

**SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, December 18, 2025**

**Minutes**

**FINAL**

**Present: Nate Longcope, Leah Jack, Katrina Catalano, Members; Jeremy Mailloux, Chair; Caitlin Anderson May, Director of Finance & Operations; Anne Magill, Principal; Shannon White-Cleveland, Superintendent; Public Guests.**

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

**B. Public Hearings: None.**

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

Jeremy reviewed the calendar for Dec items: the Superintendent's budget and *Our Town*, which seems to be in hiatus right now. There was a multi-committee meeting in town recently and a poll is out for another one in Jan. The yearly meeting with the Fin Com is coming up in Feb.

**D. Warrants and Gifts:**

○ **Accounts Payable**

3013	12/9/2025	\$7,852.90
3014	12/23/2025	\$5,342.70

○ **Payroll**

311	11/24/2025	\$91,907.19
312	12/8/2025	\$90,675.43
313	12/22/2025	\$91,339.07

**Gifts: None.**

**Grants: IDEA (FC262): \$2,565.00**

Title I (305): \$17,070.00

Title II (140): \$2,500.00

Title IV (309): \$10,000.00

REAP: \$18,073.00

**NATE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE GRANTS AS PRESENTED. LEAH SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**E. Approval of Minutes from November 20, 2025:**

Nate offered two emendations.

**LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2025 AS EMENDED. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**F. Unfinished Business / Updates:**

a. Capital Projects/Building Process: Nate explained that since the last meeting, he was contacted by the Berkshire Design Group and got the Town Administrator involved. BDG has done the EES playground and is working with Deerfield ES, repaving their parking lot (at \$1.2 million). They discussed needing to come in to do a survey, including drilling a short hole to assess substrate. They came out to meet. With the potential Green Communities Grants, we might be looking at significantly different designs, however (one grant pays for a ground-source heat pump, for example). The potential cost keeps climbing. A committee is meeting next month to discuss all this; the deadline for applying for the grants is Feb 13, and the Town might decide to apply for them to use on buildings other than SES.

Nate shared a presentation on sidewalk repair, including a detailed map with all the distances involved and problem areas highlighted in yellow. He shared photos of these. Replacing at least some of these with blacktop might be a better solution. There's an issue with snow removal and the tractor as well. We have a tractor because the Town doesn't take snow removal at SES seriously. The parking lot is frequently full of leftover ice and snow, so our maintainer takes care of that with our tractor, which needs to be replaced at an estimated \$34K. We won't need to do that necessarily if the Town could properly handle the majority of the plowing in the parking lot, and the maintainer use two snowblowers (at a cost of \$3K each) to do the sidewalks. Anne added that the tractor is old and its repairs expensive. Jeremy said the spring storms tend to be slushy and wet; could those snowblowers handle that in the way the tractor has? Yes, the model that has been picked out can. Nate said the meeting the other day was very exciting because we were able to talk about all the infrastructure problems at the school as well as the sidewalk repair and parking lot issues. If we can get three SSC members at the Green Communities Grant(s) meeting, we could really assert our agenda. Jeremy said the DPW is very short handed now; that's just the reality. Jan 8 is the next Capital Planning Committee meeting, and Nate will take this presentation to them.

Fin Com member Susie Mosher commented that until we get a master plan together with all the capital planning needs listed out in a timeline, we won't be able to make the best case for our needs. Hopefully all the information will be gathered together in a logical order before we bring in any consultants. There are still a lot of people who just don't have all the facts in front of them, so we need to help communicate those carefully. Capital Planning seems to be looking more at the Aug submission deadline for the heat pump. We'll move toward carbon neutrality, but we need to do so in a logical way. There's confusion over what is defined as maintenance and what repairs as well, which could change the funding source. There's a sense that the school has money because our budget is the biggest one in the Town, but it's not true. Susie said it's not an equitable process, and it needs to be sorted out. Maybe Shannon can help us by relating how other schools define these terms. Jeremy said there should be a single Town policy that doesn't get interpreted arbitrarily each time something happens. Susie said we need to figure out this process even during this busy budget season; it impacts all the budgets. Katrina suggested this definition work is something SSC could do. Nate added that we need direction from SES staff to understand what's going on, and to avoid contentious relationships with other Town departments.

Shannon commented that other Towns do various things. In Erving, she's invited to the department meetings, which helps her understand the Town priorities (she tag-teams these with the Principal). Something we might want to think about is having a school Capital Planning subcommittee so we can get a jump on these issues and set up a structure to communicate needs to the Town. Shannon is happy to go to any of those meetings, if she's notified ahead of time.

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

a. Green Communities Grant(s) - discussion and possible vote:

Susie said she'll contact ECAC to get a clear timeline of the grants and when their deadlines are. Nate thinks he has some information he can share with SSC as well.

b. February 2026 School Committee / Policy Meeting Date - discussion and vote:

The Feb 19 meeting falls during Feb break, so SSC needs to reschedule it. Nate wants to push applying to anything and everything we can in terms of grants.

**KATRINA MOVED TO RESCHEDULE THE FEBRUARY SSC MEETING TO FEBRUARY 12. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

c. Outstanding invoice:

Nate asked for information on this invoice, which seemed to come out of nowhere. Susie explained that an expeditious decision was made at the Buildings Committee to get the tank checked soon after we discovered water in it. The invoice floated around for three months and was eventually sent to SES to pay. Anne noted we took action on it as soon as it came to us. Jeremy said this is another example of the need Susie laid out for a rational process of Capital Planning across the Town.

Jeremy said he got an email from a member of the Town's avid pickleball group requesting the curtain be moved in the gym. The mechanism for this curtain is worn, so the school tries to avoid raising and lowering it as much as possible. Anne said we're not trying to be a bad partner and also not trying to come to the Town about replacing the mechanism when we don't need to. We might want to look at the fees we charge for lending the building, a separate conversation. Moving the curtain up and down causes wear and tear each time, so we've been so cautious about it. It's a good plan as far as allergens go as well (dividing the eating area from the gymnasium area). Jeremy said that we're limping the curtain along, it'll have to be fixed at some point, and how do we get it in the pipeline to repair? Anne said we measured the court and the school pickleball club uses half court, which the Town group doesn't want to do.

Nate said he'll fill out an application for the curtain to inform Capital Planning of the need. Anne added the soundproofing on the stage also needs to be fixed. Katrina said they can play pickleball, just not the kind of pickleball they want to play. That's not the school's directive. We can't damage something helping with allergen sequestration just for that. Shannon said we're projecting \$15K, but we don't have any hard numbers, so let's get those, then bring it to SSC for deliberation. She is a firm believer that schools are community buildings, so we want everyone in the community invested in the school. We want to make the

building available for any number of things, but if the curtain breaks, we have an immediate problem with allergens and will face an emergency repair rather than a planned one, always more expensive. Nate asked for three bids, which is what Capital Planning needs. Jeremy said we can offer the pickleball group half of the gym, and that's what we can do. Anne said the group just needs to be flexible in taking turns on the half gym. Susie said a 40, 50-year-old building needs to have a list of all its systems, and the school is a Town building that needs very careful analysis of every system. The Buildings Committee needs to start on this and bring in expertise when required. All these systems are coming due, and we need to be in the Capital Planning pipeline. SSC agreed heartily.

## **H. Reports:**

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

Shannon reported that we're in the middle of budget development in what we know is a tough financial environment. DESE Commissioner Pedro Martinez is visiting SRS on Dec 19. On Dec 9, Director of Curriculum Lindsay Rodriguez and Shannon met with Parent-Teacher group officers from each school district to discuss ongoing parent collaboration, programming support and communication strategies. The U#28 SEPAC group met at EES yesterday for a presentation by EES speech and language pathologist Heather Peterson, who shared strategies families can use to support their children's ability to plan and problem solve. The SEPAC group is open to all U#28 families.

On the legislative front, USED announced that the majority of programs managed at the federal Office of Elementary and Secondary Education will transition to the U.S. Dept of Labor, including programs in Titles I, II, III, and IV. These programs still exist for now, but we don't know what the future holds. DESE will provide more information to MA schools as they are updated.

On Dec 13, legislators Natalie Blais and Jo Comerford were joined by rural school advocates at an informational event hosted by the Leverett Democratic Committee to explain the complex process of revising the Chapter 70 funding formula, which will take years. More immediately, we should advocate for fully funding the Rural Aid earmark, which was cut this year despite incredible revenue brought in by the Fair Share Amendment (over \$5 billion). Susie said that Sen. Comerford says the funding should come out of the general budget. If the Governor gets a blizzard of postcards about this problem before she releases her budget, she'll know that we exist and that we are hurting. She's not shown a lot of response to this issue. Shannon said there's a link to an easy communication tool to send a letter to our representatives. Nate asked if SSC could send the link out to every SES parent and request they contribute. Shannon said SES can't do that, and SSC can, but should work with the PTO on this. Susie said the Fin Com is putting this out publicly as well. Jeremy suggested putting it out in *Road Town News* as well. Katrina suggested asking people to send postcards, as it's a more effective strategy. Susie envisions a postcard-writing session when the Library opens. They'll have postcards with checkmarks giving information on the sender (retired, parent of SES student, etc.). The website makes entering information very easy.

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

Caitlin reported she has shared the Expenditure Report with everyone, and it hasn't changed much since the last meeting. We have a low amount of money to get us through the rest of the year, so we need to be

careful about emergency expenditures. Right now, if we've encumbered everything we know we have to spend, we have about \$69K for the rest of the year. The current FY27 budget stands at an increase of 6.32% to the Town for a level-service budget (actually a little less, since we're not filling an open position). This is due in part to anticipated losses of various Title grants as well as a drop in Rural Aid. We'd like to reduce use of School Choice a little as well.

The biggest drivers are tuition for Out-of-District SPED placements. Without those, we'd have an increase of 2.39% instead. Caitlin made a chart of budget reduction amounts down to a percentage increase of 3.24% to use for discussion (an \$80K reduction). Jeremy said \$80K feels like a position plus, and we don't know what the regional budget will require of us yet. This is hard; he doesn't know how to sell it to the Town. Katrina asked what we asked for as in increase last year: around 5%. Last year was the first year budgeting for a new contract as well. We don't have that challenge as much; it's really the SPED placements. Jeremy commented that 5% doesn't sound irregular. Katrina said we should ask for the full percentage; Nate agreed. This is what we need to run the school. Shannon said we've worked hard to be good fiscal partners with the Town, but cautioned that if the budget doesn't pass at Town Meeting, we go to a 1/12 budget (month by month), which means even more cuts. Katrina asked Susie if she had a sense of the threshold here. Susie commented on recent increases that the Town supported, but everyone has to recognize what the pieces are. Health insurance is a big one, and inflation is driving our expenses just like everyone else.

Leah commented that last year, the Fin Com hosted meetings with all the departments to discuss budgeting. She doesn't think we need to gamble for the Town Meeting; we can get a sense of what the Town could handle at this meeting. Susie said Jan 13 is their meeting, and that's when we can explain these increases. Caitlin has been very helpful keeping Susie from getting lost in the weeds with these numbers.

### 3. Principal's Report:

Anne reported that Grade 6 celebrated a "Living History Museum" in which students composed research papers and performed a brief history in first person. They were great. Students are enjoying the snow, and we've asked for donations of sleds and outdoor activity items to help enrich the playground. We had an amazing Turkey Trot as well. Anne shared the SIP with SSC; Shannon said SSC must vote on it at some point, so we'll need to do that in Jan if not today.

Nate asked Anne about her involvement with Ron Berger's visit to the school. Anne said he's a Town treasure. He came and we did a walk down memory lane together. He wrote a lot of the units in our Exponential Learning, and he goes around giving talks about this, but his heart is still in Shutesbury. He's donated books and made a sizable donation to the PTO as well. When he's back in town, we'll set up some time with him. Nate said he's something the people in town should know about as another thing we do at SES.

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

Nate said Anna brought up something to him that we need to discuss sometime: the Amherst Middle School starting at Grade 6, giving the Amherst kids a homefield advantage in school that our kids lack. Anna suggested SES Grade 6 start going to Amherst Middle School, while Nate said why not keep our

students here through Grade 8? We have the building capacity, and everyone's heard about the mold and other issues at the middle school. It's a discussion he wants SSC to have. Shannon said that's a conversation we should be having as an SC, but it should be done through a committee that includes town members, and there are a lot of complications to handle in such a plan. Amherst would also have to be willing to accept our Grade 6. It has to be a very broad conversation with all the stakeholders at the table. Jeremy said we'd also have to reopen our regional agreement to change what's happening.

5. Joint Supervisory Committee Report, including Budget & Personnel: No report.

- Next Meeting Date: Monday, January 12, 2026 @ 7 P.M.

6. CES Report:

Leah reported CES is moving forward with hiring a new Executive Director, with a final round of interviews on Jan 14. We hope to have a start date in Feb. A full board meeting is on Jan 28.

## **I. Policy Review:**

First Read On:

IB - Academic Freedom  
IC/ICA - School Year/School Calendar  
ID - School Day

Second Read, First Vote On:

KA - School-Community Relations Goals  
KI – Visitors to the Schools  
ECAB - Access to Buildings and Grounds  
JJE – Student Fundraising Activities  
KBE – Relations with Parent /Booster Organizations

Final Vote On:

KBA - School-Parent/Guardian Relations Goal  
GBEBC - Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff  
KI - Visitors to the School  
IHAM-R- Health Education

Nate asked for examples of events from KBE. Leah discussed involving community members in listening to final portfolios as well as the student trips to the Qubbin. Jeremy mentioned the pickleball group. Nate asked if SSC had to do more as a SC. Jeremy said the newsletter is helpful, but there are probably more ways to do outreach with the community as well.

**LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICIES KA - SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS GOALS, KI – VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLS, ECAB - ACCESS TO BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS, JJE – STUDENT FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES, AND KBE – RELATIONS WITH PARENT /BOOSTER ORGANIZATIONS. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICIES KBA - SCHOOL-PARENT/GUARDIAN RELATIONS, GBEB - GIFTS TO AND SOLICITATIONS BY STAFF, KI - VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL, AND IHAM-R- HEALTH EDUCATION. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.**

**J. Future Business:**

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.
- Budget & Personnel Committee – TBA
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, March 16, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.
- Future agenda items: Jeremy said there's a multi-committee meeting on the Green Communities Grants coming up.

**K. Adjournment at 9:08**

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