

**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
100 MAPLE AVENUE
SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS**

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, October 23, 2013

Present: Ms. Sandra Fryc, Chairperson; Mr. John Samia, Vice Chairperson, Mr. Jason Palitsch, Secretary; Ms. Erin Canzano; Dr. B. Dale Magee (arrived late); Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools, Ms. Mary Beth Banios, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Liam Hurley, Director of Business Services, Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources.

The meeting was convened at 7:00 PM by Ms. Sandra Fryc.

I. Public Participation

None

II. Chairperson's Report and Members' Reports

None

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer shared that last week the annual celebration for recognizing teachers who have completed three years of successful service and earned professional status was held at Cyprian Keyes. He thanked the staff members who helped plan the event and congratulated the honorees on their achievements and accomplishments.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Proposed SHS Service Learning Trip: Vote

Mr. Todd Bazydlo, Principal SHS and Mrs. Patricia Busso, Mathematics Teacher SHS, presented a report and requested that the School Committee approve travel by SHS students to the Dominican Republic to participate in a community service project from April 18-25, 2014. At Dr. Sawyer's and Mr. Bazydlo's request, Mrs. Busso traveled with Education First (EF), a company that focuses on international service learning with schools and students, this past summer as part of an educators' trip to investigate the possibilities for SHS students, and she recommended this particular service project trip to Mr. Bazydlo. Mr. Bazydlo is supportive of the trip, indicating that it aligns with the school's community service initiative and global education opportunities for students. Mr. Bazydlo said thirty students have expressed interest in participating in this service learning trip and he has recommended that the opportunity be limited to SHS juniors and seniors. Mrs. Busso and Mr. Bazydlo shared information about the logistics of the trip. The Committee asked a few clarifying questions regarding training and funding for students. Dr. B. Dale Magee, who knew in advance that he would be late for the meeting, had submitted written comments objecting to the trip based on his concerns regarding the cost of the trip and the potential to exclude students due to financial means. Dr. Sawyer indicated that he believes the trip is aligned with the district's strategic priorities and emphasized that interested students would be able to access fundraising opportunities and would be given information regarding how to seek additional financial assistance. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Canzano, the School Committee

voted 4-0 to approve travel by SHS students to the Dominican Republic to participate in a community service project from April 18-25, 2014. Dr. Magee was not present for the vote.

B. Superintendent's Awards: Student Recognition

Dr. Sawyer shared that he has selected SHS senior class students Olga Yushkova and Catherine Zhang to receive the Superintendent's Awards for 2013-2014 and provided highlights of each student's achievements. The awardees are the two highest ranked SHS seniors. Ms. Yushkova and Ms. Zhang spoke at the School Committee meeting. They thanked parents and teachers for the support they have received as SHS students. Ms. Yushkova and Ms. Zhang will be joining Dr. Sawyer and Mr. Bazydlo at the Superintendent's Awards Luncheon in January 2014.

C. Shrewsbury Public Library: Presentation

Ms. Ellen Dolan, Director, Shrewsbury Public Library and Ms. Joan Barry, Library Board of Trustees gave a presentation on the proposed renovation and expansion of the library. They shared that the October 2013 Special Town Meeting authorized the Library Trustees to apply for State Library Construction Grant Funds. The state Board of Library Commissioners has communicated that state funding of approximately \$7.6 million is available. A debt exclusion election will be held on November 5, 2013 in order to determine whether the Town will provide its share of the funding for the project, which is estimated to be \$13.6 million. Ms. Dolan and Ms. Barry shared detailed information, charts and architectural sketches of the proposed library project. Highlights of the presentation included the children's room and services; programs for teens and adults; computers and technology enhancements; and an increase from forty-five to ninety-eight parking spaces. Ms. Canzano asked Ms. Dolan if students have been observed using the library to do research and if students are using the library in different ways than they have in the past. Ms. Dolan said students use the library to gather and work on group projects. Ms. Barry said the focus of libraries is changing to become more like community centers. Committee members stated their support for this project and Dr. Sawyer gave his analysis that he believes the project is good for the community, as having a strong public library is important for children's and family's literacy and is therefore good for schools. He said the symbiotic relationship between the schools and the library is very important, and a strong library makes for a strong community. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the School Committee voted unanimously to support the proposed renovation and expansion project of the Shrewsbury Public Library.

D. Enrollment & Class Size Report

Dr. Sawyer, Mr. Todd Bazydlo, SHS Principal and Mr. Gregory Nevader, Assistant Principal SHS provided the School Committee with an overview of a report on enrollment as of October 1, 2013. Dr. Sawyer stated that the district has hit an all-time high for enrollment. Some key points shared included over-enrollment and overcrowding issues in classes throughout the district. Mr. Nevader discussed SHS enrollment and said the number of transient students has impacted class sizes. Mr. Nevader shared that teacher caseloads for SHS averages 110-135 students, 43% of academic areas have 27 or more students in sections, and that teachers have shared that the quality of the feedback they are able to provide to students has decreased. Mr. Bazydlo shared that a primary concern that he and others share is the SHS lab and sciences safety. Labs are tight and the number of lab partners for students has increased from two to three or four. Ms. Canzano asked questions about student caseload for SHS comparing the present situation to five years ago and comparing SHS to other similar schools. Mr. Bazydlo stated that one of the major concerns high caseloads is the impact on the adoption of the Common Core curriculum and with correcting writing assignments and projects. Mr. Bazydlo said that teachers are frustrated because they want to spend more time focusing on instruction and have limited time due to increased student loads. Mr. Palitsch asked if the presenters could elaborate on the SHS course elective offerings compared to

other high schools. Mr. Bazydlo and Mr. Nevader responded that while comparisons are difficult due to differences in course titles, etc., it is clear that other high schools have more options for student courses and SHS has reduced offerings in recent years. Mr. Bazydlo said that some of the former SHS elective courses are now activity clubs that require fees. Committee members stated their concerns regarding the large student population and its impact on learning. Dr. Sawyer added that student over-enrollment stretches classrooms' physical capacity and impacts quality. He said that teaching is a service profession, teachers need to build relationships with students and provide effective feedback, and that large class sizes are limiting the ability to teach effectively. Dr. Sawyer said we are in year two of a class size crisis, 80% of classrooms are over class size guidelines, and too many classes are over the School Committee guidelines for class size by four to five students per class. Dr. Sawyer stated his belief that it is a simple problem: We do not have enough teachers and we need to invest in more teachers.

E. Fiscal Year 2014 Staffing: Report

Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources shared a report on actual staffing levels compared with projected levels from the original FY14 budget documents. She said that while enrollment is on an upward trend, declining staffing resources have resulted in insufficient resources to meet students' needs. Ms. Malone shared that the biggest portion of the classified staff group is paraprofessionals. Many of these positions are a specific response for special education and IEP needs. Dr. Sawyer commented that in many cases it is more cost effective to higher a paraprofessional than to send students outside the district for services. Dr. Magee asked Dr. Sawyer about the Boston Globe article mentioning the Shrewsbury district's ranking for the ratio of teachers to students. Dr. Sawyer said the article was incorrect due to erroneous data the district submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that has yet to be corrected. He said that the Shrewsbury district is still in the bottom ten for districts in Massachusetts for the ratio of students to teachers.

V. Curriculum

None

VI. Policy

A. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Update: Second Reading & Vote

The School Committee heard a second reading to approve an updated policy on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention and the mandated Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Dr. Sawyer stated the Bullying Prevention and Intervention policy update has been posted for public comment. In summary, the new policy specifically states that it is not acceptable for staff members to bully students. On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the updated policy on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention and the mandated Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

VII. Budget

None

VIII. Old Business

A. Proposed Dedication of Parker Road Preschool Playground: Vote

Ms. Lisa Robinson, Program Director at Parker Road Preschool prepared a memo requesting the renovated playground be named "Drew's Dream Playground" in honor of Drew Stevens, a Parker Road student who passed away in 2012. Dr. Sawyer believes this is an appropriate request and the renovated playground project has benefited from great community collaboration. Ms. Canzano stated that she would support the project. On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the School Committee

voted unanimously to dedicate the renovated Parker Road Preschool Playground by naming it “Drew’s Dream Playground” in honor of Andrew “Drew” Stevens.

IX. New Business

X. Approval of Minutes

None

XI. Executive Session

At 9:03 PM, on a motion by Ms. Fryc, seconded by Mr. Samia, the School Committee voted to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing negotiations and to return to open session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening. On a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Samia, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes.

XII. Information Exlosures

XIII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Canzano, seconded by Mr. Samia, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 PM. On a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Samia, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes.

Respectfully submitted
Christine Taylor, Clerk

Documents referenced:

- 1) Superintendent’s Awards 2013-2014: Scholar’s Profile
- 2) Community Service Project in the Dominican Republic: Memorandum
- 3) Update from the Library Building Committee: report and slide show
- 4) Enrollment and Class Size Report for Preschool – Grade 8 report and slide show
- 5) Class Size Report for Shrewsbury High School report and slide show
- 6) FY 14 Staffing Levels Effective October 1, 2013 report and slide show
- 7) Renovated Parker Road Playground Dedication Request: Memo