

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, December 17, 2020
Final Minutes

Present: Lauren Thomas-Paquin, Steve Sullivan, Jen Malcolm-Brown, members; Dan Hayes, Chair; Jackie Mendonsa, Principal; Bruce Turner, Director of Finance & Operations; Jennifer Culkeen, Superintendent; Public Guests

A. Meeting Called to Order by Dan at 7:02 P.M.

B. Public Hearings: None.

C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar: No changes.

D. Warrants and Gifts:

Payroll

#312 12-14-2020 \$71,768.10

#313 12-18-2020 \$72,810.81

Warrants

#3013 12-01-2020. \$11,468.09

#3014 12-02-2020 \$6,267.28 Cares Act \$1,469.05

#3015 12-18-2020 \$5019.12

E. Approval of Minutes from November 19, 2020:

LAUREN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 19. KATIE SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE. UNANIMOUS.

F. Unfinished Business / Updates:

1. 2020 Reopening: Dan invited Jennifer to give us an update. She said that she recently met with Central Office and U#28 school administrative staff to consider COVID-related issues. They're very concerned, given the spike in numbers from Thanksgiving, that we'll see another spike from multi-family Christmas celebrations. Out of an abundance of caution, she recommends that U#28 schools go fully remote until January 19, when we would return to the current phase that each individual school is in.

Dan said he's read a lot of letters from parents with a lot of strong feelings. He would like to see children return to a face-to-face learning environment, but given how the infection numbers are changing, he supports Jennifer's recommendation. Jen also supports this recommendation and asked how Jennifer would make determinations as we approach January 19. Jennifer said she, Jackie, and the Shutesbury Board of Health, who have been meeting regularly, would continue to monitor the trajectory of the virus and would reconsider where things are at when we approach the return to school date. Dan acknowledged the time, thoughtfulness, and effort that Jennifer, Jackie, and the BOH have all put into this recommendation.

KATIE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE SUPERINTENDENT’S RECOMMENDATION REGARDING A TEMPORARY RETURN TO FULLY REMOTE INSTRUCTION. LAUREN SECONDED. VOICE VOTES DAN, KATIE, LAUREN, JEN AYE. MOTION PASSES (ONE ABSTENTION).

G. New Business / Discussion Items:

1. MOA - Discussion and Possible Vote: Tabled.

H. Reports:

1. Superintendent’s Report: Jennifer reviewed guidance received from DESE this past summer. To go fully remote, we have to have a daily live check-in for all school days, providing 35 hours of instruction per week and meeting synchronously every school day. All of our Student Learning Time (SLT) data is being collected and reviewed by the state. All U#28 schools either met or came very close to meeting these requirements (coming as close as 6-12 minutes less than the requirements). Our very dedicated staff might not be counting some time that they should be counting, so we’re in good shape as regards state requirements.

2. Director of Finance and Operations: Bruce reported that we got some additional COVID-related funding to defray costs for the Food Service. Someone from Greenfield Glass looked at the sliding doors in the conference room; we’re waiting on a quote from them. We’ve also been spending out a COVID-related state grant that expires at the end of the month. The Town is doing an RFI for a design professional to address our damaged roof; it will probably go out over the break. We’ll be choosing someone in January.

3. Principal’s Report: Jackie gave a shout-out to the teachers and staff at SES for always going above and beyond in everything they do; their complete professionalism, kindness and compassion for the students make her happy every day. Almost all of our classrooms either met or were very close to meeting the synchronous time requirements. Some families may see a shift in their schedules in order for us to fully meet the remote requirements. We’ve had academics in the morning and lighter subjects in the afternoons, but this might have to change. We’re looking into a visiting artist or performer to do some kind of virtual assembly with the school in January. Last week, our hybrid start went very smoothly thanks to our professional teachers and staff, and thanks to the parents who read and follow our guidelines and rules. Jackie would like SSC to consider taking a vote to support a moratorium on the MCAS, as the test would not be indicative of actual learning over this extraordinarily stressful year; it’s preposterous that the state is even considering requiring this. Jennifer said all the other U#28 school committees are looking at passing a resolution to this effect, and she’ll look into adding this to the JSC agenda. A joint letter from MASC and the Massachusetts Rural Schools Coalition to this effect has already been submitted to the state.

Lauren agreed: the MCAS adds a layer of stress for everyone that we don’t need, and it takes considerable time that is more precious than ever this year. Steve added that the RSC has passed a similar letter. Lauren asked if there’s a time constraint; Dan said a resolution is really just voicing our concern, and the more voices the state hears, the better.

Dan offered a resolution for a vote: “Be it resolved that the SSC calls for a moratorium on high-stakes testing for the ‘20-’21 school year so that all students can focus on instruction, and we urge the legislature to enact a moratorium on testing for three years.”

JEN MOVED TO APPROVE THE ABOVE RESOLUTION. LAUREN SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE. UNANIMOUS.

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report: Steve reported that the RSC has met with the teachers' union a couple of more times without progress. We're still waiting to hear back from the union about meeting. We're now talking about the deficit we're looking at (\$1.4 to \$1.7 million), which is the equivalent of 26 teachers. The Amherst Town Council is holding firm on level funding (which is actually a reduction), but we're hoping they'll take a hard look at this and change their position, since they've never had to face this kind of situation before.

5. Union #28 Report, including Budget & Personnel: No report.

6. CES Report: Dan said CES had a retirement ceremony for Bill Diehl at which Dan spoke. It was fairly emotional since Bill has done so much good for CES and the districts and students it serves. He's involved in the search process for Bill's replacement, which is foregrounding social justice. CES is always trying to learn how to improve the kind and variety of services it offers, so if anyone has any feedback, let him know.

I. Policy Review:

Final Vote On:

- IHBHE - Remote Learning
- JLCB - Immunization of Students
- EBC-S - Policy on COVID-Related Issues

SSC offered emendations to policy EBC-S.

JEN MOVED TO APPROVED POLICY IHBHE - REMOTE LEARNING. LAUREN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

JEN MOVED TO APPROVED POLICY JLCB - IMMUNIZATION OF STUDENTS. LAUREN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

JEN MOVED TO APPROVED POLICY EBC-S - POLICY ON COVID-RELATED ISSUES AS EMENDED. LAUREN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

J. Future Business:

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, January 11, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.
- Budget and Personnel Committee – TBD
- Future agenda items –

K. Adjournment at 7:42.

