

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, June 17, 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 Dr. Sawyer at 7:01 pm in advance of the election of officers. Dr. Sawyer congratulated Ms. Fryc and Mr. Palitsch on their reelection to the Committee.

I. Election of Officers

Dr. Sawyer requested and accepted nominations for the Chairperson of the School Committee. Mr. Palitsch nominated Ms. Fryc for Chairperson, and Dr. Magee seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Ms. Fryc Chairperson of the Committee. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes. As the elected Chairperson of the School Committee, Ms. Fryc requested nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson; Dr. Magee nominated Mr. Wensky and Ms. Heffernan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Wensky Vice Chairperson. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes. Ms. Fryc requested nominations for the position of Secretary; Ms. Heffernan nominated Dr. Magee and Mr. Wensky seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Dr. Magee Secretary. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

II. Public Participation

Ms. Bridgette Hylton read a letter, on behalf of 150 Shrewsbury residents, to the School Committee with an anti-racism action request for the district.

Mr. Palitsch advised he was in support of the recommendations and spirit of the letter and asked that the Superintendent take it under advisement. He also encouraged other community members to reach out to the School Committee to share their views.

III. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

Dr. Magee provided his perspective on the cuts that were felt to be necessary prior to the Covid 19 shutdown as well as the added challenges to running the school system under the pandemic guidelines and the reality of higher costs going into the FY21 year. He explained that while the School Committee can ask for the money to run the system, the Selectmen and the Town Meeting members approve the amount allocated. Given the high likelihood of the approved budget not being able to support currently contracted raises for unionized staff, it would fall to the unions to decide if the cuts would be shared among all members or if staff cuts would need to occur to bring the budget into balance. He encouraged the public to share their views on the great challenges presented by the FY21 budget with the Committee and all interested parties, including the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting members, and to express their thoughts on various mechanisms - including operational overrides - to address these challenges. Mr. Wensky and Ms. Heffernan concurred with Dr. Magee on the need for the public to be included on a decision for an override should a budget shortfall occur.

IV. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer thanked students, families, and staff for their hard work on remote learning over the past three months, provided an update on how the issue of race and our schools was addressed during the past week, and previewed upcoming steps for Shrewsbury Public Schools around the issue of racism. He introduced Ms. Malone, who recognized the retirement of Ms. Sue Andrews, Social Studies/World Geography Teacher from Oak Middle School, who served 13 years as an educator in Shrewsbury and 34 years in education in all. Ms. Andrews made the decision to retire after other retirees were recognized by the Committee last week.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments:

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

Dr. Sawyer began the report with a summary of key messages, and thanked recent contributors to the ongoing Colonial Fund Appeal; Director Noelle Freeman provided an update from Department of Nursing that noted the potential for additional needs around the pandemic, including some level of additional nurse staffing to meet demands when schools reopen; and Ms. Clouter presented information on summer learning relative to available resources, the importance of structuring regular practice for students, and the ST Math & Freckle software platforms. In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Clouter provided additional information on push notifications from remote learning software platforms, high school summer work expectations, and assessing learning loss/regression during school closure and summer; and Ms. Freeman noted that updated guidelines and policies are anticipated around testing and tracking the COVID-19 virus.

VI. Curriculum

A. Educational Programming to Be Supported by Student Opportunity Act Funds: Vote

Dr. Sawyer noted information had been provided to the Committee at the previous meeting on new Student Opportunity Act (SOA) state legislation and the Chapter 70 program, and on

Shrewsbury's plan for the use of SOA funds. Ms. Clouter added that approval was being sought to use the funds to support inclusive practices through co-teaching, and to expand access to full-day kindergarten.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the district's plan as presented for expending any increases of Chapter 70 funding received from the state in order to meet the requirements of the Student Opportunity Act. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

VII. Policy

A. School Department's Release of Use of the Beal Early Childhood Center Building & Land Contingent Upon New School Opening: Vote

Ms. Fryc noted that the Committee held a discussion relative to this agenda item at their meeting on June 10, 2020 and reiterated the required steps in the process that allows the town to sell the current Beal Early Childhood Center property for reuse. Dr. Sawyer recommended that the Committee vote to approve the motion proposed.

Ms. Fryc requested a motion that the School Committee:

Vote to declare the property located at 1-7 Maple Avenue, known as the Beal School, originally acquired by the Town of Shrewsbury for school purposes by deed of William E. Rice, dated April 5, 1920 and recorded at the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Book 2208, Page 524, and by an Order of Taking dated March 27, 1922 and recorded at said Registry of Deeds in Book 2264, Page 135, is no longer necessary for school purposes provided, however, that this declaration shall be effective on the date the new Beal School, currently under construction on Lake Street, is available for occupancy for school purposes and to instruct the Secretary to provide notice of this declaration to the Board of Selectmen.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, on a roll call vote: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes, the motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Finance & Operations

A. Fiscal Year 2021 Budget: Update on Recommended Reductions

Dr. Sawyer described a traditional budget timeline and noted the disruption to the current timeline resulting from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. He advised that significant new and unexpected costs associated with the pandemic had an impact on the budget reduction plan previously presented to the Committee, and recommended the Committee vote the following week on an updated set of recommended reductions. Mr. Collins presented an overview of the anticipated new budget process timeline; recapped the prior budget reduction plan (which had not been voted on by the Committee) and updated it with subsequent known changes; illustrated the fiscal impact to the prior plan from operations and personnel/program reductions; recommended that the Committee vote to approve these "Phase 1" changes to bring a measure of

certainty to the process; and noted the estimated budget gap that would remain after accounting for the proposed Phase 1 reductions.

Committee members asked clarifying questions about the impact of across the board wage freezes and the potential for changes to transportation needs; expressed concerns around the erosion, and possible loss, of existing programs, and noted that program losses could potentially lead to more students transferring to charter schools.

B. Fiscal Year 2021 Budget: Public Hearing

Ms. Fryc opened the Public Hearing at 8:23 pm.

Participants addressed a number of topics, including homeschooling and budget; how parents can help mitigate the budget deficit; equity between schools for resources; concerns about cuts and how they are applied; components comprising the deficit; mechanisms for addressing the deficit; and the importance of visual and performing arts, and physical education programs at SPS.

Participants included:

Aaron and Neary Detrick - 29 Browning Road

Michelle Conlin - 64 Topsfield Circle

Shari Fox (parent and SPS Teacher) - 9 Childs Street

Jane and Daniel Moynihan - 35 Wachusett Avenue (Ms. Heffernan read a letter from the Moynihans into the record)

Lisa Bruschi - 90 South Street

Ms. Fryc closed the hearing at 8:49 pm. Committee members noted that while the pandemic has introduced unknown factors and ushered in a time of uncertainty, there is still an ongoing, local funding problem that must be addressed for the long term by the community.

IX. Old Business

None.

X. New Business

A. Evaluation of the Superintendent: Vote

Ms. Fryc summarized a composite evaluation that consolidated feedback from individual Committee members on Dr. Sawyer's performance from May 2019 through the present. She later noted that members had access to feedback from surveys sent to SPS staff and the parent community regarding Dr. Sawyer's performance as Superintendent to utilize for the evaluation.

Ms. Fryc noted the three goals, and Dr. Sawyer's ratings on those goals, included in the evaluation:

Student Learning Goal - Met

Professional Practice Goal - Significant Progress

Progress toward District Goals - Significant Progress

Ms. Fryc cited the four standards included in the evaluation and provided Dr. Sawyer's ratings on those standards:

Instructional Leadership - Proficient (overall)

Management & Operations - Exemplary (overall)

Family & Community Engagement - Exemplary (overall)

Professional Culture - Exemplary (overall)

Ms Fryc advised that Dr. Sawyer's Overall Summative Performance Rating was Exemplary.

Committee members also offered individual remarks in turn, and expressed appreciation for Dr. Sawyer's warm, competent, and talented leadership at all times, and especially now, while navigating the simultaneous challenges of a local budget crisis, a global pandemic, and a national crisis on racism. Dr. Sawyer thanked parents, staff, and the Committee for feedback on his performance, and expressed appreciation to SPS staff, parents, students, the Committee, the community, and his family for their support.

On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the formal evaluation document created by Ms. Fryc. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

XI. Approval of Minutes

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on June 10, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

XII. Executive Session

Ms. Fryc requested a motion that the School Committee enter into 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 Unit A; Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B; the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association; and/or the Shrewsbury Cafeteria Workers; 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") - Superintendent of Schools, 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, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session at 9:26 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

XIII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 10:32 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. Letter to School Committee - Anti-Racism Action Request
2. Update on COVID-19 Response Report Slides 06-17-20
3. Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Update Memo
4. FY21 Budget Recommended Reductions Update Slide Presentation
5. Letter to School Committee - Budget/Reductions
6. Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools
7. Parent/Community Survey Feedback for the Superintendent
8. Staff Survey Feedback for the Superintendent
9. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above