budget. They need to focus on Math curriculum, instruction and related
344 resources as well as a reorganization of the leadership team to better support teacher instructional
345 practices.

346

347 Other possible budget impacts are Transportation RFP that is currently expected. The NH
348 Retirement System rates are 2-3% higher for all of the salaries and Guaranteed Maximum Rates
349 (GMR) for health and dental insurance were set in October and are 6.3% for health and 0% for
350 dental.

351

352 Mr. Steel displayed the breakdown of the Budget Reconciliation of the FY'21 Operating Budget
353 and the FY' 22 Default Budget.

354

355 They have included the long-term planning of the Capital Maintenance Plan. This assumes that
356 they are not doing any major facilities projects in the near future. The 10-year project plan can
357 also be accessed here as well. Administration has developed a 5-year curriculum review and
358 adoption schedule to help provide predictability to the process and expenditures associated with
359 curriculum purchases. There is a detailed report in the memo.

360

361 He reviewed the staffing levels and support staff.

362

363 That is the report presentation for the budget. They will go through a lengthy review for the
364 Ways and Means and the Community.

365

366 Ms. Grund inquired about grant funding.

367

368 Mr. Steel replied it is really for accounting purposes. He does not know off hand. d

369

370 Mr. Coughlan added that there is a Google Doc.

371

372 Ms. Croteau replied that they can share that this evening or tomorrow.

373

374 Mr. Grondstra suggested that they share that tonight if possible.

375

376 Ms. Taylor added that she was hoping that they would have a discussion about the Master
377 Schedule. She thought it would be on the agenda.

378
379 Mr. Torres inquired about the reconciliation. He added that he is missing an item and is coming
380 up with a different number.

381
382 Mr. Steel added that he will double check those numbers.

383
384 Ms. Grund inquired about the Master Schedule.

385
386 Mr. Steel responded that they can discuss it at the Board level and Principal Berry can speak to
387 that as well.

388
389 Ms. Taylor inquired to see the Staffing Levels.

390
391 Ms. Facey added that she had received it earlier in the day.

392
393 Mr. Grondstra suggested that they look at the various areas of their subcommittees. He asked Mr.
394 Steel if there was anything else.

395
396 Mr. Steel thanked Ms. Croteau, Principal Berry, and Ms. Amina Fazlic for all of their work on
397 this presentation.

398
399 VIII. Board Seat Vacancy

400
401 Mr. Steel referenced NH Statute 671.33 for Cooperative members of the Board from that town,
402 are charged with picking that replacement. Those 4 members are in charge and the discussions
403 are to be held in public. There were 6 applications, in no particular order, Mr. John Glover, Mr.
404 Bob Hinz, Ms. Christine Peters, Ms. Lisa Eastland, Mr. Tony Labranche, and Mr. Jay Cohen. He
405 turned it over to the Board and importantly the 4, representatives from Amherst. It does not have
406 to be one of these people.

407
408 Mr. Coughlan added that this is the final year of Mr. Chen's term. They will be running for a full
409 three-year seat. He suggested they get someone appointed tonight.

410
411 Ms. Facey agreed that they should look for some tonight, it would be helpful to have someone
412 step right in.

413
414 Ms. Grund commented that there are multiple things on their plate, budgets, facilities, Covid, etc.
415 And keeping that all in mind is very important.

416
417 Mr. Coughlan mentioned that they have 6 candidates and they have 4 different opinions. He
418 asked Superintendent Steel what happens if they cannot agree.

419

420 Mr. Steel replied that in the event that the 4 Amherst representatives cannot agree RSA 671. 33
421 the Amherst Board of Selectman make the choice on their behalf. If they cannot decide it goes to
422 the District Moderator.

423

424 Ms. Facey added that it is a hard decision and who has been on the Board because it would be
425 very valuable, and it is a short window.

426

427 Ms. Grund mentioned that she is interested in Mr. John Glover and Ms. Christine Peters is also
428 someone to consider.

429

430 Ms. Taylor added that Ms. Eastland would be an excellent candidate she would have to give up a
431 lot to be on the Board. Mr. Glover is a good choice and Ms. Peters is understanding as well.

432

433 Mr. Coughlan mentioned that all of the candidates could bring something good, however, he was
434 impressed with Mr. Bob Hinz. His initial process of the Amherst Board is what impressed him.

435

436 Mr. Grondstra noted that there were 3 that mentioned Mr. Glover, 2 that mentioned Mr. Hinz, 2
437 that mentioned Ms. Peters and 1 that mentioned Ms. Eastland. He suggested that they narrow it
438 down to one vote.

439

440 Ms. Grund- John Glover, Ms. Facey- John Glover and thanked Ms. Eastland, Ms. Taylor-
441 Thanked Mr. Cohen but yes, Mr. Glover, Mr. Coughlan- added that he is in support of Mr.
442 Glover.

443

444 Mr. Grondstra thanked all of the interested parties and congratulated Mr. John Glover.

445

446 **Mr. Coughlan motioned for Mr. John Glover to fill the board seat vacancy until the March**
447 **2021 election. Ms. Facey seconded the motion. (4-0)**

448

449 **Mr. Grondstra called Roll Call: Coughlan – Yes, Grund- yes, Taylor- Yes, Torres- yes, and**
450 **Facey- Yes.**

451

452 Mr. Coughlan suggested that he get sworn in in person.

453

454 Mr. Steel added that he has the Oath of Office available. He has to be attested by the Clerk or
455 the Justice of the Peace, most likely in person.

456

457 Mr. Glover thanked the Board and he is happy to serve.

458

459 Mr. Grondstra added that Mr. Chen was on the Technology Committee and asked Mr. Glover to
460 take his place.

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462 Mr. Glover replied that he will be happy to help in any way.

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IX. Public Input II of II

No Public Comment

Mr. Grondstra thanked Mr. Chen for his time and dedication for his time on the Board. He gave his sincere appreciation for his time on the Board. He sent his best wishes on his new adventures with his family.

Mr. Chen thanked the Board. He had the best interest of the students in mind. It is a challenge and the best thing is that you keep your mind active and thinking about fixing problems. He wished the Board the best in everything that they do. There are a lot of different opinions and they will come through it. Superintendent Steel will provide great guidance for the future.

X. Non- Public Session

Mr. Coughlan motioned to enter into Non-Public Session RSA 91 A:3 II (a) and (c) at 8:04 PM. Ms. Taylor seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.

Roll Call vote to enter nonpublic session: Pim Grondstra – Yes, Steve Coughlan – Yes, Amy Facey – Yes, Stephanie Grund – Yes, Laura Taylor – Yes, and George Torres – Yes.

Other persons present during nonpublic session: Adam Steel, Superintendent and Mike Berry, Principal

Description of matters discussed, and final decisions made. Note: Any votes taken must be recorded “in such a manner that the vote of each member is ascertained and recorded”:

Adam and Mike presented changes to the Souhegan Administrative Team for FY 22 and the following year. They have evaluated the structure of the administration team and would like to find a more effective way to coach and evaluate teachers. The new structure would encourage teachers who want to improve in their practice of teaching to receive the support and coaching needed.

In order to prepare for the new structure, the Superintendent and Principal would like to offer an Early Retirement Incentive under Board Policy GCBD. Also, under this policy, the Board would need to approve an extension of the deadline to November 30, 2020.

Currently Policy GCBD states:

Professional Staff – maximum of \$20,000/person

Non-Certified/Support Staff – Maximum of \$10,000/person

505 **Ms. Facey motion to leave nonpublic session and return to public session at 9:00 PM. Mr.**
506 **Coughlan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous, motion passed.**

507

508 **Roll Call: Grondstra – Yes, Coughlan – Yes, Facey – Yes, Grund – Yes, Taylor – Yes, and**
509 **Torres – Yes.**

510

511 XI. Public Session

512

513 Public Session reconvened at: 9:00 PM

514

515 There was no motion to seal the minutes.

516