

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, March 14, 2019**  
**Final Minutes**

**Present: Katie Fiander, Dan Hayes, Steven Sullivan, Jen Malcolm-Brown, members; Lauren Thomas-Paquin, Chair; Jackie Mendonsa, Principal; Bruce Turner, Director of Finance and Operations; Jennifer Haggerty, Superintendent; Public Guests**

**A. Meeting Called to Order by Lauren at 7:01 P.M.**

**B. Public Hearings – FY20 Budget:**

Bruce opened hearings by noting that the budget distributed tonight is the same one we saw in February. The real issue this year is a lack of offsetting revenue, including some Circuit Breaker funds we were receiving of late. We're also trying to align our Preschool revenue with the receipts we have, and have some ground to make up there. Finally, some state grants have gone away. Regardless, we've tried to make a budget that serves the students while remaining cognizant of the Town's situation. Jennifer added that we made cuts wherever we could and have a budget that's just a hair under a 2% increase.

A Fin Com member said it looks like the Town will be able to close the budget gap and isn't asking departments to cut their budgets at this point. The revenue projections show we'll be at \$24 per \$1000 for property taxes this year, so we're nearly at the \$25 per \$1000 limit. The coming of broadband might change property values, and we'll be okay this year, but next year will be a challenge. We're essentially funding a \$174,000 budget increase this year, which is a big jump because of how we've funded the budget out of Free Cash in the past.

Jackie replied that this wasn't what she expected to hear tonight, and she's so grateful to hear it. We're going to be receiving an award for academic performance at the Statehouse this June; that's thanks to how much the Town values the school. That should help attract more students, but as a Fin Com member reflected, we need to think about how to pay to meet the needs of these students if the state isn't going to step up. It's going to be a tricky process balancing the budget going forward. Our tax rate has been growing and growing over the past decade because the state hasn't been funding us at the same level.

Lauren thanked the Fin Com for their tireless efforts and assured them that SSC hears their concerns. We want to continue to make SES the excellent school it is, but we appreciate the Town perspective on finances as well. Dan added he's grateful that SSC and the Select Board aren't fighting each other, as in some other towns. He noted that CES is holding a legislative event to help our representatives understand the full picture in rural school districts. He's also been asked to sit on a state commission to address transportation issues (which hasn't been fully funded for regionalized schools for a long time). Things are percolating on Beacon Hill, but we need to keep pushing our funding issues with our reps. Bruce added that he attended the Rural Day on the Hill a couple of weeks ago with some Swift River School reps, and Sen. Comerford really seemed to understand how badly we're faring under the Chapter 70 formula. Any kind of pressure we can apply to our reps will help.

A question from the public to Dan: the funding seemed to be headed in the direction of charter schools to address rural problems. What seems to be happening now? Dan isn't sure, but that's definitely an issue we have to keep an eye on. Charter schools are draining a significant amount from Town coffers, but Jackie said

we've hit our cap for PVPA students for now (this kind of information can be found on the DESE site). Jennifer said reps are hearing the opposition to the expansion of charter schools.

The Physical Education teacher for SES thanked both SSC and Town officials for the work they do to make SES his "dream school."

One question: is there any potential for the lunch program to run in the black again? Probably not, and that's typical of many schools. We might apply to the Community Eligibility Program to support free breakfast and lunch for students. We also have a firm policy of not treating students with accounts in arrears any differently than others. We also have significant special options and our chef cooks most things in-house. A member of the public noted that the quality of the food program makes everyone feel that they're being taken care of. It has a huge positive impact on learning.

Another question: how is it that such a large percentage of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch? Jackie said she thinks it has to do with a lack of Internet access and an overall decline in population, which has led to lower rents and housing costs and a consequent influx of families with lower levels of income.

What are the savings going to be for the school when we switch to broadband? Jackie couldn't say offhand but is happy to invite her amazing tech lady to regale us with the details. We do a lot with tech in education in 2019, and Jennifer added that as of this year, we'll have to do all our MCAS testing online. Dan added that we're not counting on any kind of savings there at this point.

Lauren emphasized how amazing our school is; for instance, our Librarian does an amazing job promoting literacy and making the Library the heart of the school. SES is simply exceptional, and it's so much easier to fight for in the budget as a result. Dan added that U#28 is similarly exceptional, and SES excels at integrating the curriculum into everything the students do.

Another question: the influence of digital technology on children is getting more scrutiny now, so is SES feeling the pressure to increase exposure to tech? Not at all. We're very thoughtful about how we incorporate tech into the curriculum. Jen added a story about how her children have been showing her the kinds of tech they're using at school, which includes self-reflective tools and presentations. The Phys Ed teacher commented that SES does the best job he's seen of balancing learning needs and supporting tech. Jackie summarized our approach: we pull from best practices all over education and apply them to the whole child to see what works best for them. It's amazing what our kids do: music, art, building electronics, track, etc. Jennifer added that U#28's reputation extends far and wide; we're preparing for two Principal searches and candidates are keen to work here.

**C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar: None.**

**D. Warrants and Gifts: None.**

**E. Approval of Minutes from February 14, 2019.**

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 14, 2019. KATIE SECONDED.  
UNANIMOUS.**

**F. Unfinished Business / Updates:**

1. FY20 Budget – Discussion and Vote:

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY20 BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,273,111 WITH A NET TOTAL TO THE TOWN OF \$2,172,311. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

#### **G. New Business / Discussion Items**

1. Academic Calendar 2019-2020 – Vote:

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR 2019-2020. STEVE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

#### **H. Reports:**

1. Director of Finance and Operations: Bruce expressed his gratitude to the Fin Com and Select Board for working so hard to support our school. SSC echoed this gratitude.

2. Principal's Report: Jackie acknowledged Heather, our Librarian Teacher, for all of the work she does at the school, but particularly for another year of successful MCBA Book Party events. There's a lot of planning and ancillary events involved with this. Heather noted that apart from the activities at the Book Party itself, students themselves generate all the ideas for events and activities. Jackie noted there's a huge reading culture here, which is not the case everywhere. Heather added she's going to seed some money for a new practice for 5th Graders, who will be empowered to buy books for the Library to leave as their legacy.

Jackie said we were treated to the Pioneer Valley Youth Symphony Orchestra performing a concert for us, 6th Graders performed their "Living History Museum," 5th Graders performed a play about Sojourner Truth, the Duffy School of Dance will be coming tomorrow to delight us with some Irish Step Dancing, and soon our Artist-in-Residence, former SES art teacher BZ Reilly, will be coming to lead students in painting an exciting mural in the 5/6/Pre-K hallway. The Spaghetti Dinner is coming up May 17 and the last day of school as of now is Friday, June 14. The Moose on the Move fundraiser dinner at the AC will be held March 22. Finally, the teachers' union voted to support moving forward with an agreement for teachers' children to be School Choice students. Enrollment has dropped by one.

3. Superintendent's Report: No report. Jennifer's been busy in the Principal hiring processes for EES and LES.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report: Steve reported that RSC approved the regional budget (\$13 million and change); Shutesbury's share of this is just over \$1 million. We also approved some capital planning spending to fix up an auditorium. We had a short presentation about the community fields at ARHS, which will be expensive to deal with (in the millions for the first phase, and there's five phases). IMP has been dropped in math starting next year. More money has also been added to professional development, which was missing from the IMP rollout.

5. Union #28 Report, including Budget & Personnel: No report.

6. CES Report: Dan reported that he attended a meeting at which a school was invited to rejoin CES.

## **I. Policy Review:**

Jackie noted that students who have been intensively researching the question of serving chocolate milk at SES will be presenting their results at an upcoming SSC meeting. SSC look forward to this.

First Reading on:

ADF – Wellness  
BDB – School Committee Officers  
BDG – School Attorney  
BEDF – Voting Method

Final Vote on:

AE – Commitment to Accomplishment  
ADC – Tobacco Products on School Premises Prohibited  
JEB – Age of Entrance

**JEN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICIES AE – COMMITMENT TO ACCOMPLISHMENT, ADC – TOBACCO PRODUCTS ON SCHOOL PREMISES PROHIBITED, AND JEB – AGE OF ENTRANCE. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

First Vote on Deletion of Policy:

JKD – Suspension Policy

**KATIE MOVED TO DELETE POLICY JKD – SUSPENSION POLICY. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

## **J. Future Business:**

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, April 25, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, April 25, 2019, 7:00 p.m.
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory Policy Committee – Monday, March 18, 2019 at 6:45 p.m. Swift River School
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, March 18, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. Swift River School
- Budget and Personnel Committee – TBD
- Future agenda items – Chocolate Milk Debate

## **K. Adjournment at 8:16 P.M.**

**LAUREN MOVED TO ADJOURN. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**