

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, April 12, 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; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being; 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 7:01 pm.

I. Public Participation

None.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

None.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer expressed appreciation to all contributors to the successful Career Awareness Day held the prior week at Oak Middle School for grade 7 students, and congratulated players on the two middle school United Basketball Teams who participated in a game held at the Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Field House the previous week.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Student Recognition: Middle School Select Music Performance Groups

Oak Middle School (OMS) Music/Band Teacher Anthony Ugliarolo and OMS Music Teacher Bryant Clark shared information about the Select Band, Chorus, and Orchestra groups at OMS, and advised that after recent successful performances at the Massachusetts Instrumental and Choral Conductors Association (MICCA) Music Concert Festival the Select Chorus and Select Orchestra would be performing at the MICCA Gold Medal Showcase Mechanics Hall in Worcester the following weekend. Students KC Crosby, 8th Grade Oak Select Band (Trombone); Pratham Pai, 7th Grade Oak Select Band (Percussion); Jaedyn McCabe, 8th Grade Oak Select Choir; and Graham Liporto, 7th Grade Oak Select Choir, talked about their experiences in the Select music groups. Student Cecilia Quintero Johnson introduced fellow 8th Grade Oak Select Orchestra students and quartet members Anya Lai, Angelina Tie, and Anna Menyalkin, who performed "Blue Rhythmico" (by Kirt Mosier). The Committee and Dr. Sawyer congratulated the students on their success and invited them up to receive certificates and be recognized by the Committee.

B. 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Draft: Public Hearing

Ms. Heffernan opened the Public Hearing at 7:25pm.

Speaker Rajesh Velagapudi asked how nimbly the Strategic Plan, post-pandemic, would address mitigating the loss of vocational training opportunities in the district.

Ms. Heffernan closed the Public Hearing at 7:26pm.

Ms. Heffernan advised that information on vocational training opportunities in the district would be presented later in the meeting.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

A. Homework Policy Revision: First Reading

In their report, Ms. Clouter and SHS Principal Todd Bazydlo provided background information, context, and noted the guiding principles utilized for development of the policy draft; defined “homework” and summarized relevant homework research; noted current practices that would remain and summarized important changes incorporated in the draft (including inclusion of students in grades 9-12); summarized key messages from the draft and shared notes on its implementation.

Committee members (Ms. Boucher and Mr. Palitsch are members of the Policy Subcommittee) presented their perspectives on the draft in turn. In response to questions from Ms. Heffernan, additional information was provided on communication around the policy (if approved) to various stakeholders, and on the potential for students to utilize Advisory time at SHS to practice modeling interactions with adults about homework concerns.

B. Charter Schools & School Choice: Report, School Choice Public Hearing, & Vote

In his report, Mr. Collins presented: Charter School enrollment history (FY99-present), FY23 enrollment by school and grade, FY23 tuitions and reimbursements and revenue, and projected FY24 enrollment; School Choice enrollment and tuition history (sending and receiving students, for 10 years) and data on FY23 sending students by grade level and destination district; Virtual School historical (six years) enrollment, and FY23 enrollment and tuitions; and enrollment history (six years) for Homeschool Students. After providing summary notes on the data presented, Mr. Collins recommended that the Committee vote to not accept new School Choice students based on space limitations, especially at the upper grade levels.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Collins and Dr. Sawyer provided additional information on Shrewsbury Public Schools students attending the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (some do attend, at no cost to the district), Virtual School tuition rates (they are set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education), and Virtual School enrollment trends.

Ms. Heffernan opened the Public Hearing on School Choice at 8:28pm.

Speaker Rajesh Velagapudi advised he agreed with the recommendation to not open new School Choice seats and asked how the district would compensate for the lack of revenue. Dr. Sawyer responded that the state reduces the district’s Chapter 70 allotment funding for School Choice students and Charter School enrollments and advised this was already factored into the FY24 Budget. Mr. Collins added that the FY24 Budget included \$100K for the district’s 20 extant School Choice (receiving) students.

Ms. Heffernan closed the Public Hearing at 8:31pm.

On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the Committee voted unanimously to not participate in interdistrict school choice for the 2023-2024 school year.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Fiscal Year 2024 Final School Department Appropriated Budget Recommendation: Presentation & Vote

Noting the FY24 Town-Appropriated Budget Recommendation overall total was the same as presented in February, Dr. Sawyer shared updated cost projections that reflected reduced and increased costs in different categories; summarized original recommendations for Strategic Investments and recommended potential additional Strategic Investments; and advised that Circuit Breaker reserve balance funds would offset costs associated with the potential additional investments.

Committee members shared their perspectives in turn, with all expressing support for the recommendation and for proposed additional strategic investments in literacy and vocational/technical educational opportunities.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend a Fiscal Year 2024 Town-Appropriated School Department Budget of \$83,086,622 as presented for Town Meeting approval.

B. Food Service Substitute Pay Rate: Vote

Acknowledging difficulties recruiting substitute food service staff in the current labor market and the availability of only a very small pool of existing staff, Mr. Collins advised that increasing the pay rate would assist in attracting and retaining staff. He also noted that a pay rate increase would not impact the district's operating budget as the cost would be borne by the Food Service Department. In response to a question from Ms. Heffernan, Mr. Collins advised that the state minimum wage law does not apply to municipalities.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Boucher, the Committee voted unanimously to increase the food service substitute hourly pay rate from \$14.25 to \$15.50 effective April 17, 2023.

C. Acceptance of Gifts: Votes

Dr. Lizotte expressed appreciation to Mr. Don Musial at WIN Waste Innovations for a donation of \$35,000, with \$17,500 allocated for career exploration pathways and \$17,500 allocated for the Reaching Independence through Supported Employment (RISE) Program; and to a group of retired teachers who made donations for an upcoming SHS student DECA Business Club trip to Florida.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously to accept a gift of \$35,000 from WIN Waste Innovations, with \$17,500 allocated for supporting the start up of the Reaching Independence through Supported Employment (RISE) Program, and \$17,500 allocated for supporting ongoing and future efforts for student career exploration activities and programs.

Mr. Collins reported the SHS Class of 2022 had offered to make a donation of \$7500 (which represented leftover funds from their class activities account) to support the replacement of mountain bikes used in the Lifetime Fitness Physical Education Program at the high school.

On motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to accept a gift of \$7,500 from the Shrewsbury High School Class of 2022 to support the replacement of mountain bikes as part of the Lifetime Fitness Physical Education Program at Shrewsbury High School.

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 29, 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” for the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes, 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 9:05 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:

Draft School Committee Policy #523 Homework Policy Memo

Draft School Committee Policy #523 Homework Policy

Draft School Committee Policy #523 Homework Policy Slide Presentation

School Choice, Charter School, Virtual, and Homeschool Students Report Slide Presentation

FY24 Budget Recommendation: Superintendent’s Memo

FY24 Budget Recommendation Data Sheets

FY24 Budget Recommended Strategic Investments

FY24 Budget Recommendation Slide Presentation

Food Service Substitute Pay Rate Recommendation Memo

Set(s) of minutes as referenced above