

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, February 13, 2025**  
**Final Minutes**

**Present: Nate Longcope, Anna Heard, Leah Jack members; Jeremy Mailloux, Chair; Caitlin Sheridan, Director of Finance & Operations; Anne Magill, Principal; Public Guests.**

**A. Meeting Called to Order by Jeremy at 7:04 P.M.**

**B. Public Hearings:**

Jeremy expressed concern that the public link isn't working for tonight. Shannon noted we could change the agenda order to take public comment and budget vote later.

**ANNA MOVED TO MOVE PUBLIC COMMENT TO LATER IN THE MEETING. LEAH SECONDED.**

However, a member of the public joined during the vote, so SSC agreed to hold Public Hearing as regularly scheduled.

A member of the public thanked SSC for responding to her email of last week, addressing the widespread unease and feeling of powerlessness caused by national politics. She praised SSC for continuing to pursue its mission of social justice. She apologized for the way her email might have come across as accusatory; rather, she intended for students, staff and family to begin a conversation about these issues and sending a public statement affirming our mission and values. But in the interim, SES administration sent out a statement supporting all our students, and especially those most vulnerable, that she appreciates and that people in the community appreciate. She looks forward to continuing to work together to uplift all students, families, and staff.

**C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar:**

Jeremy reviewed upcoming events and items, including the Superintendent evaluation. SSC discussed the timing of committee member seats and which seats will be open this year.

**D. Warrants and Gifts:**

**Accounts Payable**

<b>3015</b>	<b>1/21/2025</b>	<b>\$15,896.13</b>
<b>3016</b>	<b>2/4/2025</b>	<b>\$32,956.53</b>

**Payroll**

<b>315</b>	<b>1/21/2025</b>	<b>\$88,324.65</b>
<b>316</b>	<b>2/4/2025</b>	<b>\$90,984.24</b>

**Gifts: None.**

**Grants: None.**

**E. Approval of Minutes from January 16, 2025:**

**LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 16, 2025. ANNA SECONDED.  
UNANIMOUS.**

**F. Unfinished Business / Updates:**

**1. Capital Projects/Building Process - Update:**

Nate updated SSC. He submitted two forms to the Capital Planning Committee. The antifreeze one was rejected (liquids are not capital expenses). The other, on the driveway and parking lot, will be discussed at the next Capital Planning committee meeting. Plans for the gazebo are gaining support from other groups, including the Recreation Committee. Funding is coming together from various sources and donated materials/labor. The largest cost is for insurance and liability.

As for the antifreeze issue, Anne said that our Head Custodian explained to her that we don't have enough fresh air flow in a particular spot in the machinery, so the antifreeze is necessary to help prevent another freeze that cost \$10K to repair in the past. Fin Com member Susie Mosher advised SSC on making a request to the Fin Com for an appropriation from the Reserve Fund to cover this expense as well as additional fuel oil. It's in the range of \$5600. She also suggested bringing up the tractor replacement to the Capital Planning Committee as well (~\$30K).

Anna asked whether we could install ground-source heat pumps as part of a green energy plan. It's probably too late to apply for a grant this year. SSC and Susie discussed possibilities for grants that might cover this. Perhaps discuss with the Energy and Climate Action Committee? Is there some reason we couldn't install solar as well? Susie said there wasn't a positive recommendation the last time it was studied; there's probably not enough solar access. Jeremy suggested a new energy study. Anne's idea for a solar cover over the parking lot is dynamite.

**G. New Business / Discussion Items:**

**1. Advisory (Immigration Updates):**

Jeremy invited SSC to discuss the letter of support for our students regardless of gender or immigration status. Susie said it might be good to send a letter to the Police Department explaining our stance as well. Nate expressed appreciation that SSC is willing to take this public stance.

**H. Reports:**

**1. Superintendent's Report:**

Shannon reported that the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District is creating a portrait of a graduate and a portrait of a learner (visions for what students going through those schools can expect in terms of learning). She participated in a conference that worked on this. As for the PowerSchool data breach, U#28 schools are relatively insulated from the worst impacts since we don't store sensitive information there (SSNs and medical data). She and Anne worked on a letter to families affirming we'll protect our students regardless of their identities. She's reaching out to the Town to have a conversation about what might happen in the event of some unusual or challenging event coming to the school (e.g., last week we had no custodian available during the snowstorm, so we reached out to DPW to see if they could do a quick sidewalk sweep, but we were told they couldn't do that). We need to know what our resources and options are in the event of various emergencies. At the U#28 level, the Efficiency Advisory Group has been working and will present their findings/recommendations to JSC on March 17. EES is currently searching for their permanent Principal. MASC has been issuing guidelines about ICE visits, and we're making sure we're being accurate and transparent about what to do when and if they arrive at our school. As for the federal funding freeze, MA has joined a class action lawsuit filed on Jan 31 with other states challenging the illegal impoundment of funds allocated by Congress.

SSC discussed how the turnover in SSC and in the Town has led to uncertainties about emergency management in the Town generally. The issues Shannon has brought up should just be in the Emergency Plan so that school officials know what to do. SSC discussed how we might replace our aging walkie-talkies, ideally with one in each classroom. Anne said there was an Emergency Management meeting hosted by the Fire Dept last month. It's clear that the Emergency Plan needs significant updating. Anna suggested that local businesses might be the best place to go to for donations.

## 2. Director of Finance and Operations:

FY26 Shutesbury Elementary School Draft Budget - Discussion and Vote on the Final Adoption of the Budget: Caitlin said it's been a very busy few weeks. Going back to the oil and antifreeze expenses, we're also still dealing with the new contract. When we started the year, we thought we might be able to un-fill a para position, but that needed to be filled due to student needs, so we're still trying to figure out where we are with staffing levels. At the March meeting, we might have a more substantial discussion about all of this. We might go to the Town for the oil/antifreeze as a separate discussion, or we might go to Choice funds. We're also under the amount we estimated for Circuit Breaker (~\$10K below) and Rural Aid was reduced as well. It's a difficult-looking year due to all these factors. No new numbers at this point, but all things combined at this point, we're in a preliminary \$35K deficit in the budget.

As for the FY26 budget, the total for Town appropriation now stands at around 5%; this is just over a 3% increase over our current budget. Caitlin explained that even one personnel change can have a huge impact on our budget. Based on the staff we have now, the FY26 budget is accurate. Caitlin also reviewed our grant and School Choice funding going into next year. Choice funds pay for 2.8 FTE this year but only 2.4 FTE next year (reflective of student needs). All of this will be impacted by state allocations as well as how federal funding changes unpredictably. Susie said this is a difficult budget, so we need to do whatever we need to: talk to neighbors, have a department meeting at Fin Com to review all our Town expenses, etc. She advised SSC to go to the Town to represent and advocate for the school's needs.

**LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY26 BUDGET AS PRESENTED. NATE SECONDED.  
UNANIMOUS.**

3. Principal's Report:

Anne said the school just celebrated the 100th day of school; each grade did something special around the number 100. The Enrichment Clubs have started, including crocheting and Spanish clubs. The kids are very excited about these. There's a lot of fun activities planned for Valentine's Day as well; there's a lot of love being shared within the school as well as out in the community.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report:

Anna reported we're in the midst of APEA negotiations, which are going very well so far. The process seems pretty friendly this year, and there are portions of the contract agreed to already. There seems to be more trust between the negotiating groups. The Finance Director has added an option to the budget, but there's still a deficit in the budget of \$1.26 million. Progress has definitely been made, but the deficit at this point means a cut of 5 FTE positions. The Towns are considering how to contribute to this in various ways, and we're getting back to the original allocation method, it seems. We need all the Towns to agree to that. Progress is still happening. No confirmation about Principal yet. Anna expressed the idea that hilltown schools are likely not going to be high-profile ICE targets. We're still looking for money in the Region. Seems like Amherst College will be gifting the Amherst and Pelham schools something like \$250K for the next three years. Leah asked about the amount Amherst would be contributing under the statutory method. The percentage-based allocation method means that the smaller Towns are contributing a lot more proportional to our ability to pay. The guard rails are kind of the problem right now. Amherst has a larger population and a bigger ability to pay, so they need to contribute more proportionally. Anna said we need to find a funding method not based on property taxes, and the state's not doing its job to make up the difference. There are structural challenges to funding our schools. Finally, we got bids in for the track and field company, and approved one from a good company that came in under the amount of money we have on hand.

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

Leah updated SSC on the Efficiency Advisory Group. Our recommendations will be shared at the next SSC meeting. It's reassuring to see that a number of them have already happened or will be happening. Standardization in procurement as well as a better system of Union-wide tech support are highlights.

6. CES Report: None.

**I. Policy Review:**

Second Read, First Vote On:

JICFA-E – Hazing  
JICH – Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use by Students Prohibited  
JICFB – Bullying Prevention

Second Read and Final Vote on Deletion:

JICJ – Possession and Use of Mobile Electronic Signaling Devices at School  
JLCEA – Life Threatening Allergy Policy  
JLCG – Head Lice Policy

Leah said with JICFA-E, everything in Section 19 doesn't need to be there since it's specific to higher ed.

**LEAH MOVED TO EMEND POLICY JICFA-E – HAZING TO STRIKE SECTION 19. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY JICFA-E – HAZING AS EMENDED. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY JICH – ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUG USE BY STUDENTS PROHIBITED. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY JICFB – BULLYING PREVENTION. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**ANNA MOVED TO DELETE POLICY JICJ – POSSESSION AND USE OF MOBILE ELECTRONIC SIGNALING DEVICES AT SCHOOL. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**ANNA MOVED TO DELETE POLICY JLCEA – LIFE THREATENING ALLERGY POLICY. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**ANNA MOVED TO DELETE POLICY JLCG – HEAD LICE POLICY. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**J. Executive Session: Not necessary.**

**K. Future Business:**

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
- Budget & Personnel Committee – TBD
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, March 17, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
- Future agenda items –

**L. Adjournment at 8:54**

**ANNA MOVED TO ADJOURN. LEAH SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**