

SAU 41 GOVERNING BOARD  
DECEMBER 14, 2017  
**MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the SAU 41 Governing Board was conducted on Thursday, December 14, 2017 at 6:02 p.m. at the at the Hollis/Brookline Middle School.

Chairman, Tom Solon presided:

Members of the Board Present: Laurie Miller, Vice Chairman  
Lauren DiGennaro, Treasurer  
Erin Sarris, Secretary  
Holly Deurloo Babcock, Hollis/Brookline COOP  
John Cross, Hollis/Brookline COOP  
Tom Enright, Hollis School Board (arrived at 6:07 p.m.)  
Tammy Fareed, Vice Chairman, Hollis School Board (arrived at 6:05 p.m.)  
Kenneth Haag, Brookline School Board  
Melanie Levesque, Secretary, Hollis/Brookline COOP  
Matthew Maguire, Chairman, Brookline School Board  
Alison Marsano, Secretary, Brookline School Board  
Michelle St. John, Secretary, Hollis School Board  
Cindy VanCoughnett, Vice Chairman, Hollis/Brookline COOP  
Krista Whalen, Hollis/Brookline

Members of the Board Absent: Elizabeth Brown, Chairman, Hollis/Brookline COOP  
Robert Mann, Chairman, Hollis School Board

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent  
Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent  
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator  
Linda Sherwood, Assistant Business Administrator

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APPOINTMENT OF PROCESS OBSERVER

Chairman Solon appointed Kenneth Haag to serve as Process Observer.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS - None

FY19 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

**MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECESS UNTIL THE CONCLUSION OF THE  
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED FY19 BUDGET  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MILLER  
MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0-0**

*The Board recessed at 6:05 p.m.*

*The Board reconvened at 6:31 p.m.*

PUBLIC INPUT

Chairman Solon spoke of written input received from a resident unable to be in attendance. He read the following statement into the record:

*Maryanne Shanley, 7 Buttonwood Drive, Hollis*

*“I’m unable to attend the December meeting, but would like to provide some input on the proposed SAU budget. I support the increase suggested, and think the reasons for it are justified. The hardworking staff is working too hard now keeping the three districts under the SAU 41 umbrella producing as we expect as well as progressing, and we run the risk of losing some valuable professionals if the situation continues. The amount of money we would be investing, less than \$100,000, if I read the report correctly, is very small for such a huge return. Please approve the requested budget increase.”*

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

SAU 41 Governing Board . . . . . October 12, 2017

*The following amendments were offered:*

- Page 3, Line 25; delete “necessary” following “were not”
- Page 10, Line 1; delete “district’ following “voters,”
- Page 10, Line 5; delete “now” following “hearing”
- Page 14, Line 13; correct the spelling of “NESDEC”
- Page 14, Line 36; correct the spelling of “MOTION”

**MOTION BY MEMBER MILLER TO APPROVE AS AMENDED  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER FAREED  
MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0**  
*Members Cross, Haag, Levesque, and VanCoughnett Abstained*

SAU 41 Governing Board – **2<sup>nd</sup> Non-Public Session.** . . . . . October 12, 2017

**MOTION BY MEMBER MILLER TO APPROVE AS WRITTEN  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS  
MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0**  
*Members Cross, Haag, and VanCoughnett Abstained*

DISCUSSION

- SAU Goals/Staffing

Superintendent Corey requested the Board consider the formation of a sub-committee to create an operations plan (living document covering a five-year period) for the SAU, which would address capital improvements, facilities, structure, staffing levels, etc. Such a plan would provide the Governing Board with a roadmap for the next five years.

He spoke of growth, and the continued increase in requirements handed down from the State and Federal level. He would like the sub-committee to generate a draft document by the fall, even if only representing the first year of the plan.

Given the increased level of public viewing/participation at the district board level, and the fact that each district would be impacted in different ways, he would like to see the subject appear as a discussion item on agendas for each of the district boards for the next few months. He spoke of the different aspects that would impact individual district boards, and provided the example of the Hollis School District, which owns and manages the SAU Office building, and the fact that, if the budget is approved as presented, the facility will be at capacity in terms of space needs. The Hollis School Board has already requested the capital improvement process begin, and last year initiated a study to review the overall facility.

Information gathered during district meetings could be compiled in addition to research completed, and a draft document could be before the Governing Board for discussion/approval in the spring. The plan would lead into SAU goals, which could become part of the Superintendent's evaluation and part of the overall SAU assessment of performance from year to year.

The Board discussed the makeup of the sub-committee, and determined it would consist of a representative from each of the district school boards (appointed by the district board Chairs), a representative from the Brookline Finance Committee, Hollis Budget Committee, Hollis-Brookline COOP Budget Committee, and a member of the Administration. The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Business Administrator would participate; which member of the administration is present at any given meeting would be dependent upon the discussion at hand, e.g., facilities, staffing. Once formed, the membership of the sub-committee will formulate a charter. The vision could be brought before each of the district school boards for buy-in.

Mr. Cross questioned the authority of the sub-committee in terms of expending funds to have necessary research completed, e.g., facilities occupancy study. Chairman Solon responded if the sub-committee felt funding was needed to obtain the necessary information, a request would have to be made of the Governing Board unless the Superintendent was able to identify funds that could be utilized out of the existing operating budget. If there is research sought from outside entities such as the New Hampshire School Board Association (NHSBA), the sub-committee would be authorized to utilize those resources; however, the membership would be responsible for compiling and delivering that information.

**MOTION MADE BY MEMBER MILLER TO FORM AN SAU 41 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE COMPRISED OF A MEMBER OF EACH OF THE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARDS, A MEMBER OF THE BROOKLINE FINANCE COMMITTEE, THE HOLLIS BUDGET COMMITTEE, AND THE HOLLIS-BROOKLINE COOP SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET COMMITTEE, THE SUPERINTENDENT, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK**

ON THE QUESTION

Ms. Fared commented this five-year plan is long overdue, and she believes it would be incompetent to not undertake the task. Chairman Solon remarked it is a positive sign of the times that the SAU is asking the Board to be proactive.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0**

## DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the SAU 41 FY19 Budget

Ms. Fareed spoke of the part-time position that has been funded for the current year to assist the Human Resource Department. People have commented the position and individual have worked well. She questioned if the position has been filled long enough to provide an understanding of whether the request put forth for the coming fiscal year's budget will be sufficient. Superintendent Corey stated the position has not been filled long enough to make such a determination.

**MOTION BY MEMBER FAREED TO APPROVE THE FY19 BUDGET IN THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF ONE MILLION FIVE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE DOLLARS (\$1,577,723)**  
**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MILLER**

## ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Solon remarked the Board was notified a problem exists, which manifested itself in multiple ways, the most obvious being the number of hours being worked by the SAU Administration. He noted the hours required of staff beyond the regular work day, which includes attendance at board meetings, and questioned if the staffing request does anything to address meeting support. Superintendent Corey stated it would not. He spoke of the legal requirement for either the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent to attend meetings. The process that has had a positive impact is the Business Administrator attending the Finance and Budget Committee meetings, and Assistant Business Administrators attending the District School Board meetings. It is the amount of information that is required to be disseminated for and at those meetings that results in increased manhours, e.g., the SAU is amid 5 contract negotiations, managing 4 budgets, while creating 4 budgets. Every time there is a new salary request at a contract negotiation, the Business Administrator needs to run those numbers. As has been seen, the timelier you can be with that information the greater the likelihood of successfully negotiating an agreement. When in this season, the difficulty is the reality of monitoring the budget you are in while being focused on creating new budgets.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the current schedule of meetings that each require financial data be available for decisions to be made. With the volume of work being put out, there have been errors caught after distribution requiring amended versions of documents to be sent out. The process and procedures in place allow the corrections to be made during the review. The Administration has strived to complete budgets in the December/January timeframe so that voters can digest the information, and be prepared to make an informed decision. He is uncertain what the solution is in terms of time and workload required for board meetings. He commended the Board Chairs for the efficiency with which meetings are run. Although the addition of personnel does not provide for relief in the evening hours, it does provide for a staffing relief in the office.

Ms. Whalen stated her impression things slow slightly in the summer months, and questioned if there is an opportunity to offer an incentive such as Fridays off or half-day Fridays during the summer months. She encouraged consideration of such a benefit. She commented on the percentage of increase put forward by the Budget Sub-committee (Committee) indicating the Committee wished for it to be greater, but the funding was not available.

Chairman Solon stated if the Committee felt the percentage of increase should be greater, that is a discussion that should be had at the Board level. Ms. Whalen stated the Committee felt if the request was too much higher it could result in the taxpayers voting down the budget, which would put the default budget into play.

Chairman Solon commented there is a \$30,000 differential between the proposed budget and the default budget. He has never seen \$30,000, over the course of a year, be a make or break amount. Ms. Whalen commented when the budget is as lean as this is, it would make a difference. Ms. DiGennaro commented to lose \$30,000 out of this particular budget would result in the loss of personnel. Chairman Solon suggested what could occur is a request for a transfer of funds from the Unassigned Fund Balance (UFB).

Ms. Seeley spoke of the audit that is conducted over the summer months making it nearly impossible for time off. Superintendent Corey stated they struggle to hire when telling candidates, you will not be able to take vacation time during the summer. He commented on the magnitude of 4 audits; 10-day period where the SAU is basically shut down. The auditors come in and basically require all the resources of the Business Office.

Ms. Sherwood commented the Business Office is preparing for the new school year, which results in a monumental task for payroll. Every new contract that is approved must be manually input into the software.

Ms. Fareed spoke of discussions that occurred several years ago around contracting out payroll. At that time, it was said to be too costly. She questioned if that has changed. Superintendent Corey spoke of the complications for payroll, e.g., in a teaching system if a teacher were out and a colleague were to cover, the contract provides a rate of pay for that. All that information would have to be input by the Administration before it could be turned over to an outside contractor. He provided another example of a para-educator who receives a differential for working with a particular student. Were that para-educator out sick and another to step in, the individual filling that role for the day would receive that differential for the day. To do all that work just to send the information to a contracted service is not cost effective.

Ms. Sarris questioned how the percentage relates to cost, e.g., were the percentage of increase to go from 2.5% to 3%, what would that equate to in dollars. Superintendent Corey responded it was not necessarily discussion of the percentage of increase as it was number of personnel. His concern is if requests over-reach and the result is no additional staff, there is a significant issue. If the proposed budget were to pass, the Administration will be in a better place, will be able to get more data to put into the five-year plan, and phase it in over time. He reminded the Board he must look at the whole picture; he is asking for X amount with the SAU budget, for teachers in the Brookline School District, an increase in Hollis School District budget, and facilities proposals in the COOP School District. There are people in both communities that do their best to support the requests, and he is worried there is the need to be careful. An increase in the SAU budget means an increase in each of the district budgets.

Ms. St. John commented she felt this budget was being presented as a good-faith effort; this is step 1, and we must continue to increase staff over time. Ms. Whalen stated that was her take-away as well. Ms. DiGennaro stated these same discussions were had by the Committee. The Committee wanted to find the most fiscally responsible place for the Towns while still putting in place what the SAU requires. It does tie into the long-term vision. She stated it to be important to note the proposed budget represents an increase of \$79,093 over the FY18 approved budget. She believes there would be a large difference in gaining voter approval of this budget over the potential of the default budget.

Chairman Solon made a personal request that any member(s) that intends to vote against the budget make his/her opinions known so that questions could be asked and answered, and a thorough discussion take place.

Ms. Deurloo Babcock commended the Administration and Committee for being fiscally conservative, and stated the incremental phasing in of more relief is responsible. She is hopeful the voters will recognize how responsible the Administration has been for the last four years. She suggested the Administration could be creative in an approach to provide for opportunities for comp. time, etc.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0**

**MOTION BY MEMBER DIGENNARO TO ALLOCATE THE SUM OF SIX THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE DOLLARS (\$6,651) FROM THE UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE TO BE USED AS A REVENUE ITEM IN THE FY19 BUDGET  
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MILLER**

ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Solon noted unexpended appropriations remaining in the SAU budget at year end carry over from year to year. Past practice has been to maintain the UFB at an amount between 7 to 10% of the overall budget. It has also been past practice that when preparing a budget for the following year, the Board considers one-time expenses that could be funded through a transfer from the UFB. Were the UFB utilized to fund a recurring item one year and not the next, the amount, which would need to be raised through taxes, to maintain a flat budget would be inflated as taxpayer dollars would be needed to fund the item that was funded in the previous year through the UFB.

Were the Board to approve the motion to allocate \$6,651 from the UFB to be used as a revenue item, with the intent that the funds cover the cost of one month's salary to provide for the Network Administrator staying on beyond retirement to transition the new hire, the UFB would have a balance of 7.3%.

Chairman Solon questioned if the budget has sufficient funding to hire a replacement for this position. He believes the goal of the Administration is for the position to grow into one with expanded responsibilities. Such a position would demand a level of education and experience that would be commensurate with those responsibilities in today's market. Although that would likely result in an overall savings across the SAU, to fill such a position, a change in title and salary would be required. He is uncertain, if the retirement were to take place in the coming year, that the desired position could be filled with the funding proposed.

When asked what would occur if the funds were allocated, but not needed, Ms. Seeley stated the funds would be utilized only if the need materialized. If the motion were not approved, the amount that would be calculated in determining the tax impact would be greater; the anticipated \$6,651 cost would be included as part of the budget, and would not be offset by an allocation from the UFB.

Responding to the question of the likelihood that an additional request may be made, later, for an additional transfer from the UFB to cover the cost of the position should the transition occur, Ms. Seeley stated the Budget Sub-committee originally had a larger number for that position in the budget, but because an exact retirement date is unknown, the amount was reduced. The assumption made, for budgeting purposes, is that the retirement will occur later in the fiscal year.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0**

## TRANSPORTATION

Superintendent Corey remarked at the Board's last meeting, a request was made that legal counsel meet with him and the transportation company to address current issues. The agenda packet included a letter from legal counsel informing the Board of the outcome of that meeting.

At the time of the last meeting, he informed the Board there were a number of drivers in training. Three of those drivers have passed certification and moved forward. The split runs have been reduced to zero.

Issues continue to be encountered, e.g., there is occasionally a missed stop, driver not phrasing things in a preferred manner. Those issues are more common, and will likely continue to be addressed as they arise.

There now exists better staffing levels. The transportation company continues to advertise, and is hopeful to continue to gain drivers as maximum capacity has not been achieved. This is an ongoing problem for every district, and one that is being seen in bus drivers, building substitutes, cafeteria workers, custodians, etc. Unemployment is at 2.7%. Some come on board with the bus company, are there for a short period of time, obtain their Commercial Driver License (CDL), and leave to drive for companies such as UPS, FedEx, etc. where earning potential is greater.

Superintendent Corey stated the transportation company is always very responsive to the concerns of the District. He is hopeful the improvements continue as that cannot be guaranteed as we get into the spring where there would be the potential for conflicts around athletics. The SAU has reached out to other transportation companies seeking assistance with more of the athletic runs. They are experiencing the same issues, and will provide assistance when possible.

The SAU is working with legal counsel in an effort to make its voice heard at the State level. A number of regulations make it much more difficult to onboard staffing. As an example, a licensed driver in MA coming into NH would have to undertake the entire process again. There are a number of components on the test that are more geared towards a mechanic. He commented were there to be a mechanical issue, the transportation company has a full-time mechanic that would drive out to the bus on another bus, and a quick swap would take place. If not passing the test, the driver has to wait ten days before taking it again.

Mr. Haag questioned if parents could volunteer to drive students to athletic events. Superintendent Corey stated the SAU has been piloting a van through the special education program, which is being seen to be very cost effective. A recommendation will be made to the COOP School Board to consider the purchase of 2 vans. Vocational transportation results in 8,000 miles/year, and it is now known to be more cost effective to cover the cost of a van and driver than it is for a bus and driver. If those two vans are brought online, they could start to do the smaller athletic runs. If a vehicle is a 10-passenger or less, a CDL is not required.

In terms of parents driving, the SAU steers clear of that due to liability issues. There would be the need for additional background checks (driving record), and insurance issues. There could be situations such as a student or two going to Concord, and if a teacher has all of the right pieces of insurance in play, that option would be considered.

When asked if the remarks made around capacity on the part of the transportation company were meant to indicate the number of buses being operated is not what it would be if at capacity, Superintendent Corey stated what it means is their mechanic and another support person are driving every day. Chairman Solon questioned if it is likely, by year end, the SAU will have expended less on the transportation contract as a result of the

ongoing issues. Superintendent Corey stated any time a combined run occurs the bill is reduced by a certain amount.

When asked about additional incentives and who would cover the cost for those, Superintendent Corey stated the transportation company has a sign-on bonus and three, six, and nine month bonuses, the cost of which is rolled up into the contract. However, the vast majority of their drivers are not eligible for that as long-term employees. One of the discussions legal counsel had with the transportation company was the potential to consider other incentives that would fall within the same cost.

Ms. Fareed questioned if consideration has been given to utilizing a small van for transporting small groups of students who reside on the outer edges of the towns. Designating vans to transport those students would result in their arriving home earlier, and freeing up time for the other buses as well. Superintendent Corey noted although a CDL license would not be needed for a driver of a small van, a driver would be. When functioning well, students are on the bus for 45 minutes or less. He would not want to see the SAU become a transportation company.

Ms. Fareed questioned if in the instances such as there being 8-12 students over capacity, that another vehicle such as one of the vans be used. Ms. St. John commented the smaller bus was implemented last year for some runs when there was the need for split runs. Superintendent Corey commented in some ways that worries him more as it provides the opportunity to make a mistake, and put a student on the wrong bus. When they are 5 and 6 years old, and it is not their usual driver, they don't know if that is their bus or not. He stated he would rather have a maximized bus ten minutes late knowing the students are arriving in the right location.

Mr. Cross spoke of the letter from legal counsel noting the remark: "It also seems that the problem was recognized after it was too late." There are a number of corrective actions that were implemented, which look good. Regarding preventative actions, he questioned if they can forecast attrition and if they are attempting to implement an ongoing or rotational hiring scheme. Superintendent Corey stated they are constantly advertising. One of the issues they face, like any organization, is an employee being out due to injury or sickness. Last year we lost a driver due to a bus accident and a broken arm. That individual was out for approx. 6 weeks. The transportation company tries not to overstaff, and never knows when a driver will call in sick. He would love to figure out the long-term solution, but it will really come down to a driver issue. Bus driver shortage is a State and national issue.

Chairman Solon noted the SAU is somewhat limited by the fact that it is dealing with a bus company that only serves the SAU. Superintendent Corey commented were the SAU with a larger corporation, they would bring buses over from another terminal and potentially drivers. However, that would come at an increase of \$250,000 - \$300,000 in contract cost. From a cost perspective, it is a significant increase for that flexibility.

When asked, Superintendent Corey stated, in accordance with the contract, the transportation company is required to have 2 excess drivers. Right now those drivers are in the form of the mechanic and support staff. They would prefer to be fully staffed, and have those two in addition to what is required.

Mr. Cross questioned, as the only customer, could the SAU incentivize them to staff at that level. Superintendent Corey stated that could be done; however, noted Hollis Transportation has been the transportation company for the community for 40 years. This has been a 2-2 ½ year problem. They would love to be at +2 in terms of staffing. It is not a lack of effort or an attempt on their part to generate additional revenue, it is simply the turnover rate that they face, and the amount of time required for drivers to be certified



(can be 2-3 months from start to finish). Mr. Cross suggested historical information should be available to help determine rate of turnover. Superintendent Corey stated they are on a revolving advertising (has not ended).

Ms. Fareed requested the Superintendent seek information from the transportation company relative to the number of employees that have left employment in the past 3 years, the number of new hires, etc. At the district board level she heard the transportation company started out with a full contingent of business in the fall, and in September they lost 3 drivers.

### SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION

- Timeline, confirm assignments, explain process

The Superintendent Performance Evaluation Committee (SPEC) will perform the Superintendent evaluation. The SPEC is composed of the SAU Board Chair, SAU Vice-Chair and the Chair of each district board.

Chairman Solon stated Vice Chairman Miller oversees the process by which the Superintendent is evaluated. Each member of the SAU 41 Governing Board submits input electronically, which is compiled at the district level. The district board Chairs gather the information, and submit it. It is then consolidated by Vice Chairman Miller. The board Chairs have discussions with the Administrative staff that report to the Superintendent. That input is incorporated as well.

Vice Chairman Miller stated she would be forwarding the Google forms out to all members the following day. Emails would be sent to the board Chairs making them aware the ownership has changed to them, and they can begin the process. The Chairs will notify their board members of a deadline for submission of input. As part of the board meetings in January, each board would review and approve its board level submission. The Chairs will input that information into the SAU level evaluation. The February 15, 2018 Governing Board meeting is where the evaluation would be approved. From there, the SPEC presents the final/approved evaluation prior to the annual meetings in March.

Chairman Solon stated awareness of the unavailability of some members of the Board to attend the February meeting, and stated he would be surveying members to determine availability around that timeframe to determine if there is a need to reschedule that meeting.

### AGENDA BUILDING

Superintendent Evaluation

### REPORT OUT BY PROCESS OBSERVER

Mr. Haag stated the meeting was run efficiently, and was productive.

### ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY MEMBER FAREED TO ADJOURN**

**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MILLER**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0**

The December 14, 2017 meeting of the SAU 41 Governing Board was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

SAU Governing Board Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_