

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, October 6, 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. 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 7:00 pm.

**I. Public Participation**

Ms. Noreen Christie, President of the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association (SPA) read a petition signed by 226 paraprofessionals to express frustration with the progress of contract negotiations and a desire for a fair contract that incorporates a significant wage increase.

Mr. Jeffrey Sossa-Paquette, Shrewsbury Public School (SPS) parent, notified the Committee that he is a mandated reporter and filed a 51A form with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) against the district for abuse relative to headaches experienced by his son, which he believes are related to the mask requirement in schools.

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

None.

**III. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Sawyer provided notice that a public sale of furniture and miscellaneous equipment from the former Beal School would be held on October 16, 2021.

**IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:**

**A. District Response to the Pandemic: Report**

Dr. Sawyer noted the district's approach to meeting the goal of providing students with full-time in-school instruction; provided updated state, local, and SPS-specific COVID-19 case data; and discussed the district's Test and Stay Program and routine COVID-19 safety testing (noting nasal swab testing - versus saliva testing - would be available soon).

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Collins provided information on the approximate number of staff (625) and students (2200-2300) who had volunteered for routine testing. Dr. Sawyer concluded by adding that the Shrewsbury Board of Health had recently voted to impose a mask mandate in the community, which includes schools in town, adding that their authority supersedes that of the School Committee or the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education..

## **B. School Resource Officer Program: Report**

Noting that the Shrewsbury Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Task Force's Public Safety Subcommittee had communicated its recommendation that the School Resource Officer (SRO) program at SPS be discontinued, Dr. Sawyer began the report by presenting historical information and key facts relative to the program. Shrewsbury Police Chief Kevin Anderson provided a definition of the SRO role, discussed the program goals, and described training received by SROs. Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Principal Todd Bazydlo presented perspective on the program from his and other principals' experience with it. Mr. Bazydlo advised that principals feel the program is worthwhile and beneficial for schools; noted key areas of collaboration; and advised that SROs are not involved in school discipline decisions at schools. Dr. Sawyer concluded the report by describing opportunities for improvement relative to the program. Ms. Heffernan noted the importance of ongoing review to ensure students do not experience differential impacts and that there are no unintended consequences of the program, and suggested that future surveys solicit feedback from families and students on the SRO program. Ms. Fryc noted that concerns regarding safety in schools have changed over time and felt the SRO program should be viewed through a local lens. She also felt it important that students see police as community partners.

## **V. Curriculum**

None.

## **VI. Policy**

### **A. Potential Policy on Mandatory Vaccination of Staff: Discussion**

Mr. Wensky provided brief introductory remarks and background information on the potential implementation of a policy mandating COVID-19 vaccinations for staff, and Dr. Sawyer added that any such policy would be subject to impact bargaining with employee associations. Committee members shared their perspectives in turn. Mr. Palitsch favored requiring that employees be vaccinated, with allowances for medical or religious exemptions. Dr. Magee advised the mandate represented the best effort to ensure the safety of students who are required to attend school. Ms. Fryc expressed support for mandatory vaccination with allowances for medical and religious exemptions. Ms. Heffernan advised she agreed with her colleagues and supported the requirement. Mr. Wensky noted he was in support of the potential policy.

Dr. Sawyer advised that in light of the consensus expressed by the Committee, district administration would work on a policy document for the Committee's review and vote at their next meeting.

## **VII. Finance & Operations**

### **A. Fiscal Year 2022 Staffing: Report**

Ms. Malone detailed personnel hiring goals for the district for the 2021-2022 school year; noted the positions that have been hardest to fill; and presented data on: diversity and steps being taken to expand workforce diversity, applications to professional level positions (2.47% appointed) and paraprofessional level positions (15.3% appointed), and personnel searches conducted/filled to date. In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Malone provided additional information on the Department of Education's Diversity in Education PLC (Professional Learning Community), demand for School Nurses (due to the impact of the pandemic, not turnover), and the low rate of appointments to professional positions in the district (SPS hiring process is an outlier relative to some other districts).

## **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 September 22, 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 substitute teaching staff, 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 8:26 pm.

## **XII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 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. Pandemic Response Slide Presentation
2. School Resource Officer (SRO) Program Memo
3. SRO Program MOU
4. SRO Program Slide Presentation
5. FY22 Personnel Report Memo
6. FY22 Personnel Report Slide Presentation
7. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above