

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, June 9, 2021**

Present: Mr. Jon Wensky, Chairperson; Ms. Sandy Fryc, Vice Chairperson; Ms. Lynsey Heffernan, Secretary; Dr. B. Dale Magee; Mr. Jason Palitsch; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; 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 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 Mr. Wensky at 7:01 pm.

**I. Public Participation**

Community member Mr. Errol Ethier addressed the Committee regarding the Shrewsbury High School Colonials Mascot issue. Mr. Ethier offered suggestions relative to the decision-making process and around teaching opportunities, and encouraged the Committee to consider keeping the Colonials name as a way to acknowledge Colonials' contributions to the country and its ideals while also being flawed individuals.

**II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports**

Mr. Wensky offered congratulations to the Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Class of 2021 and reported attending their recently held Commemoration and Graduation ceremonies. He also expressed appreciation to kindergarten Teacher Mrs. Molina and her students for the opportunity to attend their (remote) class.

**III. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Sawyer offered congratulations to the SHS Class of 2021 on their graduation; noted that links to videos would soon be available for the graduation ceremony, online virtual SHS Music Concert, and the Senior Choir's performance for graduation; advised that Bus Registration was open for the 2021-2022 school year; and expressed appreciation to students and staff for their patience that week during the heat challenge in schools that were not climate controlled.

**IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:**

**A. Update on School District's Response to the Pandemic: Report**

Dr. Sawyer provided data on COVID-19 cases in the district for each of the past four weeks (3, 1, 2, & 2), noting one potential case of in-school transmission this past week. He also discussed current guidance from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on planning for normal operations for the start of school in the fall.

### **B. State Science Fair Winner: Recognition**

Director of Science & Engineering Mr. David Hruskoci noted changes to the science fair process and student participation this year as a result of the pandemic prior to introducing SHS Grade 10 student Maya Kasbekar, who received a First Place award at the 2021 Massachusetts Science and Engineering Fair. Ms. Kasbekar described her project, *Automating Skin Cancer Diagnosis Using Machine Learning Technology*, and answered questions from the Committee. The Committee and Dr. Sawyer congratulated Ms. Kasbekar and presented her with a certificate to recognize her achievement.

### **C. Special Education Parent Advisory Committee: Annual Report**

Ms. Belsito introduced Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC) Board Members Ms. Blake Poggi, Ms. Colleen Corbett, Ms. Jill DeBender, and Ms. Ashley Falandys (all attended remotely). Their presentation included: acknowledgments; SEPAC's Mission Statement, areas of work, and 501c3 non-profit status attainment; highlights from the school year; adjustments made in response to the pandemic; support, events, and a recent survey for parents/families; information on the new SEPAC website; and goals for next year. The presenters expressed appreciation to Shrewsbury Public Schools for their commitment to mental health and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives, and for supporting safe learning environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) students. In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Belsito and Dr. Sawyer provided additional information on the topics of curriculum, engagement with families, support systems, and safe learning environments for LGBTQ+ students.

### **D. SHS Mascot Ad Hoc Study Group: Report**

Mr. Todd Bazydlo, SHS Principal, began the report with background information and details relative to the Mascot ad hoc Study Group's membership and meeting schedule. Mr. Bazydlo addressed the group's norms and essential questions, the mascot's origin, and the history of the Colonial as the Shrewsbury Mascot, and then presented a current rendering of the SHS Mascot and a photo of the Colonials mural in one of the SHS stairwells. After summarizing the process of the group and noting presentations made to the study group, Mr. Bazydlo introduced Mr. Dave MacLeod, Co-Founder & CEO of ThoughtExchange (attending remotely). Mr. MacLeod provided a summary of feedback on the issue of potentially changing the SHS mascot that was received from the community via an online exchange utilizing the ThoughtExchange technology platform. After providing a high-level overview of the ThoughtExchange product and process, Mr. MacLeod discussed participation in the community exchange (in aggregate and broken down by groups), and shared top themes and a selection of thoughts for the themes "Reasons to Keep" and "Reasons to Change." He also highlighted some areas of thought that were common to both groups and illustrated how filters can be used to analyze ThoughtExchange survey results. Next,

Mr. MacLeod presented data from a Mascot ad hoc Study Group exchange that was conducted after the group heard a presentation on results from the community exchange.

Mr. Bazydlo went on to address financial considerations relative to changing the Colonials name/logo/both. He advised the School Committee that the study group did not ultimately arrive at a consensus on one recommendation regarding the mascot, but opted instead to provide arguments to the Committee for two options: 1. change the nickname and mascot; 2. keep the nickname Colonials but update the mascot's visual presentation.

The Committee asked clarifying questions on past/future monetary donations relative to changing the mascot name/logo, encouraged continued attempts to connect with groups of indigenous peoples so that their perspectives could be included in the discussion and decision-making process, and encouraged interested community members to participate in a planned Public Hearing hearing on the issue at the following meeting (June 16, 2021) or to email their feedback on the topic to the School Committee.

#### **V. Curriculum**

None.

#### **VI. Policy**

None.

#### **VII. Finance & Operations**

None.

#### **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 26, 2021 were accepted as distributed.

#### **XI. Executive Session**

Mr. Wensky 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. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Fryc, on a roll call vote: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; and Mr. Wensky, yes, the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 9:11 pm.

## **XII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 10:26 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; and Mr. Wensky, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. State Science Fair Winner Slide Presentation
2. Special Education Parent Advisory Committee Report Slide Presentation
3. SHS Mascot Ad Hoc Study Group Roster
4. SHS Mascot Ad Hoc Study Group Report
5. SHS Mascot Ad Hoc Study Group Slide Presentation
6. Set(s) of Minutes as referenced above