

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, January 16, 2020**  
**Final Minutes**

**Present: Dan Hayes, 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 7:07 P.M.**

**B. Public Hearings: None.**

**C. Adam Suzor – Suzor IT Presentation:**

Jennifer introduced Adam Suzor, founder and owner of Suzor IT, who presented on the services his company offers to schools and municipalities. Adam has experience in IT both in local schools, hospitals, and municipalities, and has been running Suzor IT for five years. He founded his company in order to address some of the frustrations and challenges he encountered working in those environments. The company's mission is to streamline K-12 schools and municipalities in the face of constantly changing tech. Tech is very complex, so it's hard sometimes to take the time to simplify something. Providing this streamlined support is what the company does for its clients.

If Suzor IT were to provide services for SES, it would be a little different from what they do in bigger places; they'd look for any gaps they can fill, primarily in data security and tech support. (Suzor IT already provides these services to Central Office.) Their focus is on security and systems that don't go down. Three areas in which they see they can provide a service to SES are: data security, asset management (hardware and software, including procurement, which they're able to do efficiently through partnerships), and network support and maintenance. Adam pointed out that IT systems are being audited now because of their integration with all the other systems at a school; Jennifer added that U#28's first such audit revealed significant deficiencies that need to be addressed somehow. Suzor IT is one possible option to address these deficiencies. Adam stressed their excellent response and resolution rates as well as their ability to support technology integration into the curriculum. In summary, Suzor IT can solve any security compliance problems as well as support the excellent tech team at SES. Adam invited questions from SSC.

Lauren turned to members of the public, which consisted primarily of technology experts at U#28 schools, for questions. One question: how would Suzor services work in real time, when tech specialists are working in real time to solve these problems already? Adam said we wouldn't necessarily set up some kind of ticket system that teachers use to get problems solved; instead, they would ensure security by implementing best practices and addressing attacks, etc. He doesn't want to step on anyone's toes, but be a part of the team when it comes to security, backups, and asset management. Schools in MA are not ready on the security front, and the state is aware of this. Suzor IT addresses that problem.

Dan asked Jennifer if this plan is Union-wide, or school-by-school. Jennifer said Suzor IT already serves Central Office, and they'd be bringing their services to each school. Dan: what's the connection with individual schools, apart from security? Adam said he needs to learn what the actual needs are at each school so he can see where the company can step in. Jennifer said this might be one area where we can achieve a district efficiency. Jackie would like to know what the pricing would be for the hybrid solution Adam is proposing. Adam doesn't quite know yet, although they have a concrete model to follow in the

services they currently offer to Mahar. Lauren asked if the model would evolve based on needs; it seems so, since this would be the first time the company offered this package of services. He'd like to go through the process of figuring out what the actual needs are at small schools like SES.

The technology coordinator at SES noted that we're already supported by a network specialist, and it's confusing because the documents they have from Suzor aren't accurate (the model laid out there is what they offer to larger institutions, and Adam has yet to figure out what makes sense to offer a school like SES). Jennifer emphasized this is an option that needs to be explored Union-wide. Adam added that there are unmet needs that the school might not even be aware of, for instance, using two-factor authentication to access sensitive data. Suzor can identify and address these needs. Lauren said that the bigger idea emerging here is that we need to examine what our needs actually are, and she looks to SES's technology staff for guidance there. This might be a way to offer support.

Dan added that this might be something we should look at as a Town because of security problems; everyone should understand that this isn't a criticism of the tech work that's already done in the school, but a reflection of the costliness of dealing with a ransomware attack, recovering data, etc. Lauren agreed: all of this is a lot to ask of one person (just teaching children about technology and supporting teachers with it is a full job). Another tech specialist from EES noted that the U#28 tech staff help each other out a lot; they work together on projects, contributing their different strengths. Jen said that even though tech is not inherently a relational thing, part of a needs assessment would be looking at how a relationship with Suzor would work so that tech specialists could reach out to get what they need (without imposing additional work on them).

Lauren said one focus of the Union-wide Technology Committee should be figuring this out. The technology specialists said that some of them should be on this committee, and SSC heartily agreed. Adam emphasized that tech specialists put their heart and soul into the systems they build and maintain, and he understands that about the work the staff do at these schools. Jackie added that the more tech is integrated into everything, the more it becomes part of all our relationships. If she doesn't have her computer, she's like, *VWAAAAAHHH!!* Lauren said that we definitely need the perspective of the techs on the Technology Committee and she hopes some will consider sitting on it. Dan said he appreciated the motivation to make things secure for our schools and all the work our technology specialists already do for our students. SSC thanked Adam for his presentation.

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

**E. Warrants and Gifts:**

Wah-wahhnn.

**F. Approval of Minutes from November 21, 2019:**

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 21, 2019. JEN SECONDED.  
UNANIMOUS.**

**G. Unfinished Business / Updates: None.**

**H. New Business / Discussion Items:**

1. Massachusetts Rural School Coalition – Rural School Aid annual dues – Discussion and Vote: Jennifer explained the focus and purpose of the Coalition, which is asking for annual dues from member schools. Since we're a small school, our annual dues are only \$250. SSC members expressed appreciation for the work the Coalition does on our behalf.

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE PAYING \$250 IN RURAL SCHOOL AID ANNUAL DUES TO THE MASSACHUSETTS RURAL SCHOOL COALITION. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

2. U28 Technology Committee – Discussion and Member Selection: Lauren explained that U28 is putting together a Technology Committee with a member from each School Committee as well as members from the school staffs. Bethany Seeger is the only member at this point. Jennifer said that the tech coordinators have said they want to meet on their own to discuss issues, and she supports them forming their own separate committee as well. Dan said we should open the Technology Committee up to any and all of them; Lauren agreed and added that she wants their thinking to be central to the Committee. SSC nominated Lauren to join this Committee, and she agreed.

3. Review and Vote on the Revised and Amended Agreement of the Collaborative for Educational Services: Jennifer said that CES is looking to have its members vote on the revised and amended agreement that adds Gateway and Worthington to the membership. There are a lot of people around the table making decisions right now, but it's working!

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE REVISED AND AMENDED AGREEMENT OF THE COLLABORATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

4. FY21 Draft Budget – Discussion and Possible Vote on Adoption of Preliminary Budget: Bruce distributed copies of the Draft Budget as well as amazing calendars from Senator Warren. SSC was agog for a full minute.

Bruce walked SSC through the budget. It contains a figure from Suzor IT that reflects a per-student basis for a full suite of services, all of which will not be needed, so this figure would go down. Jen asked if all students wanted Suzor, would there be an advantage to U28? Jennifer said maybe, but that's moot because Leverett didn't vote to include any external tech support in their budget. The SES proportional share of U28 expenses is going down slightly this year due to lower enrollment and a new staff member coming on at a lower step. We've also built in a little room for negotiations with the teachers' union. Some shuffling of grants management within Central Office has streamlined costs there as well. We've shifted some regular summer contracting work out of the salary line and into its own line. We don't have any Out-of-District placements right now (SSC knocked on wood).

Jackie said they've spent a lot of time trying not to ask for more than what we absolutely need, leading to a 2.5% increase over last year. Bruce said SES got Rural Aid this year, which he thinks we should budget for next year. Based on Jackie's analysis of DESE data, Shutesbury is the most economically disadvantaged U28 town right now, so we can probably count on continued Rural Aid. We should also use some School Choice funds to bring the total budget increase under 1%. The tech line is the only place Jackie could really pinch now, since last year we cut every line. Lauren expressed a concern that putting out a 0% budget will become an expectation; this is not something we can just do every year, and we've already cut so much. Jackie and Jennifer both feel that the Fin Com and SES understand each other's positions and have a

positive relationship. Jackie added that we don't cushion our budget at all, so when we ask for money for something (a boiler, a roof, etc.), we REALLY need it, and pronto. Bruce pointed out that he feels the Town was extremely generous last year in the face of shifting grants, etc., so this year might be a year we reciprocate. Jackie noted that if we do have to use School Choice for something unexpected, it'll be a significant chunk of it.

Jen said that we need to remind the Town of this year's situation in the years to come in order to help stave off that 0% expectation as well as preserve our options for budget asks. Lauren said we seem to have decided not to spend that \$10,000 on tech this year, so that could come out. Katie suggested that Jackie find some places where hard cuts were made and add some of that back in to the second draft of the budget. Lauren asked for a draft version that strips out the \$10,000 and another draft that takes that out and adds some or all of it back into other lines.

SSC discussed how to proceed in order to be prepared for the upcoming meeting with the Fin Com.

Dan introduced a tangential topic: the water heater. He thinks the Buildings Committee's role is to come in and evaluate what's going on and what the needs are, but that the Committee didn't follow a good process. Lauren said that part of what needs to be worked out is how to proceed in an emergent situation. We can't have research, meetings, etc., during an emergency. When we meet with the Boards, we need to clarify this process. Jackie said in most places, there's a Facilities Manager who handles these kinds of problems, but we're too small for that position. The Buildings Committee is not Matt's boss, etc.; authorities and responsibilities aren't clear enough to deal with an emergency like that. Lauren reiterated the need to clarify the process we follow in a similar situation. Jackie can't be in the middle of stuff between Town leaders, and she can't have angry people coming into the building and demanding to see things, demanding her maintainer's time, yelling at people, etc. She understands their frustration, but that's not how things are going to happen here. Lauren: Yes, this is a building full of children. We can't have *any* angry people marching in yelling. Jackie: Yes, the Buildings Committee has a right to see the problem, but they can't tell Matt what to do. It's just, like, *gne~aigh!*

SSC discussed the events involved and decided that the Town needs to figure out their process between the Town Administrator and the Buildings Committee. We can help them towards that, perhaps, but a process for resolving emergencies needs to be worked out.

5. Date for Budget Hearing – Discussion: SSC discussed the timing of the meeting with the Fin Com, the Public Hearing, and the deadline for voting on a final budget. SSC decided to meet on Tuesday, January 28, at 6:00 P.M. with a budget-only agenda. The Public Hearing will be included in the regular SSC meeting on Thursday, February 13.

## **I. Reports:**

1. Superintendent's Report: Jennifer reported that she's doing an online workshop on privacy. She has also submitted a report to DESE on what efficiencies we'll work to achieve in the next three years in exchange for Rural Aid. We also have to develop a three-year, evidence-based plan to address significant variations in student outcomes among different student populations in exchange for some money from the Student Opportunity Act. She distributed maps of Central Office space that we're looking to move into in two years (we have to leave the building in Erving).

2. Director of Finance and Operations: Bruce reported that he'll be completing the application for MSBA again this year. We do have a water heater coming here, and we had the boiler inspected by a state inspector, who basically condemned it. Also, we have a new bus contractor.

3. Principal's Report: Jackie reported that *Annie* was awesome. We're doing another musical this spring (a *Seussical*). Enrollment is up by three in a month; seems like houses are selling. We got one burner installed, and the other will be installed in about three weeks. The Whalemobile is coming back! We have a new teacher and have a School Psychologist / Counselor position posted (with someone filling in as Counselor in the meantime). We're up to 34 or 35 possible Preschoolers next year, which might be a little tricky.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report: No report.

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

6. CES Report: The meeting is next week.

#### **J. Policy Review:**

First Reading on:

JFABE – Educational Opportunities for Military Children  
JFABF – Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care  
JFF – Student Activities Account  
BEDG – Minutes

Second Reading, First Vote on:

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

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY DI – FISCAL ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BGE – POLICY DISSEMINATION. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BGF – SUSPENSION AND REPEAL OF POLICIES. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BHC – SCHOOL COMMITTEE-STAFF COMMUNICATIONS. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

#### **K. Future Business:**

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, February 13/27, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, February 13/27, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory Policy Committee – Monday, March 16, 2020 at 6:15 p.m. Swift River School
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, Monday, March 16, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. Swift River School
- Budget and Personnel Committee – None
- Future agenda items –

**L. Adjournment at 9:02 P.M.**

**DAN MOVED TO ADJOURN. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**