

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Present: Ms. Sandra Fryc, Chairperson; Ms. Erin Boucher, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Jon Wensky, Secretary; Ms. Lynsey Heffernan; Ms. Rachel Sharifipour; Mr. Christian Girardi, 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. Fryc at 7:00 pm.

I. Public Participation

None.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

Mr. Wensky reported that he would run for re-election to the School Committee in May 2024. Ms. Sharifipour congratulated Sherwood Middle School on the successful presentation of their school play *The Most Epic Birthday Party Ever*, and expressed appreciation to the Music Department for successful Grade 4 Chorus Concerts at all elementary schools, including the concert she attended at Maj. Howard W. Beal School.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer reported that a link to Shrewsbury High School's (SHS) virtual 2024 Winter Art Exhibit was available on the Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) website and in the electronic SPS Community Bulletin; expressed appreciation to Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union for displaying student art in their facility; and advised that the SHS Career Fair that will be held on February 6 is seeking representatives from a wide variety of professions.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. SHS Student Advisory Committee: Report

Students Siri Ural (Chair), Aanya Gupta, and Caroline Strickland gave the report; Mr. Andrew Smith, SHS Teacher and Faculty Advisor to the Student Advisory Committee (SAC), was in attendance at the meeting. SAC student members Noah Csank and Venkata Duggireddy were unable to attend the meeting. In the report, the students provided updates on student life, co-curricular activities, and events at SHS. The students indicated that one topic from the schoolwide town meeting they would like to see addressed further is the potential provision of menstrual products in school restrooms. In response to questions from the Committee and Dr. Sawyer, the students advised that: feedback on new start times from the majority of students at the SHS Town Hall meeting was neutral or positive, overcrowding in school hallways is

problematic, and the addition of a fourth lunch period had helped - but did not eliminate - overcrowding at lunchtimes; and provided insight on their experience (Ms. Ural) in the Capstone Program.

B. Middle School Improvement Plans: Presentation & Vote

In their report, Sherwood Middle (SMS) School Principal Jon Kelly and Oak Middle School (OMS) Principal Hallie Burak presented information, action items, and data to date on the two shared improvement goals at the middle level relative to the district's commitments to *Educational Excellence* and closing achievement gaps, and *Enhanced Well-Being of All* and increased student belonging. Mr. Kelly shared information and action steps on the SMS-specific goal to maximize family and community partnerships; Ms. Burak shared information and action steps around the OMS-specific goal to ensure a safe and inclusive culture; and both expressed appreciation to their School Councils and PTOs for their insights and support. Additional information was provided in response to questions from the Committee on the frequency of data meetings (three times per year); Explorations Period (first period for Grade 8; second period for Grade 7; ranges from Band/Chorus/Orchestra, to total interventions, to structured reading, to various tiered levels of student support); and OMS Advisory Program frequency (biweekly on Team).

On a motion by Ms. Boucher, seconded by Ms. Sharifipour, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the School Improvement Plans for Sherwood Middle School and Oak Middle School.

C. State of the District: Report

Utilizing a new format this year, Dr. Sawyer presented his report by summarizing insights he would share about Shrewsbury Public Schools with someone considering moving to Shrewsbury who asked about the district.

Insights from Dr. Sawyer included:

- students benefit tremendously from being members of the school community (giving examples)
- the district has a skilled leadership team and staff
- SPS enjoys a strong level of trust from the community
- the district and Town of Shrewsbury have enjoyed a high level of stability in governance over time
- an appreciation for the community's level of acceptance for human differences (including the LGBTQ community)

He also noted challenges around:

- living in a fraught time and the associated impacts to the school community
- supporting students and staff in difficult times
- national political instability and rancor
- use of social media
- mental and behavioral health emergencies
- dangerous student behaviors
- the threat of school violence
- complex impacts from Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Dr. Sawyer added that the district is focused on the right things, needs resources to do this important work, and aspires for all students to get what they need both educationally and to be well. Committee members shared their perspectives in turn, acknowledged the need for appropriate tools to address the

more intense challenges and achievement gaps in the current environment, and expressed appreciation for the content, transparency, and format of the report.

V. Curriculum

A. Shrewsbury High School Program of Studies Proposed Changes: Vote

Ms. Fryc advised that no feedback had been received by the Committee on the proposed changes to the Shrewsbury High School Program of Studies that was posted after being presented at the January 10, 2024, School Committee meeting. On a motion by Ms. Boucher, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the Shrewsbury High School 2024-2025 Program of Studies as presented.

VI. Policy

None.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Future Budget Projections: Report

Mr. Girardi and Dr. Sawyer began the report by presenting financial data for the district's Town Appropriated Budget that included historical: increases/decreases; recommended vs. received increases; trend data over various time periods; and budget changes as a range (high, median, low). They noted flattening Chapter 70 State Aid and proportionally less State Aid as part of required education expenditures over time; shared historical and current per pupil expenditures in Shrewsbury vs. the state and comparison districts; and provided data on the district's spending beyond the State Foundation Budget Minimum compared to other districts (currently), and historically in the district since FY 2000.

Performance data for the December 2020 Forecasting Model was shared (actuals vs. forecasts for three years and 4.25% and 4.75% projections for FY25 and FY26) prior to presentation of a five-year projection based on the current override agreement range of 4.25-4.75%, along with an additional projection that incorporated recent trends for student and program needs. Dr. Sawyer and Mr. Girardi concluded the report by detailing the assumptions inherent in the five-year projection and summarizing key points.

Committee members shared their perspectives in turn, noting that additional funds for Strategic Priorities were not included in the projection.

VIII. Old Business

A. Elementary School Improvement Plans: Vote

Ms. Fryc noted that due to an oversight a vote was needed on the Elementary School Improvement Plans presented at the School Committee meeting on January 10, 2024. There were no questions from the Committee. On a motion by Ms. Boucher, seconded by Ms. Sharifipour, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the School Improvement Plans for Major Howard W. Beal School, Calvin Coolidge School, Floral Street School, Walter J. Paton School, and Spring Street School.

IX. New Business

None.

X. Approval of Minutes

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Workshop held on January 3, and the School Committee Meeting held on January 10, 2024, were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

Ms. Fryc 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, 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, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body; and return to Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening. On a motion by Ms. Boucher, seconded by Ms. Sharifipour, on a roll call vote: Ms. Sharifipour, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Boucher, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes, the School Committee voted to adjourn to Executive Session at 9:08 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Heffernan, seconded by Ms. Boucher, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 10:17 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Sharifipour, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Boucher, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

SHS Student Advisory Committee Agenda

2023-2024 Middle School Improvement Plan

2023-2024 Middle School Improvement Plan Slide Presentation

Future Budget Projections Report

Future Budget Projections Slide Presentation

Set(s) of minutes as referenced above