

SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
100 MAPLE AVENUE
SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2015

Present: Ms. Sandy Fryc, Vice Chairperson; Ms. Erin Canzano, Secretary; Dr. B. Dale Magee, and Mr. Jon Wensky; Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of the Shrewsbury Public Schools; Ms. Mary Beth Banios, Assistant Superintendent; Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations

Not present: Mr. John Samia, Chairperson

The meeting was convened at 7:01 PM by Ms. Fryc

I. Public Participation

None

II. Chairperson's Report and Members' Reports

Dr. Magee explained that he, Ms. Fryc, and Dr. Sawyer attended a presentation on sleep deprivation by Dr. Judith Owens from the Children's Hospital in Boston which provided a great deal of useful insight for the new subcommittee to study the school calendar and start times for students.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer shared that he also found the presentation by Dr. Owens beneficial and thanked Christine Johnson, Superintendent of Schools for Northborough/Southborough for the invitation. He explained that there were many parents who expressed interest in being members of the subcommittee and that meetings would be getting underway later in the month.

He also explained that he had the opportunity on November 2, along with Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Patrick Collins, Town Manager, Mr. Dan Morgado, and Assistant Town Manager, Ms. Kristen Las to attend an event that was put on by members of Governor Baker's administration from the Executive Office for Administration and Finance. This was a listening tour for members of the office that provided community leaders an opportunity to express concerns about state regulations. Mr. Morgado spoke about his concerns including water rates and water issues. Dr. Sawyer spoke about a variety of mandates. In particular he mentioned that some mandates such as fingerprinting requirements are billed as no cost since it is a requirement of employment, but often come with costs when staff is required to put in overtime to process additional paperwork. He also discussed the costs associated with non-residential vocational transportation that are not being reimbursed by the state as expected, the lack of scrutiny given to special education tuition rate increases requested by private providers, and charter school funding mechanisms that are not sensitive to economies of scale. He noted appreciation for this group coming out in the community to listen to these concerns.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Student Presentation: Sherwood Technology Projects

Ms. Shawna Powers, Director of Instructional Technology and Media Services; Ms. Carol Virzi, Grade 5 teacher at Sherwood Middle School, sixth grade students, Madeline Duke, Aishwarya Narayanan and Vidyut Veedgav presented details to the Committee about their experiences at the conference that they were selected to attend called the MassCue/M.A.S.S “Dare to Innovate”. Aishwarya Narayanan presented her project “Digital Classroom Portfolios”, where students use an iPad to create interactive digital portfolios” to showcase work and projects; Vidyut Veedgav spoke about his project “KidFit for the Future!” where students track daily fitness activities as well as the quality and quantity of their sleep by wearing a device called the “Kid-fit Tracker”; and Madison Duke explained that her project, “Going Digital: A Classroom Odyssey”, is used to create digital newsletters in classrooms to communicate with families and staff in more innovative ways.

Committee members asked students various questions including what types of questions did conference attendees ask, what they learned about presenting at the conference, what they learned while visiting other student presenters and what projects they would like to try in the future. Committee members and Dr. Sawyer congratulated Ms. Virzi, Ms. Powers, Dr. Lizotte, Principal of Sherwood Middle School and the students for their presentation and made special note of their high level of proficiency with communication.

B. Student Presentation: SHS Student Innovation Team

Ms. Shawna Powers, Director of Instructional Technology and Media Services; Ms. Tara Gauthier, Instructional Technology teacher at SHS; and students Christopher Radkowski, David Schwartz, Chasia Molina and Simran Soin presented details to the Committee about their experiences at the same conference and work they are doing with their Student Innovation Team (SIT) course. Ms. Gauthier provided an overview of the course requirements before each student spoke about their specific chosen topic from the “Independent Learning Endeavor” course requirement. These topics included “Game Design”, which was Christopher Radkowski’s project, David Schwartz talked about, “Computer Maintenance”, Chasia Molina reviewed her project of “Improving Learning Habits” and Simran Soin explained her project, which was on “Python Coding”.

Committee members asked a few questions about students’ plans for the future, help desk issues, and what they have learned about customer service. Committee members commended the students on their presentation and Dr. Sawyer thanked Ms. Banios, Mr. Bazydlo, SHS Principal, and Mr. Brian L’Heureux, Director of Information Technology, for their efforts in developing this course as an option. He also congratulated the students on their exceptional work.

C. SHS Testing: Annual Report

Mr. Bazydlo, SHS Principal and Ms. Nga Huynh, SHS Director of School Counseling, shared a report on Shrewsbury High School’s 2014-15 results on various academic tests. Some highlights that they discussed were mean scores for SAT’s which increased 13% this year, participation rates for students who take the SAT’s, which is 96%, and scoring comparisons with local districts. They next reviewed the participation levels for SAT Subject Tests in comparison with national levels, PSAT/NMSQT results, and ACT participation and scoring increases. Mr. Bazydlo shared the results for AP test scores. He explained that 97% of the students participated and the numbers over the past 10 years have doubled. They next shared the results in comparison with local districts, national scores, number of exams taken by students, and number of AP scholars.

Next, they talked about plans to maintain and increase participation rates for all tests. Finally, they gave an overview of the redesigned SAT tests, which will occur in March 2016 for the Class of 2017, Mr. Bazydlo gave examples of the eight key changes to the test.

Committee members asked various clarifying questions pertaining to the increased spike for AP Scholars and criteria for taking AP classes. There were also questions about the writing portion of the newly designed SAT test, if the MCAS aligns with SAT and if tests scores can give indications of students' level of preparation for college. Dr. Sawyer and Committee members congratulated the administration and teachers at the high school on the test results.

D. Personnel: Annual Report

Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources, shared a summary of the report for district staffing levels for the 2015-16 school year. As of October 1st, there are 802.77 FTE's in the Shrewsbury district and the headcount is 856 employees. Ms. Malone explained the difference in the FTE and headcount figures is that more than one employee staffs some of the FTE positions. She then reviewed projected versus actual figures for the different positions throughout the district including administration, instructional classroom, specialists, support staff, and classified employees.

Committee members asked for clarification around the differences in state reporting and what is contained in the district report. Dr. Sawyer explained that information taken from payroll accounts is the most accurate information. Ms. Malone thanked Ms. Elizabeth Callahan, Executive Assistant for Business and Finance for her efforts in producing these reports and Dr. Sawyer and Committee members thanked Ms. Malone for her presentation.

V. Curriculum

None

VI. Policy

None

VII. Finance and Operations

A. Fiscal Year 2016 Update: Report

Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, referenced the report included in the packet regarding the first FY16 update, explaining that it is an expanded report that includes more categories than usual. He explained that the budget, which was approved at the town meeting in May, totals just over \$58.4 million and is a 2.2% increase over the prior year. As of October 23, expenditures were just over \$13 million, which accounts for just below 23% of the total budget and encumbrances are just over \$6.1 million, which is approximately 10% of the total budget. He characterized the overall budget is stable but tight with a year-end variance projection of approximately \$35,000, a 0.6% variance. He then reviewed in more detail some of the variances including substitute teachers, other wages, special education and vocational tuitions before ending with an overview of projected year end deficits including administrative and educational contracted services, special education therapy services and educational supplies. Mr. Collins indicated that he would provide another update in February at which time more expenditure data will be available, therefore providing a more accurate projection for year-end.

Ms. Fryc thanked Mr. Collins for providing a more detailed update as requested. Dr. Sawyer noted that the fluidity of the budget is always a concern and they would continue to pay close attention and provide timely updates as needed to stay on target.

VIII. Old Business

None

IX. New Business

None

X. Approval of Minutes: Vote

Ms. Fryc requested a motion to approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting on October 7, 2015. On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting on October 7, 2015.

XI. Executive Session

Ms. Fryc requested a motion for the School Committee to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of a) discussing negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association, Unit A; & b) for the purpose of reviewing and releasing executive session minutes from a prior meeting. On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Mr. Wensky, on a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 8:38pm.

XII. Information Enclosures

None

XIII. Adjournment

Ms. Fryc requested a motion to adjourn the School Committee meeting for November 4, 2015. On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Erin Canzano, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM. On a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes.

Respectfully submitted
Kimberlee Cantin, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Sherwood Technology Projects slide presentation
2. SHS SIT Course slide presentation
3. SHS Annual Testing Report and slide presentation
4. Annual Staffing Report and slide presentation
5. FY17 Budget Update