

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Present: Ms. Sandy Fryc, Chairperson; Dr. Dale Magee, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Jon Wensky, Secretary; Ms. Erin Canzano; Mr. John Samia; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Ms. Mary Beth Banios, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Ms. Barb Malone, 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

None.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer noted a number of Shrewsbury Public School events and student accomplishments including:

- Robotics was awarded the Engineering Inspiration award at the UNH tournament
- Five Shrewsbury High School (SHS) students qualified for the state science fair
- Oak Middle School Science Olympiad finished 8th in the state tournament, and the JV finished 6th
- Many visual arts students earned awards at Anna Maria College Art Competition and Boston Globe Art Competition, plus many were chosen to exhibit pieces at Worcester Art Museum for Youth - Art Month and in a photography exhibition at Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union
- the SHS competition play moved on to the state semifinals on Saturday
- Speech and Debate had many students qualify for nationals and continues to place in top ranks of each tournament, including hosting the Mardi Gras tournament, the largest in the state, and also coming in second place

- SHS Student Council the won Silver Award for Excellence at the state conference
- the Cheerleaders won the League title and also finished second in districts and fifth in the state
- SHS Student Julia Schaefer won state individual all around, floor exercise, and vault titles in gymnastics
- SHS Boys hockey won the league and district titles, and was currently competing in the final four for the right to play in the state final this weekend
- the SHS Spring musical would be this weekend: *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Student Recognition: State Gymnastics Champion

Shrewsbury High School senior Julia Schaefer was rescheduled to be recognized at the School Committee meeting on March 29, 2017.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

A. Charter & School Choice Attendance: Report

Mr. Collins advised that this was an annual report that would cover enrollment and finances related to Charter Schools, School Choice, and Virtual Schools. Information was provided on Charter School enrollment history, enrollment by grade, and enrollment by school; tuition, aid, and net cost history; and preliminary FY 2017 Tuition and Reimbursements. Mr. Collins noted that the state did not fully fund the Tuition Aid account this year, and that state reimbursement would only meet 59% of the calculated amount based on their formula.

Mr. Collins provided School Choice history that included information on enrollment (for incoming choice pupils and choice pupils at other districts); the number of students and associated tuition for both sending and receiving students; sending students by grade level for 2015-16; receiving students by home district for 2016-17; and FY 2017 sending students by destination district and grade level. While discussing FY 2017 sending students, Mr. Collins noted that two Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) students may have elected school choice because of an inability to access FDK in Shrewsbury, that five students enrolled in Virtual Schools (which are a subset of School Choice), and that the expected tuition cost for all 23 students was \$131,975.

Mr. Collins closed by noting that Charter School enrollment and School Choice enrollment are both declining, that the state is currently not fulfilling its reimbursement commitment, that the estimated net cost to the district for both was \$819,915, and that the recommendation for 2017-2018 was to NOT open new seats for School Choice students due to space limitations.

The Committee commented on parents' right to choices in education for their students, budget concerns around Charter Schools and School Choice, and the importance of SPS staying competitive to retain students. Dr. Sawyer also noted the importance of creating a competitive environment at SPS to retain students and reduce the outflow of out-of-district tuition dollars.

B. School Choice: Public Hearing

The public was provided with an opportunity to provide feedback to the Committee and administration on the topic of the potential for participation in interdistrict School Choice in the 2017-2018 school year. One community member noted his opposition to School Choice because he felt it could result in lost opportunities and benefits for students who are Shrewsbury residents. One community member advised that he has children who went to SPS, then charter schools, then returned to SPS, and he believed that SPS offers the best combination of academics, environment, and sports.

Ms. Fryc noted that a vote on School Choice was scheduled for March 29, and requested that interested parties submit feedback in the interim, and Dr. Sawyer added that the recommendation for 2017-2018 is to refrain from opening any new seats for School Choice.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Financial Projections Subcommittee: Report

School Committee members Dr. B. Dale Magee and Mr. John Samia are members of the Financial Projections Subcommittee. Dr. Magee advised that this was his second report, and that it would address *Costs*. Dr. Magee's presentation included information on revenues; inflation (noting that increases of three to four percent yearly are reasonable in the education sector, and that SPS per pupil costs are lower than four-fifths of districts in Massachusetts); Consumer Price Index components; and labor intensive fields (like education). Dr. Magee noted that school budgets contain different inflation rates for teachers (whose salaries make up 45% of the operating budget); special education (with inflation and volatility issues); and health care (which is part of the Town Appropriated budget, but increases here leave less funding for our public schools). In a discussion on future pressures, Dr. Magee advised that maintaining class sizes puts SPS in a higher inflation category than the CPI; Special Education services are high inflation and largely mandated; health insurance increases will crowd out funding for school services; and that all these items will increase by more than 2 ½%, more than the CPI, and more than education as a whole.

Committee members noted that: SPS is well run and fiscally responsible; out of district special education costs are extremely volatile; teachers can't be outsourced; per pupil spending is in the bottom 20% of the state; SPS step salary plan is comparable to many other districts; the student population is diverse; and following students' progress after graduation is important .

Dr. Sawyer thanked Dr. Magee for the report, noted that our teacher salary system is fair and comparable to other districts, and advised against adopting any policy that would keep teacher pay as low as possible because over time the quality of the teaching force would decline.

B. Fiscal Year 2018 Budget: Recommended Reductions

Dr. Sawyer and Mr. Collins advised that they would be presenting recommendations for a FY 2018 Budget Reduction Plan to address the difference between the initial level service budget proposed in January by Dr. Sawyer, and the funding estimated to be available per the Town Manager’s initial budget recommendation. Dr. Sawyer presented information on the FY 2018 current budget status, which indicates a budget gap of \$2,483,917, but noted that this number could change based on updated local revenue and state aid projections.

Dr. Sawyer noted that SPS strove to identify reductions to close the gap, while minimizing the negative impact on students and staff, and added that the reductions would be presented in tiers that were prioritized to illustrate what was recommended to be cut based on the level of funding available.

The following Tiers were described in detail:

Tier 1: Budget Adjustments/Refinements	Total Reductions: \$1,209,133
Tier 2: Reductions in Equipment, Materials & Services	Total Reductions: \$306,500
Tier 3: Reductions in Staffing & Educational Programming	Total Reductions: \$463,784
Tier 4: Reductions in Staffing Affecting Student Support & Class Size	Total Reductions: \$229,500
Tier 5: Reductions in Staffing Affecting Class Size	Total Reductions: \$275,000
	Grand Total: \$2,483,917

A fiscal overview of the Reduction Plan by Tier was presented in multiple formats, and the \$2,483,917 in recommended reductions was also presented by category. Dr. Sawyer went on to recommend some new positions for inclusion in the budget regardless of the level of cuts, noting they were necessary to address growing enrollment and mandated services. He also discussed how potential reductions would negatively impact students, staff, and operations, and advised that if all reductions were made, it would result in a total loss of 29.2 FTE positions. Dr. Sawyer discussed next steps, summarized key points, thanked the District Leadership Team for their work on the recommendation reduction plan, and closed the report by offering two essential questions:

- 1) How deep will the reductions for next year need to go?
- 2) What will our community do to solve the structural funding dilemma that further jeopardizes the future quality of public education in Shrewsbury?

The Committee offered comments and expressed concern about the ongoing decline in resources that results from not providing level service budgets every year, and the frustration associated

with the predictable difficulties associated with each year's budget. Ms. Fryc noted that there would be a Public Hearing on Budget at the March 29 meeting and that the Committee hoped to hear from the community.

VIII. Old Business

None.

IX. New Business

A. Superintendent's Goals: Discussion

Dr. Sawyer noted that the timetable for the Superintendent's Performance Evaluation had shifted to a calendar year approach, and that he was looking to the Committee for feedback and guidance to assist in setting his student learning and professional practice goals for 2017. Committee members suggested that Financial Literacy could be a potential student learning goal topic, and that metrics could be utilized to track SPS students after they graduate. Dr. Sawyer advised that he would utilize the feedback when crafting and refining his goals.

X. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Ms. Canzano, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting on March 1, 2017.

XI. Executive Session

None.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Ms. Canzano, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:53pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Samia, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Charter School & School Choice Annual Report Slide Presentation
2. Fiscal Projections Subcommittee Slide Presentation
3. Superintendent's Goals Memo
4. FY 2018 Budget Reduction Plan Spreadsheet
5. FY 2018 Superintendent's Reduction Plan Slides