

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, September 8, 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. Amy B. Clouter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Ms. Barb Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources; and Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools.

A complete audio/visual recording of this meeting is available on the Shrewsbury Public Schools website.

The meeting was convened by Mr. Wensky at 7:02 pm, who advised that meeting participants were unmasked, distanced six feet apart, and vaccinated for COVID-19.

**I. Public Participation**

None.

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

Ms. Heffernan acknowledged the dedication of school administration, staff, and families contributing to the successful start of the school year.

**III. Superintendent's Report**

Noting that a live performance to open the meeting was not feasible due to existing circumstances, Dr. Sawyer introduced a video recording of the Shrewsbury High School (SHS) A Cappella Choir, under the direction of Mr. Michael Lapomardo, Music Teacher, SHS, performing the National Anthem at the Opening Program for Shrewsbury Public Schools staff on Monday, August 25, 2021. Students (including grade level) who performed were:

**Soprano**

12 Deeptha Ganesh  
12 Reeya Kansra  
11 Grace Kasten  
12 Allison Sawyer  
11 Elaine Stameris

**Alto**

12 Anna Cardani  
11 Rachel Harvie  
12 Saniha Kumar  
12 Olivia Manxhari

**Tenor**

12 Jackson Bachini  
11 Seamus Callahan  
10 Chase Kinsky

**Bass**

12 Shakthi Annamalai

11 Ronan Cox

12 Richard Milord

12 Amit Shenoy

12 Pranav Vadlamudi

Dr. Sawyer expressed appreciation to all entities who contributed to the successful start of the school year.

**IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:****A. Opening of the 2021-2022 School Year & Pandemic Response: Report**

Dr. Sawyer began the report by noting Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) primary goal of providing full-time in-school learning to students and the approach being taken to accomplish this, and summarized relevant state, local, and SPS-specific COVID-19 data. Director of School Nursing Noelle Freeman detailed: mitigation strategies being implemented in the district; updated information on COVID-19 symptoms; contact tracing and quarantine exemptions (citing examples); Test and Stay protocols; quarantine options; and routine COVID safety testing (voluntary). Mr Collins addressed operational issues including school transportation; food services; fee-based programs and the Free/Reduced Meal Application; facilities, grounds, and logistics; and support provided to SPS by other municipal departments. Ms. Clouter provided an update on Professional Development (PD) that included a timeline of district PD since 2020; information on PD providers Dr. Arnisa Amante-Jackson and Dr. Katie Novak; a description of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework; and information on building-based professional learning. Dr. Sawyer concluded the report by showing photos illustrating the opening of schools and acknowledging the successful opening of the new Major Howard W. Beal School.

Committee members acknowledged the successful start to the school year and asked clarifying questions relative to challenges, benefits, technology, and tools associated with UDL and customized learning.

**B. American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund: Discussion & Feedback re: Potential Uses**

Dr. Sawyer began the report with a brief overview of previous rounds (one and two) of American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) federal funding for the district. He advised that the third round of proposed funding could be utilized for a longer period of time (2024), but included many more restrictions than previous funding. Noting the importance of stakeholder outreach, Dr. Sawyer advised that feedback from prior surveys to families and staff indicated that mental health and well-being were of particular importance to respondents. He advised that 20% of the funds would need to be used to address concerns relative to previously lost instructional time; noted work in the district to identify vulnerable students and provide school learning time during the past summer; and advised that summer instruction, and the core instructional areas of reading and math, represent other potential funding areas for additional student support.

The Committee was invited to provide feedback on potential use of ARP ESSER funds in advance of a vote at the next meeting. Members offered their perspectives in turn and discussed the potential of utilizing existing after school programs to address lost academic learning; the importance of identifying both short and long term strategies to address learning loss; looking at mental health and well-being resources already being used in the district through the lens of COVID; and utilizing what was learned from school instruction time during the past summer to inform educational opportunities going forward.

## **V. Curriculum**

None.

## **VI. Policy**

None.

## **VII. Finance & Operations**

None.

## **VIII. Old Business**

None.

## **IX. New Business**

### **A. Bullying Statistics: Annual Report**

Dr. Sawyer began by noting that the previous school year was atypical in that many students attended school remotely or via a hybrid learning model, and by providing the definition of “bullying” used as the standard to determine incidences in the report. Dr. Sawyer provided data by educational level, and from incidents reported via the school safety tip feature on the SPS website.

### **B. Appointment of Superintendent as Representative to Assabet Valley Collaborative Board of Directors: Vote**

Dr. Sawyer described the Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC) and the services it provides to districts. He noted the structure of the Board of Directors, adding he had been a member for 13 years. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to appoint Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools, as its representative to the Assabet Valley Collaborative Board of Directors for the 2021 - 2022 school year.

## **X. Approval of Minutes**

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Workshop held on September 1, 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; and

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, 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: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Mr. Wensky, yes, the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 8:51 pm.

## **XII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 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. School Year Opening Slide Presentation
2. Federal Grant Funding Overview Memo
3. 2021 Bullying Memo
4. Set(s) of Minutes as referenced above