

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, October 20, 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; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being; Ms. Barb Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources.

Not present: 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 7:01 pm.

I. Public Participation

None.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

None.

III. Superintendent's Report

None.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Accept Gift from Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union to Fund Coordinators of Development & Volunteer Activities: Vote

Mr. Michael Hale, Community Relations Officer, Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union (SFCU), noted SFCU is a mission driven organization that strives to give back to the community, and that their donation was an extension of the existing private/public partnership enjoyed by SFCU and Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS). Dr. Lizotte expressed appreciation to SFCU for their support, and to Mr. Hale for joining a group of business leaders, administrators and students that explores ways to support SPS students. Dr. Lizotte then highlighted some of the accomplishments of Michelle Biscotti and Kathleen Kehoane in their roles as Coordinators of Development & Volunteer Activities.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Collins advised that the Colonial Fund is a special revenue fund whose use is segregated exclusively for Colonial Fund purposes, and that the funds are managed by the Town Treasurer's office and have limited investment options.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to accept a gift of \$40,000 from Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union to fund the Coordinator of Development & Volunteer Activities Positions for the 2021-2022 school year.

B. District Response to the Pandemic: Report

Director of School Nursing Ms. Noelle Freeman described the mitigation strategies being implemented to achieve the district's primary goal of providing students with full-time, in-person instruction; detailed current state, local, and district-specific data relative to the COVID-19 pandemic; and provided an update on the Test and Stay and Routine COVID Safety Testing programs in the district. In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Collins provided additional information on Routine Safety Testing participation (1700-1800 student and staff samples were processed that week, with more consent forms submitted than samples processed) and noted that any possible reluctance to participation due to saliva testing might be mitigated going forward by the recent change to nasal swab testing (per Ms. Freeman, a change that was implemented because of feedback from users). Ms. Freeman provided additional information on data derived from Test and Stay and Routine Testing programs, and for follow up on positive test results.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

A. Policy for Mandatory Vaccination of Staff: Discussion & Vote

Ms. Malone presented the draft policy. Committee members offered their perspectives in turn and expressed support for the draft. Dr. Magee suggested that good quality information be made available to individuals contemplating requesting an exemption from mandatory immunization, and noted that there was value to noting the policy would stay in place for five years. Mr. Palitsch made a motion that the policy be accepted as proposed with an amendment to the language in section IV that "This policy will remain in place" be followed by the insertion of the words "for a period of five years or" before the word "until..." and that the rest be left as written in the draft presented. Dr. Magee seconded the motion, and the Committee voted unanimously to adopt Policy #394: COVID-19 Staff Vaccination Policy with the amendment stated.

Regarding the provision of an information sheet, Ms. Malone recommended that associated language not be included in the policy based on the advice of legal counsel and added that this would need to be addressed as part of impact bargaining. Ms. Malone also provided additional information on religious and medical exemption requests in the context of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Substitute Teacher Pay Rates: Vote

Ms. Malone summarized the proposed rate adjustments for day-to-day and dedicated full-week substitute teachers. In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Collins estimated the net impact to the budget through the end of the school year from the change for day-to-day subs to be \$56-57K, adding that the net cost to add six full-week dedicated building substitute teachers through the end of the school year would be approximately \$41K, with potential funding sources being remaining COVID grant funds and the Operating Budget. He later added that the rate for substitute teachers had last been raised in 2018. Ms. Malone noted that in addition to the tight labor market a neighboring district currently pays a higher rate so the increase would make SPS more competitive, and advised that current and anticipated demands warrant the addition of full-week dedicated building substitute teachers.

On a motion by Ms. Heffernan, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the rate adjustments for day-to-day and dedicated, full-week substitute teachers as presented.

B. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Calendar: Vote

Mr. Collins presented an overview of the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Calendar, which illustrated parallel budget timelines from the School Department and municipal departments (Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee), and highlighted important events on the timelines. Ms. Fryc suggested adding a 1:1 meeting with the Finance Committee (as had been done this year) to discuss the budget sometime between February 16, 2022 (the Superintendent's Budget Recommendation) and the meeting with the Finance Committee Meeting scheduled for March 26, 2022; Ms. Heffernan seconded adding such a meeting, and Mr. Wensky concurred. On a motion by Ms. Heffernan, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Calendar as presented.

C. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Priorities & Guidelines: Discussion

Noting he, Dr. Sawyer, and Fiscal Projection Subcommittee members Ms. Heffernan and Dr. Magee met recently to review a draft of the document, Mr. Collins highlighted the three FY23 Budget Priorities being presented, and added that the assumptions and guidelines incorporated were similar to those utilized in prior years. Committee members shared their perspectives in turn and all expressed support for the priorities and guidelines. Mr. Collins advised that the Committee would have the opportunity to vote on the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Priorities & Guidelines at their next meeting.

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 October 6, 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”), 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 8:16 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 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. Draft School Committee Policy #394: COVID-19 Staff Vaccination
3. Substitute Teacher Pay Rate Memo
4. FY23 Budget Calendar
5. FY23 Budget Priorities & Guidelines Draft
6. Set(s) of Minutes as referenced above