

SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
100 MAPLE AVENUE
SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS
MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP & EXECUTIVE SESSION
Wednesday, January 11, 2023
Shrewsbury High School, 2002 Conference Room

Workshop Start Time: 5:34pm

Present: Ms. Lynsey Heffernan, Chairperson; Mr. Jason Palitsch, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Jonathan Wensky, Secretary; Ms. Sandy Fryc; Ms. Erin Boucher; Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships and Well-Being; and Amy Clouter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Focused Schools/Strategic planning Update

Dr. Sawyer provided an update on SPS Strategic Planning for the next five years. Over the last few days, Dr. Sawyer and Ms. Clouter have had conversations with Focused Schools. They have sent an email to the School Committee on their status and provided a progress update. They will be scheduling sessions for staff and families. Separate discussions will be held so all voices can be heard freely. Two additional meetings will be scheduled with the School Committee - February and March are likely target timelines with the March date being a review of the final draft. Parents of English Language Learners and Special Education students will be invited to be part of focus groups conducted by Focused Schools. Ms. Fryc also asked that PTO parents are factored into the focus group feedback as well. Dr. Sawyer also recommended the town's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee be contacted for input. School Committee workshops are tentatively scheduled for February 1 or 8 and March 22.

FY 24 Budget Development - Status Update

Overview - Mr. Collins reviewed Budget Development Status update slides to provide the current status. All figures included in these slides are preliminary. The planned initial recommendation is on schedule for February 15, 2023. We reviewed the FY 24 Budget Status Summary - just over \$83.5M with an initial estimate of a 5.34% increase required to carry forward existing staff and programming. Over the last few weeks, the Town Manager laid out his financial baseline information and signaled to SPS that there is a strong likelihood the early February Town Manager budget will recommend a 4.75% budget increase. Assuming this rate, the initial projection is over the cap by 0.59% (\$465K).

FY 23 Budget Status - There have been unanticipated budget expenses in FY 23 including paraprofessional and substitute teacher budget cost overruns; recurring costs have to be incorporated into the FY24 budget plan. The additional costs for paraprofessionals is budgeted at their full cost for FY 24 assuming no vacancy rate which is the most conservative approach.

FY 24 Budget Projections - Current projections exceed the percentage increase cap of 4.75% - if costs don't change from this point forward, SPS will be over our budget cap by \$465K. The gap we experience can be drawn down by the existing, healthy Circuit Breaker balance. Mr. Collins reviewed mitigation strategies for bridging this gap with Circuit Breaker reserves. The 14% increase is assumed

and baked into the numbers presented as part of Circuit Breaker funding projections. With Circuit Breaker funding offsetting the costs associated with the tuition increase, the Committee will need to determine how to message this adjustment to the public so they understand the impact and why it's showing a line item decrease when in fact it's an increase to the tuition rates.

RISE Program - Ms. Fryc asked about the RISE Program funding. Mr. Collins advised that there is SPED grant money that will allow for retrofitting the new building space as well as annual grant funding that will allow SPS to offset the costs of operation. Additionally, the revenue brought in by the business will reduce operating costs. Revenue has not been factored into the financials that have been presented to date. Ms. Fryc wants to understand what recurring costs could have the potential to touch the operating budget to ensure it is sustainable.

Transportation - The current plan assumes no new buses for FY 24 regardless of the decision on school start times. Bids will open on January 26th for a new contract starting in FY 24.

Vocational School Tuitions - We currently have applications out from 8th grade students with seven to Assabet, one to Nashoba Valley, and one to Norfolk Agricultural School. The current FY 24 budget assumes 4 student acceptances for grade 9 students at Assabet which is considered "optimistic" based on the changes to the state law for eligible students in SPS.

District Leadership Team members provided requests for additional investments - most of these requests are recurring expenses (staffing) and some are one-time expenses (materials, technology). This list will continue to be reviewed as the budget matures and discussions will continue with leadership to determine how they might do things differently to mitigate these gaps.

Next Steps - Mr. Collins will continue to review and revise all budget items including salaries/staffing, tuitions, transportation, contract services, supplies, and materials as well as incorporating results of the school transportation bid results. We discussed the future impact of fees for Extended School Care, Transportation, and Music instruction.

Sleep Health/Start Time Study Group - Dr. Sawyer & Mr. Collins briefed the School Committee on the status. There has been a modification to option A that changes elementary end time from 3:40pm to 3:30pm. Option B presents some logistical challenges if Middle School dismisses first - highest enrollment is at Oak and you have two schools on the same premises. Elementary dismissal is a more phased approach.

Motion to adjourn to Executive Session: On a motion by Mr. Palitsch; Seconded by Ms. Boucher. Roll call vote: Ms. Fryc, Yes; Mr. Wensky, Yes; Ms. Boucher, Yes; Mr. Palitsch, Yes; Ms. Heffernan, Yes.

Workshop adjourned to Executive Session at: 7:10pm

Motion to adjourn the School Committee Workshop: On a motion by Mr. Palitsch; Seconded by Ms. Boucher. Roll call vote: Ms. Fryc, Yes; Mr. Wensky, Yes; Ms. Boucher, Yes; Mr. Palitsch, Yes; Ms. Heffernan, Yes.

Workshop adjourned at: 7:11pm

Documents referred to:

Strategic Planning Update Slide Presentation

FY24 Budget Update Slide Presentation

School Start Times Modified Option A