

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, March 13, 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. Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; 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 welcomed Scout Troop 227, who are working towards a Community Merit Badge, to the meeting, and noted he would be speaking to them about the School Committee at an upcoming Scout meeting.

**III. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Sawyer encouraged community members to attend the upcoming Shrewsbury High School (SHS) production of the musical *Little Shop of Horrors*. Dr. Sawyer reported that it was the four-year anniversary of the closing of Shrewsbury Public Schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and noted the district is still addressing challenges associated with the pandemic.

**IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:**

**A. Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget: Public Hearing**

Ms. Fryc opened the Public Hearing at 7:04 pm. No speakers addressed the Committee. The Public Hearing closed.

**B. Fiscal Year 2025 English Language Education Budget: Report**

In their report, Director of English Language Learning Ms. Christina Manos and Ms. Clouter introduced relevant terms; provided an overview of the English Language Education (ELE) Program in the district; shared English Learner (EL) population district data over time (2014-2023), and population growth by school (2019-2023); noted ELE staff data for the current school year; described new needs in the district driven by new student profiles; noted increasing mandates; highlighted key budget investments for Fiscal Year 2025; and summarized department strengths. Additional information was provided in response to the Committee on questions about family engagement and communications (noting translation and interpretation platforms utilized, and additional non-English-native-language department staff); costs for

proposed software (will bill annually); Shrewsbury High School space concerns (EL students receive services through classes); Former English Learners (continue to be monitored for four years); and preschool students (consults are becoming more formalized).

### **C. Fiscal Year 2025 Special Education & Student Services Budget: Report**

The report from Assistant Director of Special Education & Pupil Personnel Services Meghan E. Bartlett and Ms. Belsito included information on: existing inclusive practices; the Elementary Transition Program (a short-term stabilization program for new students transitioning to Shrewsbury Public Schools); department budget responsibilities; students identified for Individual Education Plans (IEP), 504 Accommodation Plans, Extended School Year services, and out of district placements; the Circuit Breaker process; grants; and contracted services. Noting existing challenges and complexities, Ms. Belsito and Ms. Bartlett summarized recommended budget investments for Fiscal Year 2025. In response to questions from the Committee, additional information was provided on the proposed Elementary Therapeutic Program to support foundational student skills (it may evolve from the existing Elementary Transition Program).

### **V. Curriculum**

None.

### **VI. Policy**

#### **A. School District Calendar for 2024 -2025 School Year: Vote**

Ms. Fryc and Dr. Sawyer advised that no feedback was received from the community on the draft 2024 -2025 School Year Calendar presented at the previous meeting.

On a motion by Ms. Boucher, seconded by Ms. Sharifipour, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the proposed 2024-2025 School Year Calendar.

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

#### **A. Fiscal Year 2025 Fees & Tuitions: Report & Discussion**

Director of Extended Learning Karen Isaacson began the report by summarizing factors impacting operations of the Extended School Care (ESC) Program. Ms. Isaacson shared comparisons for: FY23-FY24 enrollment by site, part-time vs. full-time enrollment since FY22, and reduced fee family enrollment since FY22; and provided data on financial assistance to families since FY23. Noting the district was in the process of applying to become a state voucher funded program again and could provide the same internal discounts to families as well, Ms. Isaacson presented a child care voucher timeline and summarized budget assumptions before recommending an 8% tuition increase with no change to the internal discount policy, and provided a comparison of local program fees to the proposed new rate. In response to clarifying questions, Ms. Isaacson advised that a potential surge in enrollment could support staff hires if necessary as vouchers represent fully-funded seats, and that outreach to families about tuition changes would utilize a multi-tiered approach. Dr. Sawyer added that he would make his recommendation on all proposed tuition and fee changes in advance of the next School Committee meeting.

Mr. Girardi presented historical information and current fee survey comparisons with other districts on bus transportation fees (FY16-FY24); athletic fees (since FY16 at Shrewsbury High School and since FY21 at Oak Middle School) and preschool tuition rates (FY16-FY24), which provide partial funding for the entire cost of these services; provided information and a current fee survey with other districts on music lesson fees, which cover the entire cost of services for the program; and noted the current FY25 budget recommendation assumed fees/tuitions for for busing, athletics, and preschool programs would remain the same. He referenced that per Ms. Isaacson's recommendation the Extended School Care tuition will need to increase to cover costs, but that the increase for the current year for music lessons was

sufficient and would not require any increase in the coming year. Mr. Girardi went on to detail next steps in the process, including a recommendation from Dr. Sawyer on fees for FY25 at the March 27 School Committee meeting. Committee members shared their perspectives in turn, with common themes emerging around a preference for less fee dependence in the district, support for a potential increase to the Oak Middle School athletic fee to maintain the growing program, and a desire for feedback from the community on tuitions and fees for FY25.

### **B. Massachusetts School Building Authority Statement of Interest for Potential Addition to Shrewsbury High School: Discussion & Vote**

Mr. Girardi presented information on the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and MSBA projects with Shrewsbury Public Schools; described the LPA|A Enrollment and Space Study (March 2023) which identified overcrowding at Shrewsbury High School (SHS) as the top priority; presented enrollment projection data from the McKibben Report (March 2022) which did not include enrollment pressures being created due to a subsequent change in admissions to Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School; detailed the MSBA process for capital projects and the current Statement of Interest (SOI) application period; shared data on MSBA project selection rates; recommended that the Committee vote to submit an SOI to MSBA for SHS and provided the rationale for doing so; and described next steps in the process. Committee members shared their perspectives in turn and all expressed support for submitting an SOI, and Dr. Sawyer recommended that the Committee vote to submit an SOI to MSBA for SHS.

Ms. Fryc requested a motion that:

Having convened in an open meeting on March 13, 2024, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of Shrewsbury Public Schools [Town of Shrewsbury, MA], in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated April 2024 for Shrewsbury High School located at 75 Cypress Avenue, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future to alleviate persistent severe overcrowding [Priority#2]; to replace and modernize the schools roof and HVAC systems which are near end of life and install new, energy-efficient systems [Priority#5]; to provide an addition to the school so that a full range of programs including technical training via Innovation Pathways Programs and/or Chapter 74 vocational/technical programs [Priority#7]; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Shrewsbury to file an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. On a motion by Ms. Boucher, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the motion passed unanimously.

### **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 February 28, 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. 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 9:40pm.

## **XII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Ms. Heffernan, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 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:

FY25 English Language Education Budget Report

FY25 English Language Education Budget Slide Presentation

FY25 Special Education & Student Services Budget Report

FY25 Special Education & Student Services Budget Slide Presentation

Memo: Draft 2024-2025 School District Calendar

Draft 2024-2025 School District Calendar

FY25 Fees and Tuition Report

FY25 Fees and Tuition Report Slide Presentation

Extended School Care Report

Extended School Care Slide Presentation

SHS SOI Recommendation Memo

SHS SOI Recommendation Slide Presentation

Set(s) of minutes as referenced above