

## More Letters

# Dwayne Purvis The Positive Difference For the Souhegan School Board

To the editor:

Neighbors! Yet again, thank you for considering me for the Souhegan Corporative School Board. As Election Day rapidly approaches, your choices cannot be any more stark. Do we move forward improving the quality of an already excellent high school and realizing budgetary efficiencies? Or do we degrade our high school by promoting schemes to drastically reduce spending by increasing class sizes, reducing courses offered, and converting the annex into a business park. I see these ploys as nothing more than attempts for some to save a buck on their taxes, at the expense of excellence in education for our children, quality of life, and the reputation of our Amherst. Negatively impacting our schools will impact property values, as those who seek excellence and quality, that we currently enjoy, will have no reason to consider Amherst.

Enrollment is NOT rapidly rolling off! Actual enrollment for FY14 was 842, up 29 students from the projected enrollment of 813, which was estimated October 01, 2012. The current enrollment is 850, up 11 students from the projected enrollment of 839, which was estimated October 01, 2013. Given that the school year is half over, and that the summer is to come, it is not unreasonable to expect enrollment to change. Given the last 2 years, the trend is upward. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect, for FY16, that the projected enrollment of 815, which was estimated October 01, 2014, is short by 13, as the populations of both the Amherst Middle School and High School have increased. The alarmist cries that the enrollments are falling are a knee jerk reaction paramount to Chicken Little's concerns about the sky is falling. Folks, the only thing falling these days that you can count on is the snow.

Enrollments, course offerings, staffing, and cost all change with time. Although current projections seem trending downward, only 10 years ago the projections, at that time, seemed trending upward. Frankly, putting faith in any projection beyond two years is, in my humble opinion, paramount to reading crystal balls, tea leaves, or throwing chicken bones, and foolhardy at best. Common sense, a careful and steady posture,

# Dave Chen for Souhegan School Board - Time for Some New Thinking

To the editor:

The responsibility of a school board is twofold: first, to represent the town and assure that we are getting the quality of education reflected in the priorities of the town and second to assure the town that the cost of providing that education represents good value to the town. In the current discussion regarding the Souhegan HS budget, despite some claims to the contrary, there is no desire to degrade the quality of the education, rather the desire is to improve it. As several surrounding towns have shown, paying less does not lead to inferior results. I believe the town's priority is to have one of the best school high schools in the state. Year after year we have voted for that in the budgets we have approved. Rather the current discussion is about whether Amherst is in fact getting what we have voted for, given the very high cost per student and the consistent subpar performance of the student on the State's annual NECAP testing. Given these two metrics, it is reasonable to ask if we are getting the quality of education we expected and does the cost of education represent good value to town. Given what surrounding towns are paying on a per student basis and the results they are receiving based on the state NECAP scores, I think the answer to both of these questions is no!

Unfortunately, any discussion about budgets and improvements at Souhegan is immediately perceived as a threat and insult to the school board, the staff, and the students at Souhegan. Souhegan is a vibrant and exciting place for many student and many have a wonderful experiences there, but many are also leaving the school without the quality of education they need, what we are paying for, and what we want them to have. Any organization that is truly looking to improve and stay at the top of its profession must be willing to constantly and dispassionately measure its performance against its competitors and take action when shortcomings appear; in this case educational quality and the costs of that education.

The record of the current school board suggests that neither of these things is happening. As shown by the

good judgment, and collaboration with others will go a long way at realizing continued educational excellence and appropriate budgets.

I have great respect for our current principle Rob Scully and his leadership team, as they doing a wonderful job leading Souhegan High School forward into the 21st century. They have instituted business partnerships and leading edge initiatives such as PACE. They are to be commended and congratulated, and I look forward to supporting the leadership team and these efforts. I also feel it is proper to acknowledge and thank all past principals and their leadership teams as well. I will not insult those, who contributed much to Souhegan's current excellent standing and reputation, by suggesting that we should go "back" to the "glory days." My interest is excellence now, and how to strive toward perfection going forward.

I will work with board members and administration. It is important to first establish the desired quality of education and course offerings, for the Souhegan Cooperative School District. Given the best available data, estimate the enrollment. Based on the desires of the students and parents, determine academic course offerings, extra curricula activities, as well as sports programs. Once it is understood the course offerings, extra curricula activities, and sports programs, the administration and school board must then determine staffing levels necessary to satisfy each. This must be done with the level of excellence that our district expects and deserves. Again, this process is repeated annually, with care, due diligence, common sense, and respect for all persons involved in the process, if we will continue to enjoy the fruits of success and an excellent reputation.

Neighbors, my heart is warm. I am Dwayne Purvis, candidate for the Souhegan Cooperative School Board. I desire to serve you and I need your vote. See you Election Day, Tuesday, March 10, 2015 at Souhegan High School, and please bring at least one friend! www.purvis4souhegan.org

Dwayne Purvis  
Amherst

NH State NECAP scores summarized below, over the past five years, Souhegan has consistently lagged behind surrounding towns on the statewide NECAP testing (1), especially Hollis and Bedford, who have significantly lower costs per pupil (\$19.0K versus \$13.4K and \$11.0K respectively (2), but have significantly better results. In fact in 2014 only 40% of Souhegan 11th grade students tested at a competent or better level in Math!

5 Year Average NECAP Scores - Competent or Above			
Reading	Math	Writing	Science
89.2	72.2	70.0	70.0
Bedford 2	Hollis 2	Hollis 2	Hollis 0
85.8	59.0	63.8	63.8
Hollis 8	Bedford 0	Bedford 8	Bedford 8
81.4	44.4	53.4	53.4
Souhegan 4	Souhegan 4	Souhegan 4	Souhegan 4

These are the results we want for our children and town or what we expected for our tax dollars.

We need Dave Chen to introduce some new critical thinking into the school board. We need to put Souhegan back on top and to restore the balance between quality education and the cost it represent to the taxpayers of Amherst. Dave brings a wealth of business experience that will be channeled into reviewing both the quality of the education at Souhegan and the value we are getting for our tax dollars. I am certain that Dave primary interest is in improving the educational quality for our students.

Please support Dave Chen in his campaign for the Souhegan School Board.

- <http://my.doe.nh.gov/profiles/profile.aspx?d=493&year=2014&tab=>
- [http://www.education.nh.gov/data/documents/cost\\_pup13\\_14.pdf](http://www.education.nh.gov/data/documents/cost_pup13_14.pdf)

Frank Brown  
Amherst

# Status Quo or Change for the Better?

To the editor:

What I want for Souhegan:

- A quality innovative school that puts students first; exceptional at many levels including academic, developing the whole person, and preparing them to compete throughout their lifetimes.
- Continuing the core values of the CES, but integrating modern educational technology and new best practices.
- Bring in new learning concepts and technology to reduce the emphasis on student-teacher-ratio as the only way of providing individualized learning.
- Explore and adopt new technologies to focus on adaptive learning for students. **LETTERS.doc; let's go beyond the "bring your own device" strategy to offer a truly adaptive learning platform for all students.**
- Use technology to bring down costs and improve educational quality at the same time.
- Balancing the quality and cost of education.

## Change is Disruptive

When Souhegan was founded as a Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), many new concepts were introduced that were different from other NH schools; some were quite radical and caused controversy. However, after 23 years, those ideas have become accepted and even embraced now as the status quo. Changes from the status quo create discomfort and uncertainty. Change, to those who embrace the status quo, is actually seen as disruptive. But it is change, disruption, and ongoing innovation that improve the education for generations to come by introducing new learning techniques, technologies and best practices.

## "Seeing the Forest for the Trees"

This idiom is defined as to be overwhelmed by detail to the point where it obscures the overall situation. The School Board and the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee (SAFC) work to cut costs out of the budget by going over hundreds of line items. The School Board points to the \$300 in Cost/Student that was saved over 2 years. This is by any measure a small reduction when measured against the differences between Souhegan and others schools. Our two neighboring schools, Bedford and Hollis-Brookline are \$7,984 c/p and \$6,326 c/p less than Souhegan at \$19,012. For years, successive school boards have missed the impact of declining enrollment. With this myopic focus on line items in the budget, perspective has been lost; macro changes were missed like the long term decline in enrollments from FY2006 out to FY2021.

Others argue that the enrollment isn't going down or isn't going down as rapidly as forecasted. Forecasts aren't perfect and do change. However, they are intended to show general trends and are to be used for planning. The SAU 39 forecast is the best information that we have, and it clearly shows a steady decline in enrollment from now until FY2021. There was an upward bump that was forecasted for FY2014 and FY2015, but the longer term picture is not in doubt. Call the SAU 39

office (673-2690) and ask for their forecast of Souhegan enrollment.

## Agenda/Concerns

In 2012, I was asked to serve on the SAFC. Before accepting, I met with the then Souhegan School Board Chairman, Christine Janson, and the then Souhegan Moderator, Cynthia Dokmo, and reviewed my main concerns about the rising budgets and declining enrollment derived from data available on the Dept. of Education website. I asked them not to appoint me to the SAFC if they didn't want me to act on those concerns. Both said that my concerns were valid and that my voice needed to be heard. My opponent says that I have an "agenda" and I say absolutely! The School Board has finally recognized that our high cost-per-student is a problem. Mission accomplished. Now we can change the agenda to working on improving the educational quality and addressing the glaring cost issues of running Souhegan HS.

## Core Issue:

There was a core issue that was at the heart of my disagreement with some members of the SAFC. I believe that the Advisory Finance and Ways and Means Committees (for the Town and Amherst School District) are a part of the "checks and balances" put in place by the NH Legislature to provide oversight in the budgetary process. Having served on the Town Ways and Means Committee, I believe the role of the SAFC is to be a voice for the taxpayers' perspective. Other members of the committee believe that it is the role of the SAFC to support and promote acceptance of the School Board's budget. It violated my core tenet when members of the committee and others tried to limit the information the committee could use and share with the public. The vast majority of people that I have spoken believe that the SAFC is an independent voice of the taxpayer and is part of a "checks and balance" system.

## Misrepresentation

In his last letter to the editor, my opponent stated that we (he and I) "...can find no reasonable areas to cut spending without a negative impact to the school." This is inaccurate. My "no" vote in the SAFC represented that cuts could be done without impacting the school; this is recorded on the ballot and in the Voter's Guide. This is my first no vote in 3 years as a member of the SAFC.

## Vote on March 10

This upcoming election provides a clear choice for the voters of Amherst. If you embrace the status quo – that is, the current quality of a Souhegan education at increasing cost to taxpayers – then vote for my opponent. If you want to improve the quality of education and lower taxpayer costs through innovation and efficiency, then please vote for me. There is a clear difference.

David Chen  
Amherst

# I Will Be Voting for Dwayne Purvis

To the editor:

These are reasons why I will be voting for Dwayne Purvis for SHS School Board and why I hope that each of you do....

- First, for a few years, our early projections have proven unreliaibly low. From last summer, 87 more students have been taught at our schools than projected. We do not have 839 students at Souhegan High as "projected" but, rather, 850—an increase of 11. The fact is that our excellent schools are widely recognized and families move here to get their children an excellent education. If more students enroll, as they are, we must have the funds available to teach them. No funds can be added later, by state law.

While the demographics are changing – we are getting younger! In 2010, the population was 11,201. As of last week, our town was home to 13, 817 residents. Do we really believe that 2,600 senior citizens moved to Amherst? No, it was families with children coming here for our excellent schools and safe, friendly lifestyle, replacing older citizens who moved out. That is why the schools keep getting more students. It is also why the

value of our homes sold in 2014 was \$27,000 higher than in 2013! (Hollis was down sharply in the same period and Bedford up but by half as much.)

- My second reason is that Mr. Purvis is a great candidate. He is smart and passionate and very supportive of the school's philosophy and methodology. He demands high standards and is grateful that his children are getting what they deserve. He is a fiscal conservative but will not be "penny wise and pound foolish". He will insist that our graduated students continue to receive the opportunities that so many have been afforded in their future due to the reputation of this remarkable high school. He has spent three years learning about the school, analyzing the budget, and understanding how to get the most performance from every tax-payer dollar. He is a new face and a fresh mind for the challenging times ahead and I'm delighted that he has chosen to run.

Richard Katzenberg  
Amherst

# Help Elect Dwayne Purvis; The Best Candidate For This Job

To the editor:

On March 10, 2015 you face an important choice, even if you do not currently have any children enrolled in Souhegan High School. You have the opportunity to vote, and to elect a candidate for the open seat on the Souhegan School Board. I am asking for your help in getting my husband Dwayne Purvis elected because I truly believe he is the best candidate for this job.

We moved to Amherst because we recognized the outstanding schools we are privileged to have available in our town. We are all fortunate that we are able to provide the children of our town with access to academic excellence to enable them to have a great start in life. We also understand that the performance of our schools has a direct impact on maintaining property values. We currently have at least one child attending each school in Amherst. Dwayne and I both work full-time but we make time for what is important, which is the activities and education of our children.

Three years ago Dwayne started attending school board meetings on a regular basis. He went to listen, and to learn more about how our schools are run. In that time, he learned an incredible amount about the inner workings of our schools.

Two years ago he was given the opportunity to serve on the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee. He accepted as he saw the opportunity to serve and make a positive difference. With integrity, the committee successfully validated budgets that are responsible, and appropriate for the levels and quality of education that the

school board chooses for our district. As he does in his approach to work, during his time on the committee he asked thoughtful questions and collaborated with his colleagues and members of the board. In his service Dwayne puts the interests of the students first; he wants Souhegan to be the very best school, striving for academic excellence; and he wants Souhegan to continue to move forward toward a bright future for our younger students. He would be an outstanding addition to the current school board.

I invite you to visit his web site: purvis4souhegan.org. If you would like to meet him and share your questions and concerns, Souhegan's Community Council is hosting a Candidate Forum on Tuesday, March 3 at 7:00 p.m. in the Souhegan Theater focused only on the Souhegan School Board race between Dwayne Purvis and David Chen. Student moderators will ask questions of the two candidates. I hope you can attend to hear how the two candidates differ.

I do hope that you will consider supporting Dwayne Purvis for Souhegan School Board when you go to the polls on March 10. And if for some reason you cannot be there, don't forget to get your absentee ballot. Please feel free to pass this email on to others who might want to learn more about the candidates.

My sincere thanks,  
Rachel Purvis  
Amherst

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## Dwayne Purvis

— for —

# Souhegan Cooperative School Board

With your support and vote, I will continue the work to form a more perfect Souhegan High School, and represent your children, you, and the Souhegan Cooperative School District as follows:

- Employing Proactive and Pragmatic Budget Management.
- Earnestly Hearing and Considering All Positions.
- Continuing to Ask Probing Questions, and Facilitating Healthy and Amicable Discussions.
- Staying Steady, Respectful, and Collaborative.
- Championing Consistency and Fairness in Grading.
- Encouraging Even More Scholastic Excellence from the Classroom to the Playing Fields.
- And Most Importantly, Endeavoring to Place the Interest of the Students First.

I am grateful that you have taken the time to allow me to share some of my thoughts and aspirations. I would love the opportunity to serve as your representative on the Souhegan School Board and I need your vote. If you will be out of town on Election Day, please stop at the Town Hall and get an absentee ballot. Otherwise, see you on Tuesday, March 10, 2015 between 6:00AM and 8:00PM at Souhegan High School. Oh, and yes, please bring a friend!

Paid for by Dwayne Purvis