

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

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; Ms. Barb Malone, Director of Human Resources; and Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools.

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, this meeting was not open to physical attendance by the public, but was broadcast live on SELCO Channels 29 & 329 and streamed live on the Shrewsbury Media Connection website. A complete audio/visual recording of this meeting is available on the Shrewsbury Public Schools website.

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

I. Public Participation

None.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

Mr. Wensky reported that he and Mr. Palitsch met with the PTO at Calvin Coolidge School recently to discuss the budget situation at Shrewsbury Public Schools.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer congratulated:

- Shrewsbury High School (SHS) students and staff on executing a successful (virtual) Science Fair
- the SHS Speech and Debate Team for qualifying (online) for the 2021 NCFL Grand National Tournament
- SHS Robotics for sponsoring a virtual blood drive
- Art educators and students for executing a successful virtual art show

Dr. Sawyer reported that he looked forward to seeing the upcoming SHS Black History Month Assembly online. Dr. Sawyer reported that the timeline for the ongoing work being done by the Ad Hoc Mascot Study Group would need to be extended to allow more time to do that important work in light of current time constraints brought on by the pandemic and budget situation.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Update on School District's Response to the Pandemic: Report

Dr. Sawyer summarized key messages, current district case counts, and current state and local public health data; presented data on student/staff case ratios, cases by grade/school/model, and cases of suspected in-school transmission; provided an update on pooled surveillance testing in the district; and discussed planning for a potential return to full in-person school, noting factors for consideration and next steps, and addressing a recent statement by the Commissioner of Elementary & Secondary Education on potential regulation changes relative to in-person instruction. In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Collins provided additional information on logistical challenges relative to a return to

more in-person instruction and resource allocation, including space to meet minimum physical distancing requirements for students, and time to move furniture to accommodate more students in buildings.

B. Redistricting of Elementary School Attendance Zones: Vote

Dr. Sawyer recommended that the School Committee vote to adopt Scenario 19 as the redistricting plan for Shrewsbury Public Schools elementary attendance zones when the new Beal School fully opens, detailed the reasons for his recommendation, presented demographics for Scenario 19 on student enrollment by race and ethnicity (showing no schools would be “racially isolated”), and illustrated race/ethnicity demographics in the district since 1999. Mr. Collins addressed logistical considerations for making a redistricting decision at the present time, including the ability to do advance planning to balance classes and assign staff, and to give parents a greater degree of certainty around which school their student(s) will attend when the new Beal School fully opens. Ms. Priya Sankalia, Project Manager, AppGeo, attended the meeting virtually but did not address the Committee.

Several members spoke and voiced support for Scenario 19. On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to adopt Scenario 19, as recommended by the Redistricting Committee, as the redistricting plan for Shrewsbury Public Schools elementary attendance zones when the new Beal School fully opens.

C. Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Reduction Plan: Report

Dr. Sawyer noted that the district is facing an “Education Emergency” and advised that his initial FY22 Budget Recommendation, presented at the February 10 meeting, was \$4.9 million more than the Town Manager’s. Mr. Collins noted the proposed FY22 Budget represented the second year that Strategic Improvement planning and resource requests would be put on hold, and provided data on per pupil expenditure in the district. Dr. Sawyer presented detailed information on the reductions being recommended to close the budget gap if necessary. These included deferring the opening of the new Beal School as planned, and staff reductions, which were detailed by category. Mr. Collins illustrated three different scenarios for FY22 kindergarten planning, with one based on the current recommendation and two that reflected insufficient funding being available to fully or partially open the new Beal School. Dr. Sawyer addressed options to remedy the deficit (potential federal stimulus aid, operational override) and detailed a budget timeline going forward. Members asked clarifying questions about Allied Arts class sizes in light of potential staff cuts, and about the potential impact to the community in terms of the financial agreement with the Massachusetts School Building Authority relative to uncertainty regarding the opening of the new Beal School. They expressed a desire for the Board of Selectmen to place an operational override on the ballot for voters in the spring, and noted the importance of long term planning relative to the structural budget deficit.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

None.

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 February 10, 2021 were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

Ms. Fryc 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; and

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. On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, on a roll call vote: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes, the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 9:10 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Fryc, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Dr. Magee, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Pandemic Response Update Slide Presentation
2. Superintendent’s Elementary Redistricting Recommendation Memo
3. Elementary Redistricting Legal Analysis Letter
4. Data on Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity 1998-2021
5. Elementary Redistricting Slide Presentation
6. FY22 Budget Reduction Plan Report Slide Presentation
7. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above