

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

Present: Mr. Jon Wensky, Chairperson; Ms. Sandy Fryc, Vice Chairperson; Ms. Lynsey Heffernan, Secretary; Dr. B. Dale Magee; Mr. Jason Palitsch; 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 Mr. Wensky at 7:01 pm.

I. Public Participation

None.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

None.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer reported that the PreK-Grade 12 educators enjoyed a successful Professional Development day on February 1, and provided a status on the search for a new Oak Middle School principal to replace Dr. Ann Jones who is retiring at the end of the school year, noting the field had been narrowed to three finalists - Liz Garden, currently the Principal of the Mayo Elementary School in Holden; Hallie Burak, currently the Assistant Principal of the O'Donnell Middle School in Stoughton; and Elizabeth York, currently the Principal of David Prouty High School in Spencer - who would all be in attendance at a Public Forum on February 8, 2022.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Student Spotlight: Shrewsbury High School Presentation

Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Principal Mr. Todd Bazydlo and Ms. Pamela Leblanc, Director of Visual Arts, began the report by providing an overview of the Traditional & Digital Photography course at SHS, which is co-taught and incorporates elements of both digital and 35mm film photography. Students Ally Arpino, Emily Diamond, and Anya Pyro discussed their experiences in the course and then showcased examples of their work. After asking the students questions about the course, the Committee and Dr. Sawyer recognized them with certificates.

B. SHS Student Advisory Committee: Report

Student Advisory Committee (SAC) student members Nikitha Ram (Chairperson), Shalini Biju, Anushka Mukhopadhyay, and Rishab Parikh gave the report, and Mr. Andrew Smith, SHS Teacher and Faculty Advisor to the SAC, was in attendance at the meeting. The students provided information on fundraisers at SHS, student life (with each sharing their individual perspectives on topics ranging from COVID to the SHS dress code), and school spirit in the context of events and athletics at the high school. In response to questions from the Committee, the students provided additional information

on hall passes and approaches being taken at SHS to mitigate academic stress (including no mid-term exams and some homework-free weekends for students).

C. District Response to the Pandemic: Report

Dr. Sawyer presented current state, local, and district-specific COVID case data; information on Shrewsbury Public School staff and student cases (vaccinated versus unvaccinated; by day, week, school, and grade); vaccination data by age for the Town of Shrewsbury and local communities; testing program information (*Test and Stay* (discontinued), symptomatic testing, *Routine COVID Safety Testing*, and at-home antigen testing); and updated data on student and staff absences (with both declining in recent weeks). Committee members expressed appreciation for the transparency of the report and asked clarifying questions about the at-home antigen testing program schedule.

D. State of the District: Report

Mr. Wensky advised that this agenda item was being moved to the February 16, 2022 meeting.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

A. School District Calendar for 2022-2023 School Year: Discussion

Dr. Sawyer reported that the draft calendar being presented followed state law regarding holidays and utilized the same approach taken by the district in recent years to scheduling vacations and staff professional development, based upon the recommendations of the parent and staff calendar committee from 2016. He also highlighted several aspects of the draft, including a return to one professional development day being held during the first week of school for students; December 23 marking the first day of December vacation (citing absenteeism in prior years, and closures that day in surrounding districts); and the addition of the Juneteenth holiday on June 19 should school still be in session, depending on the number of snow days needed. Noting that last year a change was made to the calendar so that the third Monday in October was acknowledged as “Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples’ Day,” Dr. Sawyer advised that the School Committee received a petition in October 2021 requesting that the 2022-23 school district calendar only reference Indigenous Peoples’ Day and not cite Columbus Day at all. In advance of a vote on the school calendar at the next meeting, Dr. Sawyer offered suggestions around questions/issues the Committee might want to consider relative to the requested change. Ms. Fryc cited concerns for working families relative to having a Professional Development day on October 7, 2022, which would mean no school for students on the Friday prior to the Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples’ Day (Monday) holiday (which is also a no school day), and suggested not having a Professional Development day in October. Dr. Sawyer added that some elements of the calendar could change in the future as a result of current negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association, Unit A.

VII. Finance & Operations

None.

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 19, 2022 were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

Mr. Wensky requested a motion to adjourn to Executive Session:

A. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) “[t]o comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements” (“Purpose 7”), Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g) – for the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes;

B. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) “to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect of the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares” (“Purpose 3”)

- the Shrewsbury Education Association Units A and/or B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, and/or the Cafeteria Workers Association;

C. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(2) “to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel” (“Purpose 2”); and

D. For the purpose of reviewing and acting upon a student residency issue, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body; and return to Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, on a roll call vote: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Mr. Wensky, yes, the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 8:15 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; and Mr. Wensky, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Shrewsbury High School Student Slide Presentation
2. Student Advisory Committee Agenda
3. Pandemic Response Slide Presentation
4. Draft 2022-2023 School Year Calendar Memo
5. Draft 2022-2023 School Year Calendar
6. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above