

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, June 7, 2017**

Present: Dr. Dale Magee, Chairperson; Mr. Jon Wensky, Vice Chairperson; Ms. Sandy Fryc, Secretary; Ms. Erin Canzano; Mr. Jason Palitsch; 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 Dr. Magee at 7:02 pm.

**I. Public Participation**

None.

**II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports**

Mr. Palitsch advised that a "Shrewsbury Soak" fundraiser to benefit Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services and the Shrewsbury Parks & Recreation Department (\$10 to "soak" someone with a bucket of water) would be held the following day on the lawn of Shrewsbury Town Hall with a number of community leaders participating.

**III. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Sawyer thanked Congressman Jim McGovern for visiting two of our schools last week. He visited with the entire 5th grade at Sherwood to discuss the importance of public service and answer questions about his job as a U.S. Representative; later, he joined Mr. Bill Cobb's sophomore honors math class at Shrewsbury High School (SHS) where several groups of students presented their projects on the financial system.

Dr. Sawyer congratulated Mahir Sowad, Grade 8 student at Oak Middle School, who was a runner-up winner in the Cooperative Credit Union Association's 2017 Student Essay Contest, where he gave advice on good personal finance habits. He received a check in the amount of \$250 and had the honor of reading his essay aloud at the awards ceremony.

Dr. Sawyer congratulated SHS spring athletics teams on strong performances, noting all spring

teams competed in playoffs, the girls tennis team is in the district final, and the boys rowing team qualified for nationals and would compete the following weekend in Philadelphia.

Dr. Sawyer noted an outstanding job was done by all involved in the Oak musical, *Damn Yankees*, and offered congratulations to our SHS Class of 2017, who graduated the previous Thursday evening.

#### **IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:**

##### **A. Senator Michael O. Moore: Legislative Update**

Senator Moore provided an update that included information on the budget timeline, Chapter 70 Aid, and legislation that he had sponsored. Sen. Moore provided details on the House, Senate and Governor's proposed budgets; noted that presently the FY18 budget sets the SPS foundation budget at \$57,966,930, which is a 2.96% increase over FY17; and added the district's net minimum contribution within the budget is set at \$44,655,044, which is an increase of 4.89% over FY17. Regarding the Foundation Budget Review Commission (FBRC), Sen. Moore advised that language had been proposed that would mandate an annual meeting by January 15 that would include the secretary of administration and finance, and the senate and house committees on ways and means to jointly determine an implementation schedule to fulfill the recommendations filed on November 2, 2015 by the FBRC established in section 4 of Chapter 70. Senator Moore also discussed work that is being done around college credit for AP courses relative to mandating that students get credit, and allowing students to have access to information when signing up for classes that will inform them as to how much credit they will receive from colleges for the class.

In response to clarifying questions from the Committee and Dr. Sawyer, Sen. Moore addressed the need for expansion of opportunities for students seeking vocational instruction, and noted how resources at community colleges might be available to address this need. Regarding budget, it was noted that town revenue was relatively predictable while state revenue was not, and that over time more of the fiscal burden was being placed on towns. Dr. Sawyer thanked Sen. Moore for his legislative work on education on behalf of our schools and students, and noted that Sen. Moore's office was always extremely responsive to any requests from SPS.

##### **B. Foundation Budget & Chapter 70: Discussion & Potential Vote**

In October 2015, the State Legislature's Foundation Budget Review Commission issued its final report regarding recommendations for changing the funding formula for the Foundation Budget, and the Committee received a copy of the report, along with a summary of the recommended changes provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) in advance of the meeting. Dr. Sawyer advised based on the state's finances, any adjustments by the Legislature would be phased in over time and should ultimately be helpful to SPS, and added that he supported the changes. Dr. Magee noted that some of the key changes proposed were relative to health insurance, special education (in-district and out-of-district), and English Language Learners (ELL), which were not satisfactory in their previous forms. Mr. Palitsch advised he felt it would be good to take a vote to support the Commission's recommendations, and added that it is important for School Committees to speak out on issues. On a motion by Mr.

Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Fryc, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Foundation Budget Review Commission's recommendations be adopted.

### **C. College Admissions Officers: Panel Discussion**

Dr. Sawyer started the discussion by noting that the district will be formulating new strategic priorities, and that information provided by the panel of college admissions officers regarding the attributes they look for in incoming students would assist with this process. Erin Bernard, Senior Assistant Director of Admissions, UMass-Amherst; Joseph J. DiCarlo III, Director of Admissions, Worcester State University; Andrew N. Carter, Senior Associate Director, Office of Admissions, College of the Holy Cross; and Shaun Holt, Associate Director of Admissions, Clark University, comprised the panel. Topics included:

- Increased competition for state colleges and universities, particularly UMass-Amherst, due to factors including increasing costs, with UMass making attempts to improve its reputation as a top academic institution
- Increased anxiety in the student applicant population regarding the application and matriculation process
- “Choice” as it relates to - where students apply; how many schools students apply to; who is selected for admission; which students exhibit the most interest in schools; and differing costs of education
- A resurgence in students seeking degrees in the liberal arts

In response to clarifying questions from the Committee and Dr. Sawyer, panelists discussed: the importance of soft skills (especially in regards to communication) and authenticity in the student's application process; AP credit for coursework; trends in fields of study; providing resources to students to assist in their success (especially for first-generation college students); the importance of students using community colleges and transfer options as needed; students' post-graduation plans; and how academic success in high school is a good predictor of success in college. The discussion closed with a reminder to students about the importance of using social media responsibly.

## **V. Curriculum**

### **A. Strategic Priorities Progress Report: Enhancing Learning Through Technology**

In the spring of 2011, the Shrewsbury School Committee set four strategic priorities for our school district for a five-year period, and one of those adopted was the priority of “Enhance Learning Through Technology.” Ms. Banios provided an update on the key goals around: Pre-K-Grade 4 interactive technology (noting Grade 4's 1:2 device model exceeded the goal); Grades 5-12 use of digital devices to improve learning (noting goals were met ahead of schedule, and providing examples of learning through technology); collaborative professional development (citing the Summer Institute); and deploying technology tools and utilizing digital content to enhance learning, communication, and customer service.

The Committee and Dr. Sawyer congratulated Ms. Banios on the overall success of the utilization of technology in the district to increase student learning and enhance professional

development, and noted the changes were implemented thoughtfully and allowed for a breadth and depth of educational benefits that surpassed the expectations set five years ago.

#### **VI. Policy**

None.

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

None.

#### **VIII. Old Business**

##### **A. Recommendation for Extended School Care Tuition Increase: Vote**

Dr. Magee noted that at the May 24, 2017 meeting, the Committee heard a report on the Extended School Care program noting increasing costs and negative cash flow. A recommendation was made for a 3% tuition increase for the 2017-2018 school year, which Dr. Sawyer recommended. Since the May 24 meeting the Committee had received fewer than ten responses to their request for feedback, and Dr. Magee advised that all responses were positive save one.

On a motion by Ms. Canzano, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously to approve an Extended School Care tuition increase of 3% for the 2017-2018 school year.

#### **IX. New Business**

##### **A. Updated Assabet Valley Collaborative Agreement: Vote**

Dr. Sawyer advised that Auburn Public Schools had requested to join the Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC). Whenever changes are made to a collaborative agreement, state law requires a vote by the member districts. Since the agreement was being amended, the AVC Board of Directors recommended approving other minor changes at the same time, including changes to language regarding transitional services. Dr. Sawyer recommended approval of the amended agreement.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Canzano, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the amended Assabet Valley Collaborative Agreement.

#### **X. Approval of Minutes**

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee meeting held on May 24, 2017 were approved as distributed.

#### **XI. Executive Session**

##### **A. Negotiations with non-represented staff**

Dr. Magee requested a motion for the School Committee to enter into executive session in order to discuss negotiations with non-represented staff, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's bargaining position, adding that the Committee would reconvene to open session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening. On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Canzano, on a roll call vote: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Dr. Magee, yes, the Committee voted to adjourn to Executive Session at 9:12 pm.

## **XII. Adjournment**

On a motion from Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Canzano, the Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; and Dr. Magee, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. MASC - Recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission
2. Foundation Budget Review Commission Final Report
3. Enhance Learning Through Technology Report
4. Enhance Learning Through Technology Slide Presentation
5. Amended Agreement for Assabet Valley Collaborative