

**Surry School Board Meeting
February 16, 2026
Minutes**

Present: Tim, Kim, Caroll, Frank, Melinda, John, Becky, Jodie

Call to Order – 7:00 pm

Secretary's Report

Tim motion to approve January 2026 minutes, Frank seconded. All in favor, one abstention

Treasurer's Report

Manifest

Holding on payment of one invoice to be confirmed regarding a student (per Kim). Caroll expressed concern around the cost of legal fees, asked whether some of the fees could be optional. Melinda motion to approve the manifest in the amount of \$36,838.29; Frank seconded; all in favor.

Budget Status Report

Kim is now including future expenses as encumbered on the status report (student transportation association, etc). The budget outlook looks improved, projecting a little over \$80,000 at the end of the year. Kim also noted that the auditors felt that we have the appropriate policies and internal controls in place.

School Board Treasurer Responsibilities

Kim noted that the Treasurer's role has changed over the past several years, and sent some adjustments to the role to Becky. Becky asked if the Treasurer should be maintaining a duplicate of the books that the accountant is using, and could the Treasurer have access to the same Quickbooks file that the accountant is using.

Becky Russo Treasurer Resignation

Becky Russo will be leaving when her term is up, and is not running for re-election. We will send a notice to the town via the town email newsletter, and add the position to the ballot. The position is open for a 3-year term.

Public Comment. None.

Old Business

RSA 189:76: Mandatory Report to Voters

This is in follow-up to a recent change in the law that will impact the current budget season previously discussed with the school board. The new law is very prescriptive as to the manner in which the school district publicly displays the required information. The district must display ten years of data illustrating "average per pupil cost", "average teacher salary", and "administrator salaries". Lastly, a table titled top administrator salaries must be included showing the top three administrative salaries over ten years. This report should be posted on the district website. The mandatory report must be posted in the Sentinel and in two public locations in Surry as prescribed. Caroll suggested we also check the Shopper in lieu of the Sentinel. Kim printed two sets at 18x24 as mandated.

This document was difficult for sending districts, as the state does not collect average per pupil costs for towns that are sending districts, such as Surry. Our student expenses are combined into Keene. Kim developed a formula to calculate average per pupil cost, which is explained in the additional information document, which will be posted to the School District website.

2026-27 Budget & Warrants

The school board has signed the warrants.

2026-27 Renovation Projects

\$100,000 is requested in the budget as a warrant. Prioritize Parking lot/ramp, and then consider work on the boiler.

- Boiler: The school board will need to decide on a new boiler option. Barker is recommending that we use propane boilers (two smaller boilers, 1 acts as a backup if the other goes down).
- Parking lot/ADA ramp: Melinda asked if we could ask a local paving company if they would consider a discount for the driveway/ADA ramp work.

Kim will talk with Barker and include John in the convo and see what the costs of each would be, prioritizing the parking lot. Tim noted that there is \$40k left in the building renovation fund.

Melinda made a motion to have Kim work with Barker for a quote for the 2026-27 renovation project that prioritizes the parking lot and ramp first, and then a quote on the boiler as well. Tim seconded, all in favor.

2025-26 Bathroom Renovation Compliance Project

The superintendent continues to work with Barker Architects and Hutter Construction on the renovation and ADA compliance project in the girls and boys bathrooms. The school board previously voted to utilize a portion of the Surry Building Expendable Trust to address urgent compliance issues in the current year. The school board voted to authorize the superintendent to execute a contract with Hutter to complete the ADA bathroom compliance and other renovation work within the scope of the approved building trust budget for this year. The superintendent consulted with the school board chair and signed a contract for the project with Hutter, as previously authorized, on 2/13/2026. The project has been scheduled over the April school break, 4/24 to 5/3. Contingencies have been arranged with SVCS, if necessary.

2024-25 Audit Summary Revised

The audit summary report accepted by the school board at the January 2026 meeting has been revised. References to the unreserved fund balance have been removed in the financial statement summary and the recommendation section based upon a subsequent discussion with the Department of Revenue Administration. The summary documents that financial statements fairly present the financial position of the governmental activities and each major fund of the Surry School District, as of June 30, 2025 in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; That no significant disagreements or difficulties were encountered by the auditors in dealing with management in performing and completing the audit; No deficiencies in internal controls considered to be material weaknesses were identified during the audit. A discussion regarding whether we should consider retaining some unreserved funds in the future for the building fund or a potential tuition offset expendable trust. Melinda made a motion to accept the revised audit summary; Tim seconded. All in favor

A big thank you to resident Bruce Smith for his knowledge of fund balance, municipal finances, and kind work with the superintendent and school board in this area.

New Business

Renovation Project Funding Research

The superintendent provides an update on funding research renovation project including grant opportunities and public/private fundraising. The objective is to explore public and private funding opportunities for the renovation project to reduce the local expense as much as possible.

- Jack Ahern from the SWRPC provided information on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. These grants are exclusively awarded to municipal governments, who can then sub-

grant the funds to non-profits or other qualifying organizations. But the municipality holds all liability from the perspective of HUD. An email on the CDBG process was sent to Jay Croteau to explore the Select Board's interest in this option. Jay Croteau responded in the affirmative and suggested scheduling a meeting with the school board and select board to discuss further. A primary mandate for the CDBG requires that at least 70% of funds must benefit low- and moderate-income populations. SWRPC does not see this as a viable option for Surry.

- Jack Ahern from the SWRPC provided information on the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) and the possibility of grant funding for the Surry project. The NBRC has several grant programs. More information to follow after a meeting with Jack Ahern. The superintendent met with Jack Ahern on 2/10/26 to explore potential grant funding for the project.
- NBRC Catalyst Program. SWRPC mentioned this program as potentially viable. "The Northern Border Regional Commission (.gov) (NBRC) Catalyst Program stimulates rural economic growth in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont by funding infrastructure, business development, and workforce projects. Goals include reducing poverty/unemployment, modernizing infrastructure, and increasing community resilience. The challenge with the program is the matching grant aspect. Match requirements are based on county distress levels (80% federal/20% match for distressed; 50%/50% for transitional)." SWRPC said Cheshire County is the 50/50 match. A pre-application for the Catalyst grant is due on August 1.
- The superintendent requests school board approval to move forward with the NBRC Catalyst Program process. Frank motion that Kim move forward with the grant application process; Tim seconded; all in favor.

The superintendent recommends that the school board schedule a meeting with the select board as suggested by Jay Croteau to discuss the Surry School project and potential funding options. Kim will reach out to Jay to schedule a meeting after the town meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Surry School Renovation & Compliance Project.

This project is moving forward. A 2026-27 warrant article is proposed to continue renovation work into the next fiscal school year. At this point, the district is planning to move the remainder of the project to a bond vote at the annual district meeting in March 2027, however the board discussed revisiting the idea of a bond.

The superintendent met with the SVCS Board Chair, SVCS Head, and their development professional on 2/13/26. The following is a summary of the meeting as confirmed with the SVCS Board Chair.

- Fundraising. SVCS is committed to launching a fundraising effort to support the long-term sustainability of the organization.
- The SVCS Board is not interested in establishing a fundraising effort to support the Surry School Renovation Project. The issue for the SVCS Board is the fact that the Surry Campus is a leased facility and not owned by SVCS.
- Surry School Renovation. SVCS is committed to investigating grant opportunities to help share in the cost of renovating and improving the Surry campus. We discussed a goal of raising 10% on the project expense through various grants.
- Maintenance. SVCS is committed to hiring a professional cleaning company to meet lease obligations.
- The SVCS Board of Trustees remain committed to the Surry School Campus for the long term.

SVCS & Surry School Building Updates

- The NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) Get the Lead Out of Drinking Water (GTLO) program is a state initiative requiring all public schools and licensed childcare centers to test for lead in water, offering grants for remediation. The drinking water at SVCS was recently tested for Lead. Lead was found in the water coming from many of the sink faucets. DES recommends installing new faucets

as a remediation strategy, as lead often comes from the older sink components. Many of the faucets have been replaced and other affected areas have been barred. SVCS is awaiting news on the GTLO grant to remediate. SVCS will keep the superintendent posted. DES will have the water re-tested at a later date. SVCS reports some difficulty performing the recommended faucet replacement due to the condition of the plumbing for the water supply to the sinks. Some of the water supply pipes are very corroded and breaking when replacing faucets. SVCS is replacing corroded water supply pipes with PVC.

- SVCS is required to evaluate for asbestos every three years. Contractors recently evaluated the Surry School and acquired samples from areas of concern (some floor tiles, boiler room, and exposed glue from deteriorating baseboards). Results of the testing are forthcoming. (It was reported that the boiler room did not contain asbestos.) SVCS will keep the superintendent posted. The floor tiles contain asbestos as previously reported. Most of the locations are undamaged. A few areas of damaged tile are located near the exterior doors, hallway closets, and the community room heater and recommended for mitigation. Tim will speak with a flooring person to determine the best course of action to remediate or repair cracked flooring times or exposed edges as needed.
- Surry Campus Security Project. Campus safety and security are important considerations and a priority of the school board and the SVCS Head. The SVCS Head and the superintendent met with First Choice in January regarding security at the Surry campus. First Choice was recommended by Hutter Construction. A quote was received from First Choice. It includes a security system for the main entrance, camera system, and the technology requirements for installation. The total cost is just over \$15,000. The superintendent inquired with SVCS about the assuming the responsibility for this project as the operators of the school program.

Special Meeting: Surry School Renovation Project

Special Meeting: Surry School Renovation Project. The superintendent suggests that the school board schedule a second special meeting in May 2026 with the Surry citizens for the purpose of inviting, informing, and updating Surry residents about the Surry School Renovation Project.

Public Comment

- Bruce said that the charter school has arranged for a Homeland Security and emergency management inspection of this building, as well as their Keene building, in April. Kim said that this is a requirement for the school safety grant.

Setting the Next Meeting Agenda

Meeting date: Monday, March 16, 2025 @ 7:00pm

Non-Public Session RSA 91-A:3

Carroll made a motion to move into non-public session at 8:57pm, Tim seconded, all in favor. Discussion regarding legal communications, and special education update.

Melinda motion to move out of non-public at 9:35pm. Frank seconded, all in favor.

Frank made a motion to adjourn; Tim seconded; all in favor 9:37 pm