

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Monday, April 24, 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 7:13 P.M.

B. Other Public Comments and Announcements

Dan noted that there is a meeting on Thursday, 4/27 at the Northampton High School with state lawmakers to gather feedback on how to improve the Foundation Budget. He distributed a petition that is circulating among School Committees; SSC will take this petition up as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Fred said he had just come from a joint meeting of the Selectboard and Fin Com at which the school budget was discussed. He also read a letter from an SSC parent to the Selectboard and Fin Com in support of the school's outstanding Preschool program and in support of the increased budget to offset the loss of the ECE grants.

C. Director of Finance and Operations Report

Stephen reported that the school budget is still being decided; before grants and revenue, the budget was essentially flat. Losing the Preschool Learning Environment grant bumped the budget up by several percentage points; the medium-term question is how we'll manage to make up the tens of thousands of dollars we'll lose over the next three years. Lauren pointed out that making things work without this money just means we have a functioning building with children in it; we'll just lose that amount of quality in the education that we offer here. Jackie said that she told the joint meeting that this year, the \$11,000 we're losing can be covered, but next year she'll have to ask for \$22,000 more to cover Preschool, and \$33,000 the year after that. If a child with special needs moves to town, there would be no money at all for Preschool, and we'd have to ask for extra funds to meet those needs, a mandatory service.

Stephen offered some what-ifs: colder winters are usually able to be handled because we'll be up some years on heating monies and down some years. But if we experience some extraordinary expense in the realm of tens of thousands of dollars, we're not remotely capable of handling that. Dan thought the Town would recognize extraordinary circumstances, but we should be blunt with our budgetary asks and reconfigure the budget to reflect these grant losses. Lauren took away an impression from the Town that they aren't thinking fully about the known costs, much less the potential or likely costs. Fred VanDerbeck commented that Town government is likely concerned about bumping up against the tax rate ceiling, and that the school should never give money back to the town; he suggested that instead, Shutesbury could establish a school reserve fund under Massachusetts General Law through a warrant at Town Meeting. He also commented that in Pelham, Medicaid funds are given to the school, another source of revenue. In addition, all Fin Coms keep reserve funds that might be used at the end of the fiscal year in order to make up shortfalls.

Jackie estimated that to publicly fund Preschool would cost anywhere from \$85,000 to \$105,000 for a teacher and up to two paras. About 60% of Preschool students don't pay full tuition now due to economic or other factors, so the Preschool can't be funded entirely through tuition now (like it once was). SSC discussed options for supporting Preschool, including gradually increasing tuition. Jackie noted that the socioeconomic circumstances of children coming in now seem to be changing rapidly; there are many more students with special needs. Lauren suggested showing the Town historical numbers for Preschoolers with special needs; the trend is increasing here as well as around the country.

Stephen said he'll be doing an in-depth audit of the Preschool revolving fund to get a clearer sense of where the budget will end up this year. He advised SSC that due to enrollment changes, Shutesbury's U#28 share was lower this year, but that might change depending on enrollment across the Union. Dan asked how things look in the budget; Stephen said things look fine right now apart from the Preschool fund.

D. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar

Fred invited thoughts from SSC on the upcoming Town Meeting. SSC discussed the state of their capital expenditure requests for the roof, parking lot, sidewalk, and boiler controls; there seems to be significant dysfunction in the process the town uses to consider and approve such expenses. The Buildings Committee seems to be out of the loop, for one thing, when they should be researching and weighing in on these decisions. Jackie has been doing a lot of research on these requests and presenting them to the Capital Planning Committee, seemingly to no end. Dan thought Jackie should be going to the Town Administrator with the requests; the committees can take up the process after that.

E. Warrants and Gifts: None

F. Approval of Minutes from March 16, 2017.

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

G. Unfinished Business / Updates: None.

H. New Business / Discussion Items:

1. Identification of School Choice Seats: Jackie said we don't want to be accepting School Choice students above Grade 3, based on data we've gathered. Jackie needs to have a conversation with staff before identifying an exact number of seats. SSC will consider a vote on this at the May meeting, pending a recommendation from Jackie.

I. Policy Review

Second Reading, First Vote 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

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY IGA – CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BDFA – SCHOOL COUNCILS. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BDFA-E-1 – SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BDFA-E-2 – SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY IHBG-R – HOME SCHOOLING. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Final 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. KATIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY IE – ORGANIZATION OF INSTRUCTION AS EMENDED. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Jennifer offered one correction to Policy IE – Organization of Instruction.

J. Reports

1. Principal's Report

Jackie added to her earlier report that we got quotes on a 30-laptop cart of Chromebooks at \$15,000 and a 30-iPad cart at \$35,000. Debbie Lee favors the iPads due to their newer technology; on the other hand, students will experience difficulty when typing on an iPad rather than on a computer. Fred added that the middle school uses Chromebooks. Jackie will definitely request to move some money around for one of these options, along with some new computers for staff.

There is one change to the posted positions; Nancy Birtwell will be retiring in late December of next year. She'll work full-time as an essential skills teacher before then, and we'll hire another Kindergarten teacher. We have only one application for School Nurse and several for long-time substitutes. Lauren asked what will happen if we can't fill the School Nurse position; we could apply for a waiver, but it's complicated due to stringent state requirements.

2. Superintendent's Report

Jennifer reported that we've arrived at a final candidate for Director of Finance and Operations: Bruce Tanner. His presentation was heads above the other candidates'. He seems excited that some of his goals match our strategic plans, and he's demonstrated a keen interest in our work here. She and Prudy have been chosen to present on Universal Design to Massachusetts Superintendents this summer.

3. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report: No report.

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

5. CES Report:

Dan reported that he's on a subcommittee looking at several of CES's programs, including occupational therapy, to either provide better services or increase revenue to offset cost. Mt. Tom Academy is now at a break-even point and is a much stronger alternative school.

K. Future Business

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, May 18, 2017, 6:30 P.M.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, May 18, 2017, 7 P.M.
- Budget and Personnel Committee – Monday, May 15, 2017 6:00 P.M. SRS
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, May 15, 2017 7:00 P.M. SRS

- Future agenda items – Shutesbury Town Meeting – Saturday, May 6, 2017

L. Executive Session:

DAN 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. KATIE SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.