

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, May 13, 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; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being; 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 7:00PM.

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

Per request, Ms. Fryc read a letter to Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Administration, Dr. Joseph Sawyer, and members of the Shrewsbury School Committee, from a group of parents/guardians of students in the Class of 2020 requesting information on plans for celebrating students' graduation.

III. Superintendent's Report

Citing concerns about conducting a candidate search during the pandemic, and uncertainties and challenges for next year, Dr. Sawyer announced that Dr. Jane Lizotte will serve as acting principal of Walter J. Paton School for the 2020-2021 academic year, replacing Ms. Wendy Bell, who is leaving the district to become principal of the Memorial School in Upton. He noted Dr. Lizotte will retain the title of Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being and will continue to shepherd some of the work in this area as possible, with the understanding that her leadership duties as acting principal at Paton School will be her primary responsibility.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Update Regarding the School District's Response to the COVID-19 School Closure: Report

Dr. Sawyer began the report with an overview of key messages; Ms. Belsito provided information on timelines, progress monitoring, and the extended school year in her update from the Department of Student Services. Dr. Sawyer and Mr. Bazydlo, SHS Principal, addressed the letter from parents (read earlier by Ms. Fryc) and the work being done by SHS Administration to meaningfully honor the Class of 2020. They reported SHS Administration is working to plan ways to celebrate graduating students, but noted difficulties around guidelines that continue to change over time; issues related to ensuring equity; and challenges when working with vendors while trying to plan events in the present environment. Regarding sharing information about potential events for students, Mr. Bazydlo expressed a desire to be able to deliver what they propose, and Dr. Sawyer noted that communications to parents/guardians will provide more clarity after additional guidance is received from Governor Baker.

Committee members thanked community members for their input regarding ways to celebrate graduating seniors, and acknowledged the frustrations inherent to planning meaningful events in the context of changing guidelines.

B. Continuation of Partnership with Mindfulness Director Institute: Vote

Dr. Lizotte presented an update on Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI) offerings and participation from January-June 2020, including programming through school closure; Ms. Maura Egan, Grade 8 ELA Teacher at Oak Middle School, described the development of a book discussion group for middle and high school staff on *Mindfulness and Racial Justice*; Mr. Bazydlo described the Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE) program for the SHS Girls Track Team, and shared testimonials from some of the student participants. Dr. Lizotte requested the Committee's approval for continued MDI programming for the 2020-21 school year.

Clarifying information was provided in response to questions on funding for the program (\$7500 from the Colonial Fund is available from an event cancelled earlier in the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic); additional mindfulness opportunities for students in the classroom; MDI leadership; program participation; and metrics of effectiveness (some data could not be collected due to school closure). Dr. Sawyer and several Committee members expressed support for continuing the program, noting it represented a very cost efficient way to provide health and well-being opportunities in times of enhanced stress due to the pandemic. Dr. Magee advised he did not support the request given that the program reaches a small percent of the population, and represents an additional nonessential cost to the district in the midst of a very challenging fiscal environment.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted 4-1 to approve the continued partnership between the Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI) and the Shrewsbury Public Schools for the 2020-2021 school year per the terms of the enclosed Memorandum of

Agreement. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Dr. Magee, no; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

V. Curriculum

A. Survey Feedback on Remote Learning Program During School Closure: Report

In her report, Ms. Clouter provided response rate by level; noted the potential for “stress” and “change” as factors to have an impact on the results; detailed successes, opportunities, and common themes in Preschool - Grade 4; detailed successes, opportunities, and common themes in Grades 5 - 12; summarized key findings for all grade levels; and described next steps for remote learning.

Committee members expressed appreciation for how much has been achieved in the district around remote learning since the onset of school closure, and acknowledged that challenges relative to equity are exacerbated when students work from home. Ms. Clouter provided additional information in response to questions from Dr. Magee on assessing how much content is absorbed by students, discerning best practices among teachers, and providing classes for parents on how to coach students.

VI. Policy

A. Resolution Regarding Federal Funding for Public Education to Address Financial Impact of the Pandemic

Noting Mr. Collins’ and Dr. Sawyer’s regular updates on the profound impact of the pandemic to the district’s finances and operations, and acknowledging the need for additional federal assistance to public school districts to maintain future educational programming and staffing, Ms. Fryc advised that she drafted a resolution advocating for federal funding for public education to address the financial impact of the pandemic. The draft resolution was being provided to the Committee for their review with the potential for a vote to approve it at their next meeting. Mr. Palitsch expressed his support for the resolution as drafted, and expressed a desire to have a copy, if approved, sent to the district’s federal congressional delegation.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Acceptance of Grant Funding for Oak Middle School Design Lab: Vote

Mr. Collins reported that Mr. Jeremy Mularella, Oak Middle School teacher, was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the NEA foundation to improve the STEM curriculum at Oak Middle School. Committee members and Dr. Sawyer congratulated Mr. Mularella on securing the competitive grant.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously to accept the \$5,000 NEA Foundation Grant and use such funds for their intended purpose of

improving the STEM curriculum at Oak Middle School. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

B. Refunds or Credits for Fiscal Year 2020 Fees & Tuitions: Vote

Dr. Sawyer expressed appreciation for feedback from the community on this topic, and noted decision-making for his recommendations to provide proportional refunds was driven by determining what was fair and equitable to families who paid the fees and tuitions. He presented detailed refund information, by category, for the following: Food Service, Transportation, Extended School Care, Preschool & Full-Day Kindergarten, and the After School Activities Program. Mr. Collins provided additional information on the sources of funding for the refunds.

Committee members expressed support for the recommendations, and Ms. Fryc noted that the Committee would be looking at policy relative to refunds going forward into the next academic year. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the proportional refund of tuitions and fees paid for optional programming and services that were not provided due to the closing of school due to the coronavirus pandemic, as illustrated in the memorandum from the Superintendent of Schools dated May 12, 2020. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

C. Pay Continuity for Food Service Department Workers: Vote

Dr. Sawyer provided background information on payroll continuity decision making in the district since the onset of the pandemic, and recommended the continued compensation of all Food Services Department employees through the end of the school year. Mr. Collins described the ongoing work of Food Service staff on the “Meal Support Program” for families in need in the district, illustrated the fiscal impact of retaining staff, and noted reasons to provide pay continuity.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the continued compensation of all Food Services Department employees during the school closure period, at their contractual rates of pay based on their typical time worked per pay period, for the remainder of their contractual work year during Fiscal Year 2020. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, 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 May 6, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

A. 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.

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 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 Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, on a roll call vote: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes, the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 9:46 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 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. SHS Class of 2020 Parents/Guardians Letter
2. Update on COVID-19 Response Report Slides 05-13-20
3. Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI) Memo
4. MDI and SPS Memorandum of Agreement
5. MDI Partnership Slide Presentation
6. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback Memo
7. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback Slide Presentation
8. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - SHS

9. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - OMS
10. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - SMS
11. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - Paton School
12. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - Spring St. School
13. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - Floral St. School
14. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - Coolidge School
15. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - Beal School
16. Remote Learning Parent Survey Feedback - Parker Rd. School
17. Draft Resolution - Federal Funding for Public Education
18. NEA Foundation Grant Memo
19. Refunds/Credits Recommendation Memo
20. Food Service Pay Continuity Memo
21. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above