

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Present via virtual participation: 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. Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; and Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools.

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, this meeting was not open to physical participation by the public, but was broadcast live on SELCO Channels 29 & 329 and streamed live on the Shrewsbury Media Connection website. A complete audio/video 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 advised that public participation was suspended due to the meeting not being open to physical participation, but noted viewers could email questions and comments to the School Committee after the meeting.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

Mr. Wensky reported that he had an opportunity to view an online learning experience for band students provided by Mr. Brian Liporto, Performing Arts Teacher at Shrewsbury High School (SHS).

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer thanked Mr. Brian L'Heureux, Director of Information Technology, and Mr. Marc Serra, Community Program Manager at Shrewsbury Media Connection, for their work on live streaming and recording the virtual meeting.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Update on School District's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dr. Sawyer began the report by providing information on the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic with an overview of key facts and messages, and noting how best to communicate with the district during school closure. Next, district leaders provided detailed information on specific subject areas: Ms. Noelle Freeman, Director of School Nursing - nursing/medical/public health; Mr. Collins - finance and operations, including meal support for families in need; Ms. Clouter - curriculum, instruction,

and assessment, including optional remote learning opportunities; and Ms. Belsito - student services and how to best serve students with disabilities.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Clouter and Ms. Belsito provided additional information on equity around meeting the needs of all students and on following guidance from state and federal governing bodies regarding civil rights and educational services.

B. Extended School Care Program: Report & Tuition Recommendation

In her report, Ms. Karen Isaacson, Director of Extended Learning, provided a local rate comparison for programs, current enrollment information, rate history, current and proposed staffing patterns, proposed policy changes for enrollment options for FY22, and FY21 budget projections based on different tuition rate and staffing scenarios. Ms. Fryc noted that the report would be available for public review and comment prior to a vote by the Committee, and Dr. Sawyer added that the April vacation enrichment programming had been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

A. Revised 2019-2020 School Calendar: Vote

Dr. Sawyer summarized guidance from MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley relative to updated regulations for public school calendars in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and provided his rationale for recommending that the Committee approve an updated calendar for the current school year that makes Friday, June 19, the last day of school for students, and that converts any remaining early release days to full school days. School Committee members expressed support for the recommendation.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously to revise the 2019-2020 school district calendar so that the last day of school for students will be no later than Friday, June 19 and so that all remaining scheduled early release days be converted to full days of school. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Payroll Continuity for All Staff During School Closure Period: Vote

Noting the mandated closure of schools through April 6, Dr. Sawyer described the shift to a work-from-home model for Shrewsbury Public School employees; noted that contracts are in place in the district for represented staff; and detailed his rationale for recommending that the Committee approve continued compensation for hourly-paid and salaried employees through April 6. Committee members expressed their support for the recommendation.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the continued compensation of all Shrewsbury Public Schools employees during the mandated school closure through April 6 for the COVID-19 pandemic, including both salaried and hourly employees, at their contractual rates of pay based on their typical time worked per pay period. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

B. Fiscal Year 2021 Fees: Vote

Ms. Fryc provided background on FY21 fee information presented to the Committee, noting that while a vote had been conducted at the March 4 meeting on the Oak Middle School (OMS) athletic fee, tonight's vote would include the OMS athletic fee and all other proposed fees. Dr. Sawyer added that the recommended incremental fee increases are in response to inflationary pressures faced by the district. Mr. Collins noted that fees represent a vital and important revenue source for the district, and advised that implementing the recommended fee increases would provide a net increase of \$55,500 that would assist in closing the FY21 budget gap.

On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the adjustments to fee rates for Fiscal Year 2021 as illustrated in the Superintendent's recommendation memo. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

Dr. Sawyer and Ms. Fryc added that no feedback had been received from the public since the March 4 School Committee meeting when fees were discussed and a Public Hearing was held.

C. 2020-2021 Full Day Kindergarten Tuition Options Report & Discussion

Dr. Sawyer noted the new Beal School, when opened, would provide the physical capacity to make Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) opportunities available to all students in Shrewsbury; detailed the School Committee's existing policy to step down the amount of FDK tuition incrementally over a period of years to prepare for fee-free FDK when the new Beal school opens; and acknowledged budgetary pressures for FY21 that warrant reviewing tuition rate scenarios which differ from the established School Committee policy, but would generate additional revenue to help close the FY21 budget gap. Mr. Collins provided statistical information on statewide FDK programs, a fee comparison, FY21 enrollment and tuition budget assumptions, and various tuition scenarios illustrating how much associated revenue would be generated.

Committee members expressed concern around diverging from the policy to step down tuition incrementally to prepare for fee-free FDK, but noted they were open to reviewing other options to ascertain what is best overall for the district in light of significant FY21 budgetary pressures. Dr. Sawyer advised that he would make a recommendation at the April 1 meeting after getting updated information from the Town Manager's office and processing feedback from the Committee.

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 March 4, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

None.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; and Mr. Palitsch, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Coronavirus Pandemic Response Report
2. Extended School Care Report
3. Extended School Care Slide Presentation
4. School Year 2019-2020 Revised Calendar Memo
5. Payroll Continuity During School Closure Report
6. FY21 Fee Recommendation Memo
7. FY21 Full Day Kindergarten Tuition Report Slides
8. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above