

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY February 26, 2015
FINAL Minutes**

Present: Dan Hayes, Mare Fox, Fred Steinberg, Steve Sullivan, members; Sean Woodard-McNiff, chair; Matthew Galman, Accountant; Jackie Mendonsa, Principal; Public Guests

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

B. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar

The Kindergarten Grant discussion is tabled until next meeting because Bob was unable to attend tonight.

Regarding the perpetual calendar: SSC's section of the 2014 Annual Town Report is overdue and must be submitted to the Town Clerk as soon as possible. This was due last September but was not included in the Perpetual Calendar, hence the delay. It will be added to the Perpetual Calendar.

C. Warrants and Gifts

One gift from Target (\$54.84) and another from Susie Mosher (\$100 for the Art program).

FRED MOVED TO ACCEPT THE GIFTS. DAN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Warrants signed:

4006: \$1,694.99

D. Approval of Minutes from January 15, 2015

Several emendations were offered for the minutes.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 15, 2015. MARE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

E. Public Comments and Announcements: none.

F. New Business / Discussion Items

1. Kindergarten Grant: Tabled until next meeting.

2. Regional Assessment Method

Dan noted that there is a public meeting regarding the regional assessment method this Saturday. Susie Mosher related that the FinCom recommends sticking with the alternative method currently being used, even though the increasing student population means that the town currently pays more than it would otherwise. Dan agreed that we should maintain the current method for now, but he hopes that the next school committee will consider the needs of the town before the needs of the region when looking at the Regional Assessment Method. Sean agreed that the committee represents the people of Shutesbury first and foremost. We should also take a careful look at the assessment method in light of the yawning budget gap at Amherst High School.

Dan added that he sees both sides of the assessment issue; if Shutesbury pays more under the current method, that allows the other communities to support their residents in need, but again, people in Shutesbury need to come first in the considerations of this committee.

MARE MOVED TO RECOMMEND TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT FUNDING METHOD FOR FY16 (CALLED THE “ALTERNATIVE METHOD”), WITH THE HOPE THAT ANOTHER METHOD CAN BE FULLY VETTED THROUGH A SUBCOMMITTEE. STEVE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS. (DAN ABSTAINED.)

3. One Signature for Payroll Warrant

Dan explained that payroll warrants go forward regardless because they have already been agreed to in contracts, and some other local school committees allow a single signature on payroll warrants. Sean expressed hesitation over this motion because control over the budget is one of the primary functions of the committee, and by requiring only one signature, the committee is not reviewing these warrants. Mare noted that there have been a number of times that warrants have not been signed in a timely manner. Sean asked why committee members couldn't sign payroll warrants at meetings; they come out every two weeks because of the biweekly pay schedule.

DAN MOVED THAT THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE REQUIRE ONLY A SINGLE SIGNATURE FOR PAYROLL WARRANTS GOING FORWARD, INDEFINITELY. MARE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

G. Unfinished Business / Updates: none.

1. Capital Planning process

Dan noted that the next meeting for Capital Planning is March 3. Jackie explained that there are two estimates for replacing the rugs in the hallways, but that a representative from the committee needs to be present at the Capital Planning meeting in order to discuss the rug issue. Also, there is a drainage / mold problem in the courtyard that needs to be addressed. Finally, the issue of rooftop snow removal needs to be addressed as well; Jackie and several other staff members have been raking the roofs and removing icicles / ice dams when there is no maintenance staff in the building. It's not clear what should happen when excessive amounts of snow build up on the roof, as they have this year. Dan said that whatever the issues are, they should be put together into a comprehensive overview when they are presented. Susie Mosher corrected the date of the meeting to March 17, although this date is unconfirmed at this point.

H. Policy Review

It is often difficult for Sean to attend the Policy Subcommittee meetings. The committee discussed appointing another member, but decided that this is not necessary at this time.

I. Reports

Matthew noted that the next school committee meeting needs to be a public forum for the budget. Dan responded that the Perpetual Calendar has the public forum and budget vote in April, not March. There was some discussion about whether the school budget is a separate warrant article, and therefore needs to be approved and submitted according to the Town Meeting timeline, or is included in the overall budget.

1. Principal's Report

Enrollment is 157 after the addition of a kindergartener. Preschool had its Open House on February 25. The enrollment numbers here are still fuzzy, and the decision whether to have one or two Pre-K classes will be made mid-March. We are also considering creative options to combine Pre-K and a small Kindergarten class.

Jackie held a parent informational meeting on PARCC, which is very different from MCAS. The PARCC schedule has been arranged to give students a break between rounds, and to preserve subject continuity. The first round is at the end of March / beginning of April; the second in mid-May.

The school will need an estimated 3,000 – 4,000 more gallons of heating oil in order to make it to the April Vacation cutoff; this will cause the heating line to go over budget by about \$5,000. Continued work with the boiler means that the maintenance lines will be over budget as well. However, looking at the overall budget, we are anticipating that these overages will not result in a budget overrun at the end of the school year. Finally, the dryer has broken and it appears that getting a new one will be cheaper than repairing it; however, it is a stacked unit. A repairman will be providing an estimate soon.

In the world of musical theater, Arin Andrews, a 3rd grader, has written, directed, and choreographed a version of The Wizard of Oz that has been rehearsed for five months; it will be performed 2/27 at 2 and 6 p.m.

The state has decreased funding for the Kindergarten Grant as part of the statewide 9c cuts; we are receiving \$8,760 rather than \$11,200. Matthew noted that as a result of changing electricity providers (to Major Energy), the school will be getting a new rate of 8 cents per kwh. He added that community members can sign up for a fixed-price rate as well; if they do so through the school's site, the school gets a small kickback (around \$30/year/signup). Dan said we should get some expert advice from Fred Dupere on this before advertising the option to the community. Fred agreed that he was leery of using the school for advertising in this way.

Steve asked about how students who have ED plans are treated under the timed PARCC test. Jackie replied that if they are on a plan, they can get extended time. The school has been putting extended time on tests into every IEP this year.

Dan has been researching Bob's proposal for MAKER labs in every U28 school; the cost of maintenance and materials seem to be significant, and he is wondering what will be covered by grants. Jackie said the maintenance and materials should be covered by grants. Dan is also curious about the educational piece; how will one lab be integrated into all eight classes? He asked that Jackie talk more about this with Bob because he can't find anyone who might be able to do the maintenance for the labs.

2. Superintendent's Report: not present to report.

3. Regional School District Planning Board Report

Steve reported on the Regional School Committee meeting held Tuesday, February 24. Only one of nine members was willing to support the proposal at the meeting, so it will come around again next year instead of being pushed through the Town Meetings this spring. The governance piece remains the most complex and contentious part, and the committee needs time to fully understand the proposal before they present it to the towns.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report

The budget shortfall at Amherst High School means that staff will be cut, but it is not clear yet what the specific cuts will look like. Several programs are also being reorganized. It appears that there will be a significant, unplanned-for drop in the high school enrollment soon; Sean commented that this should be noted in the Superintendent evaluation. Susie Mosher wondered whether the enrollment drop was due to a drop in rural population or to other causes. Sean said that there might be significant enrollment in the charter schools in Amherst; Steve agreed that the high school is concerned about the expansion of the Chinese immersion school next year.

5. Review of Expenditure Report

Matthew said that overages in some line items (a total deficit of \$11,000) look to be offset by the drop in electricity prices as a result of switching providers. The deficit should look more like \$5,000 after this. Jackie noted that there are lags in entering expenses into the system; Dan expressed concern that we spent a good deal of money on new, real-time budgeting software a few years ago, so there shouldn't be any lags. He requested an explanation for this at the next meeting. Sean agreed. Matthew said that the software isn't necessarily not working as it should; it has to do with budget projections that are rough early on and become finer over time. Jackie added that there's a lag as invoices get passed from one processing staff member to another.

6. Union #28 Report – including Budget and Personnel

Dan reported that information on the MAKER labs proposal was shared, and also some discussion about the Director of Finance position – specifically, when the position should be opened because of the change in Superintendent. The parameters for the Superintendent position were also discussed. Each school reported on its doings as well. Mare noted that she would have attended as an alternate but did not know SES did not have a full complement there. Dan responded that the committee could use Google to coordinate in the future.

7. CES Report

Dan reported that as vice-chair, he has opened up the process to the full committee of revising the tools for evaluating the executive director. This process has worked well for the U28 Joint Supervisory Committee, so Dan thought it might work well in this context as well. The executive director has committed to a 360 Evaluation in which he solicits feedback from everyone around him. This kind of evaluation can be scary, but also very informative. The staff feedback is provided anonymously.

J. Future Business

A date for a public forum on regionalization needs to be set. Dan wondered what the committee could possibly say about it at this point since the committee was not a part of the process that produced the proposal. Sean said he was not in support of such a public forum because Shutesbury residents can comment during a public comment period, and because the SSC has no more information about the proposal than the public at large at this point.

Dan asked Mike Vinsky about these issues; he responded that the Leverett public forum he had just attended did not offer satisfying answers to audience questions. Instead of recreating such an event, Mike suggested we do something different, something to address those concerns specifically. Steve added that the RSC itself will be breaking it down and discussing it from here on out.

Dan concluded that RAWG should be presenting the proposal to the public, not the various school committees. Sean reiterated that while he has an opinion on the proposal, he does not feel it appropriate to express that opinion in a public forum he is conducting.

DAN MOVED THAT A COMMUNITY FORUM TO DISCUSS REGIONALIZATION BE INITIATED AND CONDUCTED BY THE RAWG COMMITTEE BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE INFORMATION AND INSIGHT INTO THE REPORT, WHEREAS SSC HAS NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS FOR A PERIOD OF TIME. MARE SECONDED.

Sean said that making a motion not to do something does not seem productive; we have no power over RAWG. The committee discussed the status of the final report issued by RAWG and concluded that presenting the proposal is RAWG's responsibility.

DAN WITHDREW HIS MOTION. MARE WITHDREW HER SECOND.

1. Shutesbury School Committee – March 19, 2015
2. Budget and Personnel Committee – Wednesday, May 20, 2015 6 P.M. SRS
3. Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Wednesday, May 20, 2015 7 P.M. SRS
4. Future agenda items – Electric Bill

**SEAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:00 P.M. DAN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.
Adjournment at 9:00 P.M.**