

MINUTES
SOUHEGAN COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD
April 20, 2006
Souhegan High School – Info Center

Page 756

Chairperson Steve Coughlan called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m. **CALL TO ORDER**

Present:

ATTENDANCE

Souhegan Cooperative School Board: Steve Coughlan, Jeanne Ludt, John Walsh, and John Rizzi

Administrative Team: Howard Colter, Regina Sullivan, Scott Prescott, Susan Ward, and Colleen Meaney

Community Council: Alex McGuire (arrived at 6:50 p.m.)

Finance Committee: Christine Morley

Minutes Recorder: Terri Connolly

Sheryl Stephens-Burke, of Melanson Heath, presented an auditor's report to the board. Sheryl thanked Susan Ward and her staff for a smooth audit. Sheryl reviewed various financial reports and noted particular highlights associated with those reports. **AUDITOR'S REPORT**

John Walsh noted there was a land value for SCHS and questioned the amount, as all land is owned by the ASD and leased by SCHS, to which Sheryl noted she would look into that reported value.

Sheryl reviewed the Management Letter and presented two recommendations: (1) Include School Store in the District's General Ledger, and (2) Improve Student Activity Fund Policies and Procedures.

Susan Ward noted she has met with Lisa Ambrosio and Regina Sullivan regarding the school store. Susan noted this was a different situation because the store is also a class. The Finance Department will work closely with Regina to implement policies and procedures, including having Scott Prescott sign off on expenditures, as well as Regina. Steve Coughlan invited Susan to come back to the board with a description of recommended procedures for the school store.

Susan reported Lisa Ambrosio has talked with Rhonda regarding the student activity fund; those funds will be administered through the SAU and allocated to Fund 29. Jeanne Ludt added she would like to see more regular reporting of donated funds so that the board could send thank you recognitions.

**ATTORNEY
DISCUSSION**

Attorney Gordon Graham presented a legal view on the matter of school funds and board endorsed projects. Gordon noted there is not a lot of clarity, at the state level, regarding the right of a district to recommend projects to the community for [warrant] passage. Gordon added a district can expend money to provide information to the community on the matter, but should avoid spending funds as a campaign to get the project approved; any materials distributed should be informational only and there should be no implied advocacy. Gordon added there is no prohibitive stipulation against individual board members presenting and appearing in public to support a community vote for the initiative. A district cannot use district money for the purpose of initiating publications for the project.

Attorney Graham suggested private citizens spend their own money to promote the initiative while the board focuses on supplying the facts in district publications.

Attorney Graham also discussed the FERPA policy, which is related to the directory of district contacts (parent names and addresses). If the board uses this method to disseminate information than the opponents of the initiative may also have the same rights to such directory information.

Jeanne noted the board used the legal process of distributing information regarding the wellness initiative, as Attorney Graham reviewed all the materials before they were disseminated. Private donations were used to print and distribute the pamphlets and brochures. The board was careful with regard to what was sent home or distributed via email—all of these materials were informational only. Jeanne added there were so many restrictions as to what the board could do that, she believes, it negatively impacted the outcome of the vote. There were only 22% of parents who voted; Jeanne added she thought the initiative would have passed if parents had voted.

Howard Colter noted, in his experience, the public carries projects to fruition and not the board. The board puts together a plan, including the facts. The community carries the grass root effort by mailers, community meetings, and coffees/teas. Howard added he thought campaigning for a cause via the school internet was a bad public relations move, as it may be perceived as misuse and there could be negative consequences. Howard suggested the board review the FERPA policy.

Steve Coughlan noted the board has disseminated two kinds of information in the past: (1) Notification of information about voting dates and locations, and (2) Souhegan facts, such as school statistics, to counter negative perceptions. Attorney Graham noted it is legitimate for the school board and administration to provide statistics regarding the district, but do not use it as a means to advocate an issue that is going before the community for a vote.

There was additional discussion regarding what types of information can be distributed at school assemblies and what links should be linked to the school website, to which Attorney Graham noted there is nothing inappropriate in having staff present facts and research data. With regard to links off the school website, both proponents and opponents should be given the same access to the district website.

Jeanne noted there is approximately \$500 in donations remaining for the wellness committee initiative, as well as grant gifts; Jeanne questioned if the Wellness Committee can hold onto these for another year, to which Gordon noted grant funds do not lapse. Keeping the donations and gifts depends upon the condition in which the gifts were given to the district. It was agreed Gordon would review this matter in greater detail.

It was also noted the board was interested in conducting a survey regarding the wellness issue, to which Gordon noted it is appropriate for a district to get input regarding a project and to use an online means to gather that input.

Christine Morley noted she was rather alarmed that, as a parent, other groups could be able to have access to her email account; Christine added she would not want others to have access to her email address, as she is very guarded about that information.

PUBLIC TIME

Alex McGuire reported on recent events with Community Council. Community Council has been focused on the security camera proposal and has formed a committee to communicate the issue. The matter was addressed during a recent state-of-the-community day, John Smith and Regina Sullivan have presented facts to all the grades, and there have been discussions in advisories.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Jeanne Ludt added Community Council wanted to do more research and visit schools that have cameras to see if there have been positive impacts. Community Council members want to be educated on the pros and cons of the issue. Scott Prescott noted the camera discussions have led to deeper discussions regarding the culture at

Howard Colter added he appreciated the thoughtfulness of Community Council regarding this matter and encouraged members to visit schools that have the cameras and schools that do not, and to question the latter schools as to how they have dealt with theft and security issues without the use of cameras.

Alex noted more research needed to be done, but the Council would like to vote on the matter before the end of the year.

Scott Prescott presented an administrator's report on current events at SCHS and noted there were two spring coaching positions that needed board approval; Senior projects are coming up the week of May 15, 2006 and Senior Project Night will be held on May 25, 2006; Internet safety night was held last night; in the upcoming months, the administration team will review and revise the overnight stay policy with regard to looking at what other schools are doing and making the policy clearer and more defined; there are a couple of trips over April vacation, including a Germany home stay and a trip to Italy.

ADMINISTRATORS' REPORT

Ann Logan questioned if a Senior projects list would be publicized in the paper, to which Scott noted the local papers would be notified.

Howard Colter nominated Brian Wilson for position of Freshman Lacrosse coach and John Forsythe for the position of volunteer coach for Boys' Tennis.

John Walsh moved to accept the Superintendent's recommendations. John Rizzi seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor the motion. The motion passed.

Susan Ward presented an FY'06 budget update to the board and noted the finance staff members have met with Scott Prescott for end-of-year projections. Susan noted there would be budget transfers from surplus accounts to line items that were under budget and added revenue projections are on target.

FY'06 Budget Update

It was also noted the \$13,000 settlement amount, with the Amherst Soccer Club, has been received and a public hearing to accept the monies would be scheduled for the 2nd meeting in May. There was a brief discussion as to what to do with the money, to which John Walsh suggested bleachers were still needed.

**BUSINESS &
INSTRUCTION
Appointment of
District Clerk and
Treasurer**

The board agreed to reappoint Ann Logan as District Treasurer and Ann accepted the reappointment. John Walsh moved to nominate Ann Logan as District Treasurer for FY'06-07. Jeanne Ludt seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Steve Coughlan noted Lyn Jennings has declined the reappointment of District Clerk. An advertisement will be placed in the paper for this position. Steve requested board members contact him if any potential candidates come to mind.

Howard Colter presented the proposed 2006-2007 school calendar and recognized Susan Ward for her efforts in coming up with a new, clearer calendar format; the board noted they liked the new format as well. There was a suggestion to add a note that the week of June 18th through June 22nd may be used as potential snow make-up days.

**2006-2007 School
Calendar**

John Walsh moved to adopt the calendar as presented, with the friendly amendment as noted. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

The board agreed to defer the wellness facility discussion until the next meeting. Jeanne Ludt reported she and Janet Gaynor would like to put together a subcommittee to look at all the options and not just a building addition. Jeanne suggested a committee to be formed with some of the same members from the Wellness Committee.

**Wellness Facility
Discussion**

Howard Colter nominated Brenton Douglas for the position of a long-term substitute paraprofessional for the balance of the school year.

PERSONNEL

John Walsh moved to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to hire Brenton Douglas as a long-term substitute paraprofessional for the remainder of the school year. John Rizzi seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

John Rizzi moved to accept the minutes of April 6, 2006 and Jeanne Ludt. The minutes were accepted as amended: Page 751, under Community Council, 1st paragraph, last line, change "be" to "the"
The motion passed.

**APPROVAL OF
MINUTES OF
APRIL 6, 2006**

Susan Ward distributed minutes from the March 16, 2006 and March 30, 2006.

The board agreed to schedule the meeting with the Athletic Director, Bill Dod, for June 15, 2006. Jeanne Ludt and Janet Gaynor have submitted questions for Bill, which Scott Prescott compiled and forwarded to Bill.

OTHER

Howard suggested the board develop guidelines regarding what would be reasonable amounts for parents to contribute toward athletic programs. Howard added it was his experience that athletic programs were partially budgeted and partially supported by a Boosters Club. Athletic uniforms were on a purchasing cycle and the board weighed in on how much parents can contribute to a given sport. Howard added the whole matter deserves review from the board.

John Rizzi suggested Bill Dod bring his concerns and questions to the school board meeting as well.

It was also noted that scholarships must be completed prior to Scholarship Night.

John Walsh moved to adjourn. John Rizzi seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT