

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, May 27, 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. 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 7:00 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

Mr. Wensky expressed appreciation to everyone involved in the planning and execution of a number of thoughtful end of year events honoring the Class of 2020, and Ms. Heffernan acknowledged Sherwood Middle School Teachers Moira Cristy and Payson Hendrix, and Walter J. Paton School Teachers Rebekah Landers and Nicole Cormier, for engaging students with innovative remote learning opportunities during school closure.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer congratulated: both Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Esports Teams - League of Legends and Rocket League - on winning MA State Titles; the SHS Speech and Debate Team on placing 2nd overall in the remote State Championship; and individual Speech and Debate Champions Sophia Peng, Informative Speaking; Pranav Vadlamudi, Play Reading; and Haleema Siddiqui, Poetry. He also noted the ongoing Fitness Challenge in honor of the Class of 2020.

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 and provided a summary of past and upcoming events honoring the Class of 2020; Ms. Clouter addressed remote learning and discussed ongoing Professional Development, asynchronous learning opportunities from Specialists for students, reporting formats and grading practices, recommendations for the future, and the use of technology to support students; and Ms. Belsito provided detailed information on Extended School Year (ESY) services for students and issues related to a Team Meeting Consent Form in her update from Student Services.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Clouter and Ms. Belsito provided additional information on tracking student engagement, best practices for summer learning, and feedback from parents relative to the Team Meeting Consent Form.

B. Safer Schools Grant: Vote

Mr. Collins reported that Shrewsbury Public Schools was awarded a competitive grant of \$50,000 for a replacement emergency communications/public address system to be installed at Floral Street School in June 2020. He described features of the system, noting SPS hopes to eventually install it in all schools. Dr. Sawyer recommended that the Committee vote to accept the grant.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to accept the \$50,000 Safer Schools Competitive Grant and use such funds for their intended purpose of improving safety and security communications at Floral Street School. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

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

Ms. Fryc advised she had drafted a resolution advocating for additional federal education funding for public schools to address the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and presented it to the Committee for review at their meeting on May 13. No subsequent changes or corrections to the draft were requested by the Committee. Dr. Sawyer expressed support for the Committee's stance and its outreach to federal representatives.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the draft Shrewsbury School Committee Resolution in Support of Increased Federal Support and Stimulus Funding for Public K-12 Education dated May 13, 2020, and to provide a copy of this resolution to the district's federal congressional delegation. Roll call votes were as

follows: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Status Update: Report

Dr. Sawyer began the report by broadly illustrating how reductions in revenue and unanticipated costs created by the COVID-19 pandemic create the potential for an expanded budget crisis in Fiscal Year 2021. Mr. Collins provided additional information on the revised budget schedule, evolution of the FY21 budget process, additional reductions and new COVID-related costs, and a revised FY21 budget deficit range (as of May 20, 2020). Mr. Collins described factors contributing to an environment of wide fiscal uncertainty and recommended that a reserve of uncommitted funding for FY21 - including CARES Act/ESSER grant funds slated for Shrewsbury - be set aside in response. Noting a need to reduce payroll, he advised that the SPS administrative team would be reduced by one position by not backfilling a the vacancy created by the opening of the principal position at Paton School (where Dr. Lizotte will serve as acting principal), and detailed a recommendation to freeze non-union Administrator compensation. Mr. Collins finished the report by detailing a variety of next steps in the budget process.

Committee members acknowledged the complexities around developing an FY21 budget plan given the magnitude of unknown variables at the present time. In response to questions, Mr. Collins and Dr. Sawyer provided additional information on potential spending for personal protective equipment, and timelines for expected guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on reopening schools.

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 13, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

Ms. Fryc requested a motion to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of:

A) addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(1) "[t]o discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual." ("Purpose 1") – Open Meeting Law complaint filed by Patrick Higgins;

B) 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; and

C) 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 Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, and/or the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, 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: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes, the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 8:52 pm

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 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 05-27-20
2. Safer Schools Grant Memo
3. Safer Schools Grant Award Letter
4. Draft Resolution - Federal Funding for Public Education
5. FY21 Budget Status Introduction Slides
6. FY21 Budget Status Update Report Slides
7. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above