

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, January 22, 2020**

Present: Ms. Sandy Fryc, Chairperson; Mr. Jon Wensky, Vice Chairperson; Dr. B. Dale Magee, Secretary; Ms. Lynsey Heffernan; Mr. Jason Palitsch; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Ms. Amy B. Clouter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being; Ms. Barb Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources; Ms. Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; and Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools.

A complete audio/visual recording of this meeting is available on the Shrewsbury Public Schools website.

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

**I. Public Participation**

Ms. Fryc read a written statement into the record from Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) parent Sanam Zaer requesting that *Columbus Day* be changed to either *Indigenous Peoples' Day* or *Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day* on the 2020-2021 School Calendar. Ms. Fryc requested that discussion be held until later in the meeting when the 2020-2021 School Year Calendar was scheduled as an agenda item for discussion.

**II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports**

None.

**III. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Sawyer reported that two Esports teams from Shrewsbury High School (SHS) would compete in the State Finals at Patriot Place/Gillette Stadium on February 1, 2020, and that the annual Shrewsbury Education Foundation Annual Awards Dinner would be held on January 25, 2020, where, among other honorees, the Unified Program at SHS would be honored with the Community Service Award.

**IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:**

**A. Unified Play at Beal Early Childhood Center: Presentation**

Ms. Clouter; Mr. Chris Girardi, Principal; Ms. Margaret Aulenback, Teacher; Ms. Michelle Neddo, Teacher; and Beal Early Childhood Center kindergarten students Felix and Oliver Weber, gave the report. They also recognized Charlene Costello, Teacher, who was in the audience.

Mr. Girardi, Ms. Aulenback, and Ms. Neddo noted they hoped to replicate the success of the Unified Program at SHS by initiating an independent, student choice-based hour of play at Beal that was informed by recognized academic and social and emotional approaches to play, and described the setup, structure, and rules, for the experience. The students described how they utilized the time and what they hoped to do during future “hours of play,” answered questions, and were invited up to be recognized by the Committee and Dr. Sawyer.

## **V. Curriculum**

### **A. Shrewsbury High School 2020-2021 Program of Studies: Vote**

Ms. Fryc advised that no feedback had been received since the proposed changes to the Program of Studies were posted for public review after the School Committee meeting on January 8, 2020, and Dr. Sawyer added that he supports the proposed SHS Program of Studies for 2020-2021.

On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the Shrewsbury High School 2020-2021 Program of Studies as presented.

## **VI. Policy**

### **A. School Year Calendar for 2020-2021: Discussion**

Dr. Sawyer advised that the draft 2020-2021 School Calendar was developed utilizing the same approach used to structure recent school calendars, with two notable exceptions. First, a primary election scheduled by the Commonwealth of MA for Tuesday, September 1, 2020, would coincide with the date that would normally be the first day for students. After discussion with multiple stakeholders, and based on their feedback, Dr. Sawyer recommended that September 1 be scheduled as a professional development day for teachers (which would typically be held on Friday of the first week), with the first day of school for students scheduled for Wednesday, September 2. Second, Dr. Sawyer recommended that preschool and kindergarten screenings be scheduled earlier in the year, and that preschool and kindergarten students’ end their school year on the same day as other grades, based on recommendations from elementary school principals. He added that the draft calendar would be posted for public viewing and comment in advance of an anticipated vote at the meeting on February 5, 2020. Ms. Fryc proposed moving the March 2, 2021 Professional Development/Early Release Day to a date later that month and Dr. Sawyer advised that this recommendation would be considered for inclusion in an updated calendar draft.

Committee members provided their perspectives on Ms. Zaer’s request that *Columbus Day* be changed to either *Indigenous Peoples’ Day* or *Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples’ Day* on the 2020-2021 School Calendar, with consensus that their role primarily concerns overseeing how sensitive issues are approached and handled as part of the curriculum by teachers in classrooms, while the renaming of a holiday would fall under the purview of the state. Ms. Clouter added that new standards in civics education relative to history and social science include an emphasis on presenting varied perspectives.

## **VII. Finance & Operations**

### **A. Fiscal Year 2021 Superintendent's Initial Budget Recommendation: Presentation & Discussion**

Dr. Sawyer began the report by noting his recommendation would only include resources necessary to bring forward a status quo budget (versus including strategic investments) because the anticipated FY21 budget will not include enough revenue to sustain even the status quo. Dr. Sawyer described the district's mission, vision, values, and priorities, and noted maintaining the status quo budget would not be sustainable due to the impact from multiple cost drivers next year. Mr. Collins described the six main cost drivers for FY21 in detail before advising that a status quo recommendation for the School Department town appropriated budget represented a 6.45% increase, which he then summarized by category. He also acknowledged the work of Kimberly Fitzpatrick, Financial Coordinator/Budget Analyst, in developing the budget recommendation document presented at the meeting. Dr. Sawyer provided information on anticipated state aid to the district, illustrated trends in state aid versus local contributions, discussed ways the district would address the anticipated budget gap, and noted estimated costs associated with the opening of the new Beal school in FY22. He used multiple graphics to illustrate the structural funding dilemma experienced by Shrewsbury Public Schools, and provided a timeline of upcoming budget-related reports and discussions.

Committee members expressed appreciation for the clarity, depth, and thoroughness of the report, and acknowledged the challenges around addressing the FY21 budget in the short term, and the structural deficit in the long term. Noting the structural dilemma has been addressed regularly over time, Dr. Magee defined it in the context of the Proposition 2 ½ Massachusetts tax law (enacted in 1980, implemented in 1982), growth in the Shrewsbury community, and changes in the student population over time.

## **VIII. Old Business**

None.

## **IX. New Business**

None.

## **X. Approval of Minutes**

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on January 8, 2020, were accepted as distributed.

## **XI. Executive Session**

Ms. Fryc requested a motion to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of collective bargaining with the Shrewsbury Education Association - Unit A, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body, and for the

purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes, and return to Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening. On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, on a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes; the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 8:47 pm.

## **XII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Written Statement to School Committee
2. Beal Unified Play Report
3. Beal Unified Play Slide Presentation
4. Shrewsbury High School 2020-2021 Program of Studies
5. Draft 2020-2021 School Year Calendar Memo
6. Draft 2020-2021 School Year Calendar
7. FY21 Superintendent's Budget Recommendation
8. FY21 Superintendent's Budget Recommendation Slide Presentation
9. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above