

**AUBURN SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
MARCH 27, 2024 AT 6:00 P.M.  
AUBURN VILLAGE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM**

**These minutes have been approved.**

Alan Villeneuve, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those in attendance were members Janice Baker, Derek Berger, Jason Tyburski and Adrian Newton. Also in attendance was Principal Lori Collins, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessments Meg Largy, and Interim Business Administrator, Karen Lessard.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Olivia Baker led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PROOF OF POSTING**

Alan Villeneuve provided proof of posting.

Members of the Board introduced themselves.

Alan Villeneuve thanked the public for all the emails and suggestions. He said many people have volunteered.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Pinkerton Offer**

The Board reviewed the letter from Pinkerton Academy offering to allow the Board to use the 2024/2025 tuition money to offset the 2023/2024 budget emergency. The funds would be specifically earmarked to support 2024 student spring sports, field trips and arts/music programs.

Derek Berger if the Board were to accept this offer, it would effectively be borrowing against next year's budget. He expressed concern with the stipulation on how the funds can be used. Janice Baker agreed with Derek. She appreciates the offer, but said she's reluctant to further add to the obligation against next year's budget. Jason Tyburski said accepting the offer would compound the issue by borrowing against next year. Adrian Newton asked if we usually get a credit at the end of the year from Pinkerton, to which Alan Villeneuve said after Pinkerton closes their books, they will send the district the appropriate credit or a debit.

Motion by Janice Baker, seconded by Derek Berger, to thank Pinkerton Academy for their offer, but respectfully decline given the uncertainty of the 2024/2025 budget, and the motion carried unanimously.

**Board Budget Update**

Alan Villeneuve stated that every day the numbers are modified. They are now working on next year's budget. He said more information will be available at the April 9 Board meeting. Alan said he reached out to the NH Department of Education Commissioner Frank Edelblut about the possibility of recouping revenues that were missed due to paperwork not having been filed correctly. Mr. Edelblut did not promise anything, but will look into an assist at year's end.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Board Clerk Nomination**

Motion by Derek Berger, seconded by Adrian Newton, to nominate Jason Tyburski as Board Clerk, and the motion carried unanimously.

**PERSONNEL**

**Staff Nominations**

Motion by Derek Berger, seconded by Jason Tyburski, to approve the Auburn School District teacher nominations as presented, and the motion carried unanimously.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC to ADDRESS THE BOARD**

Donna Tousignant-Coleman Road-Asked for a clarification if we are \$750,000 over budget now or expect to be in June. Is the board aware of what is going on in Hooksett. The boards should be in communication with one another. Is the Board concerned with the SAU leadership. Alan Villeneuve said they are currently \$776,000 but the board will be using the Special Education Trust Fund and Building Trust Fund to help offset this. He said he has heard a little of Hooksett's overage in special education, but that Hooksett has a bigger enrollment and larger trust funds. Alan Said the Board is concerns with the SAU business services that it provides.

Emily Schmidt-Olde Town Road-Did the board just approve the 24/25 contracts for people or positions. Not replacing retiring teachers will create larger class sizes. Keep the standard of education we all want. Alan

Villeneuve said that tonight's nominations were for classified staff. No custodians, office or paras were approved. These will be discussed at the April 9 meeting.

Amy Magnan-Cricket Lane-Disagree will the board not accepting the loan from Pinkerton. The need is now. Alan Villeneuve reiterated the Board's reasoning about not wanting to borrow against the 24/25 budget and the constraints for use of those funds.

Adam Diorio-Rattlesnake Hill-What is the contingency plan if you can't use the trust funds. AVS is understaffed. Pursue taking out a loan. Consider having a town vote. Think outside the box. Alan Villeneuve said that no special education teaching positions have been removed and that AVS is fully staffed based on what has been requested. He said it is a 3 month long process to have a town vote and they don't know the extent of next year's budget yet-they may have enough to cover it.

Christine Molan-Fox Drive-How are we going to make sure we know what shortfalls there will be in 24/25. Do a town vote. Get it done sooner than later. If not, put it on warrant for next year. Is there an opportunity to have own preschool. On April 9, will we know real things that can be done this year and next year. Borrow money if we need to. Alan Villeneuve said there is no mechanism for anyone to collect funds other than the July and December tax bills. He said next year's budget has preschool but numbers need to be verified including possible revenues. He said a preschool program would consist of 12 students in the morning program and 12 in the afternoon program. 6 of each of those 12 would be identified students. He said because of the uncertainty of the budget we will do what we can to provide as much information as possible at the April 9 meeting.

Todd Royce-Seavey Rd-Why does Auburn have the lowest cost per student in the state; concerned with things falling through the cracks. Alan Villeneuve said state numbers are not considered when building budgets. Keith Leclair-Windsor-As a former school board member, knows that board members spend a lot of time doing their job and care about what they are doing. Thanked Karen Lessard for coming back as interim business administrator. Agreed with the board's decision not to accept the Pinkerton offer which compounds next year's debt. Having a special election is not a simple process and won't help the 23/24 over expenditure. Thanked the board for all they do.

Heather Lockwood-Pond View-Has the board considered having a preschool program housed at the Candia Moore School. Confused by board not accepting the Pinkerton safety net. A lot of people are trying to help. The kids will miss out. How much does spring sports cost. Alan Villeneuve said they are still developing a program and have looked at Chester and Sandown. Lori Collins said discussions with Candia have only been at the Principal level and Auburn's needs have been much more immediate. Janice Baker tried to clarify the board's position on not accepting the Pinkerton money. She said given the uncertainty of next year's budget, we don't want to add an additional \$30,000 to it. Alan Villeneuve stated that as of now, nothing has been cut from the 24/25 budget. Lori Collins broke down the cost of spring sports for four teams, 2 lacrosse, 1 softball, and 1 baseball. Coaches, umpires, supplies and field paint cost \$10,900. Field prep and aeration of the infield is \$5,600. Busing is \$10,000. These figures don't include playoffs. Heather Lockwood stated coaches should not be expected to be volunteers.

Andrea Zinkovich-Eaton Hill-The PTA annually supports field trips and has increased their budget this year so children will not miss out on field trips.

Jessica Pappas-Bunker Hill Road-Have any retirees been asked to stay. Alan Villeneuve stated that he didn't feel that the two retirees would be interested and that having them retire actually saves the district.

Amy Johanet-Lovers Lane-How much are we pulling from next year; are earmarked services being cut; when will they know if sports will be cut next year. Janice Baker said the board is looking at all the pieces, at forecasted expenses from this year to next, looking at a preschool program. There will be increases in some areas and decreases in others, but will have a better picture in April.

Marie Plefka-Hooksett Road-Concerning that the Superintendent and interim Special Education Director are not in attendance. Need checks and balances. Who didn't do things correctly. Where was the SAU three months ago. Why aren't all service providers being explored. This should never happen again. Why did it take so long to consider a developmental program/preschool. These meetings should be televised. Alan Villeneuve stated that the special ed programs are run through the special education director. He said interim business administrator, Karen Lessard is doing a forensic analysis. He said the interim special education director has discovered that paperwork hadn't been filed properly and that information had not been passed along. Purchase orders should have been created at the time the director signed contracts with service providers, but it was later discovered that process was not being followed. As far as the recent decision to move forward with a preschool program, Alan said that they had to get to a tipping point for it to be cost-effective and we are at that point. He said the board expects to have a plan for the 24/25 school year.

Derek Berger said that the board has gone through the extensive process of creating a strategic plan and preschool was part of that plan.

Dustin Dulac-Chester Road-Accountability is on the forefront of parents minds. There was a breakdown in process. This is a leadership problem. #14 on tonight's handout should be higher on the list.

Heidi Rosemader-Saddle Hill-At this stage would like the board to listen to the people to understand. Acknowledge that trust has been broken. Need transparency. Have an independent audit.

Michele DeGaspy-Heather Circle-Have a 3<sup>rd</sup> party audit. The board minutes are too vague. Wants to see financial reports. The Pinkerton vote should have been tabled. Alan Villeneuve said that all financials are included in the board packets that are online. Janice Baker stated that there have been a lot of different updates. The expenditure report is part of the packet. You must look at the entire bottom line. Through 3/12/24, there was a positive fund balance. Knowing we had a special ed trust fund, we thought the special education over expenditure would be covered.

Matt Papineau-Cedar Crest-Have an independent audit. Is the over expenditure solely due to special education. Have they added any non-teaching staff to the school this year. Alan Villeneuve said the overage came mostly from multiple special education lines. Three large lines make up the overage. No teaching staff has been added to the school this year.

Amanda Martinelli-Boxwood-Is there a way to recoup financial losses through an insurance company. Alan Villeneuve stated that we have inquired with our insurance company and that since there has been no criminal activity, there is no legal recourse.

Keith Leclair that you don't track revenues. The issues today are with over-expending and not receiving expected revenues. Keith said the meeting on April 9 will not be the end all-be all. They won't know all the expenses for the upcoming 18 months. Asked if annual audits are still conducted and if so, is it always the same auditing firm. Alan Villeneuve stated that independent audits are done annually, and Karen Lessard stated that the SAU has used two different firms in the time that she was an SAU employee.

Jennifer Anderson-Lilac-Thanks the board and asked them to think outside the box. Is there a way people can donate money to put away funds to help out-maybe help replenish the trust funds. Alan Villeneuve said it was a good concept. In order to accept more than \$5,000, there must be a public hearing. He said the board usually puts unanticipated year-end revenues into the trust funds, but they aren't sure there will be enough to do so this year.

Jessica Pappas-How closely does the board work with the other town officials. Make sure to utilize town staff and make aware of growth projections. Alan Villeneuve said the board and the selectmen do work together.

Curt Petrie-Bunker Hill-Who is responsible financially. Were checks done to ensure the financial person was in good standing. Alan Villeneuve said the business administrator provides the financial documentation. The Superintendent is their supervisor. You need to be certified by the state to become a business administrator.

Emily Schmidt-The board should request an audit.

Heather Lockwood-Requesting an audit is not an unusual ask. Do an internal control review.

Emily Socka-Londonderry Tnpk-Worked in AVS. Saw increases in special ed spending not having anything to do with services. The high school LEA cost too much money and ineffective with students. The BCBA hours increased astronomically and Tracy Griffenhagen hired her friend who spend many hours in Tracy's office and rewrote IEPs that did not need to be rewritten. Don't think the full overage came from an increase in preschoolers.

Aaron Beaudry-Spruce Lane-Can the board file a motion to do an audit. Want transparency. Have a 3<sup>rd</sup> party audit. Janice Baker said she wasn't interested in a motion and audits are done annually after the books are closed. Derek Berger said the audit is policy and part of the audit procedure is for the SAU to choose the auditing firm and for the board to be aware of which firm is being used. Karen Lessard said the annual audit is a financial audit, and clarified that the SAU does not do their own audit.

Andrea Robinson-Londonderry Tnpk-That is not a 3<sup>rd</sup> party audit, and not one that is likely to uncover what has been happening. There has not been enough supervision. This is a serious problem and there needs to be an audit on utilization of services.

Alan Villeneuve stated they are unable to determine what services for IEPs were above and beyond the need. He said the interim special ed director is looking at several IEPs and will report to the board with her findings.

Aaron Beaudry-Use grant funds. Why is the board being re-active as opposed to being pro-active. Alan Villeneuve said the district applies for as many grants as possible.

Brittany Parker-Freedom Lane-Important for the board to let people know they have been heard and taken seriously. The next board meeting should be more structured. What does the April meeting look like. Alan Villeneuve said the number one goal is to tell people they have a job next year. The April agenda has not been established yet.

Jen Hashem-Hills Road-Wonderful community. Concerned with the kindergartners who will be losing their classroom paras. Difficult and possibly traumatic transition. Lori Collins said that is a real concern, but hope that because the students have been in class for so long they are used to routines.

Jess Monroe-McEvoy-Don't want to kick the can down the road. Offer Zoom. Put meetings online. Be transparent.

Donna Tousignant-How much faith does the board have in the interim special ed director from Hooksett. Hooksett has overages in special education as well.

Mary Shank-Pondview-Will the public have a say when the board decides on making cuts. Alan Villeneuve said there is an opportunity for public input at all meetings.

Lindsay Chandler-Colonial Drive-Conduct an internal and independent appraisal. Evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of a district. Do an internal audit on operations and compliancy laws, rules, regulations and policy processes. We deserve to have that type of audit as an option.

May Schmidtchen-Colonial-Auburn is better than this. Should have an audit done.

Robin Sullivan-Pingree Hill-Online comments are an embarrassment. No need for bashing individuals, we're above that. Keep social media posts kind and professional.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Derek Berger, seconded by Adrian Newton, to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m., and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted.

Rebecca SJ McCarthy  
School Board Recording Secretary