

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, September 17, 2015
Final Minutes

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

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

Swearing In of New Members and Statutory Obligations

SSC was provided with information regarding Open Meeting law and

B. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar

C. Warrants and Gifts: None.

D. Approval of Minutes from August 27, 2015

SSC offered several emendations to the minutes.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 27, 2015 AS EMENDED. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

E. Public Comments and Announcements

Fred Vanderbeck asked a question about how the regional assessment meeting went; Dan responded that the overall feeling of the committee was that assessed amounts should be based on the ability to pay. That said, the committee looked at a number of financial models. The statutory 5-year rolling average was ranked the highest, followed by the statutory method. We will stress to the other towns that ability to pay is an important value and shouldn't be ignored. If there's a change to a different method, we need to find a way to help towns transition to it.

Dan noted that the Verizon building out front of the school is looking shabby and should be cleaned.

F. New Business / Discussion Items

1. Home School Application

Jennifer commented that the proposal looks very close to what goes on in school. Sean said that he feels SSC should be deferential to the Superintendent in reviewing home school curricula. Dan related that at the last JSC meeting, Wendell/New Salem members expressed concern that school committee votes on home school requests are effectively rubber-stamping. He recommended that those members write a letter to their legislators about the issue.

DAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE HOME SCHOOL REQUEST FROM THE MARQUIS FAMILY. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

G. Unfinished Business / Updates

H. Policy Review

1. First Reading on:

KJ – Advertising in Schools

Dan tried to verify the policy that this policy is meant to replace, and could not find it, nor could BettyLou. Once this policy is identified, it will be noted in the new policy.

I. Reports

1. Principal's Report

Jennifer reported on behalf of Jackie. School is off to a great start. The Literacy Team met this week and is creating an agenda of tasks, teachers have started the Teacher Evaluation process and have various state-mandated trainings, and Grades 1-5 have begun implementing Lucy Calkin's Reading Curriculum. In addition, teachers are identifying a focus for their PLC that are tied to school goals and have begun brainstorming positive school-wide behavior expectations. The After-School program has started successfully as well; the director is thinking of creating soccer clinics for students and an art class component. Finally, the Pre-K/K class has had a fabulous start.

2. Superintendent's Report

Jennifer reported that she attended a meet-and-greet at SES and had wonderful conversations with students there; she was also able to connect with teachers and other staff. At this event, she took time to share her educational philosophy with staff: to her, it's important to focus not only on academic growth, but also on how students treat each other and staff. We need to create a place where students and teachers learn together and take joy in each other, and our schools indeed are such places. She closed with a poem by Maya Angelou. Jennifer also referred to her Entry Plan, which was distributed to SSC via email. Finally, a PARCC update: Gov. Baker is reviewing feedback from the public forums and a vote on accepting or rejecting PARCC is scheduled for November. Only 8 states are still participating in PARCC, down from 30. Furthermore, a state advocacy group is trying to get a question on the ballot about restoring the pre-standardized test regime to the MA school system.

Dan praised the Superintendent's Entry Plan and offered several thoughts about it. He appreciates the weekly central office meetings Jennifer has established in order to facilitate communication among staff.

Jennifer noted that Aaron is also forming his Entry Plan for budgeting so that it aligns with assessment; he is working on a Zero-Base Budgeting model. In addition, she is concerned that the central office building is the only unsecured building owned by the Town of Erving, so she and the Chief of Police are trying to identify ways to improve security for both staff and office equipment/data.

3. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report

Steve reported that regionalization is still the hot topic. Legal counsel has returned a new proposal document for review; Steve offered to share it with SSC. Next week, Steve will work on a presentation with a couple of other committee members; open forums are scheduled in all four towns this fall, and as many committee members as possible will attend each. On Nov. 7, there will be a day-long forum at the Amherst Middle school about how the school will be reorganized.

Dan noted that Secretary of Education Paysor spoke about the virtues of small schools, saying that there can sometimes be diseconomies of scale.

4. Review of Expenditure Report

Aaron said that the Review of Expenditure Report in the agenda might be usefully replaced with a broader Director of Finance and Operations Report, since the review is fairly uninteresting early in the school year. The only item of concern at present is paying for kindergarten out of a grant that has yet to be disbursed; everything else looks normal as of now. As for Zero-Base Budgeting, if we want to work in that direction, we need to be honest with the town and make plain everything we need and why we need it. Aaron also commented more broadly on the importance of peering into the silos that can develop in administrative offices; the central staff's jobs should be better known to everyone, and the staff should know more about the jobs in the schools. Jennifer is taking steps to help facilitate this.

There is some disagreement about who is responsible for the summer residential costs associated with an out-of-district SPED student who aged out of SES. Our goal is to mitigate the financial risk of absorbing the whole cost. We've reached out to Amherst to see if we can work something out, but they seemed disinterested. It was suggested we file an LEA with DESE to assign responsibility. Aaron is presently taking the stance that we will not pay these bills until this responsibility is clarified. The spirit of the circuit breaker is that the \$42,000 should be an aggregate attached to the student, not to each district. Furthermore, the residential service contract ended at the end of June, so we are not obligated for these costs in July and August. Aaron proposes to continue talking with Amherst about the issue while awaiting a decision from DESE.

Sean voiced support for Aaron's position. Dan also approved of Aaron going to the schools to become cognizant of what's going on while he builds the budget. Dan also noted that Prudence Marsh has changed her title to reflect the fact that all students benefit from some kind of support (her new title is Director of Student Support Services).

5. Union #28 Report – including Budget and Personnel

Dan reported that at the next B&P meeting, the Principal Evaluation process will be explained to them; it would be good to begin the process early this year and see later if there are changes that might need to be made for the following cycle. There's a webinar that supports the evaluation process we could look at.

Scott Bastarache is working with Erving officials on proposed repairs and renovations at the central office, although they have not responded enthusiastically to the requests yet. Finally, there's an upcoming Division Five meeting on Thursday, October 15 at 6:30 p.m.

Dan reported that the last meeting was positive and productive; Jennifer, Prudence and Aaron all attended. Dan underlined the need to attend JSC meetings in order to learn about the Superintendent Evaluation Process, since this is one of SSC's most important responsibilities.

6. CES Report

CES has not yet met.

J. Future Business

1. Shutesbury Policy Committee – October 22, 2015 at 6 p.m.
2. Shutesbury School Committee – October 22, 2015 at 7 p.m.
3. Budget and Personnel Committee – October 29, 2015 6 p.m. LES
4. Union #28 Joint Supervisory – October 29, 2015 7 p.m. LES

K. Adjournment at 7:59 P.M.

DAN MOVED TO ADJOURN. FRED SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE. MOTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY.