

SHUTESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 20, 2025
Final Minutes

Present: Nate Longcope, Anna Heard, Leah Jack, 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 7:04 P.M.

B. Public Hearings: None.

C. Review of Agenda and Perpetual Calendar:

Jeremy reviewed some recent and upcoming events in the perpetual calendar. Of note is the U#28 budget, which is in the first draft phase.

D. Warrants and Gifts:

- Accounts Payable

1017	11/13/2025	\$25,181.47
1018	11/27/2025	\$42,026.89

- Payroll

309	10/27/2025	\$93,112.55
310	11/10/2025	\$90,174.79

Gifts: John Zebb Kids to Quabbin: \$5,000.00. Anne explained that John Zebb, a local resident, is donating annually to help students go enjoy the Quabbin as he has done. We took 1st Graders and Kindergarteners out on a bus to see the trout stock. It was a wonderful trip, and he got a lot of positive stories from the students.

NATE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE KIDS TO QUABBIN GIFT FROM JOHN ZEBB AS PRESENTED. LEAH SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Grants: Rural Aid: \$63,088.88; Shutesbury (240): \$47,009.00; Shutesbury (9262): \$2,656.00

ANNA MOVED TO ACCEPT THE GRANTS AS PRESENTED. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

E. Approval of Minutes from October 16, 2025:

Jeremy noted he created them.

ANNA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 16, 2025. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

F. Unfinished Business / Updates:

a. Capital Projects/Building Process – Sidewalk Repair, Oil Tank, Parking Lot, additional repairs as needed – Discussion: Jeremy invited the Building Committee to our meeting to discuss some of these topics. Nate said in May, we received a huge bill for oil that was a red flag. We met to discuss this in June, and it only took two weeks to get the Building Committee involved. He went to the Capital Planning Committee to give them a rough idea of what we're looking at, including a new oil tank, a tractor and \$34K for sidewalk repair. He shared photos of where the sidewalk was torn up with the Building Committee. We agreed to spend that money on fixing the sidewalk, so we need to find someone to do that in a cost-effective way, and not in a piecemeal way. He also reached out to FRCOG to discuss the driveway issues. They suggested reaching out to an engineering firm prior to getting capital planning bids. We need assistance from the Town to find a reliable and good engineering firm to get this moving. The oil tank is a huge issue, and we need to understand how replacing it will interact with the driveway repairs. There's also a water tank that needs to be replaced in the course of these repairs. We need coordination among these Town committees in order to manage all of these pieces.

SSC discussed potential factors on the table; Susie Mosher advocated for a comprehensive design at the outset. Nate hasn't had luck hearing back from people. We need a landscape architect to coordinate with the engineering firm in order to do this project right from the start. It's a costly investment. Susie commented that SSC isn't the main driver for this big project; SSC should take their identified concerns and needs to Capital Planning and let the Town take charge of the project. That's how this has been managed in the past. Hayley Bolton, of the Building Committee, commented that she can help in several ways, starting with finding a firm to do the concrete (Nate noted that Matt commented it might be better to do blacktop instead). Leah noted Western Mass Heating & Cooling is a good organization to work with. Anna said they're not the cheapest, but they are good. Caitlin said we've worked with FRCOG on these kinds of projects in the past. They're looking for projects now, and if we wanted ours to be one of them, we'd have to get an engineering firm soon and get going with the design. Finding a designer for the parking lot is the first step. Hayley can do that and will liaise with Nate.

Jeremy went over the critical issue with the oil tank: water infiltration. Anne said that Jamrog told us there's a secondary tank that needed to be drained before the heat was turned on in October. They cleaned that tank out, we waited for a part, and finally Shannon was told someone would come to install the part. We're still at a spot where everything isn't up and running, but we can heat the building. The air handlers aren't working, for example. The company who installed those originally can do a diagnostic of that entire system for \$6K. We're still waiting for parts, and it's really disappointing. The bills are mounting, eating away at our building maintenance line. Anna said how can they keep charging us to fix their own mistakes? How can we make them fix their own mistakes? Jeremy said yes, it's frustrating and we need to identify the person who's supposed to be accountable for the quality of their work. Susie agreed; the Town needs to represent this as a legal issue. Hayley asked why we keep going back to Jamrog if they've messed up so much? Anne said great question; there aren't a lot of companies that handle what they can handle. Jeremy said we need a company that is available for emergencies. But the delays involved here call that into question now. Shannon agreed we need to find someone who can just fix the root problems instead of nickel and diming the school. Anne has spent so much time dealing with this, and she's not a facilities manager. It's not part of her job. Also, we're putting money into this because heat is a priority; meanwhile, other true maintenance projects are being put off. It's a vicious cycle. To have the Town be a partner in

resolving this would be helpful. Hayley said it would be good to speak to someone at Jamrog before a letter from the Town lawyer goes to them. Nate seconded everything Shannon said and praised Anne for all the work and energy they've put into this. We've done what we can, and we need the Town to step up here. Anne thanked Nate for his commitment and all the work he's put into this too. He added the cost for replacing the front door is \$5K. Hayley offered to help bring Town committees together to communicate earlier about some issues; perhaps we can meet quarterly or something.

Shannon suggested Caitlin present on the budget next so that Hayley can get a sense of it if she's willing to stick around.

G. New Business / Discussion Items:

a. Building Committee Communication Process - Discussion: See F above.

H. Reports:

1. Superintendent's Report:

Shannon highlighted some things from her report. Other schools were able to get PRISM grants because they share the same literacy curriculum. We were able to get SES included in that grant work nonetheless, so all the U#28 schools are collaborating on improving our literacy education practices. Shannon went to a Superintendent's Roundtable last night where it was made very clear that the Chapter 70 listening sessions are just that: DESE doesn't set the funding formula, the legislature does. This is not a fast process. The report won't come out until next summer. Then they'll put together a committee, and it will go from there. Any change to the formula is years out. We need to push our legislators. Susie said we should push Rural Aid as well since that's right at hand; we don't need to wait years for that. Shannon commented that the study showed that \$60 million is what we needed to keep pace, but we didn't get that, and what we do get was even cut. And the state is taking more in from the Millionaires Tax.

We just got news that most of the programs managed by the Dept of Ed are being transferred to other departments, including the Dept of Labor. IDEA and the Office for Civil Rights are still at USED. It's clear that we will not be getting some of that federal funding (Title II and IV in particular). We have to plan for that loss, \$16K in our case. Anna asked whether we can collaborate with UMass to cover our PD needs. Shannon said sometimes; other times, the PD is closely tied in with our curriculum and programs. Our PD budget is very tight, and we do a lot of it in-house. Anna said UMass may be more inclined to help local districts that contribute to the region. Shannon said we can certainly reach out.

2. Director of Finance and Operations:

Caitlin reported that Rural Aid at SES has declined this year (a gap of \$12K). The overall increase in the budget this year is 5.44%. There's a 3-year audit coming up this year that require a budget line. Other increases include salaries (some of which are increasing on the operations side because grants are declining that support those positions). Caitlin covered other drivers, including SPED needs. We're making adjustments to the Title I and II grants that probably won't come in, at least at the same levels. We're awaiting some more financial information on Circuit Breaker, so we'll have an updated number for that by

the next meeting. Early Childhood is the same, and for School Choice, we're planning to use more than we're receiving. We don't want to overuse those funds year over year, so we should adjust our use of the incoming funds in order to preserve what we have saved there. Commenting on an Out-of-District placement of \$163K, Shannon said that sometimes we can bring extra services into the classroom to meet the needs of students, but sometimes we just can't offer that expertise. In those cases, we have to pay for an Out-of-District placement. Jeremy commented that we just have to do that when the need arises. Susie asked if we'll have 2 or 1 in FY27: just 1. We have to pay tuition up front and we'll get some of that back in Circuit Breaker next year. What's the ballpark for the placement? Caitlin explained there are two types of Circuit Breaker (one is for midyear events like this one, which we're applying for). We're still figuring out exactly what the expenses will be in this case.

Susie said the Fin Com signed the budgetary crisis letter organized by the MTA recently. These are such serious financial issues; we're all being crushed by these funding formulas. She looked at this budget and saw it's a funding problem, not a spending problem. Shannon said some of our fixed costs have gone up, and it's not even a level-funded service budget since we're not filling an open position. Caitlin and Anne have done a lot of work on this. There's not a lot of fluff in any U#28 budget, and the SES budget is particularly tight. And this small school is getting recognized at the state level, but this is what it costs to run the school. Anna commented that she testified along with other RSC members at the Chapter 70 listening session hosted at Greenfield High School. This is all about marshaling support for our schools and getting the government to rethink the formula to funnel more money to small schools. It's broken. We need to fix it so that it works for all our schools. She asked about Choice seats: are we turning students away? Anne said it really depends on the grade level. We do have some open in Grade 6. The only time we've turned students away is for Preschool, since we have limited opportunities there. Shannon noted Preschool is not eligible for Choice funding; we charge tuition for it instead.

Caitlin then addressed a change we need to make to pay periods. When we do 26 pay periods in the year, the first paycheck creeps back in the calendar since there are more days than 52 weeks in the year. This presents a problem because employees are getting paid ahead of time for work they haven't yet done, and sometimes they leave service before the full first two weeks. We need to reset this timing and, in consultation with Town Accountants, Treasurers, and Fin Coms, have decided that the best way to do it is to use 27 pay periods in FY27. This will have the least impact on employees; each paycheck will be slightly less, but they'll still add up to the negotiated salaries, and we'll avoid skipping a paycheck or adding non-paid days in between certain paychecks. The first paycheck in FY28 for 10-month employees will then go out after the school year has started (in Sept) rather than in Aug, as it presently does. For 12-month employees, the first paycheck is going out July 3 and is close to crossing over the fiscal year divide.

The next step is to go to the unions with it. Shannon said the reset is something that has to happen. Either we skip a pay period, or we do 27 paychecks for one year. The latter option is the most sensitive to the needs of our employees, since they won't be without income for two weeks. Anna asked why we can't pay on the 1st and the 15th? Caitlin: We could, but we'd have to redo the CBA. Also, we need to be in line with the Town's payment schedule. Anna joked it would just be less complicated to get paid on the 1st and 15th; maybe we should go to all the other Towns to get them on board. Susie asked if this change would affect health insurance withholding? No: that comes out twice a month and wouldn't change.

3. Principal's Report:

Anne gave a shout out to the organizers of the drum program that got the school moving. We started Nov with the Moose on the Move program, where students rack up laps around our track while practicing our core values (choose safety, choose respect, choose responsibility, and choose love). We've been collaborating with the PTO to plan for any food insecurities that may result from the loss of federal funding.

i. SIP: Tabled

4. Amherst-Pelham Representative's Report:

Anna said the suspended school counselor is coming back into her position per court order. The Principal and Superintendent are putting plans in place to make sure everyone feels safe and accommodated. We've strengthened our policies to make sure it's clear what's expected with regards to the treatment of transgender students. Documentation will be much stronger as well, part of the Superintendent's Goals for the year. We just approved those (very late; they were supposed to be done in April). We had a great Four Town meeting that was a big listening session, with the Towns sharing their perspectives on their finances. The new track and field are still on course. The reorganization of some grades is being looked at. Amherst elections happened and a couple of Town Council members were overturned. Amherst is probably going to ask for the other Towns to help contribute to the Middle School roof, and the High School roof is showing its age too.

5. Joint Supervisory Committee Report, including Budget & Personnel:

Nate reported that JSC discussed Superintendent Goals and evaluation, the Hampshire Trust issue, and Caitlin's presentation of the U#28 budget, which has an increase of 5.5%. Shannon commented that Erving has tuition agreements with Gill-Montague, but now Pioneer is seeking a tuition agreement with Erving as part of the proposed new regional school district out there.

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

6. CES Report:

Leah reported that the search is underway for the next Executive Director; the search should wrap up in the next few months, and we hope to make a hire by February.

I. Policy Review:

First Read 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

Second Read, First Vote On:

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

Final Vote:

BB- School Committee Legal Status

LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY KBA - SCHOOL-PARENT/GUARDIAN RELATIONS GOAL. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY GBEBC - GIFTS TO AND SOLICITATIONS BY STAFF. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY KI - VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY IHAM-R- HEALTH EDUCATION. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

LEAH MOVED TO APPROVE POLICY BB- SCHOOL COMMITTEE LEGAL STATUS. NATE SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

J. Future Business:

- Shutesbury Policy Committee – Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.
- Shutesbury School Committee – Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
- Budget & Personnel Committee – TBA
- Union #28 Joint Supervisory – Monday, January 12, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
- Future agenda items:

K. Adjournment at 8:53

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