

More Letters

Unfunded Mandates Impact Amherst School District Budget

To the editor:

Mindful of all Amherst taxpayers' desire to see ongoing cuts that reflect declining enrollment, we have presented a decreasing budget to the voters over the past two years. As we have attempted every year, we are pleased to have cut costs once again. In fact, the cuts exceed \$700,000 in expenditures in the current budget proposal. Despite these cuts, our budget is up 1.24%.

The FY16 Amherst School District budget drivers include over \$1,000,000 in under-funded state and federal mandates in Special Education costs, increases in NH Retirement, and contractual obligations. Despite over a million dollars in increases, we've controlled the budget increase to \$306,000 due to a decrease of \$700K in spending.

Last year, we received unanticipated money from our insurance provider along with more tuition from Mont Vernon than was expected. This resulted in an unreserved fund balance of over \$900,000 (a revenue anomaly) which was returned to the taxpayers this past fall. Because we didn't receive this again, it translates into a revenue loss of over \$400,000 this year thus causing an increase in the Amherst School District portion of the tax rate.

In FY16, we will continue to examine ways to lower costs while providing an exceptional education to all of our students within the Amherst School District.

*Sincerely,
Amherst School Board
Lucienne Foulks (Chair)
Peg Bennett
Amy Facey
Jim Manning
Paul Prescott*

Vote "Yes" on Article 13

To the editor:

I am writing in support of the full-day kindergarten proposal (Article 13). Full-day kindergarten allows young students to develop strong academic, social and emotional skills. Studies have shown that children in full-day kindergarten classes demonstrate greater gains in math and reading than those in half-day classes. The full-day proposal also recognizes the value of learning through play, art, music, physical movement – all important factors in the social-emotional development of 5 and 6 year old students.

Article 13 represents a thoughtful proposal developed with input from parents, community members, teachers, administrators, SAU staff, and Amherst school board members. As a community, we have a duty to provide our children with the tools necessary for success, and that responsibility includes building a strong academic foundation.

As a parent and as a teacher, I urge you to join me in voting "Yes" on Article 13 to implement full-day Kindergarten in the fall of 2015.

*Sincerely,
Larry Ballard
President – Amherst Education
Association*

Prescott for Amherst School Board

To the editor:

Please join me in voting for Paul Prescott for the Amherst School Board. I have worked with Paul for the last six years; three as a Ways and Means committee member and three as a school board member. Paul is a smart, thoughtful, trustworthy, and loyal man. He is approachable and friendly and always considers all sides of an issue with an open mind. He is a fine collaborator and exercises true fiscal discipline. Paul is a fantastic listener and a hard working school board member. We need Paul on the Amherst School Board for another term so that he can continue to support all students with his passion and drive for exceptional education.

/4Sincerely,

*Peg Bennett
Amherst*

David Chen Is Better Candidate for Souhegan School Board.

To the editor:

I'm writing this letter in support of David Chen for the open position on the school board for Souhegan High School. Many of us in Amherst realize this is a critical time for our town. We need a person on the school board who is not afraid of asking tough questions and more importantly, not afraid to sit and listen to a wide range of ideas with an open mind.

I've had the opportunity to work with both school board candidates as part of the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee over the past few years. I've come to admire Davids attention to detail and his fearless ability to question the status quo. He prefers to plan responsibly for the future, rather than simply ride the laurels of historical success. As one of the founders of Souhegan and a parent, David is passionate about bringing Souhegan back to a competitive school in the area as well as respecting a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers.

David is consistent, forthright, honest in his conversations and tenacious. He is by far the better candidate for the open position. I intend to vote for David Chen for Souhegan School Board and I invite my friends, neighbors and fellow townspeople to do the same.

/Thank you all for participating in this amazing town,

*Dr Kathie F Nunley
Amherst*

Dokmo Would Be Open-Minded, Conscientious and Dedicated

To the editor:

I am writing in support of Cynthia Dokmo for cemetery trustee. For many years, Cynthia has demonstrated commitment and leadership to our town and state. She is intelligent, thoughtful, hard-working and fair. She brings an extensive knowledge of town issues, state government and matters of law. I have no doubt that Cynthia Dokmo would be an open-minded, conscientious and dedicated cemetery trustee.

We are, in Amherst, fortunate to have so many good people volunteer their time and talents to serve our town. I will do as my friend, Norm Carnick, has asked; I will not vote for him for cemetery trustee. I am hopeful that he will, in the not too distant future, be available to serve in some capacity.

*Respectfully,
Shannon Chandley
Amherst*

Support SHS Budget and Maintain The Excellent Work Being Done

To the editor:

Voting day is March 10th, and we encourage all voters to come to the polls and exercise their right (and duty) to local control of their school systems. On Tuesday, Amherst voters will vote in the Souhegan High School Gym between 6AM and 8PM. Mont Vernon voters will vote at the Village School between 7AM and 7PM.

For the Souhegan school district, there are many decisions to be made. A single board seat will be filled for the next three years with a candidate from Amherst. The budget for the next school year will be decided. Voters will decide if the failing track will be replaced, and if the maintenance trust fund will be replenished.

Souhegan is a great high school, where the mission of educating all our towns' children is taken seriously, and "No Child Left Behind" is not just a slogan, but a priority. A High School education is not just reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic, but extends beyond academics to prepare students to be active citizens, good team players in a world where collaboration and cooperation are key to economic success, and compassionate stewards of the society they are joining. From the classroom to the athletic fields to the after-school activities to the community they serve, our students learn and are prepared for life in college, work, and society.

Here are some of the achievements from the past year that highlight the success we have enabled for our students, and the work of our staff to support them.

- 92% percent of Souhegan's Class of 2014 attend college
- 86% attend four year, 6% attend two year; 5% entered the work force; 3% went on to other activities (prep school, service organization, military etc.).
- The majority of four year college students are attending either most competitive, highly competitive, very competitive or competitive colleges.
- Souhegan has a 99% graduation rate.
- In 2014, Souhegan Students took AP exams in 14 different subjects. 85% of students who took AP exams scored a 3 (qualified to receive college credit), 4 (well qualified to receive college credit) or 5 (extremely well qualified to receive college credit). (NH State average is 74%, and the national average 60%.)
- 88% percent of Souhegan seniors took the SATs in 2013-2014
- 107 seniors received New Hampshire Scholars recognition in 2014.
- 2 seniors are commended in the National Merit Scholarship Competition.

Support Dwayne Purvis for Souhegan School Board

To the editor:

I've learned many things over the past 5 years of serving on the Amherst School Board but I'd like to use this letter to share just one. Excellence in education takes dedication, time and commitment from all who are involved. Of the 11,000+ residents who live in Amherst, there is one individual who has become a regular attendee at the Amherst and Souhegan board meetings over the past three years. Dwayne Purvis. He listens. He asks tough questions. He challenges the board members and administration with ideas and suggestions. He has taken time out of his life and time with his family to be part of the process. His pride in the town of Amherst and in the Amherst and Souhegan schools is undeniable, inspiring and contagious. Souhegan School Board will benefit tremendously from his willingness to listen, his desire to focus on positive solutions and his belief that every day we all can strive to do better.

I hope you will join me in voting for Dwayne Purvis for Souhegan School Board.

*Lucienne Foulks
Amherst*

*Bob Heaton
Amherst*

► Amherst Recreation Programs and Events

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All instructional, minor/major and juniors teams will play teams surrounding towns.

Softball age is based on the participant's age on December 31, 2014. ***Registration by Friday March 6 to avoid a \$25.00 late fee. Teams will be formed and uniforms ordered Friday March 27***

5&6 year olds: T-Ball

Introduces the player to organized softball

Who: 5&6 year old girls
What: T-ball (Softball)
Where: The back of Wilkins Elementary School
When: 52015-6/13/2015

7 & 8 yr olds: Instructional

Fundamentals of softball reinforced. Games will be played with surrounding towns

Who: 7 & 8 yr old girls
What: Instructional softball
When: Tentative start date of 42015

9-12 year olds: Minor/Major League

Team placement will be based on screening. All players will screen. Games will be played with surrounding towns

Who: 9-12 yr old girls
What: Minors/Majors
When: Tentative start date of 42015

13-15 year olds: Juniors

Play games with surrounding towns. Games generally play on Wednesdays and Saturdays, not to conflict with the Middle School Schedule.

Who: 13-15 yr old girls
What: Junior League
When: Tentative start date of 42015

Volleyball for Middle School Girls

This 5th through 8th grade program for girls is designed to develop basic volleyball skills for beginners, while reinforcing fundamentals and introducing positional play for those who demonstrate mastery of the basics.

Who: 5th-8th Grade Girls
When: Mondays and Wednesdays 4/6-5/20 @6:45pm-8pm

Where: AMS Gym
Fee: \$55R; \$65NR

Track and Field

The Amherst Track and Field program helps athletes develop age-appropriate skills and overall conditioning, including strength and flexibility, which are essential to performance in all athletic fields. Participants receive expert training in individual events.

Practices will be held on Monday, Wednesday & Thursday starting 4/20
10 and under: 6-7pm
11 and up: 6-8pm
Who: Ages 6-18
Where: Practices will be held at the SHS track
When: Practices start 4/20 from 6-8pm
Fee: 10 and under: \$45R; \$55NR
11 and up: \$60R; &70NR

Yoga for kids

Who: grades 1-4
When: Tuesdays 3/3-4/7 from 3:15-4:30
Where: Wilkins classroom
Fee: \$54R; \$64NR

Yoga for Middle Schoolers

Who: grades 5-8
When: Wednesdays 3/4-4/8 from 2:45-3:45
Where: AMS Chorus Room
Fee: \$54R; \$64NR

Pre-School Programming

Tiny Toes Dance

Lets get groovy!
Our Tiny Toes Dance program is for girls and boys ages 3-5.

Who: Boys and Girls ages 3-5
What: Tiny Toes Dance
Where: Peabody Mill Environmental Center
When: 3/13, 3/20, 3/27, 4/3 from 10:15-11am
Fee: \$25R; \$30NR

Start Smart Baseball

We are excited to offer Start Smart Baseball for boys and girls ages 3-4 again this year!

This once a week program is an opportunity for children to be introduced to the game with the support and presence of a parent.

- Souhegan students had the opportunity to study in Italy, Cuba, Germany, and France through programs organized by Souhegan Staff.
- Souhegan athletic department supports 34 programs including 53 teams.

Teacher Dave Saxe was recognized by the National Soccer Coaches of Association of America as NH Large School Coach of the Year, and Region I (New England) Coach of the Year

Teacher Kelli Warecki was recognized as Division II Coach of the Year, and selected to coach the Twin State Games between VT and NH

- Souhegan High School is consistently accessed by educators from throughout the region and country as a model for best practices; recent visitors have observed our team teaching structures, advisory program and Critical Friends Groups.

Souhegan works in conjunction with Brown University to host teachers from China visiting to examine best practice.

- This year our teaching and learning has been enhanced by our involvement in a groundbreaking initiative. The New Hampshire Department of Education has partnered with the Center for Collaborative Education and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment to develop a state-wide performance assessment system that will balance local control with state-wide accountability and comparability. Souhegan High School is one of four districts in New Hampshire implementing the Performance Assessment for Competency Education (PACE) option.

- Souhegan is a School Reform Initiative (SRI) best practice site; SRI uses Souhegan High School for site visits to observe best practices.

- Souhegan Business Partnership Board includes representatives from Souhegan High School staff, local professional communities and alumni organized to promote extended learning opportunities, job shadowing, internships and mentor programs.

Please help us to maintain all of the excellent work being done for our students by supporting our budget and other articles on March 10th.

*The Souhegan Cooperative School Board
Mary Lou Mullens, Amherst, Chair
Fran Harrow, Amherst, Vice-Chair
Howard Brown, Mont Vernon, Secretary
Steve Coughlan, Amherst
Pim Grondstra, Mont Vernon
Chris Janson, Amherst
Peter Maresco, Amherst*

Dokmo is Just What The Cemetery Trustees Need

To the editor:

The town of Amherst is extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to elect Cynthia Dokmo as a Cemetery Trustee. Cynthia has served our town in many capacities in the past including Amherst School District Moderator for 14 years and representing us in the State Legislature for 16 years. She has always promoted the best interests of the citizens of Amherst while serving us and is highly respected by legislators on both sides of the aisle in Concord. Currently Cynthia serves our community as a member of the Milford Rotary and Chair of the Board of Directors of SHARE.

Cynthia has special skills which will be particularly helpful to the Cemetery Trustees. She is a retired attorney and is very well versed in the fiduciary duties of the Cemetery Trustees. She also has an extensive knowledge of the history of the various cemeteries in Amherst.

Cynthia Dokmo's knowledge and experience is just what the Cemetery Trustees need right now. I urge you to vote for her on Tuesday, March 10th.

*Bob Heaton
Amherst*

*Bob Heaton
Amherst*

Sessions will last one hour for six weeks.

Season runs from 5/20/15-6/20/15

Pre-school Playgroup

We would like to offer a brand new program to the town of Amherst! This FREE program will give pre school students and parents a chance to get out of the house and play together.

Who: Preschoolers and parents (ages 3-5, younger siblings with parents are welcome!)
What: Pre-school Playgroup
Where: Peabody Mill Environmental Center
When: 3/13, 3/20, 3/27, 4/3 @11am-Noon
Fee: FREE

Toddler Trails and Tails

During this 4 week program we will explore a nature based theme through a story, a simple craft, movement and song, and an outside adventure! Instructor Nicole Colvin-Griffin brings 20+ years of experience in creating programs and teaching children of diverse ages.

This program needs a minimum of 4 participants to run.

Who: 3-5 yr olds
What: Toddler Trails and Tails
Where: Peabody Mill Environmental Center
When: March 3, 10, 17, 24 from 10:30-11:30am
Fee: \$35R; \$40NR

Adult Programming

Zumba Gold® (Low Impact for Beginners)

If you have ever enjoyed any kind of dance in your life...ballet, tap, swing, ballroom, folk dance, country line dance or Jazzersize...you'll pick this up in no time!

Class Format: 45 minutes of dance including: 10 min. warm-up, 20 min. moderate intensity aerobic dance, 10 min. cool-down and a 5 min. standing stretch.

Please visit www.amherstrec.org for schedule/pricing options

Adult Basketball and Adult Volleyball

Pick up games at AMS have begun. The registration fee covers the entire school year. See our website for details and to register.

Game Days

Amherst Recreation offers a fun afternoon of table or card games for adults.

Thursdays 1:00-3:30pm @ the Amherst Fire Department Training Room.

No registration required, It's free!

Family Programming

Birthday Parties at PMEC!

Create amazing birthday memories this year with a Birthday Party for your child age 3-12 at the Peabody Mill Environment Center!

We have several themes to choose from or we can work together to tailor one just for your Birthday Girl or Boy. Please visit www.amherstrec.org for more details.

Snowshoeing at PMEC

The snow is here! Head on up to PMEC for a fun-filled afternoon of snowshoeing. Snow shoe rentals will be available Saturdays, starting December 6, 2014 from Noon to 4pm.
Fee: \$6R; \$8NR

Trips

Irish Cabaret

Join Best of Times in 2015 for one of our hallmark programs...our St. Patrick's day celebration program. A show not to be missed!

Who: Adults 18+
What: Tony Kenny's Irish Cabaret day trip
When: Wednesday, March 11, 2015. Arrival time 11:30am; departure time TBA
Where: Venus De Milo Swansea, MA. Pickup location TBA
Fee: \$85 per person (includes transportation, show, and luncheon)

We add programs weekly, so check our website often... And make time in your life for Recreation!