

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, September 14, 2022**

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. 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 at 7:00 pm by Ms. Heffernan, who requested a moment of silence in memory of Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Mandarin Teacher Ms. ChinHuei Yeh who passed away unexpectedly in August 2022. Dr. Sawyer also remembered Ms. Yeh, offered condolences to her family and colleagues, and noted that World Languages Director Mr. Kenneth Almeida was the first recipient of the newly created ChinHuei Yeh Superintendent's Award, which was created in honor of Ms. Yeh and will recognize one educator annually.

**Special Opening**

The Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Chamber Choir, under the direction of Mr. Michael Lapomardo, SHS Performing Arts, Music, Choral Teacher, performed "The Star-Spangled Banner." These are the students who performed:

Soprano

Grace Kasten

Rebekah Powers

Mary Jane Pratt

Elaine Stameris

Alto

Keira Fitch

Rachel Harvie

Alia Haytham

Gianna Tan

Tenor

Chase Kinsky

Kenneth Nguyen

Carter Siebels

Bass

Carlos Reyes

Arjun Warrior

## **I. Public Participation**

Resident and SHS parent Patricia Minton shared her concerns regarding the lack of vocational education opportunities for Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) students in light of recent changes to the admissions process at vocational schools in Massachusetts, including Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School (AVRTHS), and requested that the district explore other vocational education options for students.

## **II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports**

None.

## **III. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Sawyer noted that the subsequent agenda item would serve additionally as the Superintendent's Report.

## **IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:**

### **A. Opening of the 2022-2023 School Year: Report**

In his report, Dr. Sawyer provided an overview of themes associated with the start of the school year; noted the district's Mission, Core Values, and Vision (as illustrated by the SPS *Portrait of a Graduate*); shared photos from the opening week of schools (including SHS student and Speech and Debate National Runner-Up in "Impromptu Speaking", Siri Ural, who gave an impromptu speech at Opening Day for staff; and 2022 Superintendent Award winners Patrick C. Collins, Charlene Costello, Elizabeth Caforio, Susan Shea, Erin Kennedy, Linda Weir, and Amy Russell; 2022 Thomas Kennedy Award winner Noelle Freeman; 2022 Jayne Wilkin Award winner Liza Trombley; and 2022 ChinHuei Yeh Award winner Kenneth Almeida); described challenges associated with the opening of school (e.g. transportation, lack of climate control in several schools with very hot weather, higher than expected enrollment of English language learners at the elementary level) and ongoing challenges (e.g. safety and security; staffing shortage of special education paraprofessionals); shared successes associated with the opening of school (e.g. staffing levels for teachers); welcomed new Leadership Team members; and after sharing the district's 2018-2022 Strategic Priorities, noted that opportunities would be made available for the community to participate in the process of creating the next set of strategic priorities, for 2023-2027.

In response to a question from Ms. Heffernan, Dr. Sawyer noted that there was currently no plan to increase staffing relative to increased English Language Learner (ELL) student enrollment, but that once state-required assessments of ELL students' language levels were complete the situation would be assessed to determine whether additional staffing will be necessary.

### **B. School Facilities Summer Maintenance: Report**

Mr. Collins began by providing an overview of work done by multiple municipal departments during the summer at various school buildings, and then introduced presenters Mr. Keith Baldinger, Assistant Director of Public Works, and Mr. Bill Tuttle, Public Buildings Division Manager. In their report, Mr. Baldinger and Mr. Tuttle acknowledged staff and noted staffing changes (including retirements) at the Shrewsbury Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Public Buildings Division; and provided detailed information on major summer projects, by school, at Sherwood and Oak Middle Schools, Floral Street School, Parker Road Preschool, and Shrewsbury High School. Mr. Collins noted that ongoing maintenance was conducted at all school buildings, and added that demobilization of COVID infrastructure during the summer was overseen by Assistant Finance and Operations Manager Ms. April Yu.

Committee members and Dr. Sawyer expressed appreciation to the DPW/Public Buildings Division for their work, and offered congratulations to Mr. Baldinger on his recent promotion to Assistant Director of Public Works and Mr. Tuttle for his promotion to Public Buildings Division Manager.

### **C. Student Access to Vocational-Technical Education: Update, Discussion, & Potential Vote on Communication**

Mr. Collins began the report by presenting enrollment history (11 years) by grade level for SPS students at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School (AVRTHS) and describing “member” versus “non-member” AVRTHS communities (SPS is a non-member community). Dr. Sawyer summarized recent statewide and AVRTHS admissions policy changes and their associated impact, and detailed the district’s work in response, to date, to develop other vocational education options for SPS students. Mr. Collins outlined the process the Town of Shrewsbury would need to undertake to potentially be able to join AVRTHS as a member community; provided data on current SPS enrollment, by program, at AVRTHS; and presented statewide data on post-graduate (12 months later) paths for vocational/technical school graduates.

Committee members presented their individual perspectives in turn. The high demand statewide for vocational education was acknowledged, and there was consensus among Committee members around prioritizing and providing alternative vocational education opportunities for students in the short-term while also exploring the process of applying to become an AVRTHS “member” district. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Fryc, the Committee voted unanimously to authorize the Chair to collaborate with the Chair of the Board of Selectmen to send a letter to the Assabet Valley Regional Technical School Committee requesting to meet with them to discuss the option of the Town of Shrewsbury potentially joining their district.

### **V. Curriculum**

None.

### **VI. Policy**

None.

### **VII. Finance & Operations**

None.

### **VIII. Old Business**

None.

### **IX. New Business**

#### **A. Bullying Statistics: Annual Report**

Dr. Sawyer began by clarifying the definition of “bullying” utilized for the purposes of the report. He provided detailed statistics on bullying, by level, for 2021-2022 (allegations, qualifying incidents, aggressors, targets) and compared them to 2020-2021 (noting this was an outlier year due to the pandemic); described the types of behaviors involved; noted that race/ethnicity data was collected but not being reported at the meeting due to the small number of qualifying incidents (four total) and the potential for inadvertently identifying students; addressed ongoing work in the district to minimize bullying; and noted that there is a “school safety tip” feature on the SPS website where bullying and other incidents can be reported anonymously. Ms. Heffernan suggested offering reminders to the community about the safety tip submission option on the website.

### **B. Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B Successor Contract: Vote**

Ms. Malone acknowledged the work of Committee Members Ms. Fryc and Mr. Wensky during the negotiations and provided an overview of the process; highlighted changes from the previous contract relative to Cost of Living increases, the 403(b) contribution plan, leaves of absence, gender-neutral language, and the Athletic Director position; and summarized costs associated with the new contract. Dr. Sawyer reported that Town Manager Kevin Mizikar was not able to attend the meeting but had reviewed the information and was in support of the contract's ratification, and later added that he supported the agreement and recommended its ratification. On a motion by Ms. Boucher, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B Successor Contract per the terms outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement, effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025.

### **C. Appointment of Superintendent as Representative to Assabet Valley Collaborative Board of Directors**

This agenda item will be addressed at a later meeting.

### **X. Approval of Minutes**

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Workshop held on August 16, 2022, 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; 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. At the conclusion of Executive Session the Committee will 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. Boucher, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Heffernan, yes; the School Committee voted to adjourn to Executive Session at 9:02 pm.

### **XII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Boucher, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; and Mr. Wensky, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

School Year Opening Slide Presentation

School Facilities Summer Maintenance Slide Presentation

Letter to MA Board of Elementary & Secondary Education re: Vocational School Admission

Vocational-Technical Education Access Memo

Vocational-Technical Education Access Slide Presentation

Bullying Report Memo

SEA Unit B Contract Memo

SEA Unit B Memorandum of Agreement

Set(s) of Minutes as referenced above