

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, April 8, 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 (Executive Session); 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. 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.

I. Update regarding the school district's response to the COVID-19 school closure

Dr. Sawyer's update on the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic included an overview of key facts and messages; advised how best to communicate with the district during school closure; provided a detailed update on remote learning; and illustrated where coronavirus (COVID-19) and remote learning-related information could be found on the district's website.

In response to questions from the Committee, Dr. Sawyer provided additional information on measuring the success of remote learning initiatives (first, find ways to connect with students/families; next, connect with the community to assess how things are going); recording of learning sessions ("live" sessions currently cannot be recorded; asynchronous sessions can be recorded); and outreach to English Language Learner (ELL) students and families.

II. School Calendar Revision re: April School Vacation: Vote

Dr. Sawyer summarized past changes to the school calendar approved by the Committee and based on guidance from the MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) relative to updated regulations for public school calendars in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Citing an uptick in questions from families and staff regarding whether to keep or change the planned upcoming April school vacation break, and given that families are homebound and a routine for remote learning established, he shared that the leadership team determined that it

would be helpful to develop online surveys to gauge the perspectives of families and staff alike on this issue. The surveys received a high level of response, with 2,304 families and 740 staff members providing feedback. After providing detailed survey data that indicated strong preferences by families and staff to convert some vacation days to remote learning days, and noting key elements of feedback from comments submitted, Dr. Sawyer recommended that the Committee vote to convert three days previously scheduled to be school vacation days (April 21-23) to remote learning days and end the school year on Tuesday, June 16.

Several Committee members expressed support for the recommendation, noting increased momentum relative to remote learning and acknowledging uncertainty around if/when students would be able to physically return to school. Ms. Heffernan noted she did not support the recommendation, citing concerns around the progress of remote learning at the elementary level and expressing a preference for more in-class learning in June (potentially) versus remote learning in April, which she felt would provide better value for students. In response to a request from Ms. Heffernan, Dr. Sawyer provided clarifying information around the inability to convert April vacation days to school days and keep the last day of school as June 19 relative to contractual and financial constraints.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted 4-1 to adjust the 2019-2020 school year calendar so that Tuesday, April 21 through Thursday, April 23 are changed from school vacation days to remote learning days, thereby changing the last day of the school year to Tuesday, June 16. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, no; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

III. Approval of Minutes

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on April 1, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

IV. Executive Session

A. For the purpose of a student residency issue

B. For the purpose of negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers, and non-represented staff

C. 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 a student residency issue; negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers, and non-represented staff, 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. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, 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 7:49 pm.

V. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 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 04-08-20
2. School Calendar Revision - April Vacation Memo
3. April Vacation Staff Survey
4. April Vacation Family Survey
5. School Calendar Revision - April Vacation Slide Presentation
6. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above