

Shrewsbury Public Schools
Preschool - Grade 4 Capital Planning Study Committee
Monday, January 8, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Sandy Fryc (School Committee Chair)
Erin Boucher (School Committee Vice Chair)
Theresa Flynn (Select Board Vice Chair)
John Samia (Select Board Clerk)
Bridget Nichols (Director, Parker Road Preschool)
James Dealy (Parent, Parker Road Preschool)
Jennifer Foran (Staff Member, Parker Road Preschool)
Kristen Gasper (Principal, Beal School)
Margaret Aulenback (Staff Member, Beal School)
Tiffany Ostrander (Principal, Coolidge School)
Justine Maloy (Parent, Coolidge School)
Kelly Finnaran (Staff Member, Coolidge School)
Lisa McCubrey (Principal, Floral Street School)
Varanasi Pokala (Parent, Floral Street School)
Aaron Detrick (Staff Member, Paton School)
Colleen Luzzo (Parent, Paton School)
Bryan Mabie (Principal, Spring Street School)
Peter Welland (Parent, Spring Street School)
Keith Baldinger (Assistant Town Manager for Operations)
Rajesh Velagapudi (Parent, Beal School)
Krysty Ralys (Staff Member, Floral Street School)
Alison Kimball (Staff Member, Spring Street School)
William Tuttle (Division Manager, Public Buildings)
Chris Girardi (Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations)
Joe Sawyer (Superintendent)

Members Absent

Scott Mulcahy (Principal, Paton School)

Non-Members Attending

Bill Lupini (Collins Center for Public Management)

Interested Committee members were provided with a tour of the Beal School at 6:00 p.m. prior to the meeting.

Superintendent Sawyer opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. with a review of the Charge to the Committee, and updates on interaction with the Massachusetts School Building Authority with

respect to the proposed Shrewsbury High School project. He then introduced Bridget Nichols, Director of the Parker Road Preschool, who provided the group with a presentation on Preschool in the Shrewsbury Public Schools, including locations of classrooms, morning and afternoon sessions, and a historical context on enrollment (including students with IEPs). She also discussed recent community survey results, variables regarding future space needs, and some “what if?” scenarios regarding the programs.

Dr. Lupini then facilitated the rest of this meeting. Committee members were divided into five (5) groups and given the following question:

“Is there consensus regarding maintaining the current neighborhood school configuration v. potentially consolidating to fewer, larger elementary schools? Reasoning?”

At the conclusion of these small group discussions, the groups then shared out the results of their deliberation. Responses were as follows:

Red Group

- Feeling - we do not currently have neighborhood schools (is there a misconception - the message is important)
- Parents have more angst than students regarding any change
- Consolidated school may be in the best interest of the district
- Options for consolidation:
 - Combine 3 small elementary / + preK into 1 large school
 - Combine 2 elementary + preK into 1 large school

Purple Group

- Don't believe that there is consensus. Subjective side taking over (for some):
 - Larger schools provide more equity across the entire school
 - Smaller schools may not have the resources as a result of a smaller socio-economic pool
 - People have history with their neighborhood schools

Blue Group

- Consensus - Fewer/Larger Schools
- Why?
 - Maximize resources
 - Time
 - Scalability
 - MSBA/Maximize funding (combination with PreK)

Black Group

- No consensus yet - still brainstorming advantages/disadvantages of neighborhood schools
- Consolidation of smaller schools

- Benefit of integrating pre-school into consolidated schools
- Older schools need to be renovated / expensive
- Larger schools facilitate more social interaction/friendship
- Larger schools can create small school feel
- Larger capacity facilitates storage/efficiency
- More diversity in a consolidated school
- Increased collaboration with a larger group of teachers

Green Group

- No consensus regarding neighborhood vs. larger schools
- But . . . consensus around the advantages of consolidating resources
- Town & MSBA might be more willing to approve once rather than multiple requests

Questions to be considered by the groups at our next meeting(s) are as follows:

“Is there consensus regarding which elementary school should be the first priority for replacement or renovation? Why? Next after that?”

“Is there consensus regarding whether Shrewsbury should consider expanding preschool seats and how that is best accomplished?”

- *Stand-alone new construction*
- *Renovated/Expanded Stand-alone building*
- *Combined New Elementary with Full New Preschool Space*
- *Spreading Preschool Across Elementary Schools”*

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Sawyer indicated that the next meeting will be held on Monday, February 12, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at the Floral Street School.

*Minutes approved by the Preschool - Grade 4 Capital Planning Study Committee
Monday, March 4, 2024*