

**MINUTES  
SOUHEGAN SCHOOL BOARD  
PUBLIC HEARING  
January 16, 2006  
Souhegan High School**

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Souhegan Cooperative School Board Chair Steve Coughlan called the public hearing to order at 7:15p.m. **CALL TO ORDER**

Present:

**ATTENDANCE**

Souhegan Cooperative School Board: Steve Coughlan, Jan Phelps, Janet Gaynor, Phyllis Thomas, and Jeanne Ludt. Absent: John Rizzi and John Walsh

Administrative Team: Howard Colter, Scott Prescott, Susan Ward, and Kathy Skoglund

Finance Committee: Art Faint, Christine Morley, May Balsama, and Ann Dod

Minutes Recorder: Terri Connolly

Steve Coughlan suggested that future public hearing meetings, for the annual budgets, be conducted at the town hall, which would allow television coverage for the proceedings. There was a general consensus that this was a good idea. Art Faint suggested there be an avenue for people to call in or email questions during the session, to which Steve directed the suggestion to BOS Bruce Bowler, who was present at the public hearing. **PUBLIC TIME**

Steve presented an overview of SHS and reported a projected level student population of 1,046 students with 174 staff. **Operating Budget Presentation**

Scott Prescott reviewed SHS points of pride and highlighted several points of distinction in the areas of standardized and NHEAIP tests, student academic achievements, and student activities.

Steve reviewed Warrant Article 2: The Budget, which proposes an operating budget of \$16,135,999.00 (with a default budget of \$15,349,623.00). The key elements of the operating budget include personnel, programs, special education, and operation and maintenance costs.

The proposed total gross FY'07 budget is estimated to be \$1,005,938.00 over FY'06, which equates to a 6.6% increase. The 6.6% increase reflects an increase in professional and support staff salaries, technology, increased student services within special

education, accreditation renewal, increased energy and fuel costs, health and dental insurance increases, and state retirement contributions.

Proposed changes from the current year include a net to gross budget, eliminating a part-time teaching position, adding special education staff to support an increased student load, continuing the SRO partnership with the town of Amherst, increasing salaries for teachers and support staff, increasing the professional development budget for staff, and eliminating the early retirement option for professional staff.

The projected tax impact for Amherst residents, assuming an average \$300,000.00 assessed house value, is \$8.85 per thousand or \$192.00 per year, which is a projected increase of \$0.64 over the \$8.21 per thousand for FY'06.

**Revenue Summary and Tax Rate Summary**

The projected tax impact for Mont Vernon residents, assuming an average \$300,000.00 assessed house value, is \$6.80 per thousand or \$162.00 per year, which is a projected increase of \$0.54 over the \$6.25 per thousand for FY'06. It was noted these projections are based upon FY'05 property tax valuations.

Steve reported the FY'07 default budget is \$15,349,623.00 versus the proposed budget of \$16,135,999.00, or a difference of \$786,376.00. The proposed budget is higher than the default budget due to additional energy costs unanticipated in the current year, retaining competitive salary for staff, and replacing aging technology.

**Default Budget**

Art Faint thanked the SAU, Administrative staff, and school board and noted special thanks to Susan Ward for all her efforts in getting the financial information together. Art reported the Finance Committee believes this is a financially responsible budget that will meet the educational needs of SHS students and noted the committee supports the proposed budget.

**Finance Committee Comments**

Jeanne Ludt invited representatives for the petition warrant article to speak on behalf of the article; however, there were no comments forthcoming. Jeanne addressed Warrant Article 6, which proposes separating the SAU budget from the SHS budget. Jeanne noted the SAU Board scrutinizes the SAU budget thoroughly. Jeanne reported the school board opposes this petition warrant article and noted the board believed it would impractical to implement in a multi-town, multi-district, multi-voting SAU system.

**Petition Warrant Article**

**Wellness Facility  
Warrant Article**

Janet Gaynor presented Warrant Article 3: The Wellness Facility, which proposed raising and appropriating a sum of \$270,000.00 and further appropriate the additional sum of \$92,770.00 from the June 30, 2005 Annex fund balance for the purpose of constructing a Wellness Facility. In addition, \$205,048.00 would be raised from private contributions and grants.

Janet also presented Warrant Article 4, which stipulates that in the event Article 3 fails, a sum of \$92,770.00 would be added to the Souhegan Cooperative School District School Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund established in 2005 (this amount is equivalent to the interest earned on the bond proceeds from the Annex building).

Janet presented additional information on the proposed Souhegan Wellness Facility and highlighted the need for meeting enhanced federal and state health and wellness requirements. Janet also noted there is currently a lack of adequate indoor open space and appropriate equipment for student use.

Jeanne Ludt reviewed health data and wellness statistics from the Wellness and Health faculty report, which reports 35% of incoming Freshman have a body mass index (BMI) rating of moderate to high risk for obesity; 67% of incoming Freshman failed the cardiovascular component of the Physical Best Test.

Jeanne noted the Wellness Research Facility Committee recommended the addition of two rooms, totaling 3,984 square feet, for a wellness classroom and fitness room. The investment would yield the benefit of adequate space and equipment for wellness programs for SHS students, staff/faculty and the community.

Janet Gaynor presented the proposed financing for the Wellness Facility to include \$100,000.00 from private contributions/grants, \$92,770.00 from the Annex account (amount is based on interest), \$270,000.00 (one time warrant article), and \$105,048.00 from state building aid.

The tax impact for Warrant Article 3 is estimated to be \$54.00 (on an average \$300,000.00 Amherst house valuation) and \$45.00 (on an average \$300,000.00 Mont Vernon house valuation). This tax impact is for one year only.

Jeanne noted additional information can be found on the [www.souheganwellnessfacility.org](http://www.souheganwellnessfacility.org) website, and a Wellness and

Health Forum is scheduled for February 13, 2006 with Dr. Susan Lynch scheduled as the keynote speaker. The Wellness faculty will also be presenting at the meeting.

Linda Kaiser questioned if special education students ever graduate from SHS, to which Kathy Skoglund reported special educational needs vary from case to case. Some students, with severe mental disabilities, would receive a graduation diploma at the age of 21; other students may overcome a disability at which time the students would be reassessed and proceed the appropriate academic program. There are currently 161 special education students.

**Questions from the Public**

Peter Brane, a Mont Vernon resident, noted there were two tax impact figures given for Mont Vernon, to which Steve Coughlan reported there was an error in the presentation and the first slide (\$6.80 per thousand) was correct.

Peter noted the budget proposed a 6.6% increase, which equated to an 11% increase for Mont Vernon and a 9% increase for Amherst, and questioned why that was, to which Steve noted he would review the calculation and be sure to address the matter at the deliberative session.

Peter also questioned the cost per student calculation and noted his simple formula was the budget divided by the number of students. Based upon his calculation, this proposed budget was one of the highest in the state. Steve noted the state used a different, more complex formula, which the SCHS Board subscribes to, and that the simple calculation did not take special education students into consideration.

Peter also expressed concern that the school was not producing enough students for an ivy league education, to which Christine Morley responded her child has been accepted into an ivy league college; however, the curriculum did not meet her daughter's needs. Ivy league enrollment is not a good measurement of the educational success at SHS.

Peter questioned how the wellness facility will engage the student population not participating in sports and/or subject to obesity, to which Janet Gaynor reported the Health and Wellness faculty have a proposed comprehensive program to reach students, whereby all wellness classes would use the space.

Peter noted the wellness issue is a societal problem and questioned if the students could take classes at Hampshire Hills, to which Janet

responded taking classes at Hampshire Hills was prohibitive due to bussing issues.

Peter questioned why Superintendent Colter resigned after a year and half and would the district be refunded the \$20,000 search fee, to which Steve Coughlan noted the NHSBA provided the search and it is unlikely they will refund the money. Superintendent Colter has agreed to stay until the end of the current school year, thus he will have been with the district for two years. Steve asked Howard if he would like to respond to the question, to which Howard stated he did not.

Bert McKnight responded the district deserves an answer from Superintendent Colter. With regard to the Wellness Facility, Mr. McKnight noted obesity is a result of poor diet habits. An improper diet is a societal problem and should be addressed within the family.

Linda Kaiser echoed Mr. McKnight's comments regarding receiving input from town/district employees through exit interviews and requested Howard provide feedback to the town.

Steve Coughlan noted some of the input he has received from Howard is that multi-board SAUs are different and difficult. There are lots of areas to improve upon in terms of working better and more efficiently. The boards (ASD, SCSB, and Mont Vernon) are reviewing the feasibility of unifying the district to be a K-12 district.

Janet Gaynor thanked Howard for the time he was invested at SAU 39 and noted he has made a significant impact; she encouraged the public to take solace in his efforts.

Steve closed the public hearing session at 9:01 p.m.

**Adjournment**