

1 Joint Facilities Advisory Committee Meeting

2 Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

3 Meeting Minutes

4 Attendees Via Webinar:

5 Administrative Team: Adam Steel- Superintendent, Michele Croteau- SAU #39 Business  
6 Administrator and Bethany Bernasconi- AMS Principal.

7 Committee Members: Amy Facey- JFAC Chair/SCSB Member, Pim Grondstra- SCSB Member,  
8 Stephanie Grund- SCSB Member, Ellen Gruzdién - ASB Member, Tom Gauthier- ASB Member,  
9 Shannon Gascoyne- JFAC Vice Chair, Amherst NH, Victoria Parisi, Amherst NH, Christine  
10 Grayson, Amherst NH, Brian Coogan, Amherst NH and Jeanne Ludt, Amherst NH.

11 Public: Lance Whitehead and Anne Ketterer- Lavalée Brensinger Professional Architects,  
12 Manchester, NH and Lisa Eastland- Amherst NH.

13 Meeting Minutes: Danae A. Marotta

14 I. Call to Order

15 **Chair of the Joint Facilities Advisory Committee, Ms. Amy Facey, called the meeting to**  
16 **order at 6:02PM.**

17 She thanked Ms. Gascoyne for running the meeting last month

18 II. Approval of Minutes

19 **Ms. Parisi motioned to approve the minutes of 05 21 2020. Ms. Grund seconded the motion.**  
20 **motion passed. (8-1-0)**

21 **Ms. Facey called a Roll Call: Grondstra- Yes, Parisi- Yes, Gruzdién- Yes, Gauthier-Yes,**  
22 **Grund- Yes, Ludt-Yes, Coogan-Abstain (was not in attendance) , Gascoyne-Yes and Facey-**  
23 **Yes.**

24 III. Subcommittee Updates

25 Ms. Gascoyne thanked everyone on the PR subcommittee. They have had two meetings and Ms.  
26 Facey and Ms. Ketterer have been able to join them. They are working on the survey to send to  
27 the community and their first stop was to send them to the SAU Board.

28 Ms. Facey added that they did go out last night and she has received a number of responses. She  
29 will put them together and share them with the committee.

30 IV. Overview of Building Aid

31 Ms. Michele Croteau, SAU #39 Business Administrator, commented that Building Aid is in-  
32 depth process and they can get information from the NH State website. Building Aid is a  
33 program authorized by RSA 198:15-a and it is funding that comes from the State to assist with  
34 new construction or substantial renovation of facilities for grades K-12.

35 In the past, there was funding available from 1956-2009 with a funding level range from 30-60%  
36 of the principal. They would have to bond the full project and then the State aid paid over the life  
37 of the debt payments. This was unsustainable and there was a Building Aid Moratorium that was  
38 put into place. From 2010 through 2019, no new projects were funded, and they were paying for  
39 projects previously approved.

40 Now, the State has implemented a new process. Once the State determines what the award will  
41 be, they fund 80% of that award upfront. That reduces the bonding requirement for the  
42 community and the balance of the award is 20% on completion. The application is due 12  
43 months ahead of the next State budget. They take that information and go through a ranking  
44 process.

45 The Building aid calculation identifies eligible cost, less ineligible items, and ineligible funding  
46 sources (i.e. energy rebates and Public-School Infrastructure Grants). That determines the  
47 eligible cost of the project. The eligible cost, times the building aid rate for that district will  
48 determine what the award will be for the State. Currently for Amherst and Souhegan they are at  
49 30%.

50 Ms. Croteau showed the committee the NH State planning timeline. She explained that Building  
51 aid is not retroactive. The next cycle would be Letter of Intent 01 01 2022, Application 07 01  
52 2022, Ranking (by the State) 01 15 2023, Breaking ground in the next biennium budget (07 01  
53 2023-06 30 2025). Additionally, construction prior to ranking is not eligible for Building Aid.

54 Ms. Facey asked for questions for Ms. Croteau.

55 Mr. Gauthier commented that they have not applied for any funding. He questioned if they can  
56 put it on the ballot this coming March.

57 Ms. Croteau replied that they can put it on the ballot, however, if you begin construction prior to  
58 approval and ranking then you are not eligible for building aid. Some school districts are moving  
59 forward outside of this process.

60 Ms. Gruzdien noted that they have missed the January Letter of Intent.

61 Mr. Lance Whitehead replied that he is working with another school district on their application  
62 and it is an intense timeline.

63 Ms. Croteau noted that there was a lot of discussion because the timing is really challenging. The  
64 State biennium cycle does not align with the Town voting. There also needs to be a 20-year  
65 maintenance plan on your proposed building.

66 Mr. Whitehead added that the new program is based on a ranking system. The old formula, of  
67 30%, is less important now because the ranking system considers a lot of categories.

68 Ms. Croteau added that she thought it was largely based on the number of Free and Reduced  
69 Lunch.

70 Mr. Whitehead explained that there are about 20 categories that they are going to rank, and they  
71 have not determined how the categories are weighted yet. Right now, the State has funded  
72 approx. \$45m to be spent in this biennium. There is no guarantee in the future for the same level  
73 of funding or if it even be available.

74 Ms. Parisi questioned if can they move forward with the application process.

75 Ms. Croteau replied that they can progress with compiling with the building aid process.

76 Ms. Parisi inquired if they should wait and if it is a non-starter.

77 Ms. Croteau replied that sometimes it takes a while to get a project crafted. If they waited, they  
78 would be outside of the next cycle and it is a biennium cycle.

79 Mr. Whitehead noted that a breaking ground of July 2023, would require a vote date of March  
80 2022. If the community was willing to support something in March 2021, delaying it by one year  
81 would include construction inflation costs (approx. 6% across this year on materials and energy).

82 Ms. Gruzdien inquired about in terms of transparency; how much they would get.

83 Mr. Whitehead replied that most districts in order to complete the application requirements  
84 would have had to already approved a project and started engineering

85 Ms. Gruzdien noted that they would have to delay construction.

86 Mr. Whitehead they would have to start traditionally March 2022.

87 Ms. Grund remarked that the taxpayers might want to know all of the information.

88 Ms. Croteau added that even if they did wait does not guarantee that they will be awarded.

89 Ms. Gruzdien noted that you cannot promise a couple of million and not show up with it.

90 Ms. Gascoyne recommended that they put the full cost on the ballot.

91 Mr. Steel remarked that the full cost goes on the ballot either way.

92 Ms. Facey added that they are going to potentially be having two different projects at different  
93 times and perhaps the building aid might fall in line with Souhegan 2.0. It seems that they have  
94 missed the deadline for Amherst to put something out this next year.

95 Mr. Whitehead clarified that the fourth piece is that they have put the project out to voter  
96 consideration. They would have had to pass a bond vote in March.

97 Ms. Facey asked when is the criteria coming out.

98 Mr. Whitehead replied that they are waiting on the Legislature to meet.

99 Ms. Facey inquired about the potential chances.

100 Mr. Whitehead replied that they have not ranked anything in the past, and it is a point system.

101 Ms. Facey added that they need to move forward regardless and wait for additional information.

102 Mr. Coogan mentioned that it is important to tailor the message to the community in a simplistic  
103 way. If they were to ever apply for State funding the Town has to approve it first and only after  
104 that has occurred can they apply for that funding. In being realistic, the likelihood of getting that  
105 funding is fairly low but they will do whatever they have to reduce the tax burden.

106 Ms. Facey agreed.

107 V. Lavallee Brensinger Update

108 Mr. Whitehead remarked that they did some initial meetings with AMS Leadership and he has  
109 requested Dr. Bernasconi to sit in on tonight's meeting. They focused on how the building is  
110 being used and how does it work for its function.

111 He explained that everything in light blue is a Classroom, dark blue is Specialty, orange is  
112 Special Education and green is Staff space. He explained that this is the first floor and they have  
113 documented some of the issues such as the triangle shaped rooms. Looking at the upper floor,  
114 Special Education has utilized any small space they have grabbed. What is left are the traditional  
115 education areas.

116 He reviewed the enrollment, looking at where the population peaks, 2022. They documented  
117 every room. They can create small size classrooms for break out rooms.

118 Across all areas, they are looking at planned growth of 6,500 sq. ft. for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade  
119 only. Ultimately, you have 5,000 sq. ft in growth in the core areas, overall, they are looking at a  
120 growth of 14,000 sq. ft. in reviewing with educators and administration what the ideal  
121 configuration would be, the main theme is teams with the 4 core classrooms. He then displayed  
122 the ideal configuration adding that it is similar to many schools across the State. As they look at  
123 the whole building, they need two 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teams. The anomaly is that they need two  
124 extra classrooms. The question that he is asking is how do they integrate those two teams.

125 Mr. Whitehead suggested that they create a half-team, however, the issue that he sees is staffing.  
126 He next suggested to create an additional full team. This would give them extra capacity in the  
127 future. It is giving the most flexibility in the future but is the costliest. Finally, they considered  
128 taking World Language and having it with the teams.

129 Questions to answer:

- 130 • Do they adhere to target class sizes of 22 or go to 25?
- 131 • How much excess capacity do they build in? (or building for the peak years?)
- 132 • Should they create a ½ team, full team?
- 133 • Should World Language be on a team?

134 Dr. Bethany Bernasconi, Principal of AMS, noted that there are pros and cons to each situation.  
135 The first decision is the class size. Currently, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade is in two person teams and there is

136 flexibility in what Mr. Whitehead presented. Regarding World Language, there have been  
137 questions about where World Language belongs, and it has curriculum implications. A mini team  
138 would have to flex across grade levels. If they had a 4-person team, that would allow to flex from  
139 year to year again.

140 Ms. Parisi remarked that she appreciates the outside of the box thinking and would like to see the  
141 smaller class sizes.

142 Ms. Grund asked for enrollment projections of Mont Vernon.

143 Ms. Gruzdien also inquired about the MV enrollment. She commented on suiting the needs of  
144 the advanced learners and having some additional space. There may be some team mixing that  
145 they can do. They accommodate the space initially and will need the flexibility. Additionally,  
146 there maybe years that enrollment is lower. Houses are selling fast and that is good for the  
147 community. They may also have families opting to tuitioning in. She commented that 25 should  
148 be the most for middle school, she is thinking 23 and 24.

149 Mr. Whitehead added that it does consider Mont Vernon, it is 9 extra students.

150 Ms. Gascoyne gave her support for multi-use spaces.

151 Ms. Parisi noted that she was not in town when the last middle school project was done. She  
152 noted that they should have tried to get more extra space. It is worth keeping in mind.

153 Ms. Ludt commented they need to do it right and think about small classroom sizes and think  
154 about growth. She appreciates Dr. Bernasconi being apart of the process.

155 Ms. Facey asked Mr. Whitehead if he can display the timeline. She wants to clarify when they  
156 would have to answer the questions.

157 Mr. Whitehead replied that they are trying to create some solutions this summer. Over the next  
158 couple of weeks, they would like to have the 4 questions answered.

159 Ms. Facey suggested that they create subgroups for AMS, CW and Souhegan, and come back to  
160 the larger group with a recommendation.

161 Ms. Gascoyne gave her support.

162 Ms. Facey added that she knows how busy people are.

163 Mr. Whitehead commented that it would be preferable to have the answers for AMS at the July  
164 meeting and then for CW at the following meeting.

165 Ms. Facey asked for volunteers to work with Dr. Bernasconi.

166 Ms. Parisi and Mr. Coogan volunteered.

167 Ms. Grund noted that she will work with the Amherst group.

168 Ms. Facey asked for volunteers for CW.

- 169 Ms. Gruzdien and Mr. Coogan volunteered.
- 170 Ms. Gruzdien asked if they can get some thoughts of what everyone is leaning towards and gave  
171 her support for the flex space.
- 172 Ms. Grund echoed Ms. Gruzdien.
- 173 Ms. Gruzdien inquired if they could decide tonight.
- 174 Dr. Bernasconi replied if they add the additional 4 classrooms , it some ways you can delay the  
175 conversation about World Language.
- 176 Ms. Gruzdien replied that she would vote for keeping it a fluid space and not label it.
- 177 Ms. Gascoyne echoed Ms. Gruzdien.
- 178 Mr. Whitehead remarked that their goal is to create a design that is flexible for the future. They  
179 are really only talking about two extra classrooms.
- 180 Mr. Coogan noted that he is in favor for more space. He commented that there are lots of new  
181 houses being built in Amherst and Mont Vernon.
- 182 Ms. Facey inquired if they are still thinking of forming a subcommittee.
- 183 Mr. Whitehead replied that it sounds like a subcommittee is not needed. He will work closely  
184 with Dr. Bernasconi and Superintendent Steel on conceptual design.
- 185 Ms. Facey inquired about CW.
- 186 Mr. Whitehead remarked that he will work on presenting for CW at the next meeting in the same  
187 fashion. Elementary schools are more straightforward. He will be able to give more of a  
188 conceptual design for AMS.
- 189 Ms. Ludt questioned the core space at AMS.
- 190 Mr. Whitehead commented that the biggest growth was the open commons area. Their growth in  
191 the core areas is predicted at about 5,000 sq. ft.
- 192 Mr. Whitehead explained that the idea of Smart Lunch alleviates that dual use of cafeteria and  
193 gym.
- 194 Ms. Ludt asked if they had taken into consideration the needs of the community in the gym.
- 195 Mr. Whitehead replied that it is something that they can look at when they review Clark/Wilkins.
- 196 VI. Souhegan 2.0
- 197 Ms. Facey suggested that they prioritize items for the Souhegan 2.0 project. In the meantime,  
198 they should have a subcommittee to work with Ms. Croteau and Superintendent Steel to look at  
199 the projects and developing a long-range plan. There are lots of pieces in the puzzle and they are  
200 in a good place with the elementary schools.

201 Ms. Grund, Ms. Eastland and Ms. Parisi volunteered.

202 Mr. Steel asked Ms. Parisi to coordinate the meetings and set the dates for the subcommittee  
203 meetings.

204 VII. Update on Unassigned Fund Balance

205 Ms. Gruzdien added that the ASB had a number of items and they decided to let Superintendent  
206 Steel and Ms. Croteau take care of the items that they approved with a cap of \$400k.

207 Mr. Grondstra commented that the SCSB had a UFB of \$291k and approved to spend up to  
208 \$275k.

209 Ms. Facey noted that she, Superintendent Steel and Ms. Gascoyne will be presenting to the  
210 Board of Selectmen at their June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 meeting. It will be the same presentation that they  
211 had given to the SAU Board. They are excited and will report back.

212 Ms. Gascoyne mentioned that the Upper Fields at CW were built using a grant from the State of  
213 NH. They would need to build another field if they do anything

214 VIII. Meeting Adjourned

215 **Ms. Facey adjourned the meeting at 7:47PM.**

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