

Shrewsbury Public Schools
Preschool - Grade 4 Capital Planning Study Committee
Monday, December 4, 2023

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)
Chris Girardi (Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations)
Joe Sawyer (Superintendent)

Members Absent

Rajesh Velagapudi (Parent, Beal School)
Krysty Ralys (Staff Member, Floral Street School)
Scott Mulcahy (Principal, Paton School)
Alison Kimball (Staff Member, Spring Street School)
William Tuttle (Division Manager, Public Buildings)

Non-Members Attending

Bill Lupini (Collins Center for Public Management)

Interested Committee members were provided with a tour of the Spring Street 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.

Dr. Lupini facilitated this meeting. Committee members were provided with two articles, as well as a number of documents regarding redistricting in Shrewsbury (from 2019). These articles were:

- Pros and Cons of Neighborhood Elementary Schools vs. School Consolidation (generated by ChatGPT); and
- Coming Together: The Pros and Cons of School Consolidation

Small groups worked together to discuss the importance of neighborhood schools in Shrewsbury. Following are the questions and observations generated by these groups:

- Larger schools can impact the community (Example: Beal currently needs multiple nights to hold some events).
- Operationally, larger schools are better.
- With the inclusion of building neighborhoods in Beal, we ask “why are we trying to create a small school feel in a larger school?”
- Is there a way to address the cons while keeping the smaller, neighborhood schools?
- Currently, Spring and Coolidge are closest to neighborhood schools. Paton, Beal and Floral are more spread out and could be viewed as not being neighborhood schools.
- School community drives the culture, not geography. You can create a neighborhood feel.
- Economies of scale with bigger schools?
- Need to plan for universal pk, which must be integrated.
- Cost of air conditioning offsets savings from efficiency.
- K-4 design capacity current = 75. Unknown growth. Possible pk mandate. MSBA has a formula, will want a 50 year outlook? Different class sizes may impact this net number.
- Group feels that preserving neighborhood schools is not critical. Not much pushback with prior redistricting.
- Focus on community culture of retained schools. Has been achieved at Floral and Beal.
- Redistrict to maximize geographic efficiencies and equity.
- How important is the concept of neighborhood schools in Shrewsbury?
 - Very important
 - Sense of community
 - Close to home, sense of security
 - Community has access to school resources
 - Sense of belonging
 - Childhood friends (students)
 - Socio-economic separation
 - Walk to school
 - Sense of community before middle school

- PTO events – known families in a small elementary school
- Floral - big community feels very small, community events very positive, families made connections
- Coolidge - PTO involvement, small community, building community
- Beal - sense of belonging, kindergarten wing (make that community your family), building itself (small feel from big building)
- Hire people who want to have community feel, collaboration
- Grass roots effort to create things, create a sense of smallness and community, economy of size - different lenses of professionalism
- People excited to start new community at Beal
- Floral - does not feel big, although it is a large school (small community feel)
- Benefit to students in a bigger building - economies of scale
- Would be nice to integrate Parker Road into the elementary school buildings
- Parent perspective - close by school, easier to attend
- Trying to look beyond our own experiences
- Demands from residents - sustainability, cheaper to maintain three buildings rather than five, what is most cost efficient?
- Can we do more with our dollars if we consolidate - less infrastructure, more on instruction?
- Regardless of the size of the school, you need to build the community feel.
- The larger sized school allows for more diversity.
- Fewer buildings may allow us to move more quickly if we need to react to required changes.
- PTO's - five different organizations could combine and impact the greater population.
- Regardless of the decision, kids will be just fine (it is the adult reaction we will need to support).

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Sawyer indicated that the next meeting will be held on Monday, January 8, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.