

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, March 19, 2014**

Present: Ms. Sandra Fryc, Chairperson; Mr. John Samia, Vice Chairperson, Mr. Jason Palitsch, Secretary; Ms. Erin Canzano; Dr. B. Dale Magee; 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 discussed the Education and Personal Information Management System and the data that the Shrewsbury district is required to supply to the Massachusetts Department of Education twice a year. He said the district contacted the Department of Education about an error the district made with under-reporting the number of teacher positions. The Shrewsbury district requested that the Massachusetts Department of Education change this information, however this has not been done yet. Dr. Sawyer said the correct information in the teaching category should be 360 full-time equivalent positions and this changes the student-teacher ratio. He said the district strives to be accurate and transparent and has posted the raw data on the Shrewsbury district website. Dr. Sawyer said the district staff members who worked on reporting this information to the Department of Education are very sorry this error occurred and have worked to correct this information.

Dr. Sawyer shared that Mr. Thomas O'Toole has been appointed as the new Director of the Performing Arts Department and that Mr. Liam Hurley, Director of Business Service, has accepted a job offer with the Natick Public Schools. Dr. Sawyer said he appreciates the work Mr. Hurley has done and will continue to do until he ends his position in the Shrewsbury district. He said descriptions of the open Director of Business Services position and the part-time Coordinator of Development and Volunteer Activity position are posted on the Shrewsbury district website. Dr. Sawyer shared that the part-time Coordinator of Development and Volunteer Activity position is funded entirely by contributions.

Dr. Sawyer commended those who participated with the Shrewsbury Destination Imagination Program. He shared that Shrewsbury had fifteen teams compete in the regional competitions, which is more than any other school in the region. Six teams earned second place and two teams earned third place. Dr. Sawyer congratulated the students and volunteers. Dr. Sawyer shared that the Shrewsbury Robotics team won the Entrepreneur's Award at the WPI Robotics Competition. He said that students completed more than 6,000 hours of work this season building the robot. Dr. Sawyer congratulated the SHS Men's

Hockey on winning the Division III State Championship. He congratulated all the students who have had successes in these programs.

#### **IV. Time Scheduled Appointments**

##### **A. SHS Student Advisory Committee: Report**

Students Kira Sommer, Chairperson, Class of 2014; Kayla Freeman, Class of 2015; Nithya Pathalam, Class of 2015 and Emily Taylor, Class of 2015 presented the SHS SAC report. The presenting SAC members shared that SHS students completed the first semester exams from January 16<sup>th</sup> to January 22<sup>nd</sup>. They said the testing week progressed smoothly and the feedback from the implementation of the new midterm schedule change has been positive. SAC presenters said the new extra time block in the exam schedule was used by 12% of the student population. The students who used the extra time block said it was a great opportunity for them to finish their midterms. SAC students shared that the Cafeteria Point of Sales program for lunch purchases was initiated on February 6<sup>th</sup>. SAC students said that overall SHS students are satisfied with the new point of sales system, although the cafeteria lines are currently longer with the system being very new. SAC presenters shared that there are many examples of great activities SHS students have done in 2014 and highlighted some events as examples of achievements: Class Cup competition, Mr. SHS presented by the Latin Honor Society, Black History Month assembly and the Bye-Bye Birdie spring musical. SAC students discussed the potential impact of the proposed Shrewsbury School Department budget. They said that more sections of classes, increased numbers of elective classes available and a reduction in the number of students in classes and lab groups would greatly improve the quality of their education. One SAC presenter shared the example that she plans to major in journalism as a college student and there is no longer a journalism elective course available at SHS. She said that colleges offering these programs favor admitting students who have taken high school journalism courses. Ms. Sandra Fryc asked the SAC students their opinions about how they would view large lecture hall classes if this model were added at SHS in the future. Overall, the students felt that smaller class sizes with low student-teacher ratios were the most important model for learning as high school students. SAC students shared that they need individual support from teachers to become prepared for college. They said it is important to have good relationships with teachers who know them well and can write personal recommendations for college applications. Dr. Sawyer discussed technology, remote classes and virtual high school learning experiences and stated these can be a very positive part of educating students. He emphasized these learning experiences cannot replace personal student-teacher learning interactions. Dr. Sawyer commented that there are a variety of ways students have identified that the district's lack of resources is having a negative effect on students' education. Dr. Sawyer thanked the SAC students for their leadership.

#### **V. Curriculum**

None

#### **VI. Policy**

None

#### **VII. Budget**

##### **A. Full Day Kindergarten-Revised Plan: Report**

Dr. Sawyer presented the revised plan based on the feedback from the School Committee, Finance Committee and parents. He said with the revised plan the district is able to increase the number of full day kindergarten sections and the tuition paid by parents can off set about 50% of the costs. Dr. Sawyer said that the district is able to increase the number of full day kindergarten sections to twelve and this results in 252 available slots. The overall net savings from the original budget recommendation is

\$147,867. Dr. Sawyer shared some of the trade-offs created with the revised plan. He shared that the pros include more students receiving a full day kindergarten experience. This has been requested by many parents and there is a net savings to the appropriated budget. The cons for the revised plan include a loss of designated instruction space for the music program. Dr. Sawyer said the targeted class sizes for full day kindergarten will be increased from the guideline of 19 to 21. He said he believes any negative effects of moving slightly above the guideline of 19 students are more than offset by the opportunity to have a full day program. The School Committee Members were positive and stated they supported the revised plan for full day kindergarten and that this makes sense for the budget. Jason Palitsch said that although he supports the revised plan, he is sorry this has to come from allocated space for the music program. Dr. Sawyer said the next steps for the district will be to communicate with parents on the waitlist about making a deposit for the full day kindergarten program. He said there are currently 58 students on the waitlist who have not registered for kindergarten in the district. These statistics do not include families whose first choice is full day kindergarten and have registered for the Shrewsbury half day kindergarten program.

### **B. Fiscal Year 2015 Budget: Vote**

Dr. Sawyer presented information for a revised Fiscal Year 2015 Budget recommendation based on feedback from the School Committee and community members. He discussed the School Committee strategic budget priorities. The revised Fiscal Year 2015 budget recommendation presented by Dr. Sawyer is about \$6.78 million about \$1 million less than the original budget recommendation increase of \$7.89 million. He discussed details regarding the budget recommendation request and priorities including mandates and fixed costs (i.e. special education mandates and contractual increases which represent about 3.3 percent of the budget request). School Committee members stated they were comfortable with the revised budget recommendation. Ms. Sandra Fryc requested a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2015 Budget recommendation. On a motion by Mr. Jason Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Erin Canzano, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Fiscal Year 2015 Budget recommendation.

## **VIII. Old Business**

### **A. 2014-2015 School Calendar: Vote**

Dr. Sawyer discussed some of the feedback regarding the draft proposed calendar for the 2014-2015 school year. Some parents asked why the first day of school is scheduled before Labor Day. Dr. Sawyer shared that the Shrewsbury district has chosen to start before Labor Day many years and this has worked well. Additional feedback included requests to schedule professional development early release days on Fridays so families can take advantage of planning long weekends. Dr. Sawyer said that due to other considerations, including Tuesday afternoon faculty meetings and scheduling presenters for teacher training, it would be challenging to schedule professional development days on Fridays. Ms. Sandra Fryc requested a motion to approve the proposed calendar for the 2014-2015 school year. On a motion by Mr. John Samia, seconded by Ms. Erin Canzano, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the calendar for the 2014-2015 school year.

## **IX. New Business**

None

## **X. Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Sandra Fryc requested a motion to approve the School Committee meeting minutes for February 5 and February 26, 2014. On a motion by Ms. Canzano, seconded by Dr. Magee, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the February 5 and February 26, 2014 meeting minutes.

**XI. Executive Session**

None

**XII. Information Enclosures**

None

**XIII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Canzano, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55PM. 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) SHS Student Advisory Committee: Report
- 2) Full Day Kindergarten-Revised Budget Plan: Report and slide show
- 3) Revised Fiscal 2015 Budget Recommendation: Report and slide show