

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 15, 2024
Final Minutes

Present: Anna Heard, Julie Martel, Jeremy Mailloux, members; Bethany Rose, Chair; Jackie Mendonsa, Principal; Caitlin Sheridan, Director of Finance & Operations; Public Guests

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

B. Public Hearings - FY25 Budget:

No members of the public present.

Other Public Comments and Announcements: None.

C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar: None.

D. Warrants and Gifts:

AP Warrants:

1/23/2024	\$20,911.37
2/6/2024	\$17,024.43
2/20/2024	\$29,539.93

Payroll:

315	1/23/2024	\$83,951.84
316	2/6/2024	\$85,279.14
317	2/20/2024	\$88,539.59

Gifts: None.

Grants: None.

E. Approval of Minutes from January 18, 2024:

JEREMY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 18, 2024. JULIE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

F. Unfinished Business / Updates:

1. Capital Projects/Building Process - Discussion (Roof, Boilers, Kitchen Floor):

Bethany asked for any updates. Jackie reported that the new roof was installed, but we had major flooding in the Library despite it. Ice dams were involved, and the problem has been figured out.

2. Superintendent Search - Update:

Julie said we're coming to a rapid close - JSC is interviewing three candidates at SRS tomorrow. JSC expects to make a decision afterward, with a backup meeting time set aside for next week. Shutesbury JSC members all plan to attend.

G. New Business / Discussion Items:

1. School Improvement Plan - Review:

Jackie said this is the same SIP for three years (we're in the second); nothing is different about it right now. We've basically achieved everything on it, so it needs to be revised. Julie observed that Jackie is a victim of her own success. Jackie reviewed the goals of the SIP, the major items of which we've done already.

H. Reports:

1. Superintendent's Report: No report.

2. Director of Finance and Operations:

FY25 Shutesbury Elementary School Draft Budget - Discussion and Vote on Adoption of the Final Budget:

Caitlin reported that she met with all the final Supervisor candidates, but she's been indisposed with COVID this week. There are no changes to the budget from its preliminary presentation at the last meeting. SSC discussed how the budget might have to be adjusted based on how negotiations proceed. Caitlin said if need be, we can look to other places in the budget to move grant funds around or under-expend other lines. Susie Mosher noted that Town Meeting is in April, so things can move around until then. The Fin Com is meeting April 9. The budget, of course, is not "final" final until it's approved at Town Meeting. SSC can always come back to the Fin Com after if need be. Jackie said there's really nothing more we can cut at this point; nothing can change.

ANNA MOVED TO APPROVE THE FINAL BUDGET AS PRESENTED. JEREMY SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

3. Principal's Report:

Jackie said report cards are going out this week. She made an attendance letter with a copy of our attendance policy that's going to every student with 6 or more absences. She hopes that families keep an eye on this and try to avoid chronic absenteeism, which the state is scrutinizing. The letter is gentler than the policy, which grants a school the right to contact DCF when absent days reach a certain threshold. That's scary, of course. We make many efforts to contact families before that point, however, and we always let families know if we feel we need to file with DCF. Vacation is coming up, we're finishing up a

lot of units, and we're moving toward 100% completion of our math curriculum. Crossing our fingers for no more snow days.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report:

Anna reported that RSC is working on budget, which is somewhat complicated because of the contributions from the Towns. Amherst gets to determine how much they contribute to increases, while other Towns are told. Amherst can only afford a 3% increase this year. The end result is that Pelham and Leverett are supporting a 4% increase, while Shutesbury's is lower due to fewer kids. There's some discussion of how to take on this disparity at the Four Towns meeting. We should know how many applicants for Middle School Principal we have soon. Discussions continue about renovating the field; Anna's top priority is to get a field design we can actually afford. Having grass back as an option has just reopened the whole discussion all over again. Finally, the Title IX report's findings aren't clear and we're trying to get clarity about that.

Anna reviewed the recent tumultuous turnover in Middle School leadership. We're back to Interims right now and the hiring process is underway. Julie cautioned that for the Superintendent search, the number of candidates was never allowed to be shared publicly, so Anna should find out about that before making anything public.

Jeremy wondered if there's any thinking going into how to avoid the recent messes in the district. It seems like there have been a lot of things that have undermined public faith in the leadership. Anna said there'll always be disagreement within any school committee, so most votes won't be unanimous. We try to build consensus and get things done, improving things through small changes, but it's really hard. Everyone on RSC cares about the kids and their learning environment, but these issues are around the periphery. The meetings aren't always efficiently run, either.

Susie Mosher commented that the Amherst happenings could be described as a series of unfortunate events. The national scene is at play here as well, so we can't own all of that ourselves. Saturday is the Four Town meeting, and one of the biggest parts is the salary scale. Even with the increases in contributions from everyone, it's still a \$1.9 million cut. The Chapter 70 funding disparity (not increased under the Student Opportunity Act for Shutesbury) is also a consideration. She encouraged people to pay attention to this juncture. Jackie said it's hard for her to organize parents to attend Town Meeting, but the PTO could take that on. It's time to come out to support the school. Anna noted that the RSC budget is being partially funded by debt, and the debt repayment picture isn't looking pretty.

5. Union #28 Report, including Budget & Personnel:

Jeremy said JSC really focused on the Superintendent search, honing the questions we'll be asking tomorrow. He volunteered to do the reference checks. We tweaked questions from a list we had before that were not asked in the initial interview. We have to ask the same questions of all the candidates. Julie added that Jennifer presented on the Student Opportunity Act and discussed the Leadership Team walkthroughs focused on ELA curriculum. Caitlin gave a report on budget season at the schools. Three cheers for Pam, who orchestrated the entire search! The report on ELA assessments showed a lot of good improvements at all our schools.

6. CES Report:

Jeremy said there was an interesting tour of CES facilities, where some great professional development happens. The director alerted the Board that an employee misappropriated \$25K, which will probably hit the news soon. CES operates in several different ways to provide resources to school districts as well as directly to students with specialized needs.

I. Policy Review:

Final Vote On:

- IMGA - Service Animals in Schools
- ECAF - Security Cameras in Schools
- ACAB - Sexual Harassment
- BBBE - Unexpired Term Fulfillment
- BGC - Policy Revision and Review

JEREMY MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY IMGA - SERVICE ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS. JULIE SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.

JEREMY MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY ECAF - SECURITY CAMERAS IN SCHOOLS. JULIE SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.

JEREMY MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY ACAB - SEXUAL HARASSMENT. JULIE SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.

JEREMY MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BBBE - UNEXPIRED TERM FULFILLMENT. JULIE SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.

JEREMY MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BGC - POLICY REVISION AND REVIEW. JULIE SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.

J. Executive Session:

Bethany noted there is no need for an Executive Session tonight. It will remain on the agenda until we finalize negotiations, however.

K. Future Business:

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – February 16, 2024
- Budget and Personnel Committee – TBD
- Future agenda items –

Susie Mosher noted that nomination papers for Town positions need to be in by March 9 this year. You can get 20 signatures by attending the Fire Station Pancake Breakfast.

Bethany noted she can't continue serving for now and will not be running for reelection.

L. Adjournment at 8:10

JEREMY MOVED TO ADJOURN. ANNA SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.