

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, September 21, 2017
Final Minutes

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

A. Meeting Called to Order by Fred at 7:00 P.M.

B. Public Comments and Announcements

Gillian Budine – Community Network for Children Presentation: Gillian discussed the CNC grant, provided by the state, over the past 20 years; it's declined from over \$300,000 to only about \$82,000, so the staff can't offer more programs than those they've managed to sustain today (primarily playgroups and storytelling hours, as well as a summer program). She wanted to thank the U#28 towns for chipping in to support the current programming. There's more need for the basics (food, housing, clothing, other kinds of support) among families now than ever before, so CNC is busy trying to help in all ways it can, but is also engaging in more fundraising than ever. She noted that at SES, where the playgroup is held at the school, there are fewer transition problems for children coming into Preschool.

Dan asked where CNC's town support was coming from; it comes from each school's budget. Lauren praised CNC for the positive impact it had on her child when she was young. Gillian commented that the severe reduction in budget has stripped the program to staff (one full time, one half) and just a few programs, but they try to continue offering the same quality of programming. A photo shoot fundraiser is coming up, as well as a story walk.

SSC thanked Gillian for all her hard work.

C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar

Dan reminded SSC that we should think about Capital Planning needs as the Town starts to plan.

D. Warrants and Gifts: None.

E. Approval of Minutes from August 24, 2017.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 24, 2017. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

F. Unfinished Business / Updates:

Dan queried SSC about forgiveness of outstanding balances in the School Lunch program. Do we need to clarify this further? Steve noted that they're starting to forgive balances at Amherst. Bruce asked if we have a policy – only the School Committee has the right to write off balances. Jackie noted that children are not penalized for outstanding balances. Katie noted that in previous conversations, it seemed that a certain amount of that debt was not necessarily needs-based, but Jackie would know better. Jackie would love a policy that lets her write off debts at the end of the year. Fred said this topic will be added to the next agenda.

Dan also thanked Fred VanDerbeck for mentioning the Planning for Success information brought up at the previous meeting.

G. New Business / Discussion Items:

1. Family Handbook – Vote:

Jackie noted that she added language to the Handbook clarifying that children attending after-school social events should not make use of the bus, as there's not enough room.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE FAMILY HANDBOOK. LAUREN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

H. Policy Review:

First Reading On:

JLCEA – Life Threatening Allergy Policy

Jennifer explained that some of the policy addresses legal obligations, and that procedures are not outlined here in order to give us flexibility in applying the policy.

I. Reports

1. Director of Finance and Operations Report

Budget Transfers: Bruce introduced himself and said he's greatly enjoying working in the Central Office with such a good team; it's fun to come to work each day. He got to walk around the building with Jackie and discuss Capital Planning projects. He suggested to Jennifer that we get involved in the SBA Accelerated Repair program to address the roof and boiler issues. It can be a two-year process, so we should get involved this January if we can. We're looking good for emergency protocols at SES. Part of his 100-day Entry Plan was to meet with our state reps, and he got to speak with Sen. Rosenberg, Rep. Kulik, and Rep. Lee. One concern that Bruce raised with these representatives is that Shutesbury and Wendell are running up against their levy ceiling, which could have a significant impact on school budgeting. Rep. Lee was particularly helpful in suggesting next steps for applying for grants and advocating for our schools; she wrote a letter of support for U#28 to DESE, and she'll be more than happy to advocate on our behalf. Bruce also met with Rep. Smitty Pignateli. The Rural Schools Initiative doesn't seem to be going anywhere this year, but that could change depending on how the Millionaire's Tax vote goes. Another initiative going on in U#28 is tracking receipts for school lunch programs in order to stay on top of overages, etc. He noted that he prefers giving General Fund money back to the town rather than Circuit Breaker funds, but Jackie said that this year, we need those funds back, so SSC needs to arrive at an understanding with the Town.

Bruce asked SSC to vote on transfers to cover a couple of deficits. Jackie added that sometimes checks are cashed months later, complicating the management of the budget. Bruce said that it will be easier on everyone to have the full-timers in the Central Office track these monies instead of the half-time administrators in each town, or school employees.

KATIE MOVED TO APPROVE THE TRANSFERS AS RECOMMENDED BY BRUCE AND NOTED IN HIS REPORT. LAUREN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

2. Principal's Report

Jackie reported that SES did two fundraisers to support children in Texas; they raised a lot of diapers and wipes; it went very well. Grades 5 and 6 went to Morse Hill, as they usually do. The Open House format was changed to involve the children, letting them show off their classroom and discuss what they've been learning. We'll see how it goes. There will be a short Community Meeting at the start. We currently have one or two openings on Student Council, but no interest as yet. Student Council has

been delightful and helpful in the past. A Moose on the Move Club is being formed to walk/run on the track during lunch and after school. We've started a 100-Mile Club as well. The new floors are absolutely beautiful; the teachers love them. The new stage curtain also makes a tremendous difference, and the new protective trees were praised by state police who came to observe them.

The sidewalk continues to be a problem, and it's her understanding that the Town Building Committee said the roof has to get done next year. Jackie is a new member of DESE's Principals Advisory Committee; she's one of the few members from Western Mass. The first meeting is next week. There was a staff resignation, and she'll be hiring a Staff Interventionist position to cover that short term. We also have a one-year Art Teacher posting. Lastly, we need to keep in mind we have an Out-of-District student that we can't pay for with the Circuit Breaker funds.

Steve noted that he saw a company that does ADA-approved sidewalk remediation; Jackie said that 80% of the sidewalk needs replacing. Dan wondered who the contact person is for the Capital Planning Committee. Jackie said she doesn't know, and this project doesn't seem to have gone through that committee, but another one. She'll follow up with Town officials.

3. Superintendent's Report

Jennifer reported that Opening Day was on the 28th, and the theme was The Marigold Effect, a horticultural phenomenon in which marigolds strengthen the growth of nearby plants. We charged ourselves with looking for the marigolds within our schools and to become marigolds ourselves. Our new Curriculum Coordinator, Annie Foley-Ruiz, has been meeting with each school to see what their needs are. She's going to facilitate our Professional Development Days and has already written an application for an Early Literacy grant from the Department of Early Education. Lastly, we're continuing to focus this year on Universal Design for Learning. The Leadership Team is reading two books on UDL; each member will read a chapter and represent it to the Team in a way that's meaningful to them. Pru and Jennifer will present a UDL-infused survey of all the student support services we offer to each of the schools.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report:

Steve reported that we spent three hours at the last meeting discussing whether or not to appoint the Interim Superintendent to the permanent position. It looks like this will happen because the response has been overwhelmingly positive to the idea. It's amazing how many parents are supportive of the move. There's a new dress code in the Middle School that's more positive and gender-balanced (the previous one laid out many detailed restrictions for girls). A letter is going out opposing the expansion of PVCIS, a great concern for the Regional School District. Steve is waiting for various pieces of information to report to SSC.

5. Union #28 Report – including Budget and Personnel:

Lauren reported that we talked a lot about improving the Superintendent Evaluation process. We also created a Policy SubCommittee for U#28 that Lauren chairs. Dan said we have six responses so far; it was very difficult communicating with the IT company we worked with to get information on the survey results. Dan is waiting on information from Tracy Novak on the legality of including previous JSC member's feedback. We also discussed having each school committee complete the survey so that the JSC Chair would not have as much work to do tallying every individual survey; this would also emphasize differing concerns from each town.

6. CES Report:

Dan reported that CES is looking at opportunities for expansion; it might purchase a property next door, or others for sale in the area. Things are good at CES presently. Steve asked whether Amherst could use CES for the Superintendent search; he feels we need to go through a search, but he's the only member of the committee who feels strongly so. Dan commented that at CES, they've done searches where internal candidates turned out to be the ones chosen, but not the only strong candidates.

K. Future Business

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, October 19 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, October 19 7:00 p.m.
- Budget and Personnel Committee – November meeting?
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, September 18, 2017 6:00 p.m. Supt. Office
- Future agenda items –

L. Adjournment at 8:09

DAN MOVED TO ADJOURN. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS