

MINUTES
SAU SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 29, 2007
Souhegan High School Annex, Room A222

John Schwope called the board meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Present:

ATTENDANCE

Souhegan Cooperative School Board: Steve Coughlan, Dan Foley, Jeanne Ludt, Christine Morley (arrived at 6:11 p.m.), and Dana Redmond

Amherst School Board: Peg Bennett (left at 8:22 p.m.), Dwight Brew, Pam Dudoff, Nancy Head (arrived at 6:11 p.m.), Jim O'Mara (arrived at 6:16 p.m.)

Mont Vernon School Board: Howard Brown, Jayson Darula, Bruce Schmidt, John Schwope, and Leo White

Administrative Team: Bruce Chakrin, Nicole Heimarck, Dr. Mary Jennings, Betty Shankel, and Kathy Skoglund.

Finance Committee: Charlene Carper and Peggy Stokes

Minutes Recorder: Lyn Jennings

Dr. Jennings told board members on Sunday, December 9, 2007, there would be an Open House at the Brick School from 3:30 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. prior to the Tree Lighting Ceremony. Dr. Jennings said the Amherst School Board is sponsoring the event.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

John Schwope invited comments from the Public but none were forthcoming.

III. PUBLIC TIME

The A 1. Minutes – October 25, 2007, were pulled from the Consent Agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Steve Coughlan to accept Consent Agenda items B. Budget 1. Treasurer's Report October 2007, 2. Manifest October 2007. Howard Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with three abstentions, Jayson Darula, Dana Redmond and Leo White. (12-0)

A motion was made by Pam Dudoff to approve the minutes of October 25, 2007, as amended. Bruce Schmidt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with three abstentions, Jayson Darula, Dana Redmond, and Leo White. (12-0)

- A. Global Connect – Bruce Chakrin** – Each board member received a folder detailing Global Connect, a company, which provides an emergency phone notification call system. Bruce explained it could also be used for non-emergency notifications as well.

V. PRESENTATIONS

Bruce said Global Connect allows you to reach parents, staff and faculty quickly, within a matter of seconds. The system is secure with stringent measures to protect the data.

Jeanne Ludt asked what the cost for the system would be and if it was included in the budget for next year. Bruce said the cost is \$2.00 per student, per year, and it was included in the budget for next year.

Jeanne asked how the system would be managed and Bruce said it would be managed within the individual buildings. Bruce said some of the administration is being trained, one administrator in each building.

Dr. Jennings told board members they developed protocols for use of the system this year and will be using it for non-emergency school events. Dr. Jennings said only the home phone will be called and it will only be called once.

Bruce Chakrin told board members parents could opt out from being notified for non-emergencies if they choose.

Dr. Jennings told board members more and more companies are coming forward with systems like this to help prevent tragedies such as Virginia Tech. Dr. Jennings said she is pleased they are able to implement the system this year free of charge and before any emergencies or

snow days happen.

Bruce Schmidt asked what data did the administration have to provide to Global Connect. Bruce Chakrin said they had to provide bus numbers, bus routes, school information and student phone numbers.

Jeanne Ludt asked if the cost per student appeared in the SAU Budget or in the individual district budgets.

Bruce said the cost per student is in the individual district budgets in the administration technology line.

John Schwope thanked Bruce for his demonstration of Global Connect.

- B. **SAU Website – Bruce Chakrin** – Board members were given a demonstration on the new SAU 39 Website, which was going live on Friday, November 30, 2007.

The address for the new website is www.sprise.com.

Bruce said Ektron is a local company and he likes it because they have additional features beyond being a document management system.

Bruce said Ektron can provide:

- Document management – saves previous versions so you are able to compare one version to another.
- Project management – has collaborative website areas so you are able to work on documents collaboratively. It also has discussion forums, blogs, etc.

Bruce said the SAU site will be going live tomorrow, Souhegan High School is half way done, then after the high school, they will begin on the Amherst Middle School then the elementary schools.

Pam Dudoff said the Policy Committee had some

discussion about the new website and wanted to know the format for policies on the website. Pam said they have been working with Paula, in getting them up on each of the district's websites and wanted to know if it would be problematic for her to get to each of the district's individual school websites with the new site.

Bruce said the policies are now linked to the SAU website and sees no problems.

John Schwope said the two items Bruce presented this evening both involved communication items, and improving communication was one of the priorities between all the boards. John said both items go a long way toward improving communication both in the individual boards and as an SAU as well.

Dr. Jennings congratulated Bruce for getting this site up and running.

Bruce Schmidt suggested the site should notify people when they were leaving the SAU domain.

C. **FY09 Budget – Admin.** –

1. 2nd Draft – Board members received several handouts in their board packets. The documents included the SAU 39 Budget FY09 Budget Changes, SAU 39 Proposed FY09 Budget, the School Administration Unit No. 39, Distribution of Amount of S.A.U. Budget to be Shared by Districts, FY 2008-2009 Proposal for Adoption, and the SAU # 39 FY09 Proposed Budget Salaries.

Dr. Jennings provided an additional handout at the meeting, which detailed possible SAU 39 Staff Salary percentage increases for FY 09.

Dr. Jennings said she had sent board members a copy of the revisions to the budget via e-mail, which are presented in the handout labeled V.C.1. tonight. Dr. Jennings said

there was an overall decrease in the budget of \$16,216 from the original presentation last month.

Dr. Jennings said the overall increase to the budget as compared to FY08 is \$73,000. Of this increase Dr. Jennings said \$68,000 is for the recommendation of the raises and salary adjustments.

Dr. Jennings discussed the handout provided in board packets entitled FY09 Proposed Budget. Dr. Jennings explained they had proposed \$58,000 be reserved in the Salary Set-aside budget line for the purpose of upgrading several key SAU positions, and also to reserve funds for staff raises, to be determined later in the year.

Dr. Jennings said the proposed upgrades involved two SAU –wide administrative positions – Director of Technology and K-12 Literacy Coordinator.

Dr. Jennings is proposing they increase the Literacy Coordinator salary from \$62,000 to \$66,650, going from working 200 days to 215 days. Dr. Jennings provided comparable area curriculum coordination salaries. In Bedford, one is paid \$63,500 for 210 days and another is paid \$73,500 for 210 days, in Milford for 225 days they are paid \$67,956.

Dr. Jennings is proposing the Director of Technology salary be increased from \$64,366 for 193 days to \$71,083 for 215 days. Dr. Jennings provided comparable area curriculum coordination salaries. In Bedford for 225 days they are paid \$85,000, in Merrimack for 225 days they receive \$64,800, and in Milford for 225 days they receive \$67,033.

Jeanne Ludt said she was concerned about these large requests for raises in these two positions. Jeanne said it seems they are never able to contain the budget from going up. Jeanne said now that we are funding Curriculum Coordinators in Reading, are we going to look to fund Curriculum Coordinators in other areas such as Math.

Dr. Jennings said the SAU Budget would probably always look percentage wise higher than the districts because it is people driven.

Dr. Jennings said curriculum coordinators are being looked at district wide to achieve curriculum coordination. Currently, the coordinators get stipends, and she and Nicole want to look at the current process to see if it is the best way moving forward. Dr. Jennings said she believes SAU coordination is the best bang for their buck.

Dr. Jennings said they plan on looking at the district coordinators as a whole in the future. She questions how much the stipends are needed, but said it would probably not be a reduction in the SAU budget but in the district budgets. Dr. Jennings said currently, they have not reduced any curriculum coordination in the district budgets.

Jim O'Mara said if the board recommended the upgrades to the Director of Technology and Literacy Coordinator positions, as presented they would also be entitled to a COLA increase. Jim said he was not comfortable with approving an upgrade to the positions as well as a COLA increase.

Board members were told the Literacy Coordinator position is currently unfilled.

Jim O'Mara said he did not feel comfortable hiring someone at \$66,650 and then giving them a 5% COLA increase on top of this salary adjustment.

Bruce Schmidt said based on Dr. Jennings's presentation, the way he understands it, the administration is proposing a total amount of money, and none is being set aside for anyone, the Superintendent reserves the right to determine who gets what percentage increase later in the year. Dr. Jennings agreed with Bruce's interpretation.

The Budget Committee attendees were given the opportunity to present their findings and opinions regarding

the FY09 budget as presented. The committee members able to attend the meeting were Peggy Stokes and Charlene Carper. Charlene explained the rest of the committee members were not able to attend the meeting. Charlene said they did not have any representation on the committee from Mont Vernon.

Charlene said three of the four committee members met to discuss the budget. Charlene said three out of four members could not recommend the budget as presented. Charlene said the committee could not recommend the bottom line dollar amount. She said the committee thought a 5% increase in the salary area of the budget was excessive.

Charlene said the other major concern is the inconsistencies in the back up to the budget. Charlene said any citizen reviewing the documents, such as the labeling of the positions would lead someone to believe they are hiring lots of people, which they are not. Charlene said the more consistent they are in their backup documentation the better the budget will be understood by all.

Peggy Silva asked how the review and raise process works at the SAU office. Dr. Jennings said contracts are offered in April and reviews are done at that time and raises go into affect July 1st.

Dr. Jennings thanked the Budget Committee for their feedback and said the point regarding the inconsistencies in job titles was well taken, and they would look to correct the data as presented.

Charlene said the major concern of the budget committee was the salary set aside increase and they would like to see it lowered.

Christine Morley asked the budget committee if they had a percentage increase in mind to recommend to the board and administration. Charlene said the budget committee would be comfortable with a 3-4% increase.

Jeanne Ludt asked why in the current budget, the Administrative Assistant for SPED and the Executive Assistant salaries had exceeded the budgeted amount.

Dr. Jennings said during the summer, they needed to fill the Executive Assistant position due to a long term absence.

Dr. Jennings said due to a CAT Aid change, extra time was needed over the summer for the Administrative Assistant in Special Education to complete the work.

A motion was made by Jim O'Mara to reduce the proposed salary of \$87,000 for the Director of Special Education (10.1210.111.00) to \$85,000. The motion was seconded by Leo White.

Discussion regarding the motion followed.

Jim said once Kathy leaves, it will be a vacant position they need to fill and he believes what they are paying Kathy will attract someone to the position.

Nancy Head asked if they had the figures for Director of Special Education for surrounding towns. Dr. Jennings said for the top fourteen districts the salary ranges from \$85,000 to \$100,000. This figure is for the top fourteen Special Education Directors out of 80.

Board members voted 6 in favor 7 opposed. Due to the close vote, the weighted vote was also calculated and was as follows: 3.6 yes, 5.4 no therefore, the motion was defeated.

Jeanne Ludt questioned what was included in the line for Consultant Cost (10.2321.328.00). Dr. Jennings said they would be paying for the workshops for the school board as well as any district wide workshops held.

Jeanne asked if the consultant line could be reduced and Dr. Jennings said it could be however, the Administrative team was considering Professional Development as well as

an Administrative Team and board member retreat.

Jeanne asked if we have not allocated enough in Workers Compensation in the past. (10.2900.260.00) Betty said it had not adequately been budgeted for in the past due to a confusing prior payment schedule.

A motion was made by Jim O'Mara to reduce the proposed increases / reclassifications as proposed by Dr. Jennings from \$68,000 to \$61,000. Jeanne Ludt seconded the motion.

Discussion amongst board members followed.

Bruce Schmidt said the proposed budget increase is 5.6%, he believes the overall increase should be approximately 3.5% - 3.75%, even 4% at most.

Dr. Jennings referred board members to the raises worksheet, pointing out the estimated raises were \$45,890, leaving a balance of \$8,783 to be allocated. Dr. Jennings said \$13,327 was for the proposed salary upgrades, which totals the requested salary set aside amount of \$68,000.

Dr. Jennings said the total for proposed salary increases is \$54,673 and if you divide this number by the total SAU salaries of \$1,203,290 it represents a 4.54% budget increase.

Jim O'Mara said the intent of his motion was to reiterate his initial concern regarding the reclassification of positions, giving them a substantial increase and then giving them a significant raise again at the beginning of the year.

Board members voted 12-0 in favor of the motion, with one abstention. The motion passed.

Jim O'Mara asked Dr. Jennings to explain in further detail the Consultant Cost line. (10.2321.328.00)

Dr. Jennings said these funds would allow members of the

SAU to attend conferences. The funds would be divided amongst administrators and support staff, providing learning experiences for all attendees. Dr. Jennings said some conferences are required and a representative from the district must attend.

A motion was made by Jim O'Mara to reduce Consultant Cost (10.2321.328.00) from \$10,000 to \$5,000. Leo White seconded the motion.

Board members discussed the motion.

Jim O'Mara said he was concerned since this item was not budgeted for last year, which may compromise the entire budget. Jim said this dollar amount would allow the administrative team to attend the conferences, and would make the expense more sellable.

Christine Morley asked Dr. Jennings if \$5,000 was enough for the administrative team. Dr. Jennings said she would make due with the funds.

Board members voted 8-4 in favor of the motion, the motion passed.

A motion was made by Jim O'Mara to reduce Periodicals and Reference Books (10.2321.640.00) from \$1,200 to \$800. Bruce Schmidt seconded the motion.

Board members discussed the motion.

Jim O'Mara said if you look at the last two spending patterns in 2006-2007 they spent \$601, and year to date they've spent \$622, and unless new periodicals are coming then Jim suggested they be as conservative as possible.

Nicole Heimarck explained they are trying to populate their library with Literacy materials and Science Materials to support the Literacy initiative as well as the Science curriculum revisions.

Jeanne Ludt asked Nicole what she could live with in the

budget for this line item next year.

Nicole said she believes \$900 would be a reasonable figure for her to work with.

Jim O'Mara amended his motion as follow: A motion was made by Jim O'Mara to reduce Periodicals and Reference Books from \$1,200 to \$900. Bruce Schmidt seconded the motion. Board members voted in favor of motion 12-0.

Jim O'Mara had a question on Accounting Software (10.2500.73800). Jim wanted to know what type of rollover assistance Budget Sense provided for \$1,000. He also wanted to know if this expense was different than Budget Sense training. Betty said at the end of the fiscal year and calendar year, Budget Sense provides assistance in rolling over the calendar year for payroll. Betty said this is different than Budget Sense training.

Pam Dudoff commented this was the last opportunity for board members to make changes to the budget as presented prior to the Public Hearing on December 11, 2007.

Dr. Jennings reminded board members the budget needed to be sent to the newspapers by tomorrow morning, November 30, 2007, at 9 a.m.

Jim O'Mara said the board would have the opportunity to meet after the Public Hearing where they can either increase or decrease the proposed budget based on feedback received at the Hearing.

- D. **Director of Special Education Search** – Board members received a handout entitled Administrative Hiring Process, SAU 39, Director of Special Education in their board packets.

Dr. Jennings asked board members to review the process as presented and if they had any questions or comments they could refer them to either she or John Schwope. If a board member is interested in serving on the search committee

they can contact either John Schwope or Dr. Jennings.

Jim O'Mara said he endorsed the process as outlined by the Superintendent.

- A. **Policy Comments – Angel Website** – John Schwope told board members they did not need to address this topic at the board meeting.

VI. ACTION ITEM

- A. **Introduction of Policies** – Due to the time taken on the FY09 Budget discussion, this item will be moved to the next agenda and board meeting on December 11, 2007.

VII. DISCUSSION ITEMS

John Schwope told board members he is in the process of trying to complete the Superintendent Evaluations. John reminded board members they are each supposed to complete a Superintendent Evaluation Form and submit it to the Chairman of their respective board. Once complete, the individual boards will submit a summary report to John and then John will summarize this information and bring it forward to the SAU 39 board. John said he still needs Souhegan's and Mont Vernon's summaries, and would like them as soon as possible so he has time to do his summary prior to the December 11, 2007, board meeting.

VIII. OTHER

Steve Coughlan told board members he and Dwight Brew are trying to establish a Warrant Article numbering system for this year. Steve said it would be nice to get the Mont Vernon Board and Board of Selectmen to approve this system.

Leo White agreed to approach the Board of Selectmen regarding this issue. Once the numbering scheme is decided, either Steve or Dwight will contact Leo then he will contact the Board of Selectmen.

A motion was made by Bruce Schmidt to adjourn the meeting. Howard Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (13-0) The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

IX. REVIEW OF MEETING/ADJOURN

