

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE SHREWSBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

During its meeting of May 16, 2018, the Shrewsbury School Committee discussed the Warrant Article for Shrewsbury's Annual Town Meeting which proposes to prohibit the dispensing of prepared food in disposable food service containers made from Expanded Polystyrene. During that discussion, Committee members voted unanimously to authorize the Chairperson to prepare a statement, summarizing the Committee's deliberations to interested Town Meeting Members. To wit:

At the Committee's previous meeting on May 9th, the Committee heard a presentation from staff of Shrewsbury Public Schools outlining the impact of the proposed ban on the district, should it pass, and in addition heard a presentation from the proponents of the ban. Further, a public hearing was conducted to hear community feedback. Further community feedback was received via email in advance of the May 16th meeting.

During the discussion on May 16th, there appeared a consensus that it was not the will of the Committee to take a formal position on the proposed Warrant article. No member of the Committee advocated for such a course of action. Specifically, members cited the Warrant Article's impact on business establishments in the community, and a belief that it is not within the purview of the School Committee to involve itself in regulatory matters concerning the business community.

With regard to the use of Expanded Polystyrene in the Shrewsbury Public School system, members expressed differing points of view on the topic. Some members expressed a preference that its usage within the School system be phased out over time; members cited reservations about single-use disposables, and concerns over supporting the Expanded Polystyrene market through the department's purchasing power. Some members also expressed reservations, however, about the validity of some of the claims made about these products, including purported health effects from consuming food served in Styrofoam containers. Further concerns were expressed about an immediate impact on the pricing of school lunches to cover the cost of alternatives at this time. Additionally, the potential consequence of compostable products generating more CO₂ than styrene during incineration due to greater density, in the absence of a composting service being made available to the department, was noted. Members expressed a desire both for more information in the form of objective, expert reporting on the health and environmental impacts of polystyrene and its alternatives, as well as further time to consider this issue. No formal action was taken, except to authorize the Chair to summarize the discussion.

The Committee commends the proponents of the Warrant Article, students of Shrewsbury High School, for their involvement in the democratic process. Members of the Committee will each act in accordance with their own beliefs and consciences at Town Meeting, as individually elected members of that body.

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