

**South Hadley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting Minutes**

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**September 2, 2021**

*Video Conference Meeting accessible via SCTV15*

**I. Call to Order**

Noting a quorum, Chairperson A. Schlachter called the virtual School Committee Meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**In Attendance:** Allison Schlachter, Chairperson

Dr. Jahmal Mosley, Superintendent of South Hadley Public Schools

Mark McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of South Hadley Public Schools

Allyson Garcia

Charles Miles

Jen Matos

Danielle Cooke

Kaily Godek, Student Representative

Jennifer Voyik, Business Manager, South Hadley Public Schools

**Guests:**

Scott Beaulieu, President of SHEA

Hank Skala, Principal, Plains Elementary School

Cindy Flynn, Principal, Mosier Elementary School

David Gallagher, Principal, Michael E. Smith Middle School

Elizabeth Wood, Principal, South Hadley High School

**Absent:**

**II. Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes from the August 5, 2021 meeting were reviewed and motion to approve was made with the correction that C. Miles made that motion to approve the minutes by A. Garcia, seconded by C. Miles. Roll call vote conducted. Motion passed and minutes approved.

**III. Approval of Warrants**

Motion to approve warrants as read by C. Miles, seconded by D. Cooke. Motion passed unanimously: 5/0.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Amount</b>
August 3, 2021	#2022-32	\$50,688.76
August 5, 2021	Bi-Weekly	\$675,415.40
August 10, 2021	#2022-38	\$20,130.48

**South Hadley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting Minutes**

---

**September 2, 2021**

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August 17, 2021	#2022-45	\$136,752.15
August 19, 2021	Bi-Weekly	\$664,140.90
August 24, 2021	#2022-49	\$47,259.34

**IV. Reports of Standing Committees**

- a. *School Committee Liaison Reports*
- b. *Advisory Committees*
- c. *Site-Based Committees*

None.

**V. Public Comment**

A. Schlachter opened the floor for public comment, allowing virtual attendees 3 minutes each to comment for a total of 20 Minutes. Attendees were advised where the hand icon is located on the screen and were asked to raise their virtual hand and they will be promoted to panelist to speak in the order received.

Dody Haber requested more details on when the High School is reopening other than the e-mails that have been sent out. She requested what is being done and what is the plan to get the kids back in school as soon as possible.

A. Schlachter advised that this topic will be discussed in detail during this meeting.

**VI. SHEA Updates**

S. Beaulieu is excited to get back to work on all the issues we will be confronted with this year and shares concern over the High School. The educators want to be back with their students and have worked hard to adapt to the situation. No-one had control over it and we will work together as a community to get out of it. Plains, Mosier and Michael E. Smith had a great start this week. SHEA will do their part to help with the return of students and educators to the High School to a safe and wonderful learning environment.

**VII. Report of the Superintendent**

Elementary and middle School students started this week in person. It was a successful start with students excited to be back and doing a good job of wearing their masks. Administrators, SHEA and teachers are thanked for working together on the challenges of the high school. Everyone is working together to try to get through this. The community can expect to receive updates as soon as they

# South Hadley Public Schools School Committee Meeting Minutes

---

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become available. Teacher, administrators, and staff at Central Office are commended for their work in reopening all the schools.

South Hadley has moved the traditional 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks event to September 4<sup>th</sup>. At the event, free vaccinations and booster shots will be available to the public. Event details are located on the South Hadley Public Schools website and in the schools.

## **VIII. Report of the Chair and School Committee**

C. Miles read a letter advising the public of his resignation from the School Committee effective September 2, 2021. His resignation is made by a decision to prioritize his mental health and family after a vicious online attack by an extremist blogger who slandered him and posted pictures of his children. C. Miles reminded the community that all Town boards and committees are strictly volunteer and those that serve do so out of their own personal time to give back to the community.

The committee thanked C. Miles for his service to our country and town, and for serving as a role model to students and the community of the importance of prioritizing mental health.

A. Schlachter summarized the next steps for the committee. Mass General Law dictates that any committees with a vacancy of a board consisting of 2 or more members, the remaining members should give written notice to the selectman and selectwomen to fill such vacancy after roll call vote. The person appointed will be a registered voter of the Town. Accepting inquiries, Chair of the Select Board Jeff Seer will post it for a period of time in the newspaper. Interested candidates will submit their resumes and letter of interest stating why they would be a good fit to serve. A joint board meeting will be had and a roll call vote will be conducted to appoint a 5<sup>th</sup> committee member to the School Board Committee until the April election.

In April the new member would be the incumbent if they chose to run. This appointment is separate than the election. A joint board will determine the next person and that the individual will have the option to serve the remainder of C. Miles term and choose to run or not run in the next election.

**Action:** A. Schlachter will reach out to the Select Board and advise the committee of next steps.

Students are welcomed back as we kick off the new School Year. Teachers, staff, administration and central office are thanked for their hard work to reopen schools. High school teachers, staff, students and parents are acknowledged during this challenging time with the high school and have the school committee's. We will get through this. Amazing community and we will join together and get through this next hurdle.

# South Hadley Public Schools School Committee Meeting Minutes

---

**September 2, 2021**

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The school committee along with Drs. Mosley and McLaughlin and Melissa participated in a retreat. Time was spent talking and communicating around the school district. It went really well and more retreats will be held in the future.

## **IX. Report of Student Representative**

K. Godek welcomed students back to school and thanked C. Miles for his time served in the military and his contribution to South Hadley Public Schools.

The MES grant helps Plains obtain funds to buy new signage and paint their buddy bench.

The staff at Mosier worked very hard this Summer to prepare the building for the students. Students in the area went to Mosier to help clean up the courtyard. Mosier has a new theme this year "Together we are Mosier". This theme will be used throughout the year to help everyone to continue through and recover from the pandemic.

The High School has had to delay the start of the year. Students are still able to participate in extra-curricular events and connect with faculty and peers. CTEC students started school in person at Brush Hill today. Fall sports started on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Games, matches and meets will start up in

The Class of 2022 continue to have extra lawn signs and magnets for sale on a first come basis at \$5.00 per tiger paw magnet (30 are available) and \$15.00 per lawn sign (11 signs in the paw print are left and 20 of the Tiger are available). Please contact Kaily Godek to purchase at [khgodek2022@student.shschools.com](mailto:khgodek2022@student.shschools.com) or via the class Instagram page at shhs\_2022.

Sports teams and national honors society students will volunteer at the fireworks this weekend at Michael E. Smith Middle School. Student Council has put their meetings on pause over the next few days while next steps are figured out. The Music department is working to open a practice space outside so students can continue to practice as a group.

## **X. School Reopening**

### Plains Elementary School

Principal Hank Skala provided an overview of Plains School reopening plan. The first day went well with the newest tiger cubs coming on board. Given that this year's plan is very different from DESE's scripted plan last year, H. Skala reached out to other principals to learn how to keep children safe and daily in their buildings as a community. For the first time in 6 years, the school is beautifully landscaped and H. Skala thanks all who were involved to make it happen.

## **South Hadley Public Schools School Committee Meeting Minutes**

---

**September 2, 2021**

*Video Conference Meeting accessible via SCTV15*

Plains Elementary School's reopening plan is data based according to DESE and CDC guidelines. The importance of building a school community following Covid is emphasized. Student attendance will be monitored, and all resources will be utilized to get students back in school. The RTI process will be utilized to ensure emotional support is provided. Teachers will be well trained and prepared with the information and resources needed to provide for all of the children.

To keep children safe, protocols are in place to keep students in school. This includes wearing a face mask. Children and parents are doing a great job coming to school wearing them thus far. Hand Hygiene stations are posted to remind staff and students of hygiene. Students are trained in hygiene as every classroom has a bathroom. Physical distancing is being promoted and students are always with an adult to help and encourage them. Students stay in their cohort all day in the same classroom and on the playground. In the event of outbreak, teachers have seating charts in all the classrooms and the cafeteria. PPE is available if required and the school nursing staff serve as the point of contact for health questions and concerns. Students will be spaced apart in the cafeteria and it is hoped that school assemblies will be possible with protocols in place. Emotional safety is the number one priority at Plains School. Teachers have spent weeks setting up their classrooms appropriately to ensure the learning environment makes students feel good. It is important for students to make friends and feel supported. The reopening plan has been sent out to teachers and families for review and comment and it will continue to be updated as needs change. The Frequently Asked Questions section of Plains reopening plan was well received by parents and will continue to be expanded on so families know what to expect and children are engaged and happy.

### Mosier Elementary School

Principal Cindy Flynn outlined that Mosier Elementary School's reopening plan is intentionally similar to Plains Elementary School. In addition to working with other school districts to develop a plan, all parents and teachers also received a copy of Mosier Elementary School's re-opening plan. An Open House for second graders was held on Tuesday and it was wonderful to meet parents in person. The mask mandate was also implemented with a 99.9% usage rate and C. Flynn is very proud of the students. Hygiene protocols are also in place for contact tracing. Teachers are asked to pay close attention to who is working with who throughout the day to make sure everyone is OK. Mosier has extra PPE onsite. The custodial staff have worked super hard over the Summer and the building looks great. C. Flynn meets with the school nurse daily to stay updated on Covid. Teachers are making suggestions and it is a wonderful collaborative environment. At morning message, the mention of outdoor recess received overwhelming applause and it means a lot to kids to play together again.

Traffic in and out of Mosier has been difficult and the community is thanked for their patience. C. Flynn thanks SRO Josh Helms and the Chief of South Hadley Police for helping her design a protocol that ran smoothly. Cars were able to get in and out as fast as possible and the few glitches with 5-Star bus company were worked out between Bus 9 and 11. A group of students will be attending the Y Program. Little adjustments will continue to be made with dismissal procedures.

# South Hadley Public Schools

## School Committee Meeting Minutes

---

**September 2, 2021**

*Video Conference Meeting accessible via SCTV15*

All of the carpets were replaced at Mosier and some of the desks were replaced last year. The rooms look great and students are excited to be back in school. The reopening team utilized DESE's accelerated road map for guidance and all staff are available to answer questions and provide support. Classrooms are developmentally appropriate. The professional development day was spent talking about the importance of connecting with students and slowly easing into the year.

### Michael E. Smith Middle School

Principal David Gallagher shared that Michael E. Smith Middle School's reopening plan citing that it too is similar to Plains and Mosier Elementary School. D. Gallagher's re-entry team looked at academics but the social emotional component is at the forefront. Some students had not been in a school since March 2020 and it was important to community build and connect with the teachers. Restoring the Roar was developed by Assistant Principal <name>. Parents and students in grades 5th, 6th and 7<sup>th</sup> who had never been in the building were invited to come in for a drop in Open House. Students are not being evaluated on how far behind they are academically, but where they are in the moment.

The student drop-off process is going to be reviewed with SRO Josh Helms with the hope of improving the time it takes to get students into the building promptly. The first few days have gone very well.

### South Hadley High School

J. Mosely complimented Principal Elizabeth Wood on the way she has handled the change in her re-opening plan for South Hadley High School. Jennifer Voyik, Assistant Superintendent Mark McLaughlin, Assistant Principal and all the teachers at the high school are thanked for all their hard work navigating this matter.

Prefacing that the School Department does not have a Facilities Manager to help oversee and guide administration, J. Mosley and E. Wood delivered a PowerPoint presentation outlining the work and strategies that have been put together thus far. E. Wood noted that on the previous Friday, the school had a clean and stable environment, and this is known because all rooms were reviewed for a final sweep to ensure Covid standards were met.

The presentation included the timeline from finding the substance to planned next steps. From onset, the School Department took immediate action to have the substance tested. The substance quickly spread to multiple surfaces to include furniture, walls, ceilings, fabric, and flooring. Fermata Home Services was contacted to perform spore testing. The high school was closed, and communications were consistently sent to families, students and staff apprising them of the current event and what next steps entailed. This information was also posted on the South Hadley Public Schools website. The Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) was contacted for reporting purposes, guidance, and assistance.

# South Hadley Public Schools

## School Committee Meeting Minutes

---

**September 2, 2021**

*Video Conference Meeting accessible via SCTV15*

Lunches, transportation for CTEC students and Chromebook distribution arrangements were arranged. Per DESE's recent guidelines, South Hadley does not qualify for remote learning at this time and credit would not be received for number of learning hours or school days. E. Wood commends her staff for responding and adapting to the necessary changes, quickly and efficiently.

The safety of the students and staff is the priority and thorough testing was done to include spore, tape and swab tests. The spore testing results were received and posted on the SHPS website. DESE had a Facilities Manager come out to the school to assess the situation. They recommended a thorough cleaning of the building which entails several steps and processes to include a mitigation and remediation plan. Several companies have been contacted to start this process and it is hoped that a company will be available to start this Saturday.

Students and staff will not be permitted back in the building until it has been thoroughly cleaned, the mold is removed, and areas are retested. In addition to testing, the HVAC system will be looked at to ensure it is functioning properly as well. While this is being worked on, alternative locations will be explored. South Hadley is not the only community that is currently struggling with mold. To manage problems such as this, a facilities manager is needed with administrative support to oversee problems, test systems, and make capital improvements. At this time, it is not prudent or safe to have the building occupied at this time. The public is asked for their support during budget discussions and needed capital improvements.

K. Godek inquired when students will potentially return to school. E. Wood advised that a better timeline will be learned as the district continues to work with the Department of Education and the cleaning, mitigation and re-testing is done. Currently staff are working hard to ensure the building is safe for when students are able to return.

A. Garcia inquired how did the mold spread so quickly. J. Mosley advised that there were two different molds, one not being visible to the eye. E. Woods explained that mold needs certain conditions to grow, moisture, food and an air source. The last few weeks in New England has been very wet and humid and these factors concomitant with the fact that the high school abuts wetlands are all contributing factors.

A. Schlachter questioned if DESE is willing to let students stay disconnected for several weeks or will reconsideration be given to allow students to go remote? J. Mosley does not speak for DESE but articulated that it is their stance that all students in the state of Massachusetts start in person and they would like us to explore and exhaust the ability for students to start in person at the school or somewhere else at this time. Other alternative locations are currently being explored while DESE guidelines are being followed.

A Garcia asked what alternative locations the district is currently looking into. While under the COVID umbrella, students are not able to be placed in large groupings so renting out a large space is not an

**South Hadley Public Schools**  
**School Committee Meeting Minutes**

---

**September 2, 2021**

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option. Additionally, the high school furniture is not usable. Local colleges have COVID-19 vaccination requirements to be on their campus which require proof of vaccination, therefore we would need to abide to those guidelines and disclose vaccination status. By the time you figure in transportation costs to and from school, the work that needs to be done at the high school to reopen again, and required human capital, the costs are exponential.

C. Miles asked if the district would qualify for emergency repair funds.

**XI. Convocation**

Convocation took place on August 30<sup>th</sup> and Professional Development on August 31<sup>st</sup> this year. Employees participated in health and safety, civil rights, McKinney Vento and mandated reporter training. S. Beaulieu facilitated the SHEA meeting.

**XII. Board of Health Meeting**

J. Mosley attended the recent Board of Health meeting where vaccination and masking was discussed. There will be mobile vaccination Clinic on September 4<sup>th</sup> at Michael E. Smith Middle school. The event flyer is listed on the South Hadley Public Schools website.

**XIII. School Calendar Update**

The School Calendar has two revisions. The first revision is a swap in dates. Convocation was moved from 8/31 to 8/30 and as a result, professional development changed from 8/30 to 8/31/2021. The second revision is a change in start time for the High School from 7:22 am to 7:23 am. Roll call vote conducted. Motion passed and revisions to school calendar approved.

**XIV. Information Only**

J. Voyik shared

K. Godek inquired why the sign at the high school was no longer there. E. Wood advised that the sign is currently getting replaced with a new digital sign. Mountain View Landscaping is thanked for the planting they did around the sign.

**XV. Unfinished Business**

a. South Hadley Police Department Memorandum of Understanding was tabled to the next meeting.

With no further matters to discuss, the School Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

**South Hadley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting Minutes**

---

**September 2, 2021**

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The next School Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 19, 2021. It is unknown at this time whether the session will be remote or in-person.

Respectfully submitted,  
Melissa Rainville  
Executive Assistant, South Hadley Public Schools.

Reviewed and Approved by,  
Jahmal Mosley, Ed.D.  
Superintendent, South Hadley Public Schools.  
Date: 10/7/21