

# Letters & Opinion

## Dwayne Purvis for the Souhegan Cooperative School Board.

To the editor:

We are writing to show our enthusiastic support for the Souhegan Cooperative school board candidate Dwayne Purvis. Dwayne has 8 children, 6 of which are in the school system ranging across most of the grade levels. Dwayne is a wonderful parent which shows through his bright, talented, and kind children. Dwayne exemplifies honesty, fairness and thoughtfulness and would be a great addition to the school board. He is very passionate about education in our community and will be dedicated to seeing that we continue the high standards of academic excellence that our town deserves. We believe Dwayne will advocate fairly and passionately for students, families, teachers, and administrators and bring new perspective to an ever changing academic environment. We ask that you get out and vote on March 10th and join us in supporting Dwayne Purvis for the Souhegan Cooperative school board.

Patrick and Shannon Daniel  
Amherst

## David Chen is the Best Choice for Souhegan School Board

To the editor:

I am writing this letter in support of David Chen's candidacy for the open seat on the Souhegan Cooperative School Board. For over thirty-five years, David has shown his commitment to our community by serving on educational committees, founding and coaching youth sports programs, and serving the town as a member of both the Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Amherst Ways and Means Committee. David was a member of several of the original organizing committees for Souhegan High School, both his children were educated in the Amherst and Souhegan systems, and he has served as a member of the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee for the past several years. Additionally, David is now retired from a successful business career with strong executive-level experience in finance, budgeting, and operations. In short, David is the most qualified candidate for this position.

The hot topic in the Souhegan School District this year seems to be the high cost per pupil at Souhegan relative to other school districts in the surrounding area, as well as compared with other schools in a Board selected "peer group" in the State of New Hampshire. At \$19,000 per pupil, Souhegan ranks the highest among our neighboring districts and the peer group. Indeed, the current Souhegan Board has taken great pains this budget season, through several letters to the editor and comments made at both the Deliberative Session and the Public Hearing, in acknowledging that the cost per pupil is too high and assuring us that they are aware of it and "are working on it." Although I very much want to believe them, several things cause me to give pause. Firstly, at the Deliberative Session, the Board began their comments by stating that they acknowledge that the cost per pupil is too high, but then spent considerable time during their presentation in trying to convince us that it really isn't that high. Later, several board and community members commented that if the cost per pupil is high, it is worth it because excellence comes with a cost. I left the meeting scratching my head and wondering if the Board really thinks the cost per pupil is too high, or not? Secondly, the current Board seems to be particularly upset that the high cost per pupil issue, and a plan to address it, is the centerpiece of David Chen's candidacy. If the Board really thinks that the cost per pupil is too high and "are working on it", why would they be opposed to someone who shares that view and has put forth a plan to address it?

Unfortunately the answer to that question is one of the ugly truths about the Souhegan Cooperative District. In the interest of full disclosure, I have lived in Amherst for 27 years, and my children were born here. I have been an enthusiastic cheerleader for our town and schools, delighting in the fact that my children have had the opportunity to live and be educated in such a passionate and caring community. But it is my observation that there has been a certain level of passion about the Souhegan District since inception that has stifled open and honest dialogue about spending priorities and budgets. Any critics of the budget process are immediately demonized and branded as enemies of children, education, and the school. That has happened again this year and it is unfortunate, for our school system faces the very real task of aligning an ever increasing budget with a declining student population, while still providing and preserving a quality education at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers. New and innovative thinking should be welcomed and encouraged and legitimate concerns about the cost of education should not be immediately labelled dangerous and subversive.

I have known David Chen for almost twenty-five years, and I know that his commitment to the children of this community and to the excellence of our schools runs very deep. I admire his courage in tackling the very thorny issue of aligning costs with declining enrollment, while still committing to providing a quality education for all our students. Please join me in voting for David Chen at the polls on March 10th, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,  
Greg King  
Amherst

## Challenge in the Classroom, But Don't Challenge in Life?

To the editor:

I first met David Chen when he joined the Town Ways & Means Committee. He was new to the process and had a lot of questions. He was inquisitive, persistent, and in some cases relentless in his efforts to understand, to find ways to improve the process, and to ensure the budget review kept the taxpayers in mind balancing the needs of the departments. He was a catalyst in changing the approach to budgeting which continued gaining momentum after he left the committee.

David thinks out of the box. He is not afraid to ask the tough questions and challenge the status quo. He recommends creative solutions to problems. He reaches out to everyone involved to ensure he gets the full picture. His goal is to see Souhegan High School remain successful while ensuring the budget is in alignment with decreasing enrollment and fair to the taxpayers.

Having attended every Souhegan deliberative session except last year since 2001, I have heard passionate support for the high school, what good programs are offered, how well the students do in high school and beyond, and how the school prepares them to be critical thinkers, think out of the box, be inquisitive, be creative, and challenge the status quo. Does that sound familiar? What message are we sending our students by not supporting an adult for doing exactly what we teach them to do? Is it OK to do that as a student, but not as an adult? Challenge in the classroom, but don't challenge in life?

We need more people like David. Times are changing, our thinking needs to change. Our processes need to change. Our approach to budgeting needs to change. David understands the value of Souhegan High School and supports its continued success. At the same time, David brings a fresh perspective and wants to ensure the budget we as taxpayers support is appropriate.

Let's not be afraid to explore our options and let's demonstrate to our students that we stand behind our teachings, not just for earning grades, but also for succeeding in life. I support David Chen for the Souhegan School Board and I encourage everyone to join me.

Deirdre Rogusky  
Amherst

## Dave Chen Can Address Two Key Issues

To the editor:

We support Dave Chen because we believe that he will address two key issues. The first, but not the more important issue for us, is to have a sustained initiative to bring down the cost per student to a level comparable to other peer schools. The SAU has made some progress in maintaining or slightly reducing the cost per student, but it takes a long term commitment to make some structural changes in the cost of operations to bring them down to a level comparable to our peers. Dave has the skill and perseverance to achieve this.

The second issue is the need to add to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) curriculum so that our students will still be able to gain admission to and graduate from selective colleges and STEM programs in all colleges. This is a critical issue that most people and even educators do not seem to be aware of or addressing. When the CCSS were designed there was supposed to be a third pathway for students who wanted to go to a competitive college rather than a community or non-selective college. This third pathway was also to allow students going to college to get into science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) as well as finance and biology which require a more rigorous preparation in mathematics. This third pathway also called the pre-calculus track was never developed. It is now up to our SAU to develop a curriculum that fills in this void for students who want to excel in the sciences. Dave Chen is committed to looking at how we can take advantage of new developments in learning styles and the application of technology. Let's invest wisely in our educational assets so that they continue to graduate outstanding students.

Don and Carol Holden  
Amherst

## Paul Prescott Will Finish Addressing The Cost of Education and Continue to Improve Quality

To the editor:

The Amherst school system is something for which every citizen should be proud. We have a School Board and Ways & Means Committee uniquely committed to providing a high quality education, while simultaneously looking for ways to reduce costs. Therefore, as you head to the polls on March 10th, I'd ask you to support Paul Prescott for a seat on the Amherst School Board. Paul has served on both the Ways & Means Committee and the School Board. He brings this experience, as well as, an ability to ask tough questions, insist on detailed analysis and cultivate support for careful planning. He has done this over the last three years without sacrificing the need to collaborate with his peers on the board, administration and other critical stakeholders. Paul has been instrumental in helping the board trim \$700,000 from the '15-'16 budget, while also supporting critical investments including Full-Day Kindergarten and technology investments. I have had the pleasure of working with Paul over the past three years and I urge voters to support him on March 10th. We need Paul to help us finish the work of addressing the cost of education in Amherst, while simultaneously continuing to improve quality. Vote for Paul Prescott on March 10th.

Jim Manning  
Amherst School Board

## Dokmo is the Most Qualified Candidate for Amherst Cemetery Trustee

To the editor:

Amherst's Cemetery Trustees are responsible for the operation, maintenance and expansion of the Town's six Public Cemeteries. In caring out these duties the Cemetery Trustees must interact with the Sexton (the Department of Public Works manager) for operations, maintenance, and the sale of Rights to Inter. They also cooperate with the Board of Selectmen, and the Trustees of the Trust Funds for the management of both public and private trusts, the later being subject to the supervision of the NH Attorney General's Office for Charitable Trusts. The job of Cemetery Trustee is surprisingly complex.

It follows that a prospective Cemetery Trustee benefits from having a detailed knowledge of how the Town operates, from having had service on previous Town Boards or Commissions, from having constructed budgets under NH Revised statutes Annotated (RSAs) and who has been careful in the expenditure of tax payers' money. Being a Cemetery Trustee is more than administration. It also means helping families and being sensitive to their needs at a time of interment. That is why I endorse, and support Cynthia Dokmo for Cemetery Trustee on the Amherst Town Ballot to be voted on March 10, 2015 at the Souhegan High School. Please join me in voting for Cynthia Dokmo as the most qualified candidate for Amherst Cemetery Trustee.

Respectfully,  
Bill Belvin  
Amherst

## Investing in Early Education Offers Long Term Returns

To the editor:

It's an estimated 39 cents per thousand or \$128.70 on a \$330,000 home. That's the bottom line cost for providing a full day kindergarten program in Amherst, but there is much more to the story.

94 plus districts in New Hampshire offer full day kindergarten for all students.

The percentage of students enrolled in full day Kindergarten programs nationally is currently at 82%.

In the state of New Hampshire, approximately 70% of children have both parents working.

The majority of this nation's 5 years olds already have a full day Kindergarten.

The new College and Career Ready standards (that we are now operating under) are based on a full day Kindergarten program. Our Kindergarten students and teachers are trying to meet these standards in a three hour day.

Our neighbors in Mont Vernon recognize this and will be implementing a full day Kindergarten program this fall.

We believe we need to offer full-day for ALL students in order to ensure equity and access to ALL programming for ALL students.

After speaking with local realtors, we understand that home values could be positively impacted by the implementation of a full day program.

Today's kindergarten experience is vastly different from even 5 years ago. It is a much more rigorous, academic program which leaves little or no time for two other very important pieces of early childhood education, namely, building the social/emotional skills necessary for each student's future success, and incorporating play or music/arts into their day.

The Amherst Board was presented with extensive data, facts, and research about Full Day Kindergarten. We found the material to be compelling and difficult to ignore, and the Board made the decision to present the proposal to the town.

A public forum video on full day Kindergarten is available for viewing on our sau39.org website.

As a Board, we encourage voters to ask questions of our administrators, review the information that has been provided on the school and SAU #39 websites, and to make an informed decision based on the facts and information available.

The Amherst School Board believes that we have an obligation to provide our children with the best educational experience possible and that 39 cents per thousand is a responsible investment.

We are asking the voters of Amherst to support this article on March 10.

Respectfully,  
Amherst School Board  
Lucienne Foulks, Chair  
Peg Bennett  
Amy Facey  
Paul Prescott  
Jim Manning

## Letters To the editor:

The Amherst Citizen is eager to serve as a community forum. We welcome your letters, opinions, and commentaries and make every effort to run them in their entirety. We do reserve the right to edit. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the position of the staff of The Amherst Citizen.

Please direct your letters, views and commentary to the Editor, The Amherst Citizen, P.O. Box 291, Amherst, NH 03031-0291, or e-mail your submission to: news@amherstcitizen.com. We will attempt to run your letter as submitted (space permitting) providing it is signed and phone number is included.

Cliff Ann Wales  
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