

**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP**  
**Tuesday, August 16, 2022**  
**Shrewsbury High School, 02 Conference Room**  
**64 Holden Street**  
**SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Start:** 6:02p

**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; Ms. Barbara Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations; and Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent of Community Partnerships and Well-Being.

**Reviewed workshop agenda**

**Acceptance of gift: Vote**

- \$15,000 for Sherwood Middle School from the PTO - received from events and socials to be invested in repainting and reclining basketball and foursquare courts, benches and tables for outside, TVs, and offset costs for field trips for the upcoming school year.
- On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the Committee voted unanimously to accept a donation of \$15,000 from the Shrewsbury Middle School PTO for improvements including a new basketball hoop, television screens, and outside benches, and tables; athletic court repainting and relining; and funding for field trips, at Sherwood Middle School.

**Briefing on SLT Leadership Conference**

- Dr. Sawyer provided an overview of the conference. The goal is to advance the work of the district, focus on capacity building, and team building/connection time. These meetings were held at the College of the Holy Cross - Hogan Campus Center. Topics on Day 1 included DEI, REDI Framework, and hiring diversification. Day 2 focused on advancing the district's goals and strategic priorities, annual improvement planning, and best practices. The SLT also discussed communication improvements and brainstormed ideas on protocols and avoiding email overload, and reviewed updates on safety and security. Multiple guest speakers on leadership topics were also part of the agenda.

**Discussion of School Committee focus for the 2022-2023 school year**

- The Committee reviewed tentative dates for the School Committee Meeting and Workshop Calendar and any conflicts with those dates. Ms. Heffernan has a conflict with the meeting on September 28 but it is likely that the Vice Chair will fill in on this date.

## Key topics for School Committee meetings in 2022-2023

- Future of vocational education
  - As a result of a 2/2/2 meeting between Board of Selectmen (BOS), Town Manager, and School Committee (SC), Ms. Heffernan did an informal outreach to the Chair of the Assabet School Committee. A joint letter between the School Committee and Board of Selectmen may be appropriate to request to be part of a formal agenda item with the Assabet School Committee to explore the potential option of having the Town of Shrewsbury join the Assabet district. The Committee discussed the need to be transparent with the public on the process and any potential costs involved with pursuing the potential for inclusion into Assabet's district.
- Mental Health and Well-Being
  - The Committee felt it important to demonstrate that the infusion of new staff in the area of mental health is adding value and would like to continuously communicate the return on investment to the community.
  - The Committee also expressed interest in reporting periodically on the mental health of the district, especially with the new investments in resources for the current school year.
  - Ms. Malone advised that the majority of teaching positions have been filled. There are still some openings within nursing and Special Education. There was a great pool of candidates and the Committee felt it would be good to report this to the community early in the year.
- Student Learning
  - Dr. Sawyer spoke about the district's focus on learning gaps and opportunities for growth, and that it would be important to report on how the district is tracking data and what progress is being made in this space. The Committee discussed how we might best communicate this to the public and the importance of educating the community on the process, tools, and tracking improvements.
- DEI and Belonging
  - Ms. Malone and the team she has worked with on diversifying teaching staff will report on hiring and retention. The overall topic will be a recurring theme throughout the year. The Committee felt that it would be beneficial to leverage a consultant to help guide an independent review of specific aspects of DEI to avoid overlap with the survey that has been done previously by Assabet Valley Collaborative, and needs to understand how the district will move forward with DEI work and what the baseline is for current state within Shrewsbury.
- Policy
  - **School Start time** - Dr. Sawyer advised that this will be the first priority due to budget and operations implications specific to transportation and bus registration. Dr. Sawyer put out an inquiry to parents for interest in participation. The focus will be around "sleep & mental health" and Phase 1 will start with an initial public presentation to the School Committee regarding "Why this is important" and the optics around taking a pragmatic approach. Phase 2 will focus on how it can be accomplished, provide some insight into area models where districts have made changes to school start times. Mr. Collins discussed the logistical challenges with private schools that are serviced by SPS transportation

- **Homework Policy** - Dr. Sawyer explained this focus also ties into sleep health and the goal to pull SHS into this as well. SHS policy changes that will make things more consistent - blackout weekends across all grades, including and aligned with religious holidays. Dr. Sawyer advised that they would like to continue this work through the fall to track progress and then codify what we are doing at SHS with other grade levels. The most likely approach is to begin the district-level policy work in the spring after obtaining data late fall/early winter.
- **Title IX**
  - Dr. Sawyer advised that the comment period for federal rules is closing at the end August. The federal Department of Education will issue new guidance in March/April of 2023.
- **Space Study**
  - Dr. Sawyer advised of a meeting with Lamoureux Pagano Project Management team using MSBA regulations to see how our school facilities match up. There will be an opportunity later in the fall for a few reports from this team and recommendations for priorities.

### **Strategic Planning**

- Dr. Sawyer's recommendation is to begin this work in the fall and leverage ThoughtExchange as a survey tool for parents, staff, and student feedback. Dr. Sawyer also recommended leveraging a consultant and obtaining third-party validation to confirm the plan. Mr. Collins has been engaged with the town's approach to master planning and the work their consultant has done.
- Timing - September through November; shape in January, and approve by end January. The February budget recommendation can have very specific investments based on the strategic plan. Avoid overcommitting - even without COVID - it would have been hard to accomplish everything.
- The Committee agreed with this approach and requested a follow up on the cost for hiring a consultant. The overall consensus is that the new strategic priorities have to be realistic in post-COVID conditions and the "Portrait of a Graduate" should be the "North Star".

### **Other Updates from Central Office**

- **State Regulatory Issues** - MCAS - the state increased cut score with this year's 9th grade class. Central Office will do some analysis on impacts to our district; School Lunch funding - The state is funding free lunch for all students. This will be communicated to the community.
- **COVID-19** - No state-level universal masking required. There will be no testing trailer at Maple Ave. and third-party testing will not be offered. The committee also felt that current COVID case rates are no longer necessary to report at our general meetings.
- **Student Enrollment** - Shifted positions based on student enrollment numbers to mitigate Paton school kindergarten class of 24 students. We are seeing more move-ins at Beal
- **Staffing** - We are in good shape filling all positions within guidance and mental health roles. Nurses and SPED still in progress. Paraprofessional staffing is a challenge with ABA techs and child-specific aides.

**Approval of Minutes** - on a motion by Mr. Palitsch, Seconded by Ms. Boucher, the minutes from June 15 and June 29, 2022 were unanimously approved by the Committee.

**Motion to adjourn into Executive Session:** On a motion by Mr. Palitsch; seconded by Ms. Heffernan; on a roll call vote: Mr. Palitsch: Yes; Ms. Boucher: Yes; Ms. Heffernan: Yes; Ms. Fryc: Yes; and Mr. Wensky: Yes, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session 8:11pm

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, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g) – for the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes, and 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.

**Motion to adjourn General Session:** On a motion by Mr. Palitsch; Seconded by Ms. Boucher. Roll Call: Mr. Palitsch: Yes; Ms. Boucher: Yes; Ms. Heffernan: Yes; Ms. Fryc: Yes; and Mr. Wensky: Yes. General Session adjourned at: 8:23 pm.

Documents referred to:

Workshop Discussion Topics Document  
June 15 and June 29, 2022 minutes