

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, January 21, 2016
Final Minutes

Present: Dan Hayes, Katie Fiander, Steve Sullivan, members; Fred Steinberg, Vice Chair; Aaron Osborne, Director of Finance and Operations; Jennifer Haggerty, Superintendent; Public Guests

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

B. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar

Dan clarified that “budget proposal” meant the school budget submitted to Fin Com for discussion.

C. Warrants and Gifts

5005: \$2,740.44

D. Approval of Minutes from December 17, 2015.

Committee members offered several emendations to the minutes.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2015 AS EMENDED. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

E. Public Comments and Announcements

Dan reported that the Standardized Testing Forum at Swift River School last Thursday was phenomenal; he praised Johanna and Jennifer for organizing the panel. It was very emotional and moving to hear students' and teachers' voices about the psychological impact of testing. Representatives of MASC and CES were there as well, so it was good they heard the concerns. The audience was very engaged. There were school committee representatives from Longmeadow, Holyoke, and Gill-Montague as well as U28. This is a small community that's starting to take on a big issue, and momentum is building.

F. New Business / Discussion Items:

G. Unfinished Business / Updates:

1. *Road Town* Statement: The SSC Chair is supposed to submit a statement to *Road Town* by tomorrow, although it might be submitted sometime next week; the statement is meant to inform the public about issues facing the school. SSC discussed what might go in it, including budget, U28, regionalization, and standardized testing. We could point out that the budget has only gone up about 1%, assuming the grants come through. Fred will draft the statement from pieces submitted by other committee members.

2. Updates on Assessment Method: Dan summarized a meeting of a Shutesbury negotiating team with Amherst representatives regarding proposed changes to the regional assessment method. The meeting did not go well. Furthermore, it might contribute to outside perceptions of a confusion within Shutesbury about which town officials to contact about this matter. The proposed assessment rate for Shutesbury is now 10%, and we need to do some educating at Town Meeting before this is voted on by the public. The chair of our Fin Com has since resigned, leaving three vacancies. Steve explained that a lot of work has been done to arrive at some kind of balance in the number before it goes to Town

Meeting and causes controversy. Dan agreed that as much informing and explaining should be done ahead of time as possible; we're paying a lot of money to Amherst, and people need to understand why.

H. Policy Review

First Reading on:

JKAA – Physical Restraint of Students

Fred questioned whether the first sentence of this policy is even necessary; it flows better starting with the second sentence. Also, “unreasonable” sounds awkward – how about “reasonable restraint shall be used”? Dan said that Jackie might want to include input from staff as well. Fred noted the last paragraph on the first page seems redundant. Katie also questioned the inclusion of “prone restraint” - isn't that prohibited in the first place? It doesn't seem right to allow this; it's scary. Jennifer said that she'll check, but she thinks there are certain conditions under which prone restraint is permitted; this draft came from legal counsel, so it is legal. Jennifer clarified differences among restraint types. Dan commented that it might be good to have that option in rare, extreme cases. Katie agreed that physical restraint is necessary, but not prone. Fred pointed out that if prone restraint is covered under the referenced law, it will be permitted in this policy. Jennifer said that the U28 Leadership Team is drafting the same procedures for all schools, with tweaks for each individual school.

Second Reading, First Vote on:

JIC – Student Discipline

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE JIC – STUDENT DISCIPLINE. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO EMEND AND APPROVED THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2015 ACCORDING TO INPUT FROM WEEZIE HOULE. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

I. Reports

1. Principal's Report

Jennifer reported on behalf of Jackie, who was not present. A 4th Grader received a fire safety award from a state fire marshal for her actions during a fire in her home. The U28 PLCs met here to continue to work on their professional development; the next meeting will be in Erving. The Spaghetti Supper is scheduled for May 13. Jackie would like time at the next SSC meeting to discuss School Choice as well as the Pre-K/K situation going forward. The Safety Committee is finalizing plans on reunification protocols, which will be rolled out to staff after February. Dan asked Jennifer to thank Jackie and the staff for their excellent work.

2. Superintendent's Report

Jennifer reported that the budget planning and committee work are going very well; she thanked Aaron for all his hard work to create budgets that continue to support students and staff. She just returned from her last Superintendent Induction meeting; the most recent step in that program was being observed by her coach while she observed Kelly Sullivan observe a teacher in the classroom at SRS. She also just completed her leadership skills survey self-assessment; a third party receives the survey data anonymously from members of her Leadership Team. She met with her coach on January 12 and completed her mid-cycle review, reporting on that at the last JSC meeting. Yesterday there was a professional development event at SES; she'll debrief with the Leadership Team about this next. The restraint policy had to be put in place because of state law, but we'll tweak the policy with input for each school. Finally, the Standardized Test Forum at SRS went extremely well, ending with several

avenues for next steps. Dan asked about her coach's observations; Jennifer said that he has the highest of praise for the U28 Leadership Team.

3. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report

Steve encouraged SSC to watch a recording of the last regional school committee meeting. That committee misrepresented which grades would be included in the new IMP math curriculum. At the next meeting there will be updates on that issue as well as on the proposal to introduce team teaching. Weezie asked when the vote to move the regionalization proposal forward to towns; Steve said that should be very soon. When asked for details on IMP, Steve explained that many students and teacher object to it because the writing is too difficult for students, especially those weak on ELA skills. Dan asked about consolidation in the school buildings; Pre-K through 1st Grade will be in one location and Grades 2 through 6 in another. This isn't what some parents in the community wanted, preferring two complete Pre-K through 6 schools. Dan asked whether we'd see any reduction in cost at the regional level because of the consolidations; Steve said yes, at some point after the figures have been worked out.

4. Director of Finance and Operations Report:

SES FY17 Budget: Aaron reported that Fin Com is currently reviewing the draft budget; he hasn't heard any concerns from them yet. There's additional spending on a SPED aide, but that has been offset by positions that haven't been filled. Preschool numbers are down right now, but we've kept a position in the budget because we expect them to rise again. Maintenance expenses are high because of ongoing problems with the boiler; we're looking at trying to utilize energy programs through the state, but one of them has a minimum cost of \$250,000. A new boiler might cost \$25,000. He's also reached out to energy efficiency programs but hasn't heard back from anyone there yet. Weezie asked when and how we learn people are retiring; Aaron said it's a bit of a crap shoot because there's no requirement to report within a certain period of time. He always plans for the worst in putting together a budget; he won't include a retirement until the letter comes in. This is a very good point to raise about the budgeting process – ideally, you hear from a teacher by the summer prior so you can plan. But it doesn't always happen that way. Steve asked about power usage this year; Aaron said things are looking very good so far, with only about a third spent out of that line item so far. It was difficult last year because we only had about a month's warning before the rate hike. But some of that was offset by low oil prices, and we did some offsetting at the other schools.

Dan thanked Jennifer and Aaron for putting together a very good budget.

5. Union #28 Report – including Budget and Personnel: No report.

Dan reported that the current main issue is looking at sharing employees – we've combined four part-time SPED secretary positions, one at each school, into a full-time U28 position. This streamlines pay and benefits as well as reduces costs to the towns. In the future, we might also be able to do this for other positions. Jennifer clarified that a “special teacher” is legal to share among districts so long as the position is available equally to each school.

Aaron answered a question about the new data backup system used in U28, which is all cloud-based now to allow people to work off-site; Weezie pointed out that if Internet connections are down, there's no access to the data.

Dan also reported that Jennifer's report on her mid-cycle review was very organized and clear; Katie agreed. The report was very well received by JSC. The committee also talked about the U28 building updates; there are safety and infrastructure concerns that need to be addressed, and this will be taken

up by town officials in Erving. Dan has offered to attend that meeting, pending word from Scott Bastarache.

Next meeting: TBA

6. CES Report

Dan reported that CES has done an excellent study of how charter schools impact rural districts. Charter schools seem to have a tendency to lose students over time, raising questions about how those students who return to public schools do on standardized tests that they were exempted from at the charter schools. It's time now to speak to our legislators about how we're impacted out here and in other rural districts because of charters; funding is certainly a complicated part of this issue that has not been talked about in the past.

J. Future Business

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – February 25, 2015 at 6 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – February 25, 2015 at 7 p.m.
- Budget and Personnel Committee – TBA
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – TBA
- Future agenda items: School Choice, Pre-K/K configurations, open seats on SSC

FRED MOVED TO APPOINT ALL SSC MEMBERS TO BE ALTERNATE MEMBERS OF THE U28 BUDGET & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE. DAN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

K. Executive Session – Legal Matter

DAN MOVED TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING A LEGAL MATTER, NOT TO RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION. FRED SECONDED. ALL VOICE VOTES AYE. UNANIMOUS.

L. Adjournment