

DRAFT

Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee

Approved [TBD]

Date: 5-Jan-2021

Time: 6pm

Attendees:

- Joel Gordon, Chair, SAFC
- Charlie York, SAFC member
- Jeanne Ludt, SAFC member
- Howard Brown, SAFC member
- Mark Vincent, SAFC alternate
- Daniel Veilleux, SAFC member
- Peggy Harris, SAFC alternate
- John Bowkett, SAFC alternate
- John Stover, SAFC member ?
- George Bower, Souhegan Cooperative School District Moderator
- Stephanie Grund, Souhegan Cooperative School Board and SAU39 Member

John Stover, SAFC member, was absent

There were no members of the public who participated in this meeting.

Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 6:06, by Joel Gordon, SAFC Chair.

Minutes

To be posted for review and feedback, on the Google Shared drive.

Budget approved by SHS School Board

The meeting began with a review of the following information, provided by Joel Gordon.

On 17-December-2020, the Souhegan Cooperative School Board approved a budget and a number of warrant articles to be presented to the voters in March. While the SAFC had recommended approval of the budget as it was leading up to that meeting, during the meeting the SCSB adopted a few amendments which changed the budget as follows:

- Officially adopted the inclusion of the locker renovation project as part of the proposed budget - \$75,000 line item.
- Officially adopted the front entrance security project as part of the proposed budget - \$250,000 line item.

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The other changes that had been discussed earlier as part of the list of proposed changes tab in the budget spreadsheet were also included in the approved revised budget. This results in an approved proposed FY 22 budget of \$19,690,030 and a 5.43% increase YOY. (Board Approved 6-1, Coughlin opposed).

This compares to the default budget which is \$19,314,261, a \$376k delta. (3.41% above last year's approved budget) and puts some distance between the two budgets. Check out the budget workbook "Proposed Changes After..." tab, lines 18-23, columns p-s.

In addition, the SCSB approved two warrant articles as follows:

- To request the voters approve adding up to \$85,000 from the unassigned fund balance, if available, to be added to the Turf Field Replacement Revolving Fund (Board Approved 7-0).
- To request the voter approve raising and appropriating the second installment of \$163,000 of the ten year program to support the Capital Maintenance Fund. (Board Approved 7-0)

Budget discussion

The budget was approved by all members of the SHS board except Steve Coughlan (who abstained).

Steve expressed concern about the \$250,000 budgeted for security upgrades to the front of the school building.

Howard Brown and Jeanne Ludt both commented that this was an interesting security priority when, last year, SHS did not find it necessary to retain a staff member who assisted with security at the start and end of the school day.

It was asked whether the security upgrades will affect insurance - George Bower suggested it will not.

John Bowkett – began a discussion of the school locker repairs. Boys lockers are in worse shape. However as part of Title 9, both must be upgraded. So, there was a question about whether there could be a cost savings by putting used lockers from the girls locker room into the boys', and then putting new lockers in the girls' locker room.

There was a discussion about future replacement of the turf field. Some members expressed concern that when the original turf field was installed, the community was assured that the replacement cost could be covered by accumulating usage fees. At this point, it does not look like that will be sufficient. The SAFC suggested to the SHS board that surplus maintenance fees could be used - and the SHS board agreed.

After these two discussions, the question was raised about whether security and the turf field were being given equal, or different priorities.

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It was mentioned that 20 positive COVID cases appear to be the result of a holiday party. So, there was a question about whether SHS will be open in January.

Warrant article votes

6:34 - Turf field warrant article: A vote was taken on the warrant article to finance turf. There were no abstentions and no nays.

6:35 - Capital Maintenance Fund article - To Request and appropriate \$63k to support capital maintenance fund. Comments followed before vote.

- We suggest that a 10-year plan will make this budget item easier to predict in the future.
- The elementary schools are requesting capital maintenance in their budget - if that passes, then that may come out of the overall capital maintenance budget

6:45 - George Bower suggested the AFC re-vote on the first warrant article, as abstentions and nays were requested, but there was not a clear vote to approve.

- Motion to approve warrant article 1 - approved unanimously *<does anyone have the full text?>*
- Motion to approve warrant article 2 - approved unanimously *<does anyone have the full text?>*

Budget support vote

Discussion included the following.

- There is still some concern that there is not much leverage in the budget to adjust the "cost code" - Salaries are based on a contract that requires a minimum of 3.5% increase every year
- Howard is concerned about security spending - last year, they removed a staff member who was providing security, at a savings of \$40k. This year, they are proposing spending over \$200k on security upgrades

6:59 - Motion to approve the SHS budget as proposed by the SHS board - approved by all members present except Howard Brown (abstained)

Additional budget discussion

After the vote, members expressed additional thoughts on the budget process.

Principal Michael Berry has expressed his interest in working with the budget committee on recommendations and strategic direction. Need to look for more metrics and other ways to better measure school operating efficiency.

NH retirement obligation went up 27% - what can we do about that?

Turf field - How can we ensure replacement costs are covered?

Thoughts on professional development certification for food staff

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Restructuring administrative department (look at our recommendations and think if there is any way to get school board or administration to ace on some or all of these)

After this cycle is over, we will meet to discuss ways to improve the process next year.

Upcoming dates

- Jan 13, 2021 SCSB Public Hearing
- Jan 25, 2021 SCSB Deliberative Session Planning Meeting
- Feb 1, 2021 SCSB Deliberative Session
- Feb 2, 2021 Amherst School Board Deliberative Session
- Feb 3, 2021 Mont Vernon School Board Deliberative Session

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 7:19pm