

South Hadley Public Schools

School Committee Meeting Minutes

February 4, 2026

Video Conference Meeting Accessible via SHCTV1 or SHCTV1.com

I. Call to Order: At 7:00pm noticing a quorum, Chair Eric Friesner called to order the hybrid South Hadley School Committee, in-person at the South Hadley Senior Center, Multi-Purpose Room and Zoom Video Conference Meeting accessible via SHCTV15 and SHCTV.com

In Attendance: Eric Friesner, Chairperson; Danielle Cooke, Vice Chairperson; Jack Witkowski, Member; Charles Miles, Member; Tracie Kennedy, Member; Jennifer Voyik, Superintendent for South Hadley Public Schools; Lyn Jacques, Assistant Superintendent for South Hadley Public Schools; Maya Thielen, Student Representative; & Zenniyah Valenzuela, Student Representative.

Guests: Amy Foley, SHEA President.

II. Public Comment: None,

III. SHEA Report: Amy Foley, SHEA President thanked District Administration for transparent communication and noted improved partnership under Jenn Voyik’s leadership. They support the \$11 million override to fully fund schools, raising concerns that budget projections include 4% expense increases while only assuming 2% salary growth, which they say does not reflect true cost-of-living pressures on educators and staff. They warn that insufficient salary growth, potential staff cuts, and comparisons to higher settlements in nearby districts could lead to losing strong educators. Amy concluded by stating that SHEA is ready to help educate the community and organize in support of passing the proposition of an override.

IV. Routine Items

A. Approval of Warrants (2 VOTES)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Warrant</u>	<u>Amount</u>
December 23, 2026	Warrant #2026-169	\$273,119.98 (2)
January 13, 2026	Warrant #2026-185	\$296,300.87 (1)
January 20, 2026	Warrant #2026-193	\$263,152.97 (2)
January 27, 2026	Warrant #2026-201	\$156,205.94 (2)
February 4, 2026	Biweekly Payroll	\$844,604.70 (2)

(VOTE #1) Vice Chair Cooke made a motion for those eligible to approve the following warrant. It is warrant dated January 13, 2026, it is warrant #2026-185 in the amount of \$296,300.87.

Jack Witkowski seconded.

Cooke – Abstain; Witkowski – Aye; Miles – Aye; Kennedy – Aye; & Friesner – Aye.

This motion passed four in favor and one abstention.

(VOTE #2) Vice Chair Cooke made a motion for those eligible to approve the following four warrants. The first is warrant dated December 23rd, 2026, it is warrant #2026-169 in the amount of \$273,119.98; the second is warrant dated January 20th, 2026, it is warrant #2026-193 in the amount of \$263,152.97; the third is warrant dated January 27th, 2026, it is warrant

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#2026-201 in the amount of \$156,205.94; and the fourth is warrant dated February 4th, 2026, it is a biweekly payroll in the amount of \$844,604.70.

Tracie Kennedy seconded the motion.

Cooke – Aye; Witkowski – Aye; Miles – Aye; Kennedy – Aye; & Friesner – Abstained.

This motion passed four in favor and one abstention.

V. Reports of Standing Committees

A. Subcommittee & Liaison Reports

1. Budget Task Force: Charles Miles presented the Budget Task Force is concluding its mandate, with its final report to be completed next week and presented at a quad board meeting on the 10th. The report will include a mix of cost-saving and revenue-generating recommendations, including a voted recommendation to pursue an \$11 million override.

2. SHES Building Project: Tracie Kennedy stated that the building project committee met last week and narrowed seven design options down to two. Both options will be shared with the community at a meeting tomorrow at 5:15 p.m. at Mosier, which will include a building tour led by Principal Flynn, followed by a presentation, a Q&A session, and an opportunity for community feedback.

a. Grade Reconfiguration Options: There are designs that include different grade configurations: grades 2–4 versus grades 1–5 and will be presented on 2/5/26 along with preliminary cost information.

B. Report of Student Representative: Provided by Maya Thielen & Zenniyah Valenzuela.

Henry J. Skala Elementary School

- Mid-year math and ELA assessments for kindergarten and first grade
- Frozen Friday spirit day
- Sweetheart Dance for students and parents (February 6)
- Spirit Week before February vacation
- First-ever electronic release of standards-based report cards
- 100th Day of School celebration

Michael E. Smith Middle School

- Term 2 student achievement celebrations
- National School Counseling Week
- Project Lead the Way Student Solve event with industry mentors (designing a winter ice rink concept)

South Hadley High School

- Wrestling team placed first at a tournament
- Boys' indoor track named Western Mass Champions
- Harlequins musical performances
- Indoor Guard performance

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- Spirit Week:
 - Monday – PJ Day
 - Tuesday – Cozy Day
 - Wednesday – Monochrome Day
 - Thursday – Valentine’s Day
 - Friday – Color Wars and school assembly

C. Report of Superintendent: Superintendent Voyik recognized the retirements of several longtime staff members, including Maureen (Senn) McNally, a veteran art teacher at South Hadley High School; Diana Goldberg, a longtime physical education and health teacher at the middle school; and Larry Sullivan, a longtime paraprofessional at the middle school. In addition, David Gallagher, assistant principal at Mosier, will retire next week. The district extends thanks and best wishes to all for their many years of dedicated service.

D. Report of the Chair and School Committee: Chair Friesner announced papers are available, at our clerk's office and town hall for the election coming up in April. Tracie Kennedy shared that Skala PTA has been chosen as the community recipient to receive a dollar for every reusable bag purchased and the Mosier PTA is hosting a BINGO Night for students and their families on 2/11/26 and MESMS has put together a Tiger Tee-off, a golf tournament on 5/17/26 with funds slated to support the Washington DC and Cape Cod Capers trips. Superintendent Voyik shared that some SHHS National Honor Society members is hosting homework and study sessions for South Hadley students as part of a community service project. The sessions will be held at the South Hadley Public Library at 2 Canal Street. Dates are listed on a flyer that will be shared in the Superintendent’s.

E. Appreciations: Lyn Jacques - students who came out and spoke on behalf of the things that they love last week; Jenn Voyik – Harlequins musical showcase.

VI. [2027 Spain/France/Italy Proposed Trip \(VOTE\)](#): Amy Foley requested approval for a Summer 2027 student travel trip, reflecting on the educational and cultural value of past experiences, including last summer’s trip to Costa Rica and Panama, which featured activities such as ziplining, cooking lessons, and a visit to an Indigenous tribe. This summer, 17 South Hadley students are scheduled to travel to Iceland and England, joined by students from other parts of the state and country. For Summer 2027, the proposed trip would run from June 20 to July 1 and travel to Spain, France, and Italy. The earlier timing is intended to make summer planning easier for students. The trip will focus on cultural and historical learning and include hands-on experiences such as a cooking lesson in Spain. Approval and support for the trip were requested, with an offer to answer questions.

(VOTE) Chair Friesner entertained a motion to accept the trip as proposed. Charles Miles so moved.

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Tracie Kennedy so moved.

Cooke – Aye; Witkowski – Aye; Miles – Aye; Kennedy – Aye; & Friesner – Aye.

This motion passed unanimously.

VII. Specialized Transportation Mid-Year Review: Mandy Dowers, Director of Transportation, provided the following update: Transportation is currently staffed with 16 drivers and 9 monitors, using 15 of 16 vans keeping one as a spare. All vehicles are up to date on inspections and maintenance. All in-district students are routed, and 30 out-of-district students are transported to 18 specialized programs, including McKinney-Vento and DCF students. The district is cost-sharing with several neighboring towns and developing a monthly invoicing system for reimbursements, with a potential new cost-sharing partnership with Granby for 2026–27 school year. Overall, the year has transitioned smoothly, with strong staff performance and operations running well. The Superintendent shared that the District is collaborating on transferring Yellow Bus Coordination to the transportation department next year, working with Five Star directly.

VIII. [2026-2027 Calendar](#) (VOTE): Superintendent Voyik stated three calendar options were presented to the School Committee and shared with staff for feedback due to the unusually late Labor Day and the potential impact on the typical start of the school year. Historically, the district has started in the last full week of August. Based on the feedback, the recommendation is to proceed with the first day of school being 8/27/26, maintaining the traditional calendar structure.

(VOTE) Chair Friesner entertained a motion to accept option 3 for the school calendar for 2026-2027.

Vice Chair Cooke so moved.

Tracie Kennedy seconded.

Cooke – Aye; Witkowski – Aye; Miles – Aye; Kennedy – Aye; & Friesner – Aye.

This motion passed unanimously.

IX. FY27 Continued Budget Discussion: Superintendent Voyik shared a key Quad Board meeting on Tuesday, 2/10/26, including the Select Board, School Committee, Appropriations, and Capital Planning, featuring the Budget Task Force presenting its recommendations, including a likely \$11 million override, and discussion about whether to call a special town meeting. The district has been reviewing multiple budget scenarios, including the deficit budget (\$3M) and higher override options (\$6M, \$9M, and \$11M). With the \$11M option, the focus will shift to examining level funding and identifying potential strategic growth areas, such as attracting students back from other districts or charter schools and responding to parent survey feedback. This work will continue over the next few weeks, particularly during February break. A final budget presentation and binder will be prepared and posted on the district website ahead

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of the March 4th public budget hearing. The Superintendent plans to advocate for school needs and present a clear outline of what the district requires to be successful in the 2026–27 school year.

X. Policy Review: AD, ADDA, & ADDA-R (VOTE): Superintendent Voyik reviewed these policies highlighting the minor changes to each. Discussion took place regarding policy AD and it will be looked at further by the district and presented to the School Committee later.

(VOTE) Chair Friesner entertained a motion to reaffirm policies ADDA & ADDA-R.

Tracie Kennedy so moved.

Danielle Cooke seconded.

Cooke – Aye; Witkowski – Aye; Miles – Aye; Kennedy – Aye; & Friesner – Aye.

This motion passed unanimously.

XI. Information Only: There will be a Quad Board meeting on 2/10/2026 and the next School Committee meeting is 3/4/2026, both are hybrid.

XII. Unfinished Business: None.

XIII. New Business: None.

XIV. Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, section 21(a)(3): To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares (Demand Letter, Superior Court Finding)

(VOTE) Chair Friesner entertained a motion to leave our public meeting. We will not be returning, and we would go into executive session pursuant to Mass General Law C30A, Section 21A3, to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares, and that is pursuant to a demand letter and a Superior Court finding, that would be the School Committee, joined by the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, and by legal counsel, Kimberly Roche.

Jack Witkowski so moved.

Tracie Kennedy seconded.

Cooke – Aye; Witkowski – Aye; Miles – Aye; Kennedy – Aye; & Friesner – Aye.

This motion passed unanimously and the public portion of the meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Kiesha Keitt, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent.

Reviewed and approved by the School Committee on March 4, 2026.