

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Present: Ms. Sandy Fryc, Chairperson; Mr. Jon Wensky, Vice Chairperson; Dr. B. Dale Magee, Secretary; Mr. Jason Palitsch; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Ms. Barb Malone, Director of Human Resources; and Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools.
Not present: Ms. Lynsey Heffernan.

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

None.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer recognized the work of Ms. Donna Manzoli, who retired recently after 33 years of exceptional service to Shrewsbury Public Schools. Ms. Manzoli worked as the principal's front office secretary at the Beal Early Childhood Center and Floral Street School, and most recently as the Executive Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment at the Central Office.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Update on School District's Response to the Pandemic & Plans for Reopening for Full, In-Person Learning: Report

Dr. Sawyer presented a summary of key messages, current case counts, and state and local public health data; and case information by school, grade, week, and possible in-school transmission. Dr. Sawyer provided an update on weekly pool testing and vaccines for staff. He also presented a timeline and information on the plan for return to full, in-person school, noting that grades kindergarten through four experienced a successful return to school at the start of the week. Additional information was provided in response to questions from the Committee on case ascertainment, staff absenteeism from vaccinations (there has been some, but not a significant increase), 3 foot physical distancing in schools in the fall, and documentation of the current year for historical recordkeeping.

B. Update on New Beal School Project: Report

Mr. Walter Hartley, Project Manager, PMA Consultants, LLC, began the report by presenting an update on the project's construction timeline, noting critical activities, and providing a budget update. Mr. Sean Brennan, Project Architect, LPA/A, presented a virtual walkthrough of the site via video, renderings of how different areas will look when finished (including the history wall and the mural by artist Peter Reynolds), and photos from the site taken at the present time.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

A. Resolution in Favor of Operational Override Question: Vote

Noting that the Shrewsbury Board of Selectmen recently voted unanimously to put an operational override on the May 4, 2021 ballot, Dr. Sawyer advised that benefits associated with support of the override include greater financial stability for municipal and school departments, enhanced fiscal responsibility and transparency, sufficient resources for schools, and more support for students. Dr. Sawyer also detailed adverse consequences for the district if the override fails to pass, and recommended that the Committee vote to approve the draft resolution being presented in support of the operational override. Mr. Collins addressed federal stimulus funding, noting that it was time-limited and could only be used for pandemic-related expenses. Ms. Fryc provided historical information on the work between the School Committee and Board of Selectmen to develop an agreement that addresses the current structural deficit and makes a commitment to not request further operational overrides for a period of four years. School Committee members expressed strong support for the resolution and offered their perspectives in turn. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to support the proposed resolution in favor of the operational override question - "Question 1" - on the May 4, 2021 Annual Town Election ballot.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Fees & Tuitions for the 2021-2022 School Year: Vote

Dr. Sawyer advised that since an operational override question that would increase property taxes is being placed before voters on the May, 2021 ballot, he is recommending that fees and tuitions for FY22 remain at the rates originally approved for FY21, with the exception that Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) tuition be eliminated in light of the district's commitment to establish tuition-free FDK for all students upon full opening of the New Beal school. He added that tuition for FDK might need to be revisited if the override fails to pass. Dr. Sawyer then provided detailed information on tuitions and fees by category. On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the fee and tuition rates for Fiscal Year 2022 as illustrated in the Superintendent's recommendation memo.

VIII. Old Business

None.

IX. New Business

A. Assabet Valley Collaborative: Update

After briefly describing the work of the Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC), Dr. Sawyer presented their annual report and summarized the benefits to Shrewsbury Public Schools as a member district, including volume purchasing, Shrewsbury student enrollment in AVC special education programs, and transportation services for Shrewsbury students who attend day programs at special education schools.

Dr. Sawyer also addressed a memo from AVC's Executive Director noting the dissolution of a different collaborative (EDCO) that communicated that AVC's financial position continues to be strong.

X. Approval of Minutes

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Meetings held on March 10 and March 24, 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;

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; and

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”) - non-represented administrators, 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. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, on a roll call vote: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, 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 9:14 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Pandemic Response Update & Plans for Reopening Full/In-Person - Slide Presentation
2. Beal Project Update Slide Presentation
3. Draft School Committee Resolution in Favor of Operational Override
4. Operational Override Presentation Slides
5. Superintendent's Recommendation on Fees/Tuitions: Memo
6. Assabet Valley Collaborative Annual Report
7. Assabet Valley Collaborative Memo re: EDCO Collaborative Dissolution
8. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above