

SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
100 MAPLE AVENUE
SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS
MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP
Wednesday, December 7, 2022
Shrewsbury High School, 2002 Conference Room

Start Time: 5:35pm

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 for Finance and Operations; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships and Well-Being.

Focused Schools/Strategic Planning

The School Committee and members of the Central Office team met with Ms. Kerry Purcell and Ms. Ashley Santiago, strategic planning consultants from “Focused Schools,” to discuss the next SPS five-year Strategic Plan. During this time, we discussed the process and reviewed the existing strategic plan to determine if we need to modify, maintain, or abandon current priorities as we craft our new five-year strategic plan. This discussion wrapped up at 7:10pm.

FY 24 Budget Development - Status Update

Dr. Sawyer kicked off the workshop advising that this is all preliminary budget work to give the School Committee a status on current year projections and preparations for the FY24 budget. Mr. Collins reviewed some of the key financial pressure points in the current FY23 budget. There has been an increased need for daily and long term subs costs. Absentee rates are similar to last year. Ms. Malone advised that paraprofessional staffing has been shorthanded on ABAs and CSA's for the half of year which required an increased need to call subs. She said filling substitute needs significantly improved with the added HR Manager's focus on hiring subs. It's made a big difference in the percentage of subs being filled daily. HR has hired well over 50 day-to-day subs. Ms. Fryc asked if there has been an increase in use of Family Sick Time as a result of the new SEA contract. Ms. Malone confirmed there were only four teachers requesting a conversion from Sick to Family Sick days. Additionally, there has been an increasing need for mandated paraprofessional services (i.e. students with intensive needs) and an increase in enrollment of the 18-22 year old population.

Other notable financial impacts include the decrease in vocational enrollment. School Committee members called out the potential need to respond to questions regarding where this vocational money has been spent as a result of the change in enrollment. Mr. Collins also advised that the supplies and material budgets have projected an increase of 4.25% for inflation implications. The other big variable to FY 24 budget will be the Transportation contract with bids beginning in late January 2023. Labor costs are confirmed as all contracts have been settled. In terms of transportation, in addition to the upcoming contract, Mr. Collins advised that there has been a significant rebound in bus ridership which generated more fee revenue than projected and the impact will be factored into FY24 budget projections.

Special Education Out of District Tuitions - For the FY24 budget, Special Education Out of District Tuitions are based on a different subset of students vs. current year - we could see costs shift here, especially with the 14% increase in tuition rates. Mr. Collins has budgeted for this increase. Circuit Breaker funding offsets demand on the operating budget. Mr. Collins reviewed a breakdown of Circuit Breaker funding from FY22 through projected year end FY24 (6/30/24) noting that the School Committee decided to retain a much larger reserve under the Circuit Breaker guidelines to ensure continued financial stability under the override framework.

ESSER-3 Amendment - Mr. Collins advised that they will be re-examining the use of grant funds through the ESSER-3 federal grant. The School Committee can expect an amendment to extend funding to some staff positions (one counselor and literacy tutors) vs. shifting FY 24 budget dollars as originally planned.

Next Steps - Mr. Collins advised there will be a validation of all budget line items and adjusting FY24 personnel budgets based on any additional staff changes in addition to a refinement of expected allocation grant funds and likely revision of ESSER-3 Financial and program plans. He will provide an update to the School Committee at our next budget workshop on Wednesday, January 11, 2023.

Sleep Health/Start Time Study Group - Dr. Sawyer and Mr. Collins briefed the School Committee on the status of this initiative in advance of the subcommittee presentation at our Wednesday, December 14, 2022 General Meeting.

Motion to adjourn the School Committee Workshop: On a motion by Mr. Palitsch; Seconded by Ms. Boucher, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the workshop.

Workshop adjourned at: 8:25pm

Documents referred to:

Strategic Priorities Planning Slide Presentation
FY 24 Budget Development - Status Update Slide Presentation