

MINUTES
SOUHEGAN COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Thursday December 20, 2007
Souhegan High School - Annex Room A222

Present:

Souhegan Cooperative School Board: Steve Coughlan, Christine Morley, Dana Redmond, Jeanne Ludt

Administrative Team: Dr. Mary Jennings, Scott Prescott, Betty Shankel, Kathy Skoglund, Lisa Ambrosia, Bruce Shakin

Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee: Marilyn Peterman (chair), Mary Mahar, Gail Agans, Pete Stearns, Fran Harrow

Community Council: Frank Cinque

Auditor: Cheryl Burke from Melanson Heath & Company, PC

Minutes Recorder: Christine Morley

I. CALL TO ORDER

Steve Coughlan called the meeting to order at 6.12 p.m.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:

Scott gave a brief summary of his report that had been distributed to the Board. He added that the band and chorus had been able to give their concert successfully on December 19th.

Jeanne asked for a description of the My Voice Surveys. Scott explained the surveys comprise comprehensive questionnaires and are one assessment tool to find out how the students and staff feel about Souhegan High School. Scott agreed to provide the board with a copy of the analysis resulting from the surveys.

B. COMMUNITY COUNCIL:

Frank discussed the Community Council report that had been distributed.

Community Council had voted to donate the profits from the Fang Fest penny war to the Ethics Forum which in turn will pass the donation to the Free the Children Foundation to help fund education of children in Africa. In addition, the semi-formal dance had been very successful, with a profit of more than \$3,000.

Frank reported that faculty nominations had been postponed until the next Community Council meeting after the holidays.

He also reported that Carl Benevides had brought a proposal to Community Council regarding installation of security cameras. However, more discussion was needed on the details of this proposal.

III. PUBLIC TIME

Steve invited comments from the Public but none were forthcoming.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

The A.1 Minutes – November 15, 2007 and C.1 and C.2 Personnel items were pulled from the Consent Agenda.

B. Budget – 1. Treasurer’s Report

A motion was made to accept Consent Agenda item B. Budget 1. Treasurer’s Report – November 2007. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

A. 1 Minutes

A motion was made by Dana Redmond and seconded by Jeanne Ludt to approve the minutes of November 15, 2007, as amended. *[The amendments are on page 24 to delete the words “and Christine” in the list of Administrative Team; delete the words “Ways and Means Committee” and move Marilyn Peterman up to the Finance Committee line; in A. Principal’s Report, the first sentence should be amended to read “Scott gave Board members an update on the theft from the Music Room.” On page 25 correct spelling of “up” in the first sentence to read “Betty explained ...equipment set up for other students.” Further down the page, Rachel’s Challenge should be capitalized; Change next sentence to read “Mary will put it on each agenda but...”; On page 27 correct sentence from Marilyn to “Mary explained SAU does... “ On page 29 the term budget committee should be changed to read **Advisory Finance Committee** (occurs twice); also at the bottom of page 28 the sentence “This is in the PPC” should be changed to “This is in the **personnel policies.**” On page 30, the first sentence in the Budget Communications section should be changed to read “Jeanne thanked Scott, Peggy **Silva** and Colleen Meaney for setting up a point person within the building to gather stories that **reflect ways in which Souhegan is outstanding.**” On page 32, “Ways and Means committee” should be changed to “**Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee**” (occurs twice).]*

The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

C. Personnel – 1. Sabbatical Recommendation and 2. Extended Leave of Absence request

The two items concerning personnel were considered together as they both concerned Gary Schnakenberg. Mary reported that Gary had requested a one-year sabbatical followed by a one-year leave of absence to attend Michigan State University in order to complete his doctorate. Mary said she supported the request. It was clarified that the sabbatical would be a paid leave of absence under the terms of the school policies

and the subsequent one-year leave of absence would be unpaid. Scott said that he also supports the request as Gary will come back to Souhegan and share his knowledge with teachers and also with senior seminar students. Scott also said he thinks a two-year position may be easier to fill than a one-year position. Jeanne asked how many teachers at the high school had a PhD. Betty reported that none do; only the school psychologist has a PhD. Dana asked whether it was mandatory to return to the school immediately after a sabbatical. Christine asked the monetary effect on the budget of granting the sabbatical. Betty estimated that the impact was a \$22,000 increase and had already tentatively included it in the revised budget so that the Board could see the impact. She also reported that if the voters rejected the budget, the sabbatical would not be funded.

Jeanne Ludt proposed and Dana Redmond seconded the motion to approve the sabbatical and extended leave of absence as presented by Dr. Mary Jennings. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

VI. PRESENTATIONS

A. Audit Report FY07

Cheryl Burke from the CPA firm Melanson Heath & Company, PC distributed copies of the Management Letter and Annual Financial Statements for the year ended June 30, 2007. She reported that the Souhegan Cooperative School District meets generally accepted accounting principle (GAAP) requirements. She discussed the new SAS 112 audit standard and explained that verbal reports to the Board and SAU are no longer permitted. Thus the Management Letter contains more current year recommendations than historically seen.

Recommendations #1 and 2: Cheryl said that most audit clients will receive recommendation #2 to document control processes according to SAS 112 and also to document the monitoring process. Steve asked about the COSO model and how much work it was likely to entail. Cheryl said that she didn't think it would be too difficult for the Souhegan school district to implement.

Betty reported that steps are being taken to comply with recommendations #1 and #2. The original manifests will now be maintained by the SAU.

Dana asked whether manifest reviews are conducted in the same way in all school districts. Cheryl said that our SAU's method was typical and reminded the Board that the School Board is ultimately responsible.

Recommendation #3: Cheryl noted that steps had been taken to comply with this prior-year recommendation and that the district was still working on implementation of new procedures.

Recommendation #4: Betty noted that the Business office recommends the accounting functions of the school store be integrated into the school curriculum. Scott said he thought that Regina would be happy to do this and Betty volunteered to follow up on this suggestion after budget season. Steve also asked why the land upon which the school sits is on the Statement of Net Assets as the land is owned by the Amherst

School District and leased to the Souhegan Cooperative School District. This question was raised last year, and Cheryl reported that a new footnote (#12) discloses the lease arrangement.

B. Proposed FY08/09 Budget – 1. Draft 2

Scott presented the revised budget and explained the additions and deletions noted on the Changes from Nov 15 Presentation page. He also reported that the proposal to lease technology had been looked at and did not appear to be the best option at this time. In response to Jeanne's request for more information, Bruce Chakrin summarized the research on leasing and answered questions about technology issues. He reported that there are two types of lease – (1) pay to lease for a period of time and then send the equipment back at the end of the lease and (2) lease the equipment for a period of time and then pay \$1 to buy the piece of equipment at the end of the lease. Calculations show that for option (1), Souhegan would pay the full price of the equipment over the period of the lease, but then wouldn't own it at the end; for option (2), the total cost over a three-year lease would be 6.5-8% greater than buying the equipment outright. As Souhegan usually manages to achieve five years' use out of a computer, both options will cost the district more than purchase. Betty also added that, to comply with NH law, all leases have to have an Escape Clause and that most technology leases do not have such Escape Clauses.

Jeanne asked about funding for the Literacy Initiative. Betty reported that if the voters reject the budget, money for the Initiative will have to be taken by approved transfers from other accounts.

Jeanne and Dana also asked questions about security cameras. Jeanne asked whether funding for the cameras could come from the expendable trust. Steve said yes, as security is a health and safety issue.

A. Report from the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee

Marilyn Peterman confirmed that she had been elected chair of the Advisory Finance Committee. She reported that the Committee's main area of concern is the 1400 series of accounts, which comprise the student activity accounts.

Mary Mahar asked about the financial arrangements pertaining to the driver's education program and how the vendor is chosen. Betty explained about the state subsidy of the program and how it is split between the school and the vendor. She reported that the contract will be put out to bid again in the spring.

Gail Agans pointed out that, although the overall revised budget increase is in the 3% range, the special education budget is up 8.63% and the increase for regular education is only 1.37%. She asked whether anything can be done to reduce the special education increase. Kathy Skoglund reported that the special education budget is dependent on the requirements of the student population and varies not only from year

to or out of the district. She described how the special education department tries to provide services as cost-effectively as possible. Pete Stearns pointed out that the increase seems bogusly larger because the revised budget is being compared to the current default budget. Dana said that he is concerned that even so, the percentage is larger than voters will accept. The Board and Advisory Finance Committee then discussed where the budget could possibly be cut. Betty told the Board that, to make a further 1% reduction, approximately \$167,000 more would need to be cut from the budget. The possibility of increasing user activity fees was also discussed. Mary pointed out that, due to the law, the projected increases to the special education budget will be included in the default budget. The Advisory Finance Committee agreed to look at the revised budget further and come to the next Board meeting on January 10th with its final recommendations.

B. Administrative Recommendations

After hearing the Board's opinions, Steve asked Betty to prepare a default budget for presentation at the next Board meeting. Final decisions will be made after the Advisory Finance Committee has provided its final recommendations. Scott should also give consideration as to where further cuts could be made.

2. Warrant Articles

Draft warrant articles were presented by Betty. **Warrant articles 1, 4 and 5 were discussed and unanimously approved by the Board (4-0).** Warrant articles 2 and 3 will be finalized at the Board meeting in January after further discussion on the budget.

C. Hiring Process

1. Souhegan Administration

Scott presented a proposed hiring protocol/timeline for the Athletics/Activities Director. Jeanne asked how extensively the district would advertise the position. Mary said that advertisements would be placed in all of the locations listed by Scott and that prior experience suggested that EdJobs was the best place for posting advertisements. Carrie Morneau would also be holding a job fair to recruit employees for all of the SAU 39 districts on March 24, 2008.

Dana questioned the composition of the search committee. Scott elaborated on the proposed criteria for search committee members and the interview panels that will meet with the candidates and report to the search committee. It was decided to leave the composition of the search committee and the interview panels as proposed by Scott, but Dana requested that Scott look carefully at the balance of the committee when prospective members had been identified.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Policies

Due to a lack of time, the second reading of the policies was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

VIII. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Proposed Amendment – Policy KB

Due to a lack of time, this item was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

B. Policies – 1st Reading

Due to a lack of time, this item was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

IX. OTHER

Appointment of Library and Instructional Materials Review Committee Members

Steve informed the Board that it needs to appoint two community members to the Library and Instructional Materials Review Committee. Steve reported that Ruslyn Vear, Head of Research Services at the Amherst Town Library, and Amy White, Children's Librarian at the Mont Vernon Daland Library, had volunteered for the positions. A motion was made by Jeanne Ludt and seconded by Dana Redmond to appoint the two community members to the Library and Instructional Materials Review Committee. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

Non-Public Session (V?)

Jeanne Ludt moved to go in to non-public session to discuss personnel issues per RSA 91-A:3 II(a). Dana Redmond seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously and the Board went in to non-public session at 9.25 pm.

The Board came out of non-public session at 10.17 pm.

Dana Redmond proposed and Jeanne Ludt seconded a motion to approve the PPC agreement as discussed in the non-public session. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

X. REVIEW OF MEETING/ADJOURN

There was no review of the meeting.

Jeanne proposed and Dana seconded a motion to adjourn the Board meeting. The meeting adjourned at 10.20 pm by unanimous vote (4-0).

Minutes for Non-Public Session on December 20, 2007

Present: Steve Coughlan, Christine Morley, Dana Redmond, Jeanne Ludt, Dr. Mary Jennings, Scott Prescott, Betty Shankel

Betty distributed draft agreements for the professional and support staff as crafted by the PPC for the fiscal years 08/09, 09/10 and 10/11.

Jeanne asked whether all of the Board members had a vote on the agreements. Steve confirmed that the School Board must vote on the agreements and the agreements are only binding if approved by majority vote.

Steve reported on the progress PPC had made in creating a new simplified professional staff matrix and gave credit to Betty Shankel and Carrie Morneau for doing an excellent job on a complicated task. Steve explained that the new matrix replaces the original complicated system, as one of the main interests of the PPC this year was to have a contract that can be administered simply and enable the staff to see how much they currently earn and how career development will enable them to earn more. Betty explained briefly how the new matrix works and how the staff had been placed on the matrix. Steve also reported on the support staff matrix and agreement. The support staff matrix is for new hires only; existing staff will continue to receive pay and benefits per their existing agreements. Additionally, the Board was informed that the “super six”, i.e. the employees whose roles necessitate that they be paid differently from other staff, will be offered the support staff percentage increases. That is, they will receive increases of 3.3% in the first year and 4.0% and 4.4% in the two subsequent years.

The overall increase in salaries for the staff for the first year (08/09) will be approximately 3.4%.

Steve also reported on the progress in drafting a three-year agreement and some of the items that are likely to be discussed at future PPC meetings, such as retirement benefits and number of sick days.

Dana moved and Jeanne seconded a motion to come out of public session. By unanimous vote (4-0), the Board came out of non-public session at 10.17 pm.