

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, March 16, 2017**  
**Final Minutes**

**Present: Katie Fiander, Dan Hayes, Lauren Thomas-Paquin, Steve Sullivan, members; Fred Steinberg, Chair; Jackie Mendonsa, Principal; Stephen Cass, Director of Finance and Operations; Jennifer Haggerty, Superintendent; Public Guests**

**A. Meeting Called to Order at 7:05 P.M.**

**B. Public Hearing – FY18 Budget**

**C. Other Public Comments and Announcements**

**D. Director of Finance and Operations Report**

**E. Unfinished Business/Updates:**

1. FY18 Budget – vote: Stephen reported that since the last report, there has been some bad news from the state; an inclusive Preschool grant is being phased out. Over the last two years, \$22,000 has been pulled out of state grants. This means we've gone from a 2.01% to a 2.56% increase in order to make up the shortfall. Jennifer added that she tried to clarify with the state that we're four separate school districts, but that turned out not to affect the grant total we're receiving. Jackie emphasized that nothing in the budget is frivolous or inessential and that it will be very difficult to cut back to 2.01%, especially as the rest of the grant disappears in the coming years. Stephen noted that school committee advertising was cut as well as buffer amounts in several other lines; we've worked hard to make sure every line matches reality, and the result is a very responsible budget. It's a flat budget before grants, Circuit Breaker, etc. come into the picture, despite the fact that salaries, the biggest budget driver, are increasing. Circuit Breaker funds are currently propping up the budget. We've budgeted \$50,000 for an out-of-district placement starting in one week that will most likely be more (possibly up to \$90,000); we'll get Circuit Breaker funds back for tuition the following year, but not for transportation, which is usually expensive. Nevertheless, it looks like this year we'll be coming in at budget or under. The question is, do we return any excess to the town and use Circuit Breaker next year or not? Other towns prop up their budgets with School Choice, but we might not want to go down that road.

Lauren asked what our options are. Jackie responded: ask the Town for a 2.56%-increase budget, use the Circuit Breaker funds this year, or cut another \$10,000 from the budget, which at this point would be cutting into the essential functioning of the school. The unknown but certainly high costs of the out-of-district placement might require us to use Circuit Breaker funds for that purpose. Jackie requested that SSC not pick the last option; she prefers the first one, but she might be able to get the second one to work. Then the question becomes how much we spend out of Circuit Breaker. She reiterated her request to purchase a laptop cart with Chromebooks, both for students to use for online standardized testing and for general academic purposes.

Dan spoke in favor of the 2.56% budget, adding that it will be important to communicate the situation clearly to the Selectboard. It will also be important to come up with a plan to replace the funds that will be lost in the grant. Jackie suggested the Town fund Preschool; what we take in through fees does not cover expenses without the grant. Such a proposal would fund one teacher and two paraprofessionals at the bare minimum. Dan encouraged Jackie to develop the proposal with all the reasons it's beneficial to have a Preschool program at our school.

Fred asked for clarification on what the Early Childhood Revolving Fund line is; Jackie said it's tuition. Both Fred Vanderbeck and Stephen advised SSC to use School Choice funds for one-time, non-recurring expenses.

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY18 BUDGET OF \$1,949,061. LAUREN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**F. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar**

Dan thanked SSC for funding his attendance at a recent conference on student poverty in the state; it was illuminating, and the trends are not encouraging. One moving topic was stigma over poverty. Steve noted that in the region, paperwork is done electronically, thus reducing stigma for students who have the option of filling out paperwork for reduced cost lunch or activities.

**G. Warrants and Gifts:**

#3022: \$6,041.58

**H. Approval of Minutes from February 16, 2017.**

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 16, 2017. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**I. New Business / Discussion Items:**

1. School Choice: Jackie reported that she's deliberating over opening School Choice seats; she would only do so in the mixed-cohort class in order to fill a complete grade. Jennifer noted that we need to vote on School Choice by the May meeting at the latest.
2. Academic Calendar F2017/2018 – Vote: Jennifer reported that we're keeping the Curriculum Day the same this October. The latest possible school day, including Snow Days, is June 20, with the earliest possible day being June 16. SSC discussed the vicissitudes of cancelling school in U#28 due to weather when Amherst has not cancelled.

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE F2017/2018 CALENDAR. LAUREN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

3. Home School Request:

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE HOME SCHOOL REQUEST FROM THE ROA-KERIN FAMILY. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**J. Policy Review**

First Reading on:

1. IGA – Curriculum Development
2. BDFA – School Councils
3. BDFA-E-1 – School Improvement Plan
4. BDFA-E-2 – Submission and Approval of School Improvement Plan
5. IHBG-R – Home Schooling

SSC offered several corrections and emendations to these policies.

Second Reading, First Vote on:

1. BHE – Use of Electronic Messaging by School Committee Members
2. IE – Organization of Instruction

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BHE – USE OF ELECTRONIC MESSAGING BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS. LAUREN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY IE – ORGANIZATION OF INSTRUCTION. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

## **K. Reports**

### **1. Principal's Report**

Jackie reported that enrollment is up by three. We've been up to a lot of MCBA-based awesomeness around here. Our own teacher of 20 years and librarian, Heather Lobenstine, is the recipient of the Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award for U#28 this year, and we're enormously proud of her. We're putting into a place a plan to get all students facing standardized testing on the computer in the next three years up to speed. We got 88 responses to our homework survey, more than last year. It seems that many people were satisfied with the survey and didn't feel the need to attend the forum, although those who did show up felt that their voices were heard.

She and Steve attended the Capital Planning meeting, where our requests for flooring and sidewalks were approved for advancement at the Town Meeting. The vibe seemed to be they wanted to approve all our projects, but these two seem to be the ones going forward at present. The roof is seen as very serious at this point, but we're unsure whether that request is going forward. Dan noted that we need to make all these capital improvements well known to the Town in order to advance them.

Lastly, Jackie noted that Curriculum Day is being cancelled this Spring and replaced with a regular school day. The MCBA Party was a great success; Erving joined the event this year, so students from all four U#28 schools participated.

### **2. Superintendent's Report**

Jennifer reported that she is continuing to do walkthroughs with Principals focused on universal design; these visits are very enlightening and productive. She and Prudy have submitted a proposal to present on assessment of universal design for the Summer Leadership Institute. They're also putting together a report on their findings with both qualitative and quantitative data. Jennifer has continued to work with other rural Superintendents to advocate for our unique communities and schools. Lastly, the search for a permanent Director of Operations and Finance is underway; there are three semifinalists who will be returning with a presentation.

### **3. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report**

Steve reported that there have been two RSC meetings recently. On February 28, they met with a consultant from Ray Associates. There were 23 applications for the Superintendent position then. RSC voted on an immigration resolution; it's now at the Policy Subcommittee, who are putting together a protocol to stand behind when protecting students as well as staff. Principal Jackson has indicated he doesn't want more than an hour and a half to two hours of homework per night; that's only about half an hour per class, but that doesn't always work, especially for students with educational plans. The budget vote occurred last night; the four towns will contribute \$19 million, of which Shutesbury's part is around \$1.7 million. The four towns approved an alternative assessment method; the Selectboards

and school committees of all four towns have signed a letter of intent supporting this method. LSSE will not rescind the \$10 fee for Pelham, Shutesbury and Leverett residents.

Fred Vanderbeck added that RSC approved a calendar starting before Labor Day as well as a special education stabilization fund (a statewide initiative).

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

5. CES Report:

Dan reported that the committee has not officially met yet. They just received a report on Mt. Tom Academy that indicates it's sustainable, which is great news. The programs helping incarcerated youth have been getting more positive public attention recently as well.

#### **L. Future Business**

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Monday, April 24, 2017, 6:30 P.M.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Monday, April 24, 2017, 7 P.M.
- Budget and Personnel Committee – Monday, March 20, 2017 6:00 P.M. SES
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday March 20, 2017 7:00 P.M. SES
- Future agenda items – Shutesbury Town Meeting – Saturday, May 6, 2017

#### **K. Adjournment: 8:59**

**FRED MOVED TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OR LITIGATION, NOT TO RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION AFTER. DAN SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**