

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY Sept 18, 2014**  
**FINAL Minutes**

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

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

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

Committee reviewed the perpetual calendar. Sean asked clarifying questions about the Open House and the status of School Council membership. He proposed setting a joint meeting with School Council in order to make use of survey data to address the School Improvement Plan.

**C. Warrants and Gifts**

Warrants signed:

4001: \$4241.27  
3010: \$52.81  
3009: \$27,827.75  
307: \$61,452.39

**D. Approval of Minutes from June 12, 2014**

Bob offered two clarifications of the minutes.

**DAN MOVED THAT THE JUNE 12, 2014 MINUTES BE APPROVED. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**E. Public Comments and Announcements**

Susie Mosher notified the committee that she had replaced Weezie Houle on the Fin Com and needs to be added to the SSC email list. She was directed to contact BettyLou at the Union #28 offices. Dan commented that he enjoyed attending the Open House last night; it was well done. He then guided everyone present through a short logic puzzle, which everyone seemed to enjoy or at least tolerate.

**F. New Business / Discussion Items**

1. Family Handbook

The committee reviewed the school bus policy for inclusion in the Family Handbook. Mare asked about the process for contacting parents in case of an emergency school

closing due to dangerous weather; should this policy be included in the handbook? Bob replied that the policy has never been included in the handbook because it is an unusual situation requiring an enormous volume of phone calls as administration tries to verify that people will be home waiting for their children; as such, it is not really a defined policy. He also noted that in case of a bus accident, students whose parents cannot be contacted will be taken to the hospital by default. Jackie noted that clarifications will be added to the bus policy as well as to the suspension policy, the latter reflecting a change in law.

Sean commented that the handbook is so large that families might not read through the whole thing every year; perhaps a page should be added that highlights additions and changes. Jackie responded that she would create such a summary. A member of the public suggested a “cheat sheet” to be added to the cover of the handbook, and Jackie agreed.

Committee members pointed out a number of typos and minor clarifications; Jackie also requested clarifications of contact information for members of the committee. Dan complimented the introductory letter, and Mare complimented the inclusion of the Mission Statement.

**DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE HANDBOOK AS AMENDED. FRED SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

## 2. Home School Applications

Sean asked whether these applications should be approved in Executive Session, since they identify minors. Since this is a public session, the letters would become public documents. Bob said this is the only time the issue has been brought up.

**DAN MOVED TO TABLE THE HOME SCHOOL APPLICATIONS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAINTAINING THE PRIVACY OF A MINOR. STEVE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

## **G. Unfinished Business / Updates**

### 1. Accountant Search Update

Bob reported that there are five candidates, and two interviews coming up Monday; there will be a second round of interviews after that, and the interim Accountant should be installed by Oct. 1. This Accountant will simply keep the books and it has been made eminently clear that the position is temporary, ending June 30, 2015. Dan asked whether Bob was negotiating salary; Bob responded that the salary would be well within what has been budgeted for the Business Manager position.

## **H. Policy Review: None at this time**

Bob said that there are several critical policies, including the student absence policy, that need to be looked at very soon. The Policy Committee will begin meeting in October.

## **I. Reports**

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

Jackie distributed a folder of information. There are 155 students currently, and a family with two children is considering moving to town. Sean noted that the public would like to know about availability in the preschool program, as there is a wait list for spots. Jackie noted she would get that information. She said that there has been a wonderful, joyful start to school, and the teachers here are very dedicated and special. There has been a lot of hiring to fill open positions (mainly paraeducators).

Jackie continued that there are two unexpected expenses that are non-negotiable. She saw a one-to-one pair to meet IEP compliance that had been missed last year; however, there is not much wiggle room in the budget, so she discussed options with Bob and decided the school could hire the requisite paraeducator. She also said that one student needs a bus monitor, which will run about \$11,000. This cost will last two months before the need for the monitor will be reviewed.

Sean asked why these expenses were unexpected; were these new IEPs or, were they rewritten? Jackie responded that the paraeducator came out of a plan that started with a full-time para, then scaled down to a half-time para, finishing next year with no additional para support. As far as she can tell, the full-time para position budgeted for was assigned to another student, while the half-time para was overlooked somehow. Sean suggested that the budget process take into account these kinds of unexpected IEP costs, especially if they come up mid-year. Bob noted that the town has always been very supportive of SES, and that there are several scrutinies of the budget throughout the year so that the Fin Com is appraised of where costs are at.

Jackie continued that the monitors are staff persons who will be taking notes; this data will be used when she meets with the parents to determine next steps after the two months have passed. Sean asked how these employees are compensated; perhaps their hours could be scaffolded into their hours at the school to cut back costs? They are being paid hourly, they are both paraeducators, and there are two of them so that there will be no overtime. Jackie said that due to scheduling constraints, it was very difficult finding staff to cover the necessary hours. Mare asked whether Jackie's bus rides have been going well; she responded that most of the buses are great, and there is one very full, very lively bus with a new bus driver, but there have been no major incidents so far.

Jackie reviewed the process for teacher evaluations.

Sean requested that the discussion of MCAS data be made an agenda item for next meeting. Dan had one question about how the data is influencing decisions at the school. Jackie responded that next year, the PARCC is essentially an unknown element; it is far more rigorous and represents a significant shift for the students. Dan commented that with small schools and small classes, numbers can easily get skewed, so it is more important to look at trends.

## 2. Superintendent's Report

[Bob distributed additional information.] Bob clarified that every school in U28 calls the emergency drills “lockdown drills,” thus avoiding any confusion about what is meant by the term. The procedures and processes are clear throughout. Sean raised a concern about consistency of terminology with Amherst-Pelham, and Bob assured the committee that the responders have very clear communication about incidents. What U28 is trying to standardize are the good practices seen in the various buildings. What is important is providing clear information to the responders. Sean asked if there is any notification ahead of time; Bob said no because unannounced drills provide far more information about potential problems. The students are trained to respond to the drill in the same way they respond to fire drills. Bob and Jackie both praised SES’s preparedness as demonstrated in response to drills.

Bob will be meeting with food service and maintenance staff from all four schools to see where there might be unrealized efficiencies in both skills and equipment; what can the schools share instead of maintaining four separate inventories including the same machines?

DESE is coming this fall to evaluate U28 schools, but Bob is unconcerned because of the excellent programs SES runs. He anticipates a final report by the end of the school year.

John Coolidge, a former school committee member, passed away, and a fund benefiting Union #28 teachers has been established in his name. Also, the Grinspoon Award is an educator’s award that U28 educators are eligible for.

Finally, the February meeting is scheduled during Winter Recess, so Bob wanted the committee to consider rescheduling. Also, Olive Barber requested leave; Bob suggested she take a full year’s leave, which she did, and he approved.

Sean proposed that the committee begin accepting reports as written because they need to be accepted into the public record; now, only the conversations around these reports are public record. Committee members were not clear on what they would be voting on: endorsing the report, or agreeing with its content? Sean suggested that the committee move on from the topic; he will check with MASC on the issue.

## 3. Regional School District Planning Board Report

#### 4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report

Steve missed the meeting on July 14; the minutes have not been published yet because an Open Meeting Law complaint has been filed over its advertising in Amherst. On August 14, the committee held its retreat at Amherst College to review the committee's purview and powers. He got to know other members of the committee during this. On August 26, Trevor Baptiste from Pelham was voted chair of the committee; the committee also reviewed policies on fingerprinting and service animals. They are currently awaiting discussion from RAWG. On September 16, they met with student reps from the high school. The committee also spent a good deal of time deciding how to evaluate the superintendent because committee members weren't happy with how the last evaluation was conducted. The District Improvement Plan also requires a lot of work.

Dan asked about the Superintendent's salary; it has been increased by \$11,000, making it comparable to salaries in comparable school districts. Dan noted that SSC had no opportunity for input into the decision on raises; there should be a better system that would involve school committees' input in the future. A member of the public asked about the periodicity of salary discussions; Steve responded that it occurs every three years. Mare echoed Dan's concern over the committee's lack of input into the process, since it impacts our budget. Steve noted that it's not clear whether the raise reflects her past work, or what we expect from her in the future.

Fred Vanderbeck clarified where the RAWG process is currently. Bob clarified how the towns will discuss and vote on regionalization; there are four areas where RAWG still needs to arrive at agreement before a proposal will be presented to the towns.

#### 5. Review of Expenditure Report

Bob said they will be watching the budget very carefully as the year progresses. At the next meeting, the committee will be able to look at how well projections and realities match up. Sean asked a clarifying question about how the substitute teacher line works; it usually goes deep into negative spending because of long-term subs that come up, but this deficit is balanced by a concomitant reduction in the salary line. Sean asked about how the public is informed about the budget at Town Meeting; they have a budget that's not completed because the actual numbers are not finalized then. Bob reiterated that the town has always supported the school when it was necessary.

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

7. CES Report: No report.

**DAN MOVED TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF REVIEWING HOME SCHOOL APPLICATIONS WHILE MAINTAINING THE PRIVACY OF A MINOR, WITHOUT RETURNING TO PUBLIC SESSION. MARE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**J. Future Business**

1. Shutesbury School Committee – October 16, 2014

**Adjournment at 8:45 P.M.**

Trevor Kearns  
Minute Taker