

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 30, 2022

Present: Mr. Jon Wensky, Chairperson; Ms. Sandy Fryc, Vice Chairperson; Ms. Lynsey Heffernan, Secretary; Dr. B. Dale Magee; 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; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being; Ms. Barb Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources; 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

Ms. Heffernan reported attending the Shrewsbury Middle School Unified Basketball game held at Oak Middle School on March 24 and acknowledged all parties who contributed to its success.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer reported attending the Shrewsbury Middle School Unified Basketball and described it as an "extraordinary event"; congratulated the Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Robotics Team on recently hosting the successful US First Robotics New England Central MA District competition at Shrewsbury High School; and reported that Ms. Lindsey Stasiowski was hired as the new Human Resources Manager for the district, as part of a reorganization where a Human Resources assistant position that was vacated was upgraded to this role, and that SHS IT Support Specialist Mr. Geoffrey Thayer had accepted a new position as the Data Specialist for Shrewsbury Public Schools.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. District Response to the Pandemic: Report

Dr. Sawyer presented current state, local, and district-specific COVID-19 case data; detailed student/staff cases for unvaccinated vs. vaccinated individuals; noted cases by day, week, grade, and school; reported vaccination data by age for Shrewsbury and across local communities; provided updated information on testing in the district; detailed data on student/staff absences; and noted that district administration, in response to changes in the current pandemic environment, was giving thoughtful consideration to relaxing some mitigation strategies in order to further normalize school operations. There were no objections from the School Committee regarding this approach.

B. Mindfulness Program: Report

Dr. Lizotte, Mr. Marc Waxman, Co-Founder, WholeSchool Mindfulness; Mr. Jordan Grinstein, Mindfulness Director at Shrewsbury Public Schools; Ms. Shelley Hoey, Assistant Principal, Maj. Howard W. Beal School, and the following students: Anna Baudin and Aditya Mishra, Grade 4, Maj. Howard B. Beal School; Eaden Mbaneme and Ginny Cornine, Grade 4, Walter J. Paton School; and Izaiah Skiesto and Ahmad Joma, Grade 8, Oak Middle School, gave the report. The grade 4 students led three different guided practices involving breathing, and all the students shared their individual perspectives on how mindfulness practices have impacted and supported them throughout the year. The students were invited up to be recognized by the Committee and presented with certificates.

Dr. Lizotte, Mr. Waxman, and Mr. Grinstein went on to highlight quantitative and qualitative information on the mindfulness program from a data collection and analysis process conducted in January 2022; noted suggested areas of improvement from staff and students; summarized Mr. Grinstein's activities as Mindfulness Director so far for the 2021-2022 school year; and detailed mindfulness opportunities for staff, and for students by grade level.

Dr. Lizotte concluded the presentation by expressing her hope that the district would continue its partnership with WholeSchool Mindfulness. Committee members noted the importance of the mindfulness practices as they relate to students' public speaking skills and resilience, and asked questions about the student Mindfulness Ambassador program. Dr. Magee requested that the metrics of mindfulness and the ongoing mental health crisis be connected in order to see if the program is having an impact. Dr. Sawyer advised he would make a recommendation at the next meeting on budget relative to partnering with the program going forward.

C. Mental and Behavioral Health Update: Report

Mr. Wensky called a two-minute recess at 8:04 pm so technical difficulties associated with the slide presentation could be addressed. Mr. Wensky called the meeting to order at 8:07pm.

The report was presented by Ms. Belsito; Meghan E. Bartlett, Assistant Director of Special Education & Pupil Personnel Services; and Noelle Freeman, Director of School Nursing. Their report included information on students' return to school in the midst of the ongoing pandemic; described staff roles relative to addressing student mental and behavioral health in the context of a multi-tiered system of support; provided mental health data on clinical rounds referrals, hospitalizations, and other referrals, for the year to date; provided data from mental health nurse visits for the year to date; noted the importance of schools, families, and the community working together to address the current mental health crisis; compared recommended versus actual counselor and school nurse caseload ratios; discussed funding sources; provided recommendations for programming and staffing going forward; and offered reminders to the community around watching for behavioral health issues and finding resources to address them. Committee members asked clarifying questions on topics including the most recent Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (data is still pending); the role of educators in addressing the mental health crisis; and pairing social-emotional learning with curriculum in classrooms; and they expressed support for the proposed staffing additions.

D. Special Education Fiscal Year 2023 Budget: Report

In their report, Ms. Belsito and Ms. Bartlett described areas of ongoing work by the Special Education and Student Services Department in the current year; provided historical (three years) level of service information for students; gave data (by age) on student placement types; detailed FY23 budgeted costs for

out of district placements (by type); compared FY22 and FY23 circuit breaker funding; provided contracted service expense information for FY20 (actual) through FY23(requested); described the Tiered Focus Monitoring review conducted at Shrewsbury Public Schools in December 2021; and proposed recommended investments for the Special Education FY23 budget. They concluded the report by sharing a video clip of the recent Shrewsbury Middle School Unified Basketball game that was featured on WCVB Channel 5 News.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Belsito provided additional information on acquisition, implementation, and funding for a universal mental health screener.

E. Extended School Care Program: Report & Recommendations

Ms. Karen Isaacson, Director of Extended Learning, began the report by providing information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to Extended School Care (ESC) program availability, staffing, and enrollment. Ms. Isaacson detailed changes in the current year to program tuition and enrollment options and noted the associated impact to revenue; reported current and projected enrollments; detailed the FY23 forecast/projection; and provided a tuition rate history and local comparison. Ms. Isaacson concluded by recommending an FY23 2.25% wage increase for child care providers and a 2.75% increase for site coordinators as well as a 5.0% tuition increase for the Committee's consideration in advance of their vote at a subsequent meeting.

V. Curriculum

A. Educational Programming to Be Supported by Student Opportunity Act Funds: Vote

In her report, Ms. Clouter provided a brief description of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) and its requirements; noted Shrewsbury Public Schools Chapter 70 funding would increase by \$30 per student (which is no different than past years and is a known quantity each year, not a new source of funds), and detailed how the funding would be spent; and summarized feedback from the community on the proposed SOA plan. Dr. Sawyer recommended that the Committee vote to support the plan. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the district's plan as presented for expending any increases of Chapter 70 funding received from the state in order to meet the requirements of the Student Opportunity Act.

VI. Policy

None.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Public Hearing on Fiscal Year 2023 Budget

Mr. Wensky advised that no emails had been received by the Committee regarding the FY23 Budget Recommendation since its presentation at a prior meeting. Mr. Wensky opened the FY23 Public Hearing at 9:38pm. There were no requests to speak at the Public Hearing. Mr. Wensky closed the Public Hearing at 9:39pm.

B. FY23 Fees & Tuition: Vote

Dr. Sawyer advised that his recommendation on tuition and fees aligned with the information presented at the previous meeting to hold all current fees and tuitions as they are, except for the elimination of the Student Activity Fee, and reiterated his rationale for the recommendation. Committee members shared their perspectives in turn and all expressed support for eliminating the Student Activity Fee. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the adjustments to fee and tuition rates for Fiscal Year 2023 as illustrated in the Superintendent's recommendation memo.

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 16, 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 9:52 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 10:14 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. Pandemic Response Slide Presentation
2. Mindfulness Program Report

3. Mindfulness Director Job Description
4. Mindfulness Program Slide Presentation
5. Mental/Behavioral Health Update Report
6. Mental/Behavioral Health Update Slide Presentation
7. Special Education FY23 Budget Report
8. Special Education FY23 Budget Slide Presentation
9. Extended School Care Program Report
10. Extended School Care Program Slide Presentation
11. School Opportunity Act Memo
12. School Opportunity Act Slide Presentation
13. FY23 Fees & Tuition Recommendation Memo
14. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above