



Superintendent's Update

February 28, 2018

Dear Shrewsbury Families & Community Members,

On this last day of February the long range weather forecast is looking pretty good, but we all know what March in New England is like, so I'm crossing my fingers that we get through to spring without any more significant storms.

Please read on for informational updates, including a reminder regarding tonight's school budget public hearing and our ongoing response in the aftermath of the Parkland, Florida school shooting tragedy.

School Department budget hearing - tonight

This evening's School Committee meeting will include an update on the Campaign for Shrewsbury Athletic Fields; a report on our curriculum/instruction and technology budgets; a report and discussion of fees and tuitions for next year; and my annual evaluation by the School Committee. During the meeting, at approximately 8:00/8:15, a public hearing will be held on the current recommended budget (click [here](#) for a summary and [here](#) for the full budget document). There is currently a \$2.5 million gap between my recommended budget (which is based on maintaining our current program, providing mandated services, addressing enrollment growth, and beginning to implement our new strategic priorities) and the initial town budget recommended by the Town Manager (which is based on the current projection for revenue available to town government). The School Department administration is currently working on reduction planning to close this gap, with a plan scheduled to be presented at the March 28 School Committee meeting. You are welcome to address the School Committee during tonight's public hearing with any comments or questions you may have on the current budget proposal, or to email the School Committee at schoolcommittee@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us and/or me at jsawyer@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.

Response to the Parkland, Florida school shooting tragedy

This is an extraordinary time in our country, and the reverberations from the Parkland,

Florida school shooting are unlike those of past events. Some of you may have questions regarding our district's approach to various related issues that have been in the media, and so I ask you to note the following:

As your superintendent, I believe that it would be very unwise for our school district to pursue any policies that would involve the arming of staff with guns. This would not make our schools safer.

In the aftermath of a high profile school shooting, schools across the country tend to experience more situations where individuals may make "copycat" statements or anonymous threats. As is always the case, if you as a parent hear something from your child about a situation that is concerning to you, please report it to the Shrewsbury Police or to your school's principal immediately. The Shrewsbury Police and the School Department work together closely whenever a significant concern is raised in order to assess the situation and take prudent action.

Most of you are likely aware that a significant national movement is underway to amplify the voices of students and educators around the country on the topic of school safety, including an organized "national school walkout" to take place on March 14. Our school leaders are in the process of talking with student, staff, and parent representatives to consider how to best determine how this will be addressed in our schools (which will vary by the age of students, especially with regard to the high school). Our schools will provide clear information and expectations in advance of March 14 once these conversations are complete and a plan is put into place. I am confident that we will be able to work together to listen to the voices of our students, our staff, and our parents regarding efforts to honor the victims and survivors of the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and to communicate our school community's resolve regarding the moral issue of keeping children safe at school, while respecting that there are a variety of opinions regarding how this might best be accomplished. In doing so, we will ensure our students' right, as [our policy](#) states, "to share and express their ideas and opinions on controversial issues, and within a forum of fair and open discussion, grow in their understanding of the difficult and complex problems they face as citizens in today's world." That policy was adopted in 1980, and it certainly holds true today. Thank you for your support in helping our students learn how to become engaged citizens, which is a critical function of their education. I very much look forward to hearing what they have to say.

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer

Superintendent of Schools