

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 21, 2019
Final Minutes

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

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

B. Public Hearings:

Jeff Lacy spoke to SSC about the Four Town Regional Assessment method. He noted that his two girls both went through SSC and have just graduated, and he's been working on this issue the whole time. He's very happy with SSC as well as ARMS and ARHS. The Fin Com approved the Statutory Method with a two-year transition period and will take this position into the Four Town meeting next week. This decision is based on projections drawn from data on enrollment and contributions to the Region. If we'd been paying under the Statutory Method all along, we would have saved a significant amount by this point. The 50-50 Method also means we would pay significantly more than we would under the Statutory Method. Nearly 5% of the total Town Budget is excess we pay to the Region by not using the Statutory Method, in fact. In terms of impact on the other Towns, if we changed to the Statutory Method, Leverett's contribution would increase by \$83K, Pelham's by \$20K, and Amherst's by \$206K (this last representing a trivial percentage of their overall budget). A 5-Year Rolling Average for the Statutory Method seems to supply the greatest stability over time while reducing Shutesbury's burden the most. Lauren thanked Jeff for his presentation and said that SSC would take his information into the Four Town Meeting.

Dan thanked SSC for supporting him going to the MASC Conference, which was very informative and even celebratory. The most exciting part was a keynote speech from a phenomenal speaker on social justice and equity that was positive and inspiring; it focused on broader dimensions of diversity in creating a culture of inclusivity. Diversity comes in many more forms than we might usually consider.

C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar:

Dan approved.

D. Warrants and Gifts:

Jackie: *do-do-do-DO-do-DOOOOO!* We have a Box Tops submission of \$72.30.
#3007: \$3,952.94
#3008: \$9,950.81

E. Approval of Minutes from September 19, 2019:

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2019. KATIE SECONDED.
UNANIMOUS.**

F. Unfinished Business / Updates:

1. CES Expansion: Dan explained that two school districts (Gateway and Worthington) are asking to join or rejoin CES. Two-thirds of the current member school districts have to approve Articles of Agreement in order for this to happen. These Articles have been reviewed by DESE.

DAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT TO ALLOW THE GATEWAY AND WORTHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO JOIN CES. STEVE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

G. New Business / Discussion Items:

1. Student Opportunity Act: Lauren noted that this Act has been unanimously approved by both House and Senate. The Governor just has to sign it, and with this level of support, it would be surprising if he hadn't. This is a big win for our students and our school communities, as it revises the Foundation Formula that has not been updated since the early '90s. Dan expressed appreciation for the entire democratic process, which started with grassroots advocacy and moved through the entire system to culminate in this meaningful legislation.

2. School Choice Spending Policy – Discussion: Lauren explained that we don't need such a policy, but there is some benefit to limiting the kinds of things we can use this money for. Bruce noted that among his counterparts, it seems to be standard practice for school districts to offset teacher salaries, a practice he disagrees with. SSC suggested that Jackie come up with some ideas for what would go into the policy. She wanted to make sure that she's able to ask SSC for permission to spend Choice funds on different things as they come up, to which SSC readily assented.

3. Selection of Negotiating Subcommittee Members – Vote: We are about to commence negotiations with the teacher's union and we need to form this subcommittee. Katie has experience doing this and volunteered to sit on this subcommittee again. Jen also volunteered. Steve noted he must abstain because his COLA as a Town employee is tied to the teachers' COLA.

DAN MOVED TO NOMINATE KATIE AND JEN TO THE NEGOTIATING SUBCOMMITTEE. STEVE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Dan brought up a tangential issue: Policy binders no longer circulate among SSC members, and he recommends we move away from paper policy binders entirely as well as passing out revised policies at the Policy Subcommittee. It doesn't seem effective to maintain physical binders because a member can never quite be sure the binder is up to date, and the paper is wasteful besides. A number of SSC members as well as Jackie said they access policies via the school website. Katie requested that the Policy Subcommittee still distribute the list of policies to review, as this is a handy reference; SSC agreed.

H. Reports:

1. Superintendent's Report: Jennifer reported that the Professional Learning Day was very successful (with a very tasty lunch to boot). Workshop leaders were all U#28 staff, and all the workshops were excellent. We have a lot of leadership and talent within the Union that we're fortunate to be able to use to strengthen education across all four schools. Some U#28 staff also attended a Universal Design for Learning workshop in Groton. The Rural Schools Coalition has become a non-profit; we're now working on bylaws, etc. for the group. Annie has also written a grant to try new approaches to teaching, learning, and

assessment, and Jennifer has written a smaller grant that would allow us to look at assessment tools we use and give feedback to DESE on their effectiveness.

2. Director of Finance and Operations: Bruce reported that Shutesbury will be getting over \$32K in Rural Aid this year, which is a very positive development. Also, the Town will be paying to replace both boilers, which is a very welcome outcome as well. They agreed to do so in record time as well. We're also going to be getting a small amount of Circuit Breaker this year. We've reorganized Central Office a bit, hiring an Accounts Payable person (a .8 position) and shifting grant writing and management around. We're starting budgeting work now as well.

3. Principal's Report: Jackie said we're having our all-school production of *Annie* on December 6; all students are involved somehow (and Jackie is playing Mrs. Warbucks). We're having a 2:15 and a 6:30 performance that day; it's a half-hour long and it's amazing, so everyone should attend. We did very well on MCAS: we meet every standard and exceed most, and we're above the state average in everything. Laura, our 5th Grade teacher, helped our 5th Graders last year to bounce up double digits in our Science assessment. Also, thanks to a grant written by Laura, every class is doing a science unit related to their MCAS Science standards. The 6th Grade is participating in Monte's March next week. The School Council met, and we still have some open positions there, so we're reaching out to potential representatives. The School Improvement Plan is ready; Jennifer added that we're doing a lot of work to make sure the District Plan is aligned with school plans. Jen asked if this is something that comes from the state; Jackie said the School Council is responsible for it, and we look at a lot of things, documenting the work we're doing, paying attention to surveys we conduct among parents, etc. Jackie commented on one significant difference in the SIP this year: we're looking into whole-school social-ethical initiatives. Also, we already do a lot of mindfulness (every kid has yoga every week, and teachers lead mindfulness exercises via PA system), so we're documenting those in the SIP this year and looking at expanding them.

One FYI: next year we have 33-34 kids eligible for Pre-K, so we might have upwards of 40 kids looking for a place in Preschool, which we wouldn't be able to fit in a single classroom. Steve asked how many families are opting out MCAS now? (One.) And what happened to Swift River when everyone opted out there? Jennifer said they were classified as Level 3 due to non-participation (and that was for PARCC, not MCAS). Jennifer added that she's already documenting a lot of the efficiencies we engage in for reporting on how we use Rural Aid. Jackie said that being a small school, we don't have expertise in certain areas, so we often need to spend some money on consultation for building learning plans for individual students. Jen asked if we might offer any School Choice seats in the upcoming Pre-K; Jackie said she hasn't looked at that yet, but it's a possibility. The split we did last year was fortuitous and worked out. Only a few of our students Choice out.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report: Steve reported that the Athletic Field is starting to be taken care of with a water hose system; the Field Hockey field in particular was able to be maintained properly for the first time in something like 20 years. We're going to hire an architect to plan the proposed new school. There's a big change in warrant policy: we only need one authorized representative to sign from now on, instead of having the entire committee sign them. Dan suggested looking into electronic signatures, as they do at CES; it's easy and direct. The 2020-2021 School Calendar has been adopted by the district already. The Girls' Locker Room is scheduled to be refurbished in 2026, but if there's money available before then, they'll take care of it. RSC is also pushing hard to redo the Superintendent's Contract; they want to get it done before the end of the year. This may be because RSC members want to make sure the current Superintendent doesn't leave. Steve isn't for rushing through this Contract because

he still has two years to go, and there's no public input into his performance yet. Katie said she had some concerns about him, in fact. Lauren said it seems like a bad precedent to try to negotiate the next Contract so far ahead of the end of the current one; so much could happen before the current one ends. Steve keeps bringing up the promise RSC made before to do a full search for a Superintendent, which we never did, but other current RSC members don't seem to be concerned about this. Dan said he doesn't want to move forward with this Contract process yet, either. SSC expressed unanimous opposition to rushing to the next Contract already. They would like to hear the reasoning behind this.

As a follow-up to the last meeting's discussion about the disturbing website, Dan has looked at it, and it is disturbing. Other SSC members expressed the same sentiment, and Steve added that members of RSC have been receiving vicious emails from the website owner. It's not at all a productive way to address concerns about what's going on in the district.

Dan emphasized that process is very important: if you have a good process, you'll get a good result. The Superintendent search should be carried out.

5. Union #28 Report, including Budget & Personnel: Lauren reported that we'll be meeting Monday to discuss the budget. Jennifer noted that as many representatives as possible from each school committee should attend so we can have a balanced discussion.

6. CES Report: Dan reported that we've formed a Policy Subcommittee (on which Jennifer has agreed to sit, hooray!). He's also attended the Division 5 Conference, where several committee members have changed roles. The Division 5 Committee is looking at ways to connect with local school committees to collect concerns and take them on to MASC. Dan was also appointed to a Regions Committee, which collects information from specific regions to pass on to MASC. The Transportation Committee is now working on recommendations to the Governor. Some seem premature (autonomous buses), while others are much more promising (for example, electric buses would reduce the health impact on students who now breathe diesel fumes every day).

I. Policy Review:

First Reading on:

DI – Fiscal Accounting and Reporting
BGE – Policy Dissemination
BGF – Suspension and Repeal of Policies
BHC – School Committee-Staff Communications

Final Vote on:

BG – School Committee Policy Development
BGB – Adoption, Amendment, Deletion and Suspension of Policies
BGC – Policy Revision and Review
BGD – School Committee Review and Regulations

Dan offered copy edits to two policies.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BG – SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AS EMENDED. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BGB – ADOPTION, AMENDMENT, DELETION AND SUSPENSION OF POLICIES. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BGC – POLICY REVISION AND REVIEW. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BGD – SCHOOL COMMITTEE REVIEW AND REGULATIONS AS EMENDED. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

J. Future Business:

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, January 16, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, January 16, 2019, 7:00 p.m.
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory Policy Committee – Monday, November 25, 2019 at 6:45 p.m.
Leverett Elementary School
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, November 25, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. Leverett Elementary School
- Budget and Personnel Committee – November 25, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. Leverett Elementary School
- Future agenda items –

K. Adjournment at 8:28 P.M.

STEVE MOVED TO ADJOURN. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.