

More Letters

Souhegan High School is The Best High School in NH and Our Most Valuable Asset

To the editor:

It has been my privilege to serve on the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee (SAFC) for the past four years and as co-chair for two years. I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the Administration, School Board and staff for their insight, time and thoughtfulness over the years. As a typical citizen, my previous knowledge of the high school was gained through my children's and my own high school experience. By serving on the SAFC, I learned quite a bit about Souhegan High School and the task of delivering a high school education in the 21st century. The scope of my learning is too broad to discuss here so I will focus on three points.

1. Souhegan High School is the best high school in New Hampshire. In just the past two years, the following accomplishments have been achieved by Souhegan High School and its graduates.

Medal of Honor recipient

American Idol finalist

Multiple attendees at Ivy League schools

Multiple attendees at military academies

National Merit Scholarship Finalist

National Scholastic Arts Awards recipient

The lowest drop-out rate in New Hampshire

Over 92% of students go on to higher education

Multiple state sports championships

Robotics team victories

This is a list of accomplishments that any high school in America would be proud of but only Souhegan High School can boast of such extraordinary achievements.

2. Souhegan High School is an expensive high school. Amherst has the 9th highest per capita income of any town or city in New Hampshire. Souhegan has the 9th highest cost per pupil in the State. Approximately 75% of the budget is for staff. Souhegan has a high pay scale. I applaud this strategy because the value

of one good teacher is worth more than two inadequate ones. The citizens of Amherst and Mont Vernon have historically supported strong education throughout our school system. The funding of a school should occur at the intersection of what the school needs and what the town can afford. We are fortunate to live in a community in which this intersection is at a relatively high level. Over the past four budgets, the School Board and Administration have taken the following steps to make sure we can afford our high school. First, since 2005, the taxes to support Souhegan paid by the citizens of Amherst and Mont Vernon has increased less than inflation. Second, the proposed FY 2016 budget is less than the FY 2011 budget from five years ago. Third, over the past decade, the increase in taxes for Souhegan has been less than the increases for other components of town budget.

3. Third, Souhegan High School is the most valuable asset in the towns of Mont Vernon and Amherst. On any given day, SHS is active from 7AM to 10 PM. It is the central hub of activity for our community. It is used by students and faculty as well as the vast majority of town residents. Even on weekends, the school and its fields are alive with a variety of activities. From a financial perspective, it is imperative that we invest in our most valuable asset. The value of our residential real estate is directly tied to the commitment that citizens make to invest in our community assets.

I strongly encourage all citizens of Amherst and Mont Vernon to support Souhegan High School. It is an institution with extraordinary results. It serves intelligently and comprehensively students who have a variety of strengths and challenges. Souhegan High School is the best high school in New Hampshire and our town's most valuable asset.

*Sincerely,
Tom Silvia
Co-Chair, Souhegan Advisory
Finance Committee*

Dwayne Purvis – The Positive Difference For the Souhegan School Board

To the editor:

Neighbors! I am truly grateful to be considered for the Souhegan Corporative School Board. The issues around this election are not as simple as "spending too much," but more about the complicated task of balancing continuous improvement with responsible spending. This election is about our children continuing to receive high quality instruction, our schools improving their already excellent rating, and our town's reputation for high quality of life. We need not engage in schemes that endanger all that is right with Amherst, or negatively impact property values, just to save a buck.

For the past 24 years, I have been actively involved in my children's education, expecting excellence from all parties involved. Our Amherst schools and my children have risen to the expectation, and I am pleased, still! I have great respect for the people who deliver education in our schools. I feel it is important to recognize these servants for willingly answering the high call as educators. Our teachers are consistently making significant contributions, many of them quietly and unnoticed. Our teachers are the major reasons why Souhegan High School graduates nearly 100% and sends more than 92% to college each year. With a sense of pride and accomplishment, these people return each year, attempting to do better for your children and mine. I emphasize people as they are like you and me. They have passions, desires, and feelings too. Teachers should not be treated as objects to be cast aside in schemes to save a buck. The wonderful citizens of our districts are indeed grateful for these servants. We, like you, moved here for excellence in education and the high quality of life offered by Amherst. With your support and vote, I will work collaboratively and respectfully with students, parents and non-parents, teachers, administrators, and other board members carefully engaging issues, and realizing efficient solutions that do not impact quality or our fine reputation.

Before moving to Amherst, I was very active in my eldest son's education and extracurricular activities at Eastside Christian School in Mesa, Arizona. I coached chess team and coordinated science fairs for 4 years, taught Algebra for 8th grade, and 6th grade Mathe-

matics. I also coached YMCA basketball for 5 years (10 seasons). I genuinely enjoy service and volunteerism. It was joyful and successful because I naturally treat people, administrators, teachers, parents, and students with consideration and respect. I taught Sunday School for Churches in Phoenix and Mesa, and was a Minister at a Church in Phoenix, Arizona. Although I tend to be soft spoken, I am not a push over, but steadfast, fair, reasonable, and expect excellence.

My opponent and I have much in common: Our up-bringsings from the South-Side of Chicago; graduates of the University of Illinois in Engineering; enjoying great careers in technology. His children went to Souhegan and are long gone, while I still have children in the schools for a long time to come. We both served on the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee. We both examined the current budget and can find no reasonable areas to cut spending without a negative impact to the school. Yet I support the budget, while my opponent does not. I respect the Moderator, School Board, Administration, and SAFC. I listened to all sides before deciding. My opponent chose to blast all parties he disagreed with, and did so with great disrespect.

Folks, let's face it, controversy over Public Education spending is as old as the hills. Those in opposition present examples to justify literally, "throwing out the baby with the bath water." Those who are pleased with the outcome will continue to support our schools, and budgets.

This election is not about creating or imagining problems, but being kind, respecting people, improving our high levels of excellence in education, enjoying our high quality of life, and reaping the benefits of good works for our children and ourselves.

Again, I am grateful for your time. 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 bring a friend.

*Dwayne Purvis
Amherst*

Support Paul Prescott for Amherst School Board

To the editor:

Paul Prescott has been serving his community for many years first as a member of the Amherst District Ways and Means Committee and as a school board member for the past three years. He has brought sound reason and logic to every discussion. He works diligently on every initiative and has been a tremendous contributor to the collaborative effort of the board. I have appreciated and valued his insight and I always want to hear his thoughts on every issue. Amherst has benefited tremendously from his fair evaluations of budget matters and his dedication to ensuring the students of Amherst receive a quality education. It has been a pleasure working with Paul for the past three years and I look forward to the opportunity to work with him in the future. We need board members who are open minded, conscientious, collaborative and respectful of maintaining the balance between offering the best academics for our students while keeping costs low for taxpayers. Paul understands and respects that balance. Join me in supporting Paul Prescott for the Amherst School Board on March 10th.

*Lucienne Foulks
Amherst School Board, Chair*

Important Cemetery Trustee Election

To the editor:

This year's election for Cemetery Trustees deserves attention because of the tax implications of how our cemeteries get financed.

For the past five years, property taxes have been paying most of the cemetery maintenance expenses even though the cemetery trusts have produced income specifically for that purpose. The Cemetery Trustees have been holding back the trust income on the expectation that they can get a judge in the future to authorize diverting excess maintenance funds towards building the new cemetery. If the Cemetery Trustees can accumulate enough 'excess' funds, they will be able to avoid a townwide vote on funding the new cemetery. How do voters feel about paying extra taxes for 5 years in order to not be able to vote on a major project?

For background information, see the memorandum of understanding, specifically the attached report from the Cemetery Finance Committee, on the Cemetery Trustees page of the town website.

*Peter de Bruyn Kops
Amherst*

David Chen Understands Quality Education at a Reasonable Cost

To the editor:

We are writing to support David Chen in his candidacy for the Souhegan School Board. We have known him for 35 years; we and the Chens moved to Amherst in 1980 for Digital. Dave has a great deal of executive experience in business, and has been on the ZBA, the Souhegan Advisory Finance Committee, and the Town Ways & Means Committee. He has a long history of interest in the schools and town. He has the ability to think of and act on new ideas, and will be a great asset to the board. From talking with him, we know he is dedicated to providing quality education to our students, and at a reasonable cost.

While Souhegan does provide a good education for our students, there are other schools with similar demographics that provide as good or better an education, based on several metrics, and do so at a much lower cost. Using NH Department of Education figures for 2013-14, here is a comparison of high schools of similar size and demographics.

	No. of Students	Student: Teacher Ratio	% of students Showing Proficiency (11th grade std. test)		Cost per Student
			Math	Reading	
Bedford	1408	14:1	57%	92%	\$11,028
Goffstown	1167	13:1	49%	91%	\$11,333
Hollis-Brookline	868	14:1	52%	82%	\$12,686
Merrimack	1301	14:1	48%	84%	\$14,016
Portsmouth	1075	13:1	45%	80%	\$15,595
Souhegan	827	10:1	40%	84%	\$19,012

You can see by these numbers (and by other measures as well) that one might conclude that we are paying too much for the results we are getting. To us, the chart clearly shows that the board should make it its priority to determine how we can improve the school and at the same time do it with fewer tax dollars. David Chen understands these issues, and has the management background and knowledge gained from working on the finance committee to make him highly qualified to be a member of the Souhegan School Board.

In government as in business, it's important to have a board that will ask the difficult questions of management. David will do that. We ask that you vote for him on March 10th.

*Liz & Bill Overholt
Amherst*

More Letters on pages 13 and 15

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

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Town of Amherst

TOWN OFFICER FILINGS

Selectman-3 yr. (2)

Nate Jensen
Reed Panasiti

Town Treasurer-3 yr. (1)

Elizabeth Overholt (i)

Cemetery Trustee-3 yr. (1)

Cynthia Dokmo
Lisa Eastland
Norman Carnick

Checklist Supervisor-1 yr. (1)

Jeanne Ludt (i)

Zoning Board – 3 yr. (3)

Kevin Shea
James W Quinn (i)
Douglas Kirkwood (i)

Library Trustee – 3yr. (2)

Nancy T. Baker (i)
Karl (Ted) Krantz (i)

Trustee of the Trust Funds (1)

Lori Mix (i)
Kevin Grasset

(i) = incumbent

Candidates for School District Offices to be Elected March 10, 2015

Amherst and Mont Vernon

FILING DATES FOR AMHERST SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICES:

For three years:	One School Board Member	Paul Prescott
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FILING DATES FOR MONT VERNON SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICES:

For three years:	Two School Board Members	Wesley Sonner Sarah Lawrence
For one year:	One School District Moderator	David Sturm
For one year:	One School District Treasurer	Lyn Jennings
For one year:	One School District Clerk	

FILING DATES FOR SOUHEGAN COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICES:

For three years:	One School Board Member Amherst resident	David Chen Dwayne Purvis
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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 Probative 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