

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY May 15, 2014
FINAL Minutes**

Present: Dan Hayes, Mare Fox, Fred Steinberg, Stephen Sullivan, Sean Woodard-McNiff, members; Bob Mahler, Superintendent; Public Guests

A. Meeting Called to Order at 7:04 P.M.

B. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar

Committee reviewed May/June/July events in the perpetual calendar, including Town Meeting, Superintendent Review, and policy review, among other items.

C. Warrants and Gifts

Warrants signed:

MAY01: \$1,087.67

D. Approval of Minutes from April 17, 2014

DAN MOVED THAT THE APRIL 17, 2014 MINUTES BE APPROVED. MARE SECONDED. THREE APPROVED (FRED AND STEVE ABSTAINED).

DAN MOVED THAT THE MAY 12, 2014 MINUTES FOR THE REORGANIZATION MEETING BE APPROVED. SEAN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

E. Public Comments and Announcements

Dan thanked everyone who participated in the principal search. He noted that the Spaghetti Dinner and Silent Auction were fabulous per usual, and thanked the 5th and 6th grade classes, and their teachers, for their hard work. Mare welcomed the new members. Sean thanked Michael DeChiara for his many years of service on the committee. Bob invited the new members to meet with him sometime to discuss their roles on the committee. The committee discussed optional meetings in the region as well as statewide to help orient members and answer their questions.

F. New Business / Discussion Items

1. Sick Bank Request

The committee has been asked to field a request for sick time for a staff member. The staff union representative recommend 15 school days be offered. Mare was concerned that the sick days were not being used to cover an illness, which is their purpose. Dan pointed out that the decision is ultimately up to the Sick Bank Committee. The

committee decided that the Sick Bank Committee will meet and discuss the request, since if approved, it would set a precedent for the use of Sick Bank days for a purpose other than long-term personal illness. It is also possible that, upon further discussion, this request will prove to be a unique one.

2. MCAS / PARCC Test 2015

Bob discussed a letter sent from DESE encouraging elementary schools to use PARCC instead of MCAS in Spring 2015. He characterized it as a form of extortion, since schools that take PARCC will enjoy protections and benefits that schools continuing with MCAS will not. Sean noted that, be that as it may, SES students would benefit from taking PARCC because of what is being offered. Bob agreed with that, but objected to the arm-twisting involved. Mare agreed with Bob's characterization of the letter and related that students suffering from test anxiety will be impacted by the switch. The committee is concerned that money is driving this switch, not concern for the welfare of students.

3. Superintendent Search Discussion

Bob has been involved in several principal searches and has not been able to move far on this search. It will start in the fall. Before then, members of the search committee will determine the desired attributes of the new superintendent. Sean noted that while the search committee will be large, there is no way to shrink it without losing some inclusivity for the U28 communities.

4. Responsibilities of School Committee Members

Bob explained to the new members that school committees have three responsibilities: evaluation of the Superintendent, review and approval of the budget, and design of policies and goals. Prior to Ed Reform in the '80s, committees had a lot more responsibilities, but they are streamlined now. Sean said that another very important function of the committee is to have public discussions about what's happening in the community and what's happening in the school. Bob noted that power over the budget is very significant, and Dan asked Bob to weigh in with the committee if he ever saw it getting in its own way or acting in an unhealthy way. Sean concluded that while the committee's responsibilities are relatively narrow, he would like it to keep the focus wide enough to address broader issues.

G. Unfinished Business / Updates

1. Principal Search Process

Jackie Mendonza has agreed to be the Principal at SES next year (the first of a three-year contract). Bob noted that she is quite excited about coming. Mare asked whether Jackie would be coming to any SES events this school year, and Bob said she is planning on it. Bob thanked all the search committee members for their work.

Bob also noted that a new occupational therapist has been hired, since the previous one is leaving for a position at a hospital.

H. Policy Review: None at this time

I. Reports

1. Principal's Report

[Bob distributed the Principal's Report.] There are 160 students at SES right now. Sean asked how we are doing with teacher evaluation timelines. (They must be completed by June 10.) Bob said that the union is adopting a software package with statewide templates, OASYS, that seems to be a more convenient and effective tool.

2. Superintendent's Report

[Bob distributed a list of services and personnel U28 provides to SES, for reference.]

Bob noted that the new teacher contract needs to go on the next SSC agenda due to a substantive change that must be reviewed and approved. He said the teachers' union is fine with this tabling. Bob will distribute change-tracked digital copies to the committee for review.

Regarding the regional assessment vote, Bob reported that Leverett passed its budget successfully. The search for the new LES principal has also begun.

3. Regional School District Planning Board Report

Fred Vanderbeck reported that the subcommittees met and are on track to produce a draft document at the end of May / end of June to present for review and voting by towns in the fall. Sean asked about the procedure for ratifying the proposal: if any one town votes it down, does it not pass? Fred replied that Amherst must be one of the towns voting in favor; there are other voting options towns might opt for that would change the ultimate composition of the region. It would be possible, for example, for a town to vote not to join the region, but to enter into some other kind of union.

The committee discussed Michael DeChiara's status as the SSC's representative to the Planning Board; Mare pointed out that since he is no longer on the committee, he shouldn't be representing SSC there. Bob and Fred pointed out that he was appointed by Town Meeting, and another Town Meeting would have to take away his representation. Sean noted that asking Michael to resign isn't desirable, however, because of his background with the issues and with the Board. The problem is that Michael is not reporting to the SSC now, and also that the Board has been reconstituted as a different entity. Finally, Sean noted that he is opposed to regionalization and would like SES to remain in U28. Dan agreed.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report

Steve is the new Representative to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District.

5. Union #28 Report – including Budget and Personnel

Sean reported there is a June 16 Reorganization Meeting; it will be interesting to attend since there will be a lot of new faces. Bob added that he will be making a presentation about the Superintendent Evaluation system.

6. CES Report

Dan reported that the rate will remain the same (\$5.80 per student), partly as a result of declining costs. Several towns in the Berkshires are interested in being associate members and the Collaborative board is looking at how they can provide services out there. The CES is looking into creating a retreat at which the Collaborative's goals can be discussed. Some remaining restrictions left over from the merger of the collaboratives in Hampshire and Franklin Counties have been cleaned up. Dan said it is a well-functioning organization whose executive director reaches out a lot to the Board as well as to superintendents for feedback and ideas. The focus of the CES is supporting schools, rather than taking directives from the state.

J. Future Business

1. Shutesbury School Committee – June 19, 2014

Sean would like to reschedule the June 19 meeting since that's Graduation Day. He would also like to invite the new SES Principal to this meeting. The committee agreed to change the next meeting to June 12, pending confirmation from Bob. Sean invited committee members to send him agenda items. Dan noted that the committee needs to continue reviewing and updating policies.

Adjournment at 8:15 P.M.

DAN MOVED TO ADJOURN. UNANIMOUS.