

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Present: Ms. Lynsey Heffernan, Chairperson; Mr. Jason Palitsch, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Jon Wensky, Secretary; Ms. Erin Boucher; Ms. Sandra Fryc; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Ms. Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; 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 Ms. Heffernan at 7:00 pm.

I. Public Participation

None.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

None.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer reported that the annual Shrewsbury High School (SHS) spring musical, *Babes in Arms*, would be performed at the weekend, and that the SHS Girls' Ice Hockey team would compete in the state championship game at TD Garden on the following Sunday. He wished good luck to the SHS Robotics Team and Speech and Debate Team at their upcoming competitions. Dr. Sawyer thanked the Elementary Instructional Coaches/Curriculum Coordinators for facilitating an ST Math Virtual Family Workshop that evening.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations: Discussion & Potential Vote to Appoint

Dr. Sawyer recommended that the Committee vote to appoint Mr. Christian Girardi, current Principal at Major Howard W. Beal Elementary School, as the next Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations for Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS). Dr. Sawyer provided a timeline and description of the search process; summarized feedback themes from surveys conducted after various stakeholder groups had an opportunity to meet with Mr. Girardi during a day of interviews; shared his rationale for recommending Mr. Girard (including his school leadership skills and experience, interpersonal skills, strong work ethic, and demonstration of the district's core values); and noted the robust onboarding process planned for Mr. Girardi to train with Mr. Collins on all aspects of the position, including school finance responsibilities. Committee members shared their perspectives in turn, and all expressed support for Dr. Sawyer's recommendation of Mr. Girardi for the position. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the Committee voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Christian Girardi, as recommended by the Superintendent, for the position of Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations as of July 1, 2023.

B. State of the District: Report

Ms. Heffernan advised that this agenda item would be postponed to the School Committee meeting on March 29, 2023, to align with presentation of the Strategic Planning Report.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

None.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Fiscal Year 2024 Special Education Budget: Report

Ms. Belsito and Assistant Director of Special Education & Pupil Personnel Services Ms. Meghan E. Bartlett gave the report, which included information/data on: Professional Development in the department; work towards becoming a Unified Champion District; the number of students identified for Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Accommodation Plans; student placement types (Integrated, Partial Inclusion, Sub-Separate); Out of District funding, placements, and enrollment projections; finances relative to Circuit Breaker funding and tuitions, and for Contracted Services; FY24 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Grant expenditures for Disproportionality, Proportionate Share & Resolution Funds; and recommended new investments for the Reaching Independence through Supported Employment (RISE) Program. Mr. Collins joined Ms. Belsito and Ms. Bartlett to present an update on the RISE Program. The RISE update included program enrollment projections; FY24 budget details (as of March 2023); funding information; a cost/benefit analysis (with the RISE program projected to save \$83,159 versus utilizing Out of District placements); a description of the foundational underpinnings of the program; and property information for the RISE building location.

Additional information was provided to the Committee on Out of District tuitions (range is \$60-280K per student); the total building capacity for the RISE program location (estimated at 50-55; not all students would be there at the same time); interest in the program from the business community; potential fundraising and sponsorship initiatives (capital campaign, annual fund, etc.) for enhanced revenue opportunities; and the co-teaching model (a minimum of one team/pair of teachers per building and more depending on need).

B. Massachusetts School Building Authority Statement of Interest for Potential Addition to Shrewsbury High School: Vote

In his report, Mr. Collins presented background information on the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and its past projects with SPS; noted that overcrowding at SHS was identified as a high priority in the recent Grades PreK-12 Space Study conducted by Lamoureux Pagano Associates |Architects (LPA|A); described the MSBA capital project process, timeline, and current Statement of Interest (SOI) application period; provided statistics on MSBA application acceptance rates; recommended the Committee vote to support submitting an SOI for SHS; and detailed next steps in the process.

Committee members and Dr. Sawyer expressed support for the recommendation to submit an SOI. Mr. Palitsch requested that the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, write a letter to the Select Board requesting they support this effort.

Ms. Heffernan requested a motion that having convened in an open meeting on March 15, 2023, prior to the Statement Of Interest submission closing date, the School Committee of Shrewsbury Public Schools [Town of Shrewsbury, MA], in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, vote to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated April 2023 for Shrewsbury High School located at 64 Holden Street, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority categories for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future to alleviate persistent severe overcrowding [Priority#2]; to replace and modernize the school's roof and HVAC systems which are near end of life and install new, energy-efficient systems [Priority#5]; to provide an addition to the school so that a full range of programs including technical training via Innovation Pathways Programs and/or Chapter 74 vocational/technical programs [Priority#7], and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Shrewsbury to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Mr. Palitsch moved that the School Committee direct the Chairperson to write a letter of request, on the Committee's behalf, to the Select Board, requesting that the Select Board take any necessary action to support the submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority a Statement of Interest for Shrewsbury High School. On a motion by Ms. Boucher, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Ms. Heffernan requested that an item be added to the School Committee meeting agenda on April 12 to address some additional concerns identified in the Space Study relative to preschool capacity and elementary programs/buildings.

C. Fiscal Year 2024 Fees & Tuitions: Vote

Dr. Sawyer recommended that: transportation and athletic fees and preschool tuitions remain the same for Fiscal Year 2024 and provided his rationale for doing so; music lesson rate increases to make instructor pay more competitive and keep the self-funded program viable; and Extended School Care tuitions increase, and discounts for qualifying families decrease, in anticipation of increased health insurance costs while still providing good value. Committee members expressed support for the recommendations.

On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the adjustments to fee and tuition rates for Fiscal Year 2024 as illustrated in the Superintendent's recommendation memo dated March 12, 2023.

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 March 1, 2023, were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

Ms. Heffernan 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, – 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 Mr. Wensky, on a roll call vote: Ms. Fryc, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Boucher, yes; and Ms. Heffernan, yes; the School Committee voted to adjourn to Executive Session at 9:03 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Fryc, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Boucher, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Heffernan, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

Asst. Supt. for Finance & Operations Recommendation Memo

Special Education FY24 Budget Report

RISE Program Information

Special Education FY24 Budget Slide Presentation

SHS Statement of Interest (SOI) Report

SHS SOI Slide Presentation

SPS PreK-12 Space Study

MSBA SOI Process Overview

MSBA Senior Study Site Visits

MSBA SOI FAQs

FY24 Fees & Tuitions Recommendation Memo

Set(s) of minutes as referenced above