

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, February 25, 2016
Final Minutes

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

A. Meeting Called to Order at 7:01 P.M.

B. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar

C. Warrants and Gifts

5006: \$2,357.34

Jackie reported a gift in the amount of \$500 from the Billion Mile Race Club to support SES's new track in the upper field. Dan asked Jackie to thank Jennifer for applying for the grant.

DAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE GIFT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$500. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

D. Approval of Minutes from January 21, 2016.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 21, 2016. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

E. Public Comments and Announcements

F. New Business / Discussion Items:

1. School Choice: Jackie addressed SSC on this issue. At the moment, we have 132 students; in the next three weeks, we'll lose four, and during the summer we'll lose two more. Three to five students could also move at any time. This precipitous drop in enrollment is difficult to manage both pedagogically and financially. We have six Kindergarteners this year in a combined Pre-K/K classroom under Nancy's eminently capable instruction (Nancy reports they're the strongest class she's ever had). Looking ahead, we need to think carefully about School Choice. There are only three choices before us for this very small Kindergarten class: 1. the Pre-K/K class moves forward as they are (about ten in the class, one of whom is likely to move); 2. they move forward along with five School Choice students; 3. just the six Kindergarteners move forward as 1st Graders, along with six School Choice seats in order to make a viable class size.

The general consensus among staff at a brainstorming meeting around this issue is for Option 2 (moving the cohort forward with five School Choice seats). While there are challenges presented by this option, SES has had mixed grades for years and there is considerable support for mixed-age learning groups in the SES culture. In addition, next year, both 6th and 3rd Grades might be at eleven students without School Choice.

Dan praised the integrity of the process so far and asked about the possibility Jackie mentioned of having to eliminate a teaching position. She responded that if the budget is approved, no position needs to be cut, but it's difficult to deal with a class of six; moreover, if a position is eliminated, two classes will have to be combined. A teacher attending as a public guest noted that a class of six can be difficult because if two or three students are missing, that's half the class. Aaron added that as enrollment declines, Chapter 70 support also declines. Dan went on to relate the issue to the viability of the town; how could we utilize the school in multiple ways to increase the town's viability – for example,

offering library access or athletic classes to the public when the school is closed? We need to think about sustainability much more globally as a community?

Jackie clarified for SSC that once School Choice students attend, they are guaranteed a spot at SES until they graduate, if they so choose. She added that there is concern among the school community that our wonderful, rich program will be affected by declining enrollment. School Choice monies can also be used for anything we choose, but other school committees in neighboring towns have been concerned about becoming reliant on these monies.

Jackie recommends voting on School Choice in May; until then, we'll continue to monitor enrollment carefully. She also said she'd have to research how School Choice would affect Choice families with siblings.

Public guests commented on the Pre-K/K issue. One parent with a student in that class has concerns about the model, specifically the academic and behavioral expectations that are levied on the younger students. This is a significant problem from a developmental standpoint. Their family moved to Shutesbury because of the school, and having small cohorts going forward only undermines the classroom experience. As a result, this parent is pro-School Choice.

2. Open Seat on School Committee: The SSC Chair, Sean Woodard-McNiff, has left town and thus retired from SSC. His seat is open; Jackie said it would be appropriate for SSC to advertise the seat in *Road Town News*.

G. Unfinished Business / Updates:

H. Policy Review

Second Reading, First Vote on:
JKAA – Physical Restraint of Students

Jennifer provided clarification about prone restraint, an issue Katie raised at the last SSC meeting; to summarize, prone restraint is allowed under very specific and limited conditions related to the student's health, behavioral history, and the administration's position. This option will effectively never be used at SES.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE JKAA – PHYSICAL RESTRAINT OF STUDENTS. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Final Vote on:
JIC – Student Discipline

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

I. Reports

1. Principal's Report

Jackie reported that report cards went out, and she's received compliments from parents on the quality and detail of the report cards. Dan asked how teachers feel about them; the teachers present felt positive about them. Of special concern is that we're losing students as well as a para-educator. This is a transitional time, with orientations for Preschool and Kindergarten coming up. The MTBA Party is coming up March 4, right here at SES. As of right now, the last day of school is June 20 due to two

snow days. School Council is continuing to meet, and Jackie will be holding a forum for the families of the Pre-K/K cohort.

2. Superintendent's Report

Jennifer reported that she's had two more sessions of the New Superintendent Induction Program; the program is excellent and she's learning a lot from her cohort. She has also completed all the mid-cycle reviews for all the administrators and educators; she enjoyed her one-on-one time with the principals during this process. She got great feedback from the Leadership Team on what's occurring union-wide through the Professional Learning Communities.

3. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report: Not present to report.

4. Director of Finance and Operations Report:

SES FY17 Budget: Aaron reported that the budget stands at roughly the same place it was when brought before the Fin Com. Since we apparently need to include an additional para-educator next year, we need to move some things around, but he'll have that update for SSC by the next meeting. The expenditure report looks fine so far; there are some salary line items that are up and down, oil expenditures are down, and overall, expenses are coming in under budget. He'll be presenting an overview of the Chapter 70 and circuit-breaker programs at the JSC meeting next Monday, February 29.

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

Next meeting: TBA

6. CES Report

Dan reported that CES has been providing data to Sen. Rosenberg and the Baker administration regarding the impact of charter schools on rural communities. Sen. Rosenberg's approach is going down two different paths: a referendum on lifting caps (meaning a free-for-all), and the legislators working with the Governor to come up with a plan on extant charter schools as well as proposed ones. This is very important to watch and be involved with because of the impact on our schools.

J. Future Business

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – March 17, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – March 17, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.
- Budget and Personnel Committee – Monday, February 29, 2016 6:00 p.m. Erving ES
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, February 29, 2016 7:00 p.m. Erving ES
- Future agenda items

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