

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 21, 2021
Final Minutes

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

A. Meeting Called to Order by Dan at 7:00 P.M.

B. Public Hearings: None.

C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar: No changes.

D. Warrants and Gifts:

#313 12/28/20 \$72,021.81
#314 1/11/21 \$72,672.81
#315 1/25/21 \$71,514.21
#3016 12/29/21 \$11,996.98
#3017 1/11/21 \$19,546.32

LAUREN MOVED TO APPROVE THE WARRANTS AS REPORTED. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

E. Approval of Minutes from December 17, 2020:

LAUREN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

F. Unfinished Business / Updates:

1. 2020/2021 Reopening: Jackie discussed personnel changes that will support the Reopening Plan. Mornings are hybrid and afternoons are fully remote. Students are split down the middle in terms of hybrid vs. fully remote signups. In-person students will have some outdoor social time, and fully remote students will also have some social component. A lot of planning has gone into this; it's all hands on deck (even Jackie will be teaching 6th Grade Social Studies). Jennifer praised Jackie for all the countless hours she's poured into teaching, which is in addition to her duties as Principal. She's working very hard, and Jennifer applauds her dedication and her positivity. Jackie spoke to timelines: we can't get this plan up and running next week, so they're aiming for Feb 1. One middle-grade teacher has had a medical problem, so planning for Grades 3 and 4 is behind schedule. Jackie therefore requests that the return of Grades 3 and 4 be delayed until after February break. She also wants to see the results of the survey before committing to other changes. Jennifer supports Jackie's requests. Dan noted that social-emotional learning is key. Jen said that many parents seem to be in support of the plan.

LAUREN MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2020/2021 REOPENING PLAN AS PRESENTED BY JACKIE. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

G. New Business / Discussion Items:

1. MCAS Resolution Letter - Discussion and Vote:

Jennifer has a letter that has been modeled on those adopted by other school committees. This letter asks that the state impose a moratorium on MCAS testing this year, which would further reduce the limited social-emotional time our students have now. Jennifer read the letter to SSC; it requests for a three-year moratorium on MCAS testing. Jen proposed one edit, which will be sent to Pam.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE LETTER REGARDING WAIVING MCAS TESTING THIS ACADEMIC YEAR AS EMENDED. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

2. MOA - Discussion and Possible Vote:

SSC still has some pieces to discuss with regard to the MOA.

3. Home School Application - Discussion and Vote:

Jennifer said there is one Home School application for one student, which she supports.

LAUREN MOVED TO APPROVE THE HOME SCHOOL APPLICATION BEFORE THE COMMITTEE. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

H. Reports:

1. Superintendent's Report: Jennifer reported that she attended a webinar detailing the state's pooled testing strategy for testing students and teachers for COVID. This method mixes several samples together and tests them once per week (nasal swabs). If the result is negative, all individuals in the pool are presumed negative, while a positive result would trigger further testing of the individuals. We filled out a survey saying we're interested, but the costs are at least \$5 / swab. We also need to identify personnel to carry out the process. After six weeks, the school district would be entirely responsible for the costs. Stephen asked how the pools would work: wouldn't each school be its own "pool"? Jennifer said yes, each school would be its own pool, since the districts are separate.

Jennifer also said she and Central Office staff are trying to streamline some forms, including U#28 Preschool enrollment forms. We're also trying to streamline our reporting to DESE in general.

2. Director of Finance and Operations:

FY22 Draft Budget: thoughts from BoS and FinCom meeting: Bruce reported that we're winding down some COVID relief monies; one grant has been extended beyond December. He's waiting to hear about dollar amounts for the next round of aid. He thought our discussion with the Board of Selectmen and the FinCom went very well. Steve agreed; it went smoothly, and other Town boards are happy that we're so reasonable and that Bruce is so forthcoming with information. Dan said that Bruce and Jennifer both got a lot of accolades for their ability to answer questions on the spot. One piece that came up during the conversation was School Choice monies: he advocates using it to enhance what we do at SES rather than

supplant budget items. He asked Jackie and Jennifer to think of ways those funds could be used productively. Jennifer will come up with a list of items. Bruce said we have just short of \$198,000 in the account right now. We're in a good position regarding the budget right now; in fact, we might be returning some money to the Town this year. Jackie said we're very conscientious about spending, and we've been getting COVID support. Dan and Lauren agreed that the system we have is very efficient (returning money to the Town, then going to the Town for money when an emergency happens).

3. Principal's Report: Jackie reported that a few students have been added to the crew who's already coming (the majority of lower-grade students are coming to the school). We had one para-educator retire on her birthday, so Jackie has hired two new paras (one to replace the retirement, one to support higher grade learning). Jackie praised Mr. Kortina, the Music Teacher, for his creative and collaborative work; he really gets the kids singing and moving.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report: Steve said that RSC authorized teachers to come back into the buildings; we're starting to bring back students with special needs first. There are discussions going on between APEA and the Superintendent about bringing the high-needs students in. RSC has pushed changes to the daily start time where the conversation is being had in the community. Jennifer added that she's thankful Dr. Morris has been engaged with U#28 in discussing the potential impacts on our grade schools; he's definitely listening to us on this. Bruce added that collaborating on the bus route problems is leading to some creative solutions. Dan said he's happy to hear that these discussions are going on prior to decisions being made at the regional level.

5. Union #28 Report, including Budget & Personnel: Lauren said that one item brought up at JSC is how glaring the extra challenges of the multiple individual reporting from each district is. Any efficiencies we can find in reporting and other paperwork will take some of the burden off our Principals. Dan agreed that any way we can operate efficiently and provide better services to our kids, we should pursue. Our legislative leaders need to get on board with this as well. This applies to tax reporting and contract management as well.

6. CES Report: No report.

I. Policy Review:

First Reading On:

BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings
IHBEA - English Learner Education
JB - Equal Educational Opportunities
JBB - Educational Equity
CHCA - Approval of Handbooks and Directives

J. Future Business:

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, March 15, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.
- Budget and Personnel Committee – TBD

- Future agenda items –

Jackie asked how she should communicate problems with the Reopening Plan to SSC in the meantime. Dan said they trust her judgment, and he'll call a meeting if need be (if SSC needs to hold a vote on something outside Jackie's autonomous purview).

K. Adjournment: 8:05