

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, April 16, 2020
Final Minutes

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

A. Meeting Called to Order by Lauren at 7:02 P.M.

Lauren read a statement with instructions on how the public can access this Zoom meeting, or the recording of the meeting afterwards. She also read a statement praising SES staff for their excellent and professional service to students, families, and the community, and Jennifer and U#28 staff for their leadership during this difficult and uncertain time. We are so grateful to everyone for everything they're doing.

B. Public Hearings:

C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar: None.

D. Warrants and Gifts:

Gifts: Wah-wahnn.

#319: \$68,926.09

#320: \$70,335.31

#3015: \$28,324.78

#3016: \$7,911.74

E. Approval of Minutes from February 13, 2020:

SSC offered one amendment to the minutes.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 13, 2020 AS AMENDED. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

F. Unfinished Business / Updates: None.

G. New Business / Discussion Items:

1. Change FY20 Academic Calendar – Remove April Vacation – Vote:

Jennifer explained that after talking with teachers across U#28, most didn't want to lose momentum with the remote learning we've switched over to. We have a full-day Professional Day on May 22 that we can work through as well if we're not physically back in the school by then. So we're asking to modify the FY20 calendar so that teachers are working through April vacation as well as the Professional Day. Jackie added this is a unanimous request from SES staff. That will make the last school day June 12.

Jennifer expressed her amazement at the incredible work being done remotely by SES staff, and she thanked them for their creativity, adaptability, and great effort. SSC echoed these sentiments.

DAN MOVED TO AMEND THE FY20 ACADEMIC CALENDAR BY REMOVING APRIL VACATION AND THE PROFESSIONAL DAY ON MAY 22. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

2. FY21 Academic Calendar – Vote:

Jennifer explained that in the FY21 Academic Calendar, we'd begin on August 26 and end on June 11. Amherst starts September 2, so we have some dates we can play around with to try to synchronize the calendars (or not). Jackie said that staff initially had mixed responses as to start dates, but when she asked again recently, staff overwhelmingly voted for the late start (synchronizing with Amherst). Jennifer supports the staff's decision even though it means we'll probably be getting out pretty late. Jen wondered why there was such a shift in the staff's views on this. Jackie speculated that they might want a late August vacation, prefer starting on Wednesday (allowing a gradual start for the kids), and want to align with the Amherst calendar to support families with kids in both schools. Five days would be set aside for weather closings due to snow, rain, or their abominable offspring, snain.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY21 ACADEMIC CALENDAR STARTING ON SEPTEMBER 2 AND ENDING ON JUNE 18 (WITH FIVE DAYS FOR WEATHER CLOSINGS). JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

3. Identification of School Choice Seats:

Jackie said there are open seats, but only in classes with fewer than 15 students, and with preference given to students with siblings already in the school.

4. School of Choice – Vote:

DAN MOVED TO IDENTIFY SES AS A SCHOOL OF CHOICE FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 20-21. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

5. Hand Wash Fountains – Discussion:

A member of the community has suggested installing hand wash fountains in the school. Jackie said she generally supports ideas that come from the community, and it's something that we can look into. She just hasn't had time to go figure out where these could go in the school yet. Dan suggested that someone else could come up with a proposal, since Jackie no doubt already has her hands full. Then SSC can discuss and vote on the proposal. Jackie said she's super grateful that people are trying to think of ways to help, but we can't really figure this out right now since we're not even allowing people in the building right now. Steve suggested that we could make these fountains hydration stations as well.

6. Superintendent Evaluation – Discussion:

Lauren explained SSC's options for completing this evaluation, given the viral disruptions to our lives. We don't want to put more on Jennifer's plate as she's trying to navigate U#28 through this crisis. We can

delay the deadline, we can do an evaluation based on where she was on her goals before the crisis hit, or some combination. Dan agreed and said we should give her a great performance review and move on. Lauren said we can note that significant progress has been made on some goals, but we can't evaluate goals that just can't be met now. Dan asked whether we could do this electronically: perhaps? Dan asked Jennifer to reach out to CES to look at the evaluation form they use there; it's so easy and clear, so there are a lot of respondents. Jennifer said she'd do whatever SSC needs her to do as regards the evaluation; she has a scanner app that she could use to create digital copies of artifacts, for example.

H. Reports:

1. Superintendent's Report: Jennifer reported that virus planning started to coalesce around the end of February. She worked with Suzor IT, various town Boards of Health, Superintendents and state agencies and departments, and other institutions in Western Mass to share information and create plans. She's tried to keep families and school committees informed on the latest developments. She shared one guideline that she thinks is paramount: balance, flexibility, connection and emotional wellbeing. We're supposed to be meeting with the Governor sometime soon. Jackie said we often hear "it's a local decision." Jennifer stressed that she thinks we're making everything work with grace and compassion. Maybe we don't have the greatest bandwidth or cell reception, but we're making it work. She thinks the Commissioner is hearing our concerns, but he has no idea what remote learning looks like out here. We're doing a fantastic job out here in Western Mass. Whatever word is better than *amazing* or *awesome*, that's what our U#28 leadership and staff are. (Editorial aside: nonpareil? Ne plus ultra? Something French, in any case.) Lauren said we should see this as an opportunity to improve on what we do: if we're able to shut down and rebuild everything so quickly, now would be a good time to change the things that need changing going forward. Lauren thanked Jennifer for her leadership and efforts.

2. Director of Finance and Operations: Bruce reported that Central Office has been dispersed and is working remotely, with a few visits to the office per week to process payroll and various banking business. We're keeping up with things very well. He's working with a lot of business leaders in Franklin Country to work out fair reduced prices for transportation; we want to keep the contractor in business while saving us some money. Hopefully we'll be saving in excess of 20% on our monthly fee while we're not transporting kids. He hasn't heard back from MSBA yet, although he's had a report that it's still financially sound and our projects should be funded. There's some money from Rural Aid we can roll into our budget next year, it looks like. We're still paying all school staff. Bruce has been working with the food service directors in U#28 to work out a plan to provide meals that are still reimbursed. We're taking care of the kids. Next year's budget from the state perspective is concerning; who knows what it will look like? The SES budget this year is doing better than it normally does, so Bruce feels okay at present.

3. Principal's Report: Jackie reported that she's so grateful to her staff for everything they've done: they are exceptional. She can't find another town that can top what our teachers are doing. Under state guidance, we're to have about 3 hours of learning for students per day. Students are using different technological tools according to their grade. Many classrooms have virtual meeting times a couple of times per week. She demonstrated where all COVID-19-related communications are archived on the school website, as well as the class sites that students go to to access their work. (Jen put a plug in for Moose TV.) A tech survey has gone out to see what needs there are in the community, and 37 devices have already been distributed to families. Debbie Lee is amazing (Jackie's "angel" in this), getting these devices out to people and working with families to make sure they're connected. Students have stopped by the school for a resource pickup (including notebooks, textbooks, journals, workbooks, etc.). 100% of families came to pick up their

resources. Our teachers, paras, and maintainers have all gone way beyond the call of duty to support each other and our students. They are all AWESOME! In May, we'll start to discuss what "recovery education" will look like to address some of the gaps that students will have. We're also looking at what remote learning might look like if this continues into the fall. I'm dedicated to having a 6th Grade Graduation in some form, even if it has a very unusual setup or even if it has to be delayed till late in the summer. Finally, Jackie wanted to give a shout-out to Jennifer for her incredible support. Lauren appreciated Jackie's commitment to the Graduation, which is so incredibly special for the participants. Jen brought up grieving all the things that are lost, like the Spaghetti Dinner. Jackie said we definitely can't do the traditional Dinner, but maybe we could do something smaller and simpler. It's really hard having to live with these losses, to be sure.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report: Steve reported that the Amherst-Pelham school system is distributing 2000 meals at various sites and has added weekend meals. It's a lot of food. RSC voted not to accept Choice students at the Middle and High Schools next year because of current class sizes. Most families now have mobile hotspots, and money has been raised to pay for the service through the end of the next school year. One down note is that some students have been working hard to take the MCAS in May, but the state has delayed that to August, so that's now the earliest they could graduate. The Pelham Principal search is being finished up now, while the Middle School one hasn't gotten far.

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

6. CES Report: Dan reported that CES is in the same boat managing a workforce who's working from home. Everybody's working hard to support everyone they can: families, students, each other Jackie praised CES's free professional development classes for teachers and paras; they're so awesome. Dan said he'd pass that on. Jennifer and Lauren praised this service as well.

I. Policy Review:

Second Reading, First Vote on:

JFABD – Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

DGA – Authorized Signatures

CH – Policy Implementation

CHD – Administration in Policy Absence

Lauren wondered who our homeless student liaison is; it's the school nurse.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY JFABD – HOMELESS STUDENTS: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY DGA – AUTHORIZED SIGNATURES. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY CH – POLICY IMPLEMENTATION. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY CHD – ADMINISTRATION IN POLICY ABSENCE. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Final Vote on:

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

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY JFABE – EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILITARY CHILDREN. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY JFABF – EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY JJF – STUDENT ACTIVITIES ACCOUNT. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BEDG – MINUTES. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

J. Future Business:

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, June 18, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, June 18, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory Policy Committee – Monday, May 18, 2020 TBD
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, Monday, May 18, 2020 TBD at 6:30 p.m. REMOTE MEETING
- Budget and Personnel Committee – None
- Future agenda items –

Jennifer expressed her hope that the June meeting will be in person, and we can all eat Steve’s cookies (hint, hint). Steve also wondered whether SSC could ask for a second opinion on the roof repair, since it really needs to be taken care of. Jackie said it would be a real shame if the beautiful floor there were destroyed by the recurrent puddle, but the way the roof was fixed before, the water now pours onto the front sidewalk like a waterfall, and the sidewalk is now buckling. The remedy has created new problems. Bruce said he’s confident that the MSBA will still be funding projects this year; it’s a question of whether we’ll be invited because they keep moving the goalposts. It might help to contact our state senator and representative.

DAN MOVED TO HAVE LAUREN DRAFT A LETTER EXPLAINING THE URGENCY OF OUR NEED FOR A NEW ROOF THAT THE ENTIRE COMMITTEE SUPPORTS. STEVE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

K. Adjournment at 8:20 P.M.

DAN MOVED TO ADJOURN. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.