

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, February 28, 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; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being; 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 7:00pm.

I. Public Participation

None.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

None.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer expressed appreciation to all staff who contributed to the successful execution of the February Vacation Enrichment Program, noted sign ups for the April Vacation Enrichment Program would begin soon, and advised Summer Program sign ups were already open.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Staff Wellness Initiatives: Report

Noting the district's Strategic Commitment to *Enhanced Well-Being of All* and its Strategic Priority to *Promote Student and Staff Wellness*, Dr. Lizotte shared examples of ways Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) is addressing this priority and goal. Her report included information on defining *well-being*, creating a culture of caring in schools, and acknowledging unprecedented levels of stress for educators. Dr. Lizotte detailed recommended action steps for building a systemic and sustainable culture of care; summarized data from staff wellness surveys conducted in June 2023 and January 2024; noted classes offered this winter that are "For Staff, by Staff"; detailed next steps around building and supporting a culture of staff wellness across the district; and noted upcoming offerings that include a workshop for all staff being presented by Sherwood Middle School Assistant Principal Karen Gutekanst in collaboration with Associate Professor of Practice, Human Services & Rehab Studies at Assumption University, Ms. Lea Christo.

In response to questions from the Committee, Dr. Lizotte advised that town-wide partnership programs include a mindfulness and meditation drop-in class on Tuesdays at Town Hall, a Spring Wellness Retreat at Shrewsbury High School, and a Well-Being Challenge from Jessica Gifford at Project Connect in Northampton (funded by West Suburban Health Group). Committee members and Dr. Sawyer

acknowledged the importance of finding ways to include outside groups (e.g. Ms. Christo, PTOs) in conversations around staff stress.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

A. School District Calendar for 2024 -2025 School Year: Discussion

Dr. Sawyer presented a draft of the 2024-2025 School Calendar, noting it took a similar approach to calendars in recent years which are based on recommendations from the 2016 Calendar Committee. Dr. Sawyer addressed aspects of the draft relative to: the start of the school year; a Parent Conference/Professional Development Day on Election Day in November; the return of Kindergarten screening days; religious holidays; “No Homework” dates; the Juneteenth holiday; and the Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples’ Day holiday. Dr. Sawyer advised that the draft calendar would be posted for public viewing/comment in advance of a vote by the Committee in two weeks.

Ms. Heffernan noted she felt there is room for growth around communication to families about religious holidays and “No Homework” dates, and was provided with information on how interested parties can receive calendar updates from the SPS website by subscribing under the *Upcoming Events* section on the homepage.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Fiscal Year 2025 Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Budget: Report

Ms. Clouter’s report included information on key areas of budget responsibility; Fiscal Year 2024 Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment (CIA) staffing data; fall to winter comparisons of students designated for reading support (based on Star Reading assessment data) by level for Grades K - 8; connecting the budget to the district’s Strategic Priorities, including the Priority to *Ensure High-Quality Teaching and Learning* (e.g. Professional Development over time relative to PreK- Grade 6 Literacy); CIA budget trends over time; the Fiscal Year 2025 proposed budget by category; federal grant funding (FY24); and optimization of other resources (e.g. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-sponsored partnerships, community support).

Ms. Clouter provided additional information in response to questions from the Committee on Title III Grant Funds (expected to stay level; unsure if they will increase); teacher stipends (for curriculum development, leading Professional Development, and mentoring - 1:1; building-based; and self-paced); and complexities around the pairing of digital and hard copy curriculum resources and the associated pricing.

B. Fiscal Year 2025 Information Technology Budget: Report

In his report, Director of Information Technology Mr. Brian L’Heureux: noted that technology use remains high and cybersecurity demands are increasing, time-sensitive, and complex; described current FY24 Information Technology (IT) staffing and detailed additional personnel being requested (IT Project Manager and IT Network Manager); and described ongoing needs for refreshed technology while noting the gap between his FY25 non-personnel budget request for IT operations (\$2.7M) and the Superintendent’s Initial FY25 Budget Recommendation (\$1.5M). Committee members shared their perspectives in turn and expressed support for the personnel additions. In response to a question from Ms Sharifipour, Mr. L’Heureux shared examples of what might happen on a day in the district if there was no ability to use technology (including disruptions to student absence tracking and general and emergency communications).

VIII. Old Business

None.

IX. New Business

None.

X. Approval of Minutes

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Workshop held on January 31, 2024, and the School Committee Meeting held on February 7, 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;

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

C. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(2) “to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel” – non-union clerical and support staff and/or administrators. (“Purpose 2”), 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. Heffernan, 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 8:51 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Heffernan, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 10:10pm. 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:

Staff Wellness Initiatives Report

Staff Wellness Initiatives Slide Presentation

Memo: Draft 2024-2025 School District Calendar

Draft 2024-2025 School District Calendar
FY25 Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Budget Report
FY25 Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Budget Slide Presentation
FY25 Information Technology Budget Report
FY25 Information Technology Budget Slide Presentation
Set(s) of minutes as referenced above