

# South Hadley Public Schools School Committee Meeting Minutes

February 2, 2023

Video Conference Meeting Accessible via SHCTV1 or SHCTV1.com

## I. Call to Order

Noticing a quorum, Chairperson, Allison Schlachter called the virtual School Committee Meeting to order at 6:11 p.m. A Zoom video conference meeting accessible via SHCTV15 and SHCTV.com made possible by Governor Baker's June 16, 2021, remote meeting provision to the March 12, 2020, COVID-19 Emergency

**In Attendance:** Allison Schlachter, Chairperson; Eric Friesner, Vice Chairperson; Danielle Cooke, Member; Lynda Pickbourn-Smith, Member; Kyle Belanger, Member; Mark McLaughlin, Interim Superintendent for South Hadley Public Schools; and Jennifer Voyik, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Business Operations for South Hadley Public Schools.

**Guests:** Jake Oliveira, State Senator; Liz Lafond, MASC Field Director; Dan Carey, State Representative; Mildred Lefebvre, MASC President-Elect.

**Absent:** Junoon Giridhar, Student Representative.

## II. Public Comment: None.

III. **SHEA Report:** Amy Foley expressed happiness to be coming into the meeting with all SHEA unit contracts ratified but informed the Committee that 46% of teachers voted against ratification. She spoke about public education within the nation and Massachusetts and the teacher shortage, staff retention, work to life balances, and her personal experience of advocating for the Student Opportunity Act where students, teachers, SHEA leadership, building administration, district administration, and School Committee members worked together. A. Foley stated that SHEA is ready to organize and work with members of the school leadership and all the stakeholders in the school community to advocate for better funding not just for this year, but well into the future.

## IV. Routine Items

### A. Approval of Warrants (VOTE)

Date	Number	Amount
January 17,2023	Warrant #2023-171	\$299,850.32
January 24, 2023	Warrant # 2023-177	\$297,567.17
February 2, 2023	Bi-weekly Payroll	\$979,128.32

(VOTE) D. Cooke made a motion to approve the following warrants, Warrant #2023-171 dated January 17,2023 in the amount of \$299,850.32; Warrant #2023-177 dated January 24, 2023, in the amount of \$297,567.17; and Biweekly payroll dated February 2, 2023, in the amount of \$979,128.32.

E. Friesner seconded the motion.

No further discussion.

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E. Friesner – Aye; D. Cooke – Aye; L. Pickbourn – Aye; K. Belanger – Aye; A. Schlachter – Aye.  
This motion passed unanimously.

### **B. Approval of Minutes: None**

- V. All-State School Committee Award Presented to Chair Allison Schlachter:** Agenda rearranged to accommodate guests. State Senator, Jake Oliveira, State Representative Dan Carey, Liz Lafond and Mildred Lefebvre, MASC President-Elect were all present, and honored Chairperson Schlachter for the work she is doing in her community. On behalf of The Massachusetts Association of School Committees Schlachter was awarded the All-state School Committee Award. This award is given to acknowledge individuals whose work on their school committee always keeps children as their primary focus, also, representing the best interest of all constituents, is open and honest with other school committee members and district administration and who abides by MASC Code of Ethics in their work and on behalf of students in their district. Senator Oliveira presented Chair Schlachter with a State Citation from the Massachusetts State Senate. Representative Carey expressed gratitude to all the School Committee Members, Liz, Mildred, and Chairperson Schlachter specifically and presented a citation from the Massachusetts House of Representatives. M. McLaughlin, K. Belanger, E. Friesner all expressed appreciation for Schlachter.

### **VI. Reports of Standing Committees**

#### **A. School Committee Liaison Reports**

- B. Budget Subcommittee Update:** Lynda shared that the committee met on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at Town Hall, this was the third meeting since September and the purpose of the meeting was to get an update of the budget process for next fiscal year. Various sections of the districts have submitted their requests, with needs greater than the district can afford. The Superintendent is working with the Administrative team to prioritize needs. A crucial factor is Chapter 70 funding that the district will receive from the State. At the time of the meeting this amount is unknown, although it appears that the amount will be smaller this year than last. The next meeting is scheduled for the week of March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023. L. Pickbourn shared that these meetings have been helpful in making the budget process and concerns clearer.

#### **C. Advisory Committees**

#### **D. Site-based Committees**

- E. Report of Student Representative:** None. Junoon did try to be present but due to technical difficulties at this time in the agenda he was not in attendance.

- F. Report of Interim Superintendent:** M. McLaughlin spoke of the correspondence to go out to the community about 2/3/23 weather. He shared appreciation for the SHEA President's comments earlier and spoke of his experience that sometimes it felt that the same vision

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wasn't shared, recognized challenges, and takes the invitation to work collaboratively, affirming that we are all in this together.

- G. Report of the Chair and School Committee:** Chairperson Schlachter revisited what SHEA President shared about the collaboration for the fund our future campaign and how well the committee worked with the union. She reminded the community that the leadership in Town wants to fund the schools properly. E. Friesner commented that he joined the negotiations committee as a strong collaborator and that remains a priority as he will stand on the committee with the next round of negotiations. K. Belanger encouraged community members to pull papers for people to run for School Committee. E. Friesner reminded people that all School Committee members' emails are available on the district website and spurred anyone who might be interested to reach out to learn what the role entails.
- H. Appreciations:** J. Voyik – School Counselors & Mosier and Plains PTO. E. Friesner – SHCTV team. A. Schlachter – Dan Pease and Jackson Matos. D. Cooke – all the work to get signed contracts.

- VII. Budget Update:** M. McLaughlin commented on the number of hours that the Admin Team has devoted to this process and how collaboratively the team works. The biggest challenge recently has been assessing what are the things that would be a loss to the district if we didn't have them and what would add value if we had them. How do we move into next year and try to put some things in place that will meaningfully address challenges. He spoke about special education and the extraordinary cost of out-of-district placements and ways the team is developing to accommodate student needs in-district. J. Voyik discussed vocational positions and the District's requirement to fulfill needs if a student wants to pursue vocational education. A projected number of the student population who want to be involved in vocational education is 25-30%. A challenge the District is currently facing is the Governor's Budget is not slated to be released until March 1, 2023, due to the newly elected Governor being granted additional time to settle into office. It is typically released by the last week of January. The hope is that on February 16<sup>th</sup> the District will have a presentation illustrating District priorities and specifications, along with budget drivers. J. Voyik also mentioned potentially holding additional meetings before the Public Budget Hearing to discuss all factors. M. McLaughlin added that the Administration has been applying for grants, as well, reminding the Committee of the most recent literacy grant.
- VIII. Information concerning Chapter 70 Funding:** Jenn Voyik explained that Chapter 70 is funding South Hadley receives from the State based on a multitude on factors, such as, enrollment, special education, vocational reimbursement, socioeconomic status, etc. This is part of the increase that the School Department gets each year. There was discussion regarding the money received and charged for School Choice and Charter Schools and enrollment numbers.
- IX. Commission on Equity:** E. Friesner shared the appointments for this commission do not have to come from within the School Committee. The Committee can appoint someone and if the members' status for the School Committee changes that would not affect the position on this

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commission. Appointments are due by the end of March. Discussion on how to proceed took place. D. Cooke shared willingness to accept the one-year appointment. Lisa Wong, Town Administrator came on and shared that a flyer is being created and she will be in communication with Mark and Jenn to make sure the School Department is in the loop.

**X. Further Update on Plains Renaming Project:** M. McLaughlin was in contact with someone from DESE who provided some guidance and a form for submission. Mark and Jenn have been discussing the cost regarding signage and will provide an update at the next meeting.

**XI. Information Only: None**

**XII. Unfinished Business: None**

**XIII. New Business: None**

**XIV. Executive Session:** Chairperson Schlachter entertained a motion to end the public session and to move into executive session under M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21, section 2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.

K. Belanger so moved.

D. Cooke seconded.

E. Friesner – Aye; D. Cooke – Aye; L. Pickbourn – Aye; K. Belanger – Aye; A. Schlachter – Aye.

This motion passed unanimously.

Public session adjourned at 8:27.51p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kiesha Keitt, Executive Assistant, South Hadley Public Schools.

Date: 2/14/2023