

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY November 20, 2014
FINAL Minutes

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

A. Meeting Called to Order at 7:30 P.M.

B. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar

No comments on perpetual calendar.

C. Warrants and Gifts

No gifts, but a total of \$119.50 will be received for box tops.

Warrants signed:

4003: \$2845.14

D. Approval of Minutes from October 16, 2014

Tabled until next meeting.

E. Public Comments and Announcements

Mike Vinsky reminded the committee that the Selectboard is responsible for authorizing all bills paid by town departments. He noticed one from the school that involved a professional development course that was not attended; on this, Jackie had attached a note saying that was unacceptable, and Mike commended her for her oversight and diligence. Jackie added that staff is taking pains to collect significant evidence for such activities. Dan thanked Mike for his diligence as well.

F. New Business / Discussion Items

1. LOA that does not fall under FMLA

Bob reported that the FMLA will change to reflect federal law. From now on, formal requests for leave will be required before a LOA will be approved.

2. Gun Bill Radio

Bob reported that he has applied for a grant from the Executive Office of Education to get two portable radios for every school in the union, as well as to train staff in their use; they will broadcast on the public safety official network. The only times these radios will be used is during an emergency, specifically violent crime. Dan asked where the radios are coming from; Bob said that they'll arrive in the box, and Chief Tom Harding and Chief Walter Tibbetts will program them and set up trainings. They'll also advise on the kinds of situations the radios ought to be used for. Bob had to apply for a grant for these radios because the new law does not provide appropriations for any of the measures it requires of schools.

3. Capital Planning Committee – Representation – Vote

Mare said that the committee had a parent representative to the Capital Planning Committee; what happened to him? The SSC has not heard from this committee. Dan said the composition of the Capital Planning Committee has changed over time – the representative used to be an SSC member, but this was changed to a representative who had more expertise in construction and building issues. Bob suggested bringing members of the Building Committee into the building, since they are all in the trades and could see problems coming down the road. Dan said the representative to the Capital Planning Committee should be a member of the SSC.

DAN MOVED TO APPOINT FRED STEINBERG TO THE CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE. MARE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

4. Home School Request

Bob has been in touch with the family, and he recommends this request.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE HOME SCHOOL REQUEST BEFORE THE COMMITTEE. MARE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

G. Unfinished Business / Updates

1. Carpet – Update

Jackie met with Becky Torres to ask about the carpet situation; she learned that, incidentally, the committee must appoint a representative to the Capital Planning Committee. Jackie also emailed Becky a letter to forward to the Finance Committee explaining the rug situation. There are two quotes so far: Booska's Flooring for \$23,619.60 and Summerlin Floors for \$26,967.76. The next step after updating the hallways is looking at classroom floors.

2. Union #28 Budget Review and Vote

Matthew Galman presented the Union #28 budget to the committee. The proposed budget represents a .89% decrease from last year. Drivers include the new superintendent's salary, an increase in secretary salaries (COLA and longevity), a position of note-taker for the Supervisory Committee meetings, underutilized superintendent travel budget, a new Director of Finance position at a lower salary, classified ads (which have not been budgeted for in the past), computer supplies, a SPED teacher salary decrease, professional development, a drop of an annuity as part of the superintendent's compensation, and a drop in computer equipment needs (since computers have recently been updated at all schools).

Mike had a question about the increase in professional development funds; Bob said that it was a way to train staff in larger groups rather than hiring trainers and consultants in a piecemeal fashion over the years. Dan also said that there is a need for professional development in the schools, and that the staff needs to be supported by the towns in this. Bob added that this is an opportunity to master some professional skills that have been developed already.

Mike also asked about the drop in the SPED mentor funds; Bob replied that the SPED director is now on her own, so there is less need for the mentoring that served as a bridge to get her settled in the position.

Mare asked Bob about the drop in the superintendent travel budget; why not a drop in the SPED director travel budget? Bob replied that her demand is more frequent and longer distance because of SPED placements.

Mare noted that she opposed the budget last night because of the increase in professional development funds as well as the increase in sub caller telephone service. Bob replied that it includes Internet and is so high because Time-Warner, the carrier, is the only one that can do what the union requires.

Dan noted that there is not a lot of room to cut in the budget; perhaps professional development could be scaled back. But over the years, he has seen that the superintendents have been very frugal with the budget, and money comes back into the towns. The practice of returning excess funds has been so established in the union that he is confident that it will continue. Also, this budget is lower than last year's, and the towns have been vigilant when it comes to expenditures.

Mike added that he agrees with Mare that a prioritized list of potential cuts would be helpful in deciding on the budget. Dan responded that, for example, in the face of changes to the union through regionalization, there are many options for saving money. Mare replied that it's important to know what would be cut depending on different outcomes of the regionalization issue; we should be planning for multiple scenarios anyway. Dan agreed that we need a plan, but at the same time, we're a union

of four schools and we need to ensure that there's quality education for all the students. Susie Mosher, Fin Com member, noted that it's very early in the financial planning process at the state and town levels, so it's a waste of effort to decide on budgetary parts that we can't see the whole picture for right now. Dan said that at the same time, deciding on a budget is a statement of our priorities.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE UNION 28 BUDGET. SEAN SECONDED. TWO YEAS, ONE NAY: MOTION PASSES.

3. Superintendent Search – Update

Bob reported there were 32 applicants; the committee is meeting Monday to review applicants and set up an interview schedule. A survey was also sent out about the desired qualities in a superintendent; of the 120 or so responses, about 60% came from Shutesbury. Dan thanked Mike for extending the deadline. Bob noted that the responses were split almost exactly among parents, teachers, and residents. The most important trait was educational leadership, followed by communication with parents.

H. Policy Review

1. Review – KJ Advertising in the Schools

Sean summarized the discussion around advertising in the *Road Town News* and through the school in general at the last SSC meeting. It is not clear who is responsible for approving advertising of a commercial nature, so Sean proposes that the committee clarify this issue; it seems like the principal's call. Jackie would also like clarity on the definition of “commercial.”

Sean asked Jackie how she determined what gets put in the newsletter. She consults with Bob if she's on the fence about an ad, but if it has to do with betterment in the community, and not for profit, or if it's beneficial for kids, she puts it in, making sure it says it's not a school-sponsored event. Dan asked whether she'd ever rejected an ad; she has recently because of the SSC discussion, an ad for a Holiday Shop at the Athletic Club.

Sean proposed changes to the policy that leaves the sole discretion of what ads may run to the principal. Mare said it's vital to define the parameters of what is considered commercial, so that Jackie has some criteria to rely on in her decisions. Bob said that the language in the policy specifies a positive educational opportunity for students as a determining factor, so that, for example, people in town offering music lessons would be permissible even though the lessons are for profit. Mare said the policy needs to go to the Policy Subcommittee to be hashed out and rewritten.

Sean disagreed; he said his proposals would do the job. According to the policy, flyers advertising commercial activities have to be approved by the superintendent, while the principal approves ads in the *Road Town*. The committee discussed who ought to determine what is permissible for going on the Community Board. Bob asked what the changes were for, and Sean replied that when Jackie makes a determination about what goes into the newsletter, she can have the backing of the policy. Bob said that the policy should reference the school's Mission, then, because that clear, objective statement is less subject to argument than Jackie's subjective judgment.

SEAN MOVED TO REFER THE POLICY TO THE POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE FOR REVIEW. MARE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

I. Reports

1. Principal's Report

The enrollment fell by one due to a home school application; it stands at 154. The school is focused on forming a Literacy Team. Also, a Student Council has been created; Jackie was impressed with how mature and thoughtful the students have been in the process. The Council will select a presentation every month focused on a specific value; they selected “teamwork” as the first value, and the project is to choose a school mascot. Jackie also presented the idea of adding a student member of the School Council. Sixth Grade math tutoring is going on three days a week now. A \$5,000 STARS grant has been awarded to work with Enchanted Circle Theater on a theater in the round piece based on “Switch on the Night” by Ray Bradbury. It will be performed on Dec. 17. The Safety Committee met and discussed issues of concern, including having locked doors at dismissal and arrival, examining safety in pick-ups, and unannounced versus announced lockdown drills.

Sean noted that he was concerned about locking the doors, and Jackie responded that she is responsible for keeping a whole list of people out of the school. If one of these people came in and an incident occurred, it would be on her. Dan suggested that Jackie not move quickly on the issue, but rather go through a process of communication with the community. Jackie said she would like the community to be a part of the decision, but nevertheless, she is responsible for the safety of the students.

Jackie concluded by noting the professional development activities and classroom snapshots in her report. The committee praised both the kindergarten teacher and Jackie for their wonderful efforts with the children.

Mare asked whether we still have a bus monitor; Jackie said yes, and it will probably have to continue through the rest of the year. She and Bob have already gone through the budget to make sure that the additional expense is covered.

2. Superintendent's Report

Bob emailed his report ahead of time and asked for any questions on it. Dan praised Bob for his great work in the union. Mare had a question about Maker grants; Bob said he'd hired Michael DeChiara to write grants. Bob noted that Maker activities tend to be in secondary schools and colleges and involve students who self-select, but instead, we need to get kids involved young, and especially get girls involved. Bob's goal is to put a Maker lab in each school. Mare asked clarifying questions about Michael's grant-writing position and activities; she also asked clarifying questions about how Maker training would be paid for.

3. Regional Agreement Working Group Report: No report. RAWG will present its proposal in December.

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

5. Review of Expenditure Report

Bob said it's still early in the school year, and that he and Jackie have been keeping a careful eye on the budget. They're meeting Monday to create a first draft of next year's budget.

6. Union #28 Report – including Budget and Personnel

Dan said they met last night and voted on the budget; if there are any concerns from any of the towns, they will reconsider the budget. Each school reported on what they're doing, and they will review superintendent search traits soon.

7. CES Report

Dan reported that the committee voted not to add the “emeritus” title to the title of the former executive director, on legal counsel. The committee looked at surveys done by the Collaborative in their efforts to reach out to schools. The CES is turning the survey results into action plans. Bill Diehl, the new executive director, is doing a great job.

J. Future Business

1. Shutesbury School Committee – December 18, 2014
2. Budget and Personnel Committee – Wednesday, November 19, 2014 6 P.M. LES

3. Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Wednesday, November 19, 2014 7 P.M. LES
4. Future agenda items?

DAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:19 P.M. MARE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Adjournment at 9:19 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Trevor Kearns
Minute Taker