

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, May 6, 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. 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 7:00 pm.

I. Public Participation

Ms. Fryc advised that public participation was suspended due to the meeting being virtual, but noted viewers could email questions and comments to the School Committee.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

Ms. Fryc noted several recent appreciation events: National School Principals' Day (May 1); and Teacher Appreciation Week (May 4-8), which includes National Teacher Day (May 5) and National School Nurse Day (May 6), and on behalf of the Committee expressed gratitude and appreciation to these staff members.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer reported that a successful Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) Virtual 5K was held for the community the previous weekend and thanked participants, organizers, and sponsors. Dr. Sawyer congratulated the following Shrewsbury High School (SHS) winners at the virtual State Science and Engineering Fair: Zoe Rudnick, Grade 12, Honorable Mention; Alina Shkurikhina, Grade 10, 3rd Place; and Arnav Mishra, Grade 10, 1st Place; and congratulated Aditi Dosi, Grade 9, whose project was recognized by the International Science and Engineering Fair.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Acceptance of Donation: Vote

On behalf of Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being, who was unable to attend the meeting, Dr. Sawyer presented information on a

donation of \$50,000 from a Shrewsbury family for unbudgeted and new COVID-19 related expenses; noted the family has a child in the district and preferred to remain anonymous; described how the funds would be used; and recommended that the Committee (per policy) vote to accept the donation. On behalf of the Committee, Ms. Fryc expressed appreciation for the generous donation.

On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously to accept a donation of \$50,000 from an anonymous donor to be used for the purchase of educational technology resources to mitigate learning loss during school closure. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

B. Update Regarding the School District's Response to the COVID-19 School Closure

Dr. Sawyer began the report with an overview of key messages, then provided information on Dr. Lizotte's behalf for two Community Well-Being events - the recently held Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) Virtual 5K, and the SHS Fitness Challenge in support of the Class of 2020. Director of Nursing Noelle Freeman's update from the Department of School Nursing included information on mental health resources currently available to students and families, and details on Governor Baker's recently implemented order to wear face masks. In her update on remote learning, Ms. Clouter presented information on Professional Development for staff, parents, and families; noted a new Remote Learning Technology Resources page was available on the SPS website; and provided data on use of the SeeSaw technology platform. Dr. Sawyer acknowledged several recent appreciation events: School Lunch Hero Day (May 1); National School Principals' Day (May 1); and Teacher Appreciation Week (May 4-8), which includes National Teacher Day (May 5) and National School Nurse Day (May 6).

Committee members expressed appreciation for the information on mental health resources available to the community, and the increased availability of information on technology for parents. From her experience as a district parent, Ms. Heffernan noted enhanced opportunities and increasing levels of engagement for students, and found the technology team at SPS to be responsive to parent concerns.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

None.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Update on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Finance & Operations: Report

Mr. Collins presented information on operations that are continuing through school closure, including meals for families in need, building access, student registration, financial management, and assistance with the unemployment process for furloughed employees. Dr. Sawyer presented information on possible federal assistance, and noted financial challenges for FY 2021 relative to forecasting and potential additional budget cuts.

B. Considerations Regarding Potential Credits or Refunds for FY20 Fees & Tuitions: Report & Discussion

Mr. Collins began the report with context for issues around credits and refunds for fees and tuitions, and presented a number of items for consideration: continued district cost liabilities during closure, current district refund policies, municipal finance laws and regulation, associated administrative workload, and parent expectations. He presented data on the financial impact and number of transactions associated with refunds/credits for full-day kindergarten, preschool, Extended School Care, the After School Activities Program, and busing; described the refund/credit process for Food Services; provided options for resolution for the Committee's consideration; and offered suggestions for the decision-making process.

Committee members noted complexities relative to the issue and added that the district's reliance on fees was a contributing factor, and acknowledged that many SPS families are experiencing financial hardship. Initial potential solutions suggested included refunding money for any unused services, and giving families the choice to opt-in (or not) for a refund. Ms. Fryc requested feedback from the community. Dr. Sawyer provided additional information on remote learning experiences for full-day kindergarten and preschool students, and noted he would craft a recommendation for the Committee's review at the May 13 meeting.

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 April 29, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

Ms. Fryc requested a motion to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of negotiations with some or all of the following: the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, the Shrewsbury Cafeteria Workers, and/or non-represented staff, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body; and for the purpose of 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 Dr. Magee, 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 8:29 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch: yes; Mr. Wensky: yes; Ms. Heffernan: yes; Dr. Magee: yes; Ms. Fryc: yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Anonymous Donation Memo
2. Update on COVID-19 Response Report Slides 05-06-20
3. Update on Impact of COVID-19 on Finance & Operations Report Slides 05-06-20
4. Potential FY20 Credits/Refunds Slide Presentation
5. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above