

New Hampshire School Administrative Unit 29

SAU 29 School Board Meeting Minutes

Date: May 13, 2026

Called to Order: 5:30pm

Time Adjourned: 6:40pm

Location: Jonathan Daniels PD Center, 227 Maple Ave Keene, NH 03431

In Attendance

Ege Cordell, Chesterfield, Chair

Claire Gargan, Harrisville

Brian Clark, Westmoreland

Russell Denney, Keene

Rich Popovic, Nelson

Christie Smith, Marlow

Jeff Miller, Harrisville

Paige Walker, Keene

Robert Malay, Superintendent

Tim Ruehr, Chief Financial Officer

Called to Order

Superintendent Robert Malay called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Election of SAU Officers 2026-2027

Ms. Walker nominated Ege Cordell as Board Chair. Ms. Gargan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Walker nominated George Downing as Vice Chair. Mr. Popovic seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

The board discussed the tradition of nominating chairs and vice chairs representing Keene and the towns.

Ms. Walker spoke about the structure of how all the boards interact, particularly with new board members. This can be a topic of discussion for the upcoming board retreat.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Miller moved to approve the minutes of March 25, 2026 (R)(NP). Ms. Gargan seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Financial Report

Mr. Miller moved to accept the financial report. Mr. Popovic second.

CFO Tim Ruehr presented the financial report. Next year's budget is based on \$400,000 of surplus, and if all of that is returned, it means there will be more contributions from the district share to make up the difference. For a few years, there were larger surpluses because it was harder to fill vacant positions. This year, the SAU was mostly fully staffed. Positions that vacated also left with vacation buyouts.

The HVAC system work found the AC portion was obsolete, and will be at least a week's worth of labor to update the minisplits with the new coolants. The minisplits that were installed were obsolete because

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they no longer can the current type of coolants. Engineers were working with the CFO for two years on this project and the hope was to get out of using minisplits altogether as the problem with them becoming obsolete would continue. Another option would be to install an outside AC unit and use coils to blow the cool air in the rooms. Other solutions were being investigated with the intention of settling on a system that would last 20-25 years.

The financial report was in the positive. In the salaries and benefits line, it was down due to overtime and vacation buyouts when people left. The legal fees line was showing a surplus. The equipment and furniture line was over budget due to the purchase of a new copier and office chairs. Dues and fees are over for principals and SAU members, this will be addressed at budget time.

The surplus will be lower next year than in the current budget, and the difference will need to be made up in district distributions.

The net available balance was \$63,868.

Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Authorization for Superintendent of Schools or Chief Financial Officer to Sign Any and All Contracts, Grants-in-Aid, etc.

This was an annual motion made to help get qualified candidates hired in the timely manner. Contracts were signed all throughout the year. The authorization also assists in making hires over the summer before the board gets together again.

Reaffirmation of Existing Policies

Appointment of Legal Counsel for SAU 29

Appointment of NHSAU 29 Treasurer

Mr. Miller moved to authorize the Superintendent of Schools or Chief Financial Officer to Sign Any and All Contracts, Grants-in-Aid, etc. on behalf of SAU 29, Reaffirmation of Existing Policies, Appoint the Legal Counsel for SAU 29, and Appoint James Carley as the NHSAU 29 Treasurer. Ms. Smith seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Updates

Student Services Director Search Update

The committee is down to a finalist for the Student Services Director search. There will be a meeting with the candidate with special educators and with the Keene special education administrators, and then will give a presentation. Mr. Ruehr explained the approach of the hiring committee and process for recommendations for hire.

Board members were invited to the candidate presentation this Friday.

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Superintendent Malay provided an update on personnel changes. A search will soon open for an assistant superintendent position.

Legislative updates were provided to the board. The Superintendent shared concerns with the Governor during a meeting. Updates were provided on surrounding districts and SAUs, and some struggles they are experiencing with declining enrollment.

Old Business

SAU Board Retreat Planning

The retreat will spend time talking about success and challenges, and how to learn from one another. There were talks about having an SAU Board level manual with procedures. The hope was to at least have all chairs present at the retreat, but other board members were also encouraged to attend.

A survey will be sent out to see what dates may work for most board members. There is already an SAU-wide professional development day, and Mr. Malay suggested this could provide an opportunity to include SAU board members as well. There could be a session held that day for just board members.

Ms. Smith also recommended adding more of these discussion topics to SAU board meetings.

More feedback will be collected from board members. The retreat may be scheduled in the fall and would be at least a few hours long.

Superintendent Evaluation

The individual boards were submitting the evaluations.

Non-Public Session

None.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Samperisi, Stenographer

APPROVED: