

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, April 1, 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; Ms. Barb Malone, Executive 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 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 7:01 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.

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

None.

**III. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Sawyer thanked everyone involved in the public health effort around the COVID-19 pandemic, including Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) Director of Nursing, Noelle Freeman; Town Leadership; medical professionals; first responders; community members; and SPS staff, students, and parents.

**IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:**

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

Dr. Sawyer began the report by providing an update on the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic with an overview of key facts and messages; advising how best to communicate with the district during school closure; noting where coronavirus information could be found on the district's website; describing efforts to date; and noting challenges going forward. Ms. Clouter described current efforts and next steps around curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the district. Ms. Belsito discussed current practices and next steps relative to the Department of Student Services, noting known hurdles and ongoing messaging from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

The Committee asked clarifying questions about expectations for more intense interactive learning experiences for students, and Ms. Heffernan and Mr. Wensky (who are also parents of SPS students) noted differences around learning opportunities, over time and by grade level, for students. Dr. Sawyer and Ms. Clouter provided additional information on state and federal guidance relative to previous and new learning, and required and optional learning; and noted challenges around coordinating the timing of instruction opportunities for the various grade levels in the district.

## **V. Curriculum**

None.

## **VI. Policy**

### **A. Succession planning for district administration: Vote**

Ms. Fryc noted that there is currently no formal School Committee policy in place in the event of the Superintendent of Schools being unable to fulfill the duties of the office. Dr. Sawyer went on to provide a detailed summary of the recommended policy, and requested - in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the operational nature of the proposed policy - that the customary second reading be waived so that the policy could be voted on at tonight's meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to approve proposed School Committee Policy 243: Establishment of an Acting Superintendent. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

## **VII. Finance & Operations**

### **A. Update on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Finance & Operations: Report & Vote on Current Year Tuition Payments**

In his report, Mr. Collins provided an update on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the district's finance and operations. Topics included COVID-19 related unbudgeted expenses, preliminary estimated budget savings, and revenue loss estimates; a recommendation for payments/credits relative to tuition-based programs at SPS; grant funding and field trips; pay continuity planning and the associated decision making; and ways the community can help during the pandemic crisis. In response to questioning from the Committee, Mr. Collins advised that withdrawing a student from the Extended School Care program would result in the loss of their slot. Committee members and Dr. Sawyer voiced support for the recommendation to adjust current-year tuitions as detailed in the report.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to waive tuitions for Full Day Kindergarten, Preschool, and Extended School Care on a per diem basis for all days schools are closed by the State or District due to COVID-19, and provide tuition credits to be applied for future payments due for the current year, and only provide refund checks in those cases where the tuition already paid exceeds the revised tuition due for the 2019-2020 school year, and further affirm that all other payment terms such as notice for disenrollment and late payment fees still apply. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

### **B. Payroll Continuity for All Staff During School Closure Period: Vote**

Dr. Sawyer advised that payroll continuity had been addressed by Mr. Collins as part of the previous agenda item, noted the extension of the current school closure by Gov. Baker, advised that payroll continuity would be addressed again at the meeting on April 15, and recommended that the Committee vote to approve the continued compensation of SPS employees through at least April 17. In response to a question from Dr. Magee regarding employees providing future services for compensation currently being received, Mr. Collins advised that further investigation was necessary due to legal concerns around hourly wages being highly regulated and some employees being represented by collective bargaining agreements.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the continued compensation of all Shrewsbury Public Schools employees through at least April 17 of the mandated school closure 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: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

### **C. Full Day Kindergarten 2020-2021 Tuition Recommendation: Vote**

Noting the School Committee policy to step down tuition incrementally over time with the goal of providing free full day kindergarten to all SPS students to coincide with the opening of the new Beal school, Dr. Sawyer recommended lowering tuition by \$195 (versus lowering it by \$1200, as originally planned) for FY21, citing existing FY21 budget challenges and new fiscal pressure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Committee members expressed reluctant support for the recommendation, noting that budget pressures constrained the ability to step down tuition as planned and directed by the policy. Dr. Magee polled members to see if there was support to keep the tuition rate the same for FY21. Dr. Magee made a motion to freeze tuition at the current rate for the coming year. The motion was not seconded.

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

### **D. Extended School Care Program 2020-21 Tuition Recommendation: Vote**

Dr. Sawyer thanked Ms. Karen Isaacson, Director of Extended Learning, and Mr. Collins for their presentation at the last School Committee meeting on the Extended School Care (ESC) program. He added that Ms. Isaacson proposed a tuition increase of 7.0% at the meeting, and that he concurs with the recommendation. Ms. Fryc added that one email with feedback was received after the previous meeting with a suggestion relative to parents having an hourly fee for pickup and dropoff at the ESC program.

On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to adjust Extended School Care tuition by an increase of 7.0% for the 2020-2021 school year. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

## **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 18, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

#### **XI. Executive Session**

**A. For the purpose of negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, and the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers.**

**B. For the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes.**

Ms. Fryc requested a motion to adjourn to Executive Session for the purposes of negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, and the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body; and 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. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes; the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 8:46 pm.

#### **XII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch: yes; Mr. Wensky: yes; Ms. Heffernan: yes; Dr. Magee: yes; and Ms. Fryc: yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Update on COVID-19 Response Report Slides
2. Administration Succession Policy Memo
3. Impact of COVID-19 on Finance & Operations Report Slides
4. Payroll Continuity During School Closure Memo
5. Full Day Kindergarten Tuition Recommendation Memo
6. Extended School Care Tuition Recommendation Memo
7. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above