

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, October 12, 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. Amy B. Clouter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; 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

Ms. Heffernan reported that Walter J. Paton School offered a Safe Routes to School program - which promotes walking to school - to students and families earlier in the day.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer reported on different efforts in the district to promote walking to school; expressed appreciation to outgoing Director of Parks & Recreation Ms. Angela Snell for her contributions to the community over the years; noted the Fall Concert at Shrewsbury High School (SHS) would be held October 13; and cited elimination of the activity fee and availability of the Late Bus Program as ways the district has helped reduce barriers to middle and high school student participation in activities at Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS).

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Family Feedback Survey: Report

In the report, Dr. Sawyer shared feedback from an anonymous online survey for families about the start of the school year. He provided an overview of participation, participation languages, and data by school; summarized top-rated thoughts and low-rated thoughts; shared themes associated with the opening of schools; cited challenges around conflicting perceptions (e.g. dress codes, homework); and detailed efforts being undertaken by the district in response to the feedback.

Committee members shared their thoughts on the survey data and noted the strong support expressed for the work of SPS staff and for communication in the district. Dr. Sawyer added that complete survey data would be available on the district website for public viewing.

B. Superintendent's Goals: Presentation & Vote

Noting the proposed goals being presented reflect guidelines provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Dr. Sawyer detailed his Student Learning SMART (S=Specific and Strategic; M=Measurable; A=Action Oriented; R=Rigorous, Realistic, and Results-Focused; T=Timed and Tracked)

Goal, Student Health & Well-Being S.M.A.R.T. Goal, District Strategy S.M.A.R.T. Goal, and Professional Practice S.M.A.R.T. Goal, and detailed the actions planned to achieve each goal. School Committee members expressed support for the proposed goals. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the Superintendent's Goals for the 2022-2023 school year as presented.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Priorities & Guidelines: Discussion

Ms. Heffernan advised that this agenda item was being addressed out of order.

Dr. Sawyer began the discussion by noting the district would be looking for feedback on the draft FY24 Budget Priorities & Guidelines from the Committee and from the public (the document would be posted for viewing) prior to a vote at the next School Committee meeting. Mr. Collins reported that the priorities and guidelines for FY24 represented a shift away from medical components necessitated by the Coronavirus pandemic, and towards a focus on high inflation in the current environment and planning for the district's Strategic Priorities. He described the priorities relative to meeting commitments detailed in the March 2021 Override Statement, and around resources to support current and future district Strategic Priorities (e.g. vocational education opportunities, English Language Learners, student sleep health). Mr. Collins highlighted some of the assumptions and guidance incorporated in the draft relative to a new transportation contract, increased private Special Education tuitions in the Commonwealth, fee levels for students, and School Choice students (recommending no new School Choice students). Committee members acknowledged impacts to the budget from the upcoming transportation contract and increased Special Education costs while noting the Override Agreement provided a level of financial stability, and described the draft as fair and helpful. Ms. Fryc suggested that the University of Massachusetts Edward J. Collins Center for Public Management's Central Office Organizational Study be revisited for relevance in light of its age, and suggested having a School Committee Budget Workshop prior to December. Ms. Heffernan requested that the draft be made easily available to the public for review and feedback. Dr. Sawyer described sharing and posting of the document for public viewing, and advised he was looking for additional information on a recently implemented workforce stabilization factor used by the state's Operational Services Division as part of their inflation estimate for tuitions at private Special Education schools and its potential impact on the next year's budget.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

None.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

C. Communication Translation for Families: Report

This agenda item was taken out of order.

Ms. Clouter began the report by discussing communication and translation in the context of belonging, describing effective family engagement, summarizing tips for translation, and introducing Talking Points as a translation tool for communication with families. English Language Education Department Director Christina Manos highlighted aspects of Talking Points she likes (including ubiquitous mobile phone access for families, two way communication, and good quality AI translation); detailed its history at SPS during the 2021-2022 school year; provided historical and current usage and message data; and described how the tool works for students and families before demonstrating the Talking Points translation tool for the Committee.

Committee members noted the importance of communication with families, expressed appreciation for the accessibility and enhanced technology features (e.g. idiom clarification) associated with Talking Points, and asked clarifying questions about feedback (families and staff appreciate the tool) and cost (the base plan for 400 seats cost approximately \$3K last year).

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 September 28, 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”), Open Meeting Law, 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, 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 8:41 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Fryc, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 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:

Family Feedback Survey Report

Family Feedback Survey Slide Presentation

Superintendent’s FY23 Goals Memo

Superintendent's FY23 Goals Slide Presentation

Family Communication Translation Report

Family Communication Translation Slide Presentation

FY24 Budget Priorities & Guidelines Draft

Set(s) of minutes as referenced above