

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, November 30, 2023**  
**Final Minutes**

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

**A. Meeting Called to Order by Bethany at 7:03 P.M.**

**B. Public Hearings:**

A member of the public asked the School Committee if they could sponsor a grant to build a pavilion on school grounds. Jackie noted the deadline for the turnaround is Dec. 4. Jeremy asked whether we could just vote on it. Jennifer said SSC could make that decision, but as a body. Julie asked if SSC could see the grant proposal before approving it. Jackie noted that there are bigger discussions that need to be had around this proposal, but the public member did an enormous amount of work with the Town already, which we appreciate. Jennifer requested that the grant proposal also be emailed to Central Office. Anna asked for clarification: Is SSC endorsing the grant? Yes. The amount of the grant isn't determined yet. There isn't a definite cost for the project yet. SSC Emeritus Steve Sullivan noted that the more people on board, the better the chances of getting the grant. Jackie noted that SSC has supported grants in the past (for our track, for example) without being the authors or writers of the grant.

**ANNA MOVED TO ALLOW NATE TO WRITE A GRANT AND FOR SSC TO SPONSOR HIS APPLICATION. JEN SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**

Steve then noted that SSC should have a policy on the use of cameras on file now that cameras are installed. He also requested that the Principal return to a previous practice of making known the breakdown of enrollment.

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

Bethany noted a correction to the Policy section: the first batch should be First Reading on rather than First Vote On.

**D. Warrants and Gifts:**

**Accounts Payable:**

3012	11/14/2023	\$14,863.15
3013	11/28/2023	\$45,187.32
3014	12/2/23	\$4,203.77

**Payroll:**

309	10/31/2023	\$85,988.65
310	11/14/2023	\$87,964.87

311	11/28/2023	\$86,322.38
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**Gifts: None.**

**Grants:** REAP \$16,397, Rural Aid \$86,317.96

**JEN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE REAP AND RURAL AID GRANTS. ANNA SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**

**E. Approval of Minutes from October 19, 2023:**

Julie offered an emendation.

**JEREMY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 19, 2023 AS EMENDED. JEN SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**

**F. Unfinished Business / Updates:**

1. Capital Projects/Building Process - Discussion (Roof, Boilers, Kitchen Floor): No update.

2. Superintendent Search - Update:

Julie reported that the Superintendent position has been posted online. The Search Committee has reviewed the rubric we'll use to evaluate applications, and we'll evaluate applications as soon as they become available. The deadline is Dec. 19. We hope to have finalists selected by Jan. 19. It's slow going, but we're making steady progress.

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

1. Family Handbook - Review and Possible Vote:

Jackie said we're ready to go live with the Handbook online. We'll be able to reference the Handbook more easily and let the community know as new policies take effect. Thank you to Debbie Lee for the technical setup!

**JULIE MOVED TO APPROVE THE FAMILY HANDBOOK. JEN SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**

2. School Improvement Plan - Review:

Jackie said this is a review of the SIP; we haven't completely updated it yet. She offered to just bring the updated one in December. SSC was amenable to this notion.

3. Negotiation Sub-Committee Member Selection - Discussion and Vote:

Bethany said we need to elect two of our members to serve on the Negotiation Sub-Committee to negotiate the next Contract with the teachers. Any volunteers? Once we have this Sub-Committee, we can start the process. There's no definite sense of time commitment; it depends on how negotiations go. Jennifer said once the Sub-Committee is voted in, SSC can have an Executive Session at the next SSC meeting to consult with Caitlin and Jennifer about budgetary parameters. The Sub-Committee members are the negotiating agents, but they'll have support from the Town or Central Office. Jeremy and Bethany volunteered.

**JEN MOVED TO NOMINATE JEREMY TO THE NEGOTIATION SUB-COMMITTEE. JEN SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**

**JULIE MOVED TO NOMINATE BETHANY TO THE NEGOTIATION SUB-COMMITTEE. JEN SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**

#### **H. Reports:**

##### 1. Superintendent's Report:

Jennifer reported that we're in budget season. She and Caitlin have met with all the Principals to create draft budgets. We've done literacy walkthroughs as well and shared out the results of those to all the schools. We'll be doing equity walkthroughs next. We have a Superintendent Search Committee working, and Erving is still holding meetings to weigh the merits of staying in U#28. Commissioner Riley has emphasized how bad chronic absenteeism has become in the state (also across the country); all schools are measured on absenteeism with MCAS as well. We have a letter ready to go to families to encourage them getting their kids back in school.

##### 2. Director of Finance and Operations:

FY25 Shutesbury Elementary School Draft Budget: Caitlin said the End-of-Year Report has an audit every three years, and it's our audit year currently. Next meeting, she'll be asking SSC to approve going through with the audit process. Caitlin then shared the draft budget with main drivers. The total increase in Town appropriation is 7.79%. Increases include Medicaid reporting services, U#28 office supplies, travel (more in-person meetings now), an anticipated but indefinite increase in salaries, an ESSER-funded position (an Adjustment Counselor shared with Leverett) moving into its own line, an adjustment up for actual spending in the substitute line, and software subscriptions. If Leverett doesn't also make this move, we would still have a .5 position here. There are decreases in audit expenses (we won't be audited next year) and several other areas. There are some decreases in grant categories so we're not as dependent on them for our operating expenses. The Early Childhood Revolving Fund (a revenue source) is increasing. We are increasing funding of some positions out of School Choice slightly. Jackie noted that most lines are level-funded. We have an Out-of-District placement to pay for, salary increases, and backfilling the loss of ESSER funds. Caitlin noted that without some of these drivers, the actual increase is 2.19%.

SSC expressed support for continuing the Adjustment Counselor position. Anna asked if we're using less fuel now that the roof is repaired, and what are some other steps the School is taking to create energy efficiency? Jackie said those decisions are made by the Buildings Committee (the Town). We did get a grant to have weatherization done in the building this summer.

SSC thanked Caitlin for her overview.

### 3. Principal's Report:

Jackie said we've done an equity walkthrough, and one area where we really shine is in our ELA curriculum, which focuses on social justice. That aspect is apparent in the students' work schoolwide. She's grateful to her staff for all the work they did choosing that curriculum. We've had some field trips, and Jackie's partnering with the PTO on a Bingo for Books event in December.

### 4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report:

Anna reported that the RSC Search for a New Superintendent (SNS) Sub-Committee has recommended a headhunting firm to the RSC. The debate about what to use for the athletics field is coming around again. The Town might be asked at some point to help fund the athletics field. Steve added that it was 3-4 months after the vote to go with artificial turf that the PFAS studies about them came out.

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

Bethany reported that Leverett seems to be struggling with the loss of the ESSER funds. The last JSC meeting was also taken up quite a bit with the question of Erving possibly leaving U#28, but they're not being exactly forthcoming about the reasons. Julie added that Shutesbury's praises were highly sung at the meeting. We're doing wonderful things at our school because we have such caring and engaged staff who treat our children like real people with so much potential. Jackie said she really appreciates SSC as well.

### 6. CES Report: No report.

## **I. Policy Review:**

### First Reading:

EBCFA - Face Coverings

AC-R - Nondiscrimination Policy Including Harassment and Retaliation

ACA - Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex

### Second Reading, First Vote On:

BDF A - School Councils - TABLED

BDF A-E - School Improvement Plans

CHA/CHC - Development and Dissemination of Procedures

Julie shared concerns about the School Councils policy: it has to meet every month, it has to be an open meeting, etc. Maybe we should table that one and have some more discussion on this one?

Anna also wanted to add some gender identity language around using bathrooms in AC-R or ACA. Jackie said all our bathrooms are gender neutral now. But we could certainly have a protection clause in a policy. Jennifer suggested the Policy Sub-Committee revise those for the next meeting.

**JULIE MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BDFA-E - SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS. ANNA SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**

**JULIE MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY CHA/CHC - DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF PROCEDURES. ANNA SECONDED. VOICE VOTES ALL AYE.**

**J. Future Business:**

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, December 21, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, December 21, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – January 22, 2024
- Budget and Personnel Committee – TBD
- Future agenda items –

**K. Adjournment at 8:56**

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