

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 29, 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. Amy B. Clouter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment; Ms. Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; 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 6:30 pm.

I. Public Participation

None.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

Ms. Heffernan thanked the Shrewsbury Finance Committee and Town Administrators for facilitating recent Public Hearings at which the School Committee and Shrewsbury Public School (SPS) Administrators presented Fiscal Year 2024 budget information.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer reported SPS was not affected by swatting (false 911 calls) that impacted several nearby districts the prior day and described the work being done at SPS to plan for any potential future similar incidents; displayed a copy of the most recent Shrewsbury School Journal and expressed appreciation to all contributors; and congratulated Maj. Howard W. Beal Principal Christian Girardi - who was in the audience - on his appointment to the role of Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations beginning July 1, 2023.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Student Recognition: SHS Girls Ice Hockey State Champions

Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Principal Todd Bazydlo, Head Coach Frank Panarelli, Assistant Coach Joe Joubert, and Girls Ice Hockey Senior Captains Maddie Mrva, Taylor Ryder, Katherin Vona, and Rachel Bunsick addressed the Committee and shared their perspectives on the team's successful season and State Championship win. Mr. Bazydlo shared a video from Athletic Director Jay Costa (who was away at the Massachusetts State Athletic Directors Conference and unable to attend the meeting) and Westborough Public Schools Athletic Director Johanna DiCarlo congratulating the team. Team members and coaches were invited up to be recognized by the Committee and Dr. Sawyer and were presented with certificates. Dr. Sawyer added that the cooperative team included players from Westborough High School, Milford High School, and Wachusett Regional High School.

B. State of the District: Report

In his report, Dr. Sawyer addressed: the district's use of technology (trends, challenges, opportunities); its academic health; student mental, behavioral, and emotional health; Diversity, Belonging, Inclusion, & Equity (DBIE) and how it supports educational excellence and well-being; the district's financial and operational health; how strengthening systems (safety/security, professional development, etc.) empowers people; and feedback themes gathered from multiple focus group meetings in schools with over 200 students in grades 3 through 12, asking them what is working well in our schools and what could be better. One key theme was the importance of making connections with and among students.

Committee members expressed appreciation for the financial predictability provided by the 2021 Override Agreement, student access to district iPads, and the transparency of the report relative to assessing both strengths and challenges in the district.

C. Draft of Strategic Plan for 2023-2027: Report

Focused Schools Managing Director Kerry Purcell and School and District Improvement Manager Ashley Santiago gave the report, which noted the process timeline to date, provided data highlights, and summarized feedback from all stakeholders by theme. They described the three identified Commitments (Educational Excellence, Enhanced Well-Being of All, Optimization of Resources), detailed the Strategic Priorities supporting each, and provided sample action steps that could be utilized to assess their impacts. Ms. Purcell and Ms. Santiago concluded the report by sharing recommended next steps and providing a suggested timeline through June 2024.

Ms. Boucher noted the importance of utilizing the proposed check-in tools, and Ms. Fryc suggested that continual course improvement and assessment be included as an action step.

D. Mental Health and Clinical Services Resources: Report

Ms. Belsito provided introductory remarks and introduced presenters Jamie Millett, Director of Counseling and Mental Health Services, and Felicitie Boisvert, District Social Worker. In their report, Ms. Millett and Ms. Boisvert provided information on: the most recent (2021) SHS Regional Youth Health Survey (RYHS); SPS Clinical Department staffing and student/staff ratios; Behavioral Health Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and shared associated data by tier and by level; the Bridging Resilient Youth in Transitions (BRYT) program, and shared data by school (Sherwood and Oak Middle Schools; Shrewsbury High School); Emergency Responses Services and shared data by level; the work of Clinical Coordinators and shared referral, caseload, and Clinical Rounds data; the role of the District Social Worker (Ms. Boisvert), shared referral data by type, and provided data on homeless students and students in foster care in the district; the procedure for implementing universal screening tools and the rationale for utilizing them; district participation in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) Social Emotional Behavioral (SEB) Academy; Trauma Informed Education Training that was provided during Paraprofessional Professional Development and at elementary faculty meetings; Mental Health & Athletics/After School Activities; community partnerships; and future recommendations. They concluded the report by sharing resources with the community for identifying behavioral changes and seeking help for mental health emergencies.

Committee members and Dr. Sawyer expressed appreciation for the recently added roles and staff who are providing much-needed mental health support and clinical services in the district.

E. School Nursing: Report

Ms. Belsito provided introductory remarks and Director of Nursing Noelle Freeman gave the report, which included historical (since 2018-2019) and current year-to-date data on student visits to the Health

Office by type; noted the average (for the past five years) return to class rate was 95%; and compared Massachusetts Department of Public Health school nurse/student recommended ratios with those at SPS, by school. In response to a question from Ms. Fryc, Ms. Freeman advised the number of students seen by nurses for mental health issues had stayed consistent since additional mental health staff were added, probably because nurses' offices are always available and are often the first point of contact for students seeking help.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

None.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Public hearing on FY24 Budget

Ms. Heffernan opened the Public Hearing at 9:19 pm.

Christa Duprey spoke and asked for clarification on information (including funding sources, operating costs, transportation, fundraising, corporate partnerships) about the RISE (Reaching Independence through Supported Education) program presented at the prior School Committee meeting (March 15, 2023).

After determining there were no additional Public Hearing participants (9:28 pm) Ms. Heffernan referred Ms. Duprey to the meeting materials presented on the RISE program at the March 15, 2023 School Committee meeting that are posted on the SPS website. Dr. Sawyer provided additional information on funding and funding sources for the program, and Mr. Collins advised that three vans (one is currently on order) will be utilized for transportation to meet the needs of the RISE program.

B. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Update

Mr. Collins provided a current status on COVID relief grant funds and on Town Meeting (Appropriated Budget) funds, noting that a stable, moderate surplus (\$264,793) is projected for June 30, 2023. Mr. Collins went on to share more detailed information on those budget categories (including Substitute Teachers, tuition reimbursements, and transportation) with projected variances that are greater than 5% (over or under). In response to a question from Ms. Fryc, Mr. Collins advised that March (2023) represented the first month of the current school year that substitute costs were on par with the same month of the previous school year (other months in the current year were all higher than the same month in the previous year).

VIII. Old Business

None.

IX. New Business

None.

X. Approval of Minutes

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Workshops held on March 15 and March 22, 2023, and from the School Committee Meeting held on March 15, 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”) 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”); 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 Ms. Boucher, 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 9:54 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Fryc, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 10:09pm. 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:

SHS Girls Varsity Ice Hockey Roster

Superintendent’s State of the District Report Slide Presentation

2023-2027 Strategic Plan Draft

2023-2027 Strategic Plan Draft Slide Presentation

Mental Health & Clinical Services Report

Mental Health & Clinical Services Slide Presentation

School Nursing Report

School Nursing Slide Presentation

Fiscal Year 23 Budget Update

Set(s) of minutes as referenced above