

South Hadley Public Schools School Committee Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2022

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 6:00 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

Jennifer Matos, Assistant Chairperson

Danielle Cooke, Member

Eric Friesner, Member

Lynda Pickbourn, Member

Kaily Godek, Student Representative

Mark McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of the South Hadley Public Schools

Jennifer Voyik, Business Manager, South Hadley Public Schools

Guests: Amy Foley, President of SHEA

Absent: Dr. Jahmal Mosley, Superintendent of the South Hadley Public Schools

II. Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Schlachter confirmed the review of the minutes from February 17, 2022. She entertained a motion from Jen Matos to accept the minutes, which was seconded by Lynda Pickbourn. No further discussion. Motion passed: 5/0 (Matos, Cooke, Friesner, Pickbourn and Schlachter).

III. Approval of Warrants

Jennifer Matos read for approval the following Warrants and Bi-Weekly Payroll. Jen Matos made a motion for approval of said warrants. It was moved by Jen Matos and second by Danielle Cooke. No further discussion. Motion passed: 5/0 (Matos, Cooke, Friesner, Pickbourn and Schlachter).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Amount</u>
March 1, 2022	Warrant #2022-207	\$58,612.74
March 3, 2022	Bi-Weekly Payroll	\$737,591.69
March 8, 2022	Warrant #2022-214	\$323,897.34

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IV. Reports of Standing Committees

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

Racial Justice Task Force

Jen Matos states that the Racial Justice Task Force has been working with The Collaborative for Educational Services of Northampton. Principal Liz Wood has been a point person. They are working on having a training for the School Committee that will be two (2) parts. One part will be Listening Session and the other will be Social Justice one-on-one session so we can all have the same vocabulary as we move forward in our DEI work.

Jen Matos provided a **FUN FACT** with regards to the biological and solidarity connections between the Irish and the Puerto Rican.

Capital Planning Sub-Committee

Eric Friesner states that Capital Planning is in the process of hearing every department's budgets. The School Department will present their capital improvement suggestions or requests on March 28th between 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Chairperson Schlachter stated her appreciation for Eric Friesner attending those meetings.

Contract Negotiations Sub-Committee

Eric Friesner states that negotiations continue to move along. We are agreeing on things. Everybody is working together. It's nice we're moving along there.

Budget Sub-Committee

Lynda Pickbourn confirmed that they had the Budget meeting last week. They had a slightly more detailed look at the budget that we will discuss in length during this meeting.

Anti-Bullying Coalition

Danielle Cooke states that they are still looking for volunteers to join them for the Anti-Bullying Coalition work. They only have a few RSVPs for their first potential meeting that is set for next Thursday. We are hoping to get more interest. If anyone knows anyone or if there is any staff interested in participating, please let them know so they can start working on the new mission that they sent out.

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Chairperson Schlachter stated that they are a very busy committee with regards to sub-committees. She's proud that they are very active. She realizes that it could very easy not to be since they are time intensive, outside of the regular school committee duties. She thanked all of the members for being involved and putting in those extra hours and days for this commitment. She confirmed no further discussion.

V. Detailed Budget Review for FY23

Chairperson Schlachter thanked Dr. Mark McLaughlin and Jennifer Voyik, Business Manager their assistance in providing a full picture of the budget. They hear all the work that's being done. At the end of their presentation, they will have a moment to make public comment on what they hear this evening and what they have observed over the last couple of meetings.

Once they have completed public comment, the committee will have a moment to discuss, make comment, share ideas and thoughts. Then they will take a vote.

Chairperson Schlachter wants to make it very clear that the vote on the bottom-line number for the school budget. A school budget is a living, breathing document. It's a document that will likely change shape over the next several weeks as we prepare for Town Meeting and even throughout the school year until all the money is spent. There's flexibility to the budget. They are focusing on hearing about where they stand, as well as all the ins and outs of it. The vote will be on the bottom line.

Jennifer Voyik and Dr. Mark McLaughlin provided a detailed description of the FY23 Budget (see attached presentation). During and following the presentation they responded to the School Committee Members comments, questions, and concerns:

Chairperson Schlachter stated that there was a comment that the way the presentation was organized was very helpful. Danielle Cooke agreed and appreciated the acknowledgment of the Town Administrator and Selectboard for their roles, which is very important.

- **Linda Pickbourn wasn't familiar with the term "circuit breaker" and requested clarification.**
 - *Jennifer Voyik responded that "circuit breaker" is a reimbursement for special education tuition. Basically, there's a threshold. For example, if we spend ~\$47,000, anything above that \$47,000 is eligible for reimbursement from the State. We get seventy-five (75%) percent of that back. That comes in the following year; and then the District can use those funds to help support some of the special education costs in the following year.*

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- **Chairperson Schlachter asked with the circuit breaker we're always a year behind, so it's not necessarily matching the need of the year prior.**
 - *Jennifer Voyik explains that the goal is that you can carry up to a year of circuit breaker reimbursement. So we had built that up over the last couple of years. What's nice about being able to do that is that you know what you have. As an example: In this year, we took in over Five Hundred Thousand and 00/100 (\$500,000.00) Dollars so I know for next year, we have over \$500,000 available. Then during that next year, you get your reimbursement back and you know what you have for the following year. That's not always possible and a lot of districts can't operate like that, but that's the goal for planning if you can do it.*
- *Chairperson Schlachter asked if you weren't planning for it, you would spend that money right away and not have it for the following year if you weren't planning ahead?*
 - *Jenn Voyik confirmed that's right. It comes in quarterly payments so you don't know what your final reimbursement will be until July /August, which is when Beth Cooke would submit all of the paperwork. You would be estimating based on what you spent this year, how much you should be getting. It's a risk.*

Chairperson Schlachter thanked Lynda Pickbourn for that question. She thinks that most of the people watching would like to know that information.

- **Danielle Cooke asked if we have more applications for School Choice than we can sustain for the current positions or do we need to do more to get more School Choice people interested?**
 - Jennifer Voyik believes that we would need to open up some additional slots. When you look at our enrollment by grade, a lot of our enrollment numbers are in the high school right now. So over the last couple of years they have graduated off. We haven't filled back in those numbers at the lower levels. She states that we have to take a look at it to decide which way do we want to go, because if we want to keep sustaining paying these salaries then we have to open up additional slots at the lower levels.
- Lynda Pickbourn asked if our applications have gone up or down for the District?
 - Jenn Voyik stated that she thinks they stayed pretty sustainable, but she differed to Dr. Mark McLaughlin.
 - Dr. McLaughlin states that there is a decline, but he would not say it's a significant decline in applications. Right now, there's a bit of an uptick and we haven't even

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posted yet, since we haven't brought our recommendations to the School Committee. It seems interest generated by people just calling into Central Office to get information about when that will be posted and if the applications are open. He could suggest that there might be an uptick this year, but what he would reiterate is what Danielle Cooke mentioned, it's really a "chicken and egg" situation. Because of the current staffing, we are somewhat hand-strung by being able to offer more school choice. Given the fact that there are other variables like the number of students that move into South Hadley in any given year that we wouldn't necessarily know of now. Also, the number of the students that have Homeschooled. It could well be a number of those students could choose to come back. We wouldn't know that right now. Also, a number of students that have gone to charter schools and the like, so it's a little bit tricky to guess what those numbers might be, but we have to imagine there has to be some. Recognizing the importance of School Choice to the financial position is complicated by the realities of how many we can take due to the current staffing. It's not as simple as it might seem.

- **Chairperson Schlachter asked what is the schedule for that money to come into the district?**
 - *Jennifer Voyik responded that once the approval has come through, we get ten (10%) percent of that funding up front. Then each month as the District spends that money, you report with the Grantium website and request funding based on how much has been spent. For example, we spend \$20k and you get the approved amount of the grant. Then It's as you spend the grant, you get the funding sent to you.*

- **Chairperson Schlachter asked how long into the future do we have Esser?**
 - *Jenn Voyik Esser I will be all done; Esser II will be all done; and Esser III the only remaining amount we will have left going into next fiscal year is a partial salary for Assistant Director. She also put COVID-19 supplies because we currently have \$20-25,000 budgeted and they don't know what's going to be spent in FY23. It could potentially be something that could still be available basically the end of this upcoming year, all of the COVID /Esser money will be gone.*

- **Chairperson Schlachter asked if we knew how much in Esser we are spending in salaries? What do we do next year when that money is gone?**
 - *Jenn Voyik stated that she could get those numbers for them. There's a significant amount on Esser III and that's a main concern.*
 - *Dr. McLaughlin added that a lot of Esser funding was geared towards helping school districts account for or accommodate to learning loss resulted from the pandemic.*

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The idea is that learning loss, hopefully, is not going to be permanent. That all districts will be able to meet the challenge of regaining some of the last momentum through the use of some of the funds available in Esser. The idea being that then you can keep going. However, one of the things that schools have started to recognize is that some of the kinds of supports that students have needed through Esser are the same kinds of supports that are needed in any good school system as part of a sustaining initiative for teaching and learning. While they might have been born out of COVID need, they exist anyway. The Esser monies that were used, were provided to districts for that purpose. It's a bit of a misnomer to suggest that need just goes away automatically because the COVID pandemic has subsided a little bit. Chairperson Schlachter agrees with Dr. McLaughlin's points about the needs never going away moving forward.

- *Jennifer Voyik confirmed that approximately \$923,000 of the Esser III out of the \$1.5 million dollars is tied to salaries. Chairperson Schlachter states that it's startling.*
- *Jen Matos commented for the committee as a placeholder, she's always curious when families leave the district – Why? What can they do to get them back? What do we need to do that's different and innovative to make our district more attractive? That's a conversation more for later, but she wanted to put a placeholder so they can think about it.*
- *Danielle Cooke wanted to piggyback off of Jen Matos' statement. We are seeing a lot of the vocational teachers. A lot of great things that will hopefully be in that same direction. For a staffing decision, last year they heard a presentation about adding a .5 position for the Preschool Early Education Coordinator position. She believes there's a staff member that is half-time doing it and half-time being a teacher. When they heard that presentation, it was presented that our preschool tuition was to help support that; and ideally that position would be full-time moving forward. Do either of you have any information on that, is it staying where it's at? But as far as placeholder, putting it out there that she would like to have that be an update from Special Education. She thinks it's important that they don't lose sight of it, too.*
 - *Jennifer Voyik responded that it's still currently a .5 position; and that's what it's budgeted for FY23. The hope is that we can fund that .5 definitely from the revolving account and if we can fund the other .5 on the local budget. There's not enough tuition to support a full-time position for that... Maybe a .6 or .7, not a full-time. The only way we would be able to increase that is if we had additional preschool classrooms or we raised tuition costs. There are only so many peer slots for*

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preschool, we are probably at what we are going to get next year as well as far as tuition.

- **Chairperson Schlachter asked if we added another .5 position, does that mean we wouldn't have to provide benefits package.**
 - *Jenn Voyik states that it depends that by adding the .5 last year, we had to add an extra person because we needed a .5 preschool teacher to add an extra class. Potentially, you're adding benefits because of that. If someone that is already in the district became that 1.0; and in theory the person that is a .5 becomes a full-time preschool teacher, then you're not adding any benefits.*

- **Lynda Pickbourn asked when students live in South Hadley School Choice from other districts, does that impact Chapter 70 funding? Also, do we keep track of the number of students living in the district attend other districts?**
 - *Jennifer Voyik responded that we have a Data Specialist that reports to the State each year the number of students that are attending school in other districts.*
 - *She continued that the South Hadley School District has been very lucky because it doesn't happen for every district in the state. Currently, the Town does not penalize us for our School Choice students that choice out. We get the funding for School Choice in, which comes through a separate revolving account that the school can use to pay for salaries. It's not the same for other districts across the state.*

- **Eric Friesner first wanted to thank Jennifer Voyik for her hard work on the presentation; and Lisa Wong, Town Administrator for their collaboration to help find money for the schools. He continued that the funding that came from the Town, some if it was being used to pay for the benefits package for twelve (12) new employees. We don't have a lot of those new employees coming in right now. Is there an opportunity to go back to the Town and say that this money is going into existing budget, not new hires, can we get an extra One Hundred Thousand and 00/100 (\$100,000.00) Dollars.**
 - *Jennifer Voyik responded that would have to be discussed with Town Administrator, Lisa Wong and she's not sure what she would say on this matter. However, her concern would be that if any of these grant funded positions that are not on the local budget but they are new positions, choose to get benefits, that still effects the Town benefits side.*

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- **Eric Friesner stated that he realized that they had a decrease in one of the lines because the Racial Justice Task Force had Fifteen Thousand and 00/100 (\$15,000.00) Dollars for a program for last year. Do we have any money for any Racial Justice Task Force or DEI work this year? It has been one of our stated goals for the whole district and wants to make sure there is some funding for goals that may come up.**
 - *Jennifer Voyik stated that there are a couple of different spots that we have for professional development for next year. We funded Twenty Thousand and 00/100 (\$20,000.00) Dollars on actual local budget, but Dr. McLaughlin also has some initiatives that he has coming up that he funded specifically for professional development on Esser III. She doesn't know for sure and doesn't want to speak for Dr. McLaughlin, but between both of those funding sources that we would be able to discuss and find a way to make sure that we would be able to continue that work.*
 - *Dr. McLaughlin continued that this year we have in our partnership with The Collaborative for Educational Services, we are in the halfway point. We have three (3) more professional development dates and they have all been exclusively for social and emotional learning, particularly getting back into the school setting for students, teachers and staff. Learning strategies to deal with the new challenges students are presenting and to do so proactively and supportively. That will certainly sustain us through the year. He states what's challenging is to plan ahead so that one could have something that we can financially commit to a multi-year effort along this line or any effort. It's heavily dependent on grant funding. Can we sustain long-term... It's certainly the will of the district and the school committee, but it begs the question if we have the financial withhold to plan deep into the future to build upon past successes and new challenges that emerge.*
 - *Jen Matos stated that one of the ways that the need for the funding almost becomes obsolete is that we should be able to create our own training so that even the Racial Justice Task Force could be the ones trained to provide the training. So that we have a program that exists within the sub-committee to deliver that program.*
 - *Dr. McLaughlin agrees with that process, but a training requires time and we have a small amount of time to put teachers in front of trainers. Not to say it's an impossible thing, but to be realistic in our conversations, he would just add that may be a potential problem, which could be overcome, but it's a potential challenge.*
- **Eric Friesner states that we're really heavily grant funded for things that we're going to need funds for next year. It's his assumption that it's going to cause problems next year. Is there anyway out of that this year or do we need all of that funded by Esser?**

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- *Jenn Voyik thinks there's an opportunity to sit with all building administrators and really take another look and see if there are some areas that we can see to work together to try and help soften the challenges that the district will face next year when it runs out of this Esser funding.*
- **Chairperson Schlachter stated that it's really troubling. We may have to cut about a million dollars as we have in the past.**
 - *Jenn Voyik thinks that we need to look at classroom sizes and take a look at everything from the beginning as a team to see what adjustments need to be made. She feels like there's opportunity there to move some things. She also thinks that if we look at the end of this year to see if there's some room at the end of the year to shift some salaries off of School Choice. She thinks there's some things, but the budget can't just be voted on and be done with... She thinks that we need to continue to work on it and continue to look and see what adjustments can be made so that we're not in a huge cutting position next year. That's where we don't want to be.*
 - *Chairperson Schlachter repeated that Ms. Voyik was stating that we should start looking at the budget right away and not wait until the next budget cycle. She agrees that's a wise idea.*
- **Lynda Pickbourn asked if there are other sources of grant funding? She's not advocating for putting people's positions permanently on grant funds, but are there grants that we could apply for that would help increase the revenue stream into the district?**
 - *Jennifer Voyik responded that they had talked two (2) years ago for a Grant position that would not only manage grants, but also hunt for new grants. Someone that would have the time to research what's out there and a lot of these are competitive grants so you really need someone who can spend the time doing that research. There are opportunities and a lot of them are one or two year grants. There's not a ton of multi-year, so a lot of them will be short-term, but there's many of them out there, it's just having the staffing situation again.*
 - *Dr. McLaughlin continued that the even the entitlement grants that it would be folly to think that they will always be at the rates that they are now. He has been in positions before where he has become used to certain entitlement funding and programs that had become established and fixed based on those grants, had to be adjusted when one year they received a very significant multi-digit decrease. He thinks that the idea that these will be perpetually sustaining, and they may be, and*

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have been, are also subject to fluctuation. Just bearing that in mind as we have these future conversations that it's just the reality of the ground that we're treading.

- **Danielle Cooke asked with the spirit that you will go back to administrators to see what would be important to add, does it make more sense to add less so we can sustain longer or add all of these things for a short-term?**
 - *Jennifer Voyik responded "Yes".*

- **Eric Friesner asked when we would decide on School Choice. When is that conversation?**
 - *Dr. McLaughlin is working with the Leadership Team and the Executive Assistant and we will be prepared to provide those recommendations by the next meeting. It is his understanding that the Administration presents it can sustain through School Choice; and the School Choice exercises it's prerogative to do whatever it chooses with that information. Then we would make the posting to reach surrounding areas for a period of time by sometime in May. We have a significant number of people who are interested in the School Choice program.*
 - *Jennifer Voyik stated that the funding for those School Choice students will not go into effect until FY24. We are always a year behind.*

- **Danielle Cooke confirmed that the spots were a lottery system?**
 - *Jennifer Voyik confirmed that it's a lottery system. You have the slots available by grade and put them in a hat. You would pick out those number of applicants and they would be offered a School Choice slot. Whether they accept or decline, then you would move on to the next person in line and offer them the position.*

- **Danielle Cooke asked if there anything that prioritizes siblings, if there was a sibling already School Choice in a different grade or its full lottery?**
 - *Dr. McLaughlin stated that the lottery has been impressed on him as being very important. We really can not promise anything to anyone because that would take the idea of the lottery out of it. By assigning a slot through means other than a lottery, which we really have to be careful. It would make sense for one child to come into the district that all should be able to do so, but we can not promise that at all. It really can't be done.*

Chairperson Schlachter and Jennifer Voyik provided summarized the discussion. Then she entertained a motion to accept the budget request of \$23,626,460.00 as discussed per the presentation. This motion was moved by Jen Matos and seconded by Eric Friesner. No further discussion. Motion passed: 5/0 (Matos, Cooke, Friesner, Pickbourn and Schlachter).

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Chairperson Schlactor congratulated Jennifer Voyik and Dr. Mark McLaughlin for the presentation and great discussion. She appreciated all of their answers to the questions.

VI. Public Comment

No Public Comments with regards to the Budget. No Public Comment on any other subject.

VII. Discussion and Action Items

a. SHEA Updates

Amy Foley, SHEA President, stated that as she sat down to put her update together, she struggled on what she planned to say during the meeting because she was feeling very frustrated. She also believes that she probably shares on some level the same frustration as the School Committee and the District Leadership. She thanked Dr. Mosley, Dr. McLaughlin, Jenn Voyik, and the School Administrators for their hard work in developing the budget. She knows it's not an easy process.

Yesterday, Union leadership was able to meet with Dr. Mosley to discuss the budget and his revisions to the original budget proposal. She really appreciates the opportunity to have that open communication with the District Leadership. To say they were disappointed would be an understatement. There are so many things that our districts need that would directly benefit our children that are not going to be funded this year. For the last ten (10) years or so, they have suffered devastating cuts. Our schools had staggering needs before the pandemic hit and these have only been exacerbated. For example, in the last normal school year of 2018-2019, our school nurses saw over 18,500 office visits, almost 7,500 visits for medication, almost 7,500 visits for treatments, over 8,700 administrative visits (i.e., parents dropping off medications) and over 4,000 screenings for a total of 46,288 visits to their offices. This doesn't account for data entry, parent communications, individualized healthcare plans, state reports and much more. We need CNA positions and Floating Nurses long before COVID hit, and we now need these added positions to remain permanent.

In the last twenty-five (25) plus years, we have had no permanent additions to the nursing staff. All of this work has been done, for the most part, by just four (4) nurses. It's absolutely necessary that the added positions remain permanently. The nurses are just one example, we pay a good number of our support staff just over \$12 / hour and the turnover and the inability to fill these vacancies is out of control. The loss of administrator position and teacher positions over the years, has caused others to have to pick up the workload. Our service providers have unmanageable caseloads. We have special educators who are

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overworked. She provided examples of these issues. We find that when we hire Special Educators, they have very little experience in completing evaluations because South Hadley's motto is outdated. Other districts hire Team Leaders to complete IEP obligations, so their Special Educators can focus on teaching their students. This is a direction in which our district needs to head. All of these conditions and more existed before the pandemic and now feel even heavier with the weight and effects of COVID. On top of that, there's also a teacher shortage. There's not only a nationwide shortage, this is happening in our district. Teachers are leaving. Seven (7) teachers have left or in the process of leaving Mosier School this year. For the first time ever, teachers with years of experience are sought after. No longer are districts settling for new teachers whose low pay benefits their budgets. Experienced teachers can look for jobs with the expectation of receiving salary and benefits that are in line with their years of experience. If we want to keep the exemplary teachers we have, we need to make a financial commitment to them to keep them in South Hadley.

She knows this sounds grim and she's not here to play the blame game. She's actually here to fight alongside you for our students. The situation is dire. She's here to tell you that SHEA's willing to do all that they can do to help you educate the town leaders and the town meeting members on the extreme need to fully fund our schools, not just this year, but in the future especially when the ESSER Funds are no longer available.

Chairperson Schlachter said that SHEA's statement was powerful. Jen Matos stated that it goes to what was discussed earlier as to what's working and what's not. We need to have a diagnostic outlook on what we need to keep people here.

Jennifer Voyik stated that she can't address all of Amy Foley's concerns, but she would like to address the Health Services Department. Mary Walsh the new Director of Health Services has been fighting hard for that department. She may not have had a moment to discuss it with her staff, but they have been working on getting a Workforce Health Service Grant, which will bring in \$100,000 for health services for the next two years. It would involve keeping the two (2) Float Nurses, they would be funded partially on ESSER and partially on this grant for the next two (2) years. Also, keeping one (1) CNA in the district. She hopes that any of our nurses that work so hard with everything going on... she hopes she hears that. Mary Walsh has definitely been advocating to make sure that the health services department remains strong for the next two (2) years, and we will do everything that we can in our power to try and continue to support that in future years after it.

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Chairperson Schlachter she appreciates what the nurses go through. They have heard from them a lot and we have as a committee made a lot of steps in regards to that and just having Mary Walsh onboard and creating an entirely new position for her. She knows that a lot of the things that would have been falling to the nurses, she has been able to absorb. She knows that being in a school and being in education, it's exacerbating there feels like there are never enough resources. There is so much happening, and people are exhausted. She knows that caseloads are big, and people are stretched thin. She would be interested to hear about some of those other towns, which ones are providing some of those financial incentives and how they're doing that... This is not a wealthy time for schools, and she wonders with all that the schools have to pay for, it feels like difficult to work through the budget. It broke our heart a little bit for some of the things that were could not fund. She wonders how people are funding necessary positions. She asked Jennifer Voyik how that could happen. Jenn Voyik responded that it depends on the town and what contribution there is because the funding formula is all based on enrollment and low income. Therefore, districts like South Hadley that are in between, we are not getting contributions and rely on our town to supplement, and they are doing the best they can. She would love to hear that too. Maybe initiating conversations with some other Business Administrators in Western Mass and seeing if there are some things that other districts are doing that we haven't thought of yet. There is always room to learn and collaborate and get new ideas. Maybe part of our budget analysis is to reach out to other areas and get some ideas. Chairperson Schlachter agrees and reiterates that we will be committed to fund every department as much as we can. They will keep trying to do right by our teachers and especially by our students in South Hadley.

b. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Mosley was unable to attend so there was no Superintendent's Report.

c. Report of the Chair and School Committee

Chairperson Schlachter does not have a Report of the Chair and School Committee at this time.

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d. Report of Student Representative

Kaily Godek provided the following information with regards to the South Hadley Public Schools:

- **Plains**
 - Nothing to Report
- **Mosier**
 - Kindness Month continues on at Mosier with many classroom and whole school activities. Even teachers were showered with Kindness (Hershey's) Kisses one day.
- **MESMS**
 - The upcoming production of *The Lion King Jr.* is only 2 weeks away. The first performance is on March 31st.
- **SHHS**
 - 2022 Beijing Paralympics
 - Congratulations to Kyle Zych, an SHHS alum, for winning a gold medal in Sled Hockey.
 - Athletics
 - **Congratulations!**
 - **Football**
 - Congratulations to Ish Flores for being awarded the Joe Schebieli award for Best Offensive Linemen in Western Mass!
 - Congratulations to Jake Jackson for being awarded the Ed Healey award for Best Defensive Linemen in Western Mass! Jake was also awarded the Archie Roberts award for being the top academic football player in Western Mass, along with being named to the all-academic team in Western Mass!
 - Congratulations to Evan Piquette for also being named to the all-academic team in Western Mass!
 - **Indoor Track and Field**
 - Congratulations to indoor track and field senior, Jonas Clarke for placing 3rd in the 60-meter run in the New Balance National this past Sunday!
 - Congratulations to indoor track and field junior Emma Sanford for competing in the New Balance Nationals in the high jump this past weekend!
 - Congratulations to the 4x200 relay team for competing in the Nike Indoor Nationals! The relay team consisted of Senior Bella Alcaraz, Junior Emma Sanford,

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Sophomore Lauren Marjanski, and Freshmen Abby Gelinas.

- Signings
 - Football senior, Jake Jackson, has committed to playing football for the next 4 years at Bentley University. Congrats Jake!
 - Girl's Soccer senior, Elyse Manzi, has committed to playing soccer for the next 4 years at UMass Boston. Congrats Elyse!
- Spring Sports
 - Spring sports practice starts on Monday 3/21.
- Winter Sports
 - Our Winter Sports season came to an end on Tuesday when the girls' basketball team lost to #4 Amesbury in the Final Four. Congrats to all of the athletes, coaches, and managers for a wonderful season and an amazing run in the state playoffs.
- Class of 2022
 - The Class of 2022 has extra lawn signs and magnets for sale. There are a limited number of signs and magnets up for grabs and it will be first come first serve. Magnets are \$5 and lawn signs are \$15. Please reach out to Kaily Godek at khgodek2022@student.shschools.com to get your sign(s) or magnet(s) today.
- Clothing Drive
 - SHHS sophomore, Jenna Bobrowski will be running a clothing drive from March 21st to March 31st with a drop-off box located in the entryway of the high school. All donations will support the Cradles to Crayons organization.
- Prom
 - The Junior/Senior Prom will be held on Saturday 5/7 from 6-10 pm at the Log Cabin in Holyoke.
- SHImprov
 - SHHS's own Improv troop, "SHImprov," will be having a show on Friday 3/18 at 6 pm in the SHHS auditorium.

Chairperson Schlachter provided additional details about the production of Lion King, Jr. starting March 31st, April 1st, April 2nd and April 3rd at Michael E. Smith Middle School.

e. Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Awards

Dr. Mark McLaughlin discussed the recipients of the Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Awards recipients: Jennifer Weeks, Mosier and Brooks Holmes, MESMS. He briefly discussed statements about each award winner.

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Jennifer Weeks (Grade 4, Mosier Elementary School) is an exemplary teacher at Mosier School. She is a leader amongst her peers and is a pillar of hope and strength in our educational community, especially through the global pandemic that we have all been living through. Jennifer is nine (9) year veteran of the school. Her attendance is exemplary; and her evaluation ratings have always fall within the proficiency and exemplary range. Her commitment to her educational community is extraordinary as she is always willing to tackle whatever stands in the way of students' success. Jennifer is an excellent teacher. Her students come first and she is willing to embrace new teaching techniques and philosophies that may help her students find more success. She is often found circling her classroom attending to each students needs and using every moment as a teachable moment. Her classroom climate is one of joy and kindness and the expectation of respect for all is ever present. Jennifer is a colleague who cares and is always willing to go the extra mile. She works hard to advocate for her peers and their success. Simply put, Jen is a great teacher who so many of us aspire to be. The Assistant Superintendent, Mark McLaughlin and the School Committee offered their congratulations to Jennifer Weeks.

Dr. Mark McLaughlin continued to discuss our Music Director at Michael E. Smith Middle School, Brooks Holmes, who has been employed at South Hadley Schools since 2005 as the elementary and middle school band instructor. Since that time, he has connected hundreds of students to musical instruments and positively impacted our community. Whether working with elementary or middle-aged students, the enthusiasm that Brooks brings to his teaching is infectious. He wants students to learn how to play an instrument, but above all, he wants students to LOVE playing their instrument. If one has been fortunate enough to spend time in Mr. Holmes classroom or attend a performance of one of his many bands, the excitement is mirrored by the students. Mr. Holmes has been a wonderful advocate of honing his students talents with the local community. Mr. Holmes has been involved with Flag Day celebrations, Memorial Day parades, concerts for members of our Senior Center, Raising money for St. Jude Children's Hospital and has lent his talent for the somber memorial that is Veteran's Day. In each of these instances, Mr. Holmes demonstrates professionalism to his craft and the ability to know what the moment requires. The past two (2) years have been difficult for educators, especially those who teach hands-on programs. Brooks developed strategies and collaborated with peers to design a remote music program. The program included evening classes, novel ways to share live music and a virtual concert. Watching the faces of the assembled families as they watched their students play was priceless. The hours of collecting and syncing all of the individual performances were immediately made worthwhile. We are now back in school and it is wonderful once again to hear the sounds of music emanating from Brooks Holmes

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classroom. Dr. McLaughlin congratulated both Jennifer Weeks and Brooks Holmes for being Pioneer Valley's Teachers of Excellence.

Chairperson Schlachter thanked Dr. McLaughlin for discussion and acknowledge how great both of those teachers are and her personal connection with each of them. She says we are so lucky to have them in South Hadley.

Jen Matos stated how great it was to be a teacher and to have these teachers with us.

Danielle Cooke states that her child, Jack, currently has Jennifer Weeks and she had her sold on her classroom style from her first email. She's a super-inclusive person and definitely a role model for all teachers.

f. Donation to MESMS Music Department (vote)

Chairperson Schlachter read a letter from a retired employee, Muriel Moner, outlining the contribution of an electric guitar from her stepson to Michael E. Smith Middle School Music Department, Brook Holmes (Director). She appreciates it when they receive these generous donations when others think of the public schools.

Chairperson Schlachter entertained a motion to except the donation of the electronic guitar to the Music Department of the Michael E. Smith Middle School. The motion was moved by Eric Friesner and second by Danielle Cooke. No further discussion. Motion passed: 5/0 (Matos, Cooke, Friesner, Pickbourn and Schlachter).

g. School Committee Return to In-Person Meetings

Chairperson Schlachter briefly discussed with the members of the School Committee their thoughts and concerns about returning to in-person meetings. The mask mandate has been lifted; the schools are open; and the Governor states that they do not have to meet in person until approximately July 2022.

Eric Friesner asked what does that look like? Would it be hybrid? Would everyone meet in person? What can SHCTV15 do for us? Chairperson Schlachter stated that she would have to talk to Dan Pease. Her understanding is that it would be at the new senior center and there would be a hybrid option. The idea would be that the committee would come together and be together along with our school department representatives. When necessary, someone could join in a hybrid / virtual session. Also, public comment could be

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virtual. Chairperson Schlachter explained that hybrid would be partially in person and partially virtual.

Jen Matos states that she's sensitive to the fact that members of our committee have families. She states that COVID took a lot, but it also introduced a bunch of ways to be flexible. She thinks the option for the public to join virtually is a great thing because not every person can attend in person for different reasons. If we're moving toward a DEI model on how to run the district, she believes that's important to keep in mind. Especially on how we are being accommodating, flexible and keeping all types of family's needs in mind that also includes the School Committee. She is curious what the flexibility part looks like. Chairperson Schlachter clarified if she meant the flexibility of the group to make choices to meet in person from meeting-to-meeting. Committee discussed various scenarios. Eric Friesner extended on Jen Matos statement that it's not just extenuating circumstances or vacations, but it could be single parents, or families with one spouse working that may need that hybrid option, not just for public comment. He understands that there are rules. He realizes that the School Committee has to have an in-person quorum. He thinks that at least the Chair has to be there, but what other flexibility is available to leave people an opportunity to contribute that wouldn't be able to if it was fully enforced as it was before. Lynda Pickbourn agrees that's important for inclusion in the community. That there's a hybrid option so people can participate in meetings that are not able to attend in person. Chairperson confirms that she is hearing from the committee that the hybrid option is very important just to meet the needs of all of their different family circumstances as well as the community. She wanted to reach out and see what the Selectboard was doing before bringing this to a vote. The last she heard was that the School Committee was able to meet in this format at least until the summer at this point. They are not aware if it will go totally away after the extension. Chairperson Schlachter plans to speak with the union. They discussed the options throughout the committee including how it would impact the student representative and whether they would be able to attend in-person or hybrid in future meetings to provide flexibility. They will also discuss with Dan Pease at SHCTV15 with regards to the hybrid (ZOOM room) at the South Hadley Senior Center to make it easier for the Town Committees and the SHCTV15 camera crew.

VIII. Information Only

None.

IX. Unfinished Business

None.

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X. New Business

None.

Chairperson Schlachter informed the public that she will not be attending the March 31, 2022, meeting and that Jen Matos, Assistant Chairperson will be coordinating the meeting. They will have to cover some items, such as School Choice. Danielle Cooke confirmed that their next meeting is March 31st along with the 22-23 School Calendar. They want to get the school calendar out the sooner the better, which is why she thinks they should come back on March 31st instead of waiting for April 7, 2022.

She will also send a communication to Dan Pease (SHCTV15) about the April School Committee meetings because if they meet on March 31st, the next meeting will be the following week on April 7th and the last meeting of the month will be during April break. She suggested that they meet on April 14th and April 28th if they can move their dates since the station has obligations to other town committees.

Danielle Cooke mentioned her appreciation for the presentation from Jenn Voyik and Dr. McLaughlin. Jen Matos suggested we should end our meetings with "What's good in the news?" maybe... Chairperson Schlachter liked the idea. No further

Motion moved by Lynda Pickbourn and second by Jen Matos. Jenn Voyik gave some 'good news' that she planned to spend the rest of the evening at the St. Patrick's festivities. No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously: 5/0 (Matos, Cooke, Friesner, Pickbourn and Schlachter) With no further business to discuss, the School Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christina Stevenson
Executive Assistant, South Hadley Public Schools.

Reviewed and Approved by,
Jennifer Matos
Assistant Chairperson, South Hadley School Committee
Date: March 31, 2022