

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING AT SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL**

WEDNESDAY, February 26, 2014

Present: Ms. Sandra Fryc, Chairperson; Mr. John Samia, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Jason Palitsch, Secretary; Dr. B. Dale Magee, Ms. Erin Canzano, Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Mary Beth Banios, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Liam Hurley, Director of Business Services; Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources; Ms. Melissa Maguire, Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel and Mr. Jonathan Green, Director of Technology.

The meeting was convened at 7:00 PM by Ms. Sandra Fryc.

I. Public Participation

None

II. Chairperson's Report and Members' Reports

None

III. Superintendent's Report

None

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments

None

V. Curriculum

None

VI. Policy

None

VII. Budget

A. State Aid for Education: Report

Mr. Liam Hurley, Director of Business Services, presented the State Aid for Education Report. He shared that Chapter 70 is the state aid formula used to determine adequate funding levels to educate children throughout Massachusetts. Mr. Hurley described the shortcomings of the Chapter 70 formula and shared data about how Shrewsbury compares to other communities. He described the three steps for the Chapter 70 formula calculation: foundation budget; calculating the target local share based on wealth defined by property income and residents' income; and the aid portion that comes into the school district budget from the state, which is the difference between the foundation budget and the calculation for Chapter 70. In FY14 the Shrewsbury school district received \$18.89 million in state aid and in the Governor's budget for FY15 Shrewsbury will receive \$19.04 million. Shrewsbury contributes about 69% of the foundation budget and the Chapter 70 formula calculates that Shrewsbury should be contributing 77% and that the

state aid portion should be 23%. Since Shrewsbury receives more state aid than the Chapter 70 formula calculates, it is unlikely that Shrewsbury will receive substantial increases in state aid in the foreseeable future. Mr. Hurley shared that most school districts spend above the foundation budget. Shrewsbury is currently spending about 10% above the foundation that is set while the state average is about 15%. Mr. Hurley stated that the state budget only provides the minimum aid to school communities and this does not account for many costs. He shared an example for the Shrewsbury district: more than \$3.5 million is spent on transportation for students.

B. Teacher Compensation: Report

Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources, presented the report on teacher compensation for the Shrewsbury district. She shared that the Shrewsbury teacher salaries are comparable to those in the Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC) school districts. Shrewsbury teachers have agreed to a 0% cost of living adjustment for the first year and very modest adjustments in years two and three of the recently ratified contract. Ms. Malone shared some details about Shrewsbury teacher salaries: salaries for teachers hired with a bachelor's degree are \$43,224, salaries for teachers hired with a master's degree are \$47,937, and \$87,190 is the highest salary teachers can attain in the district with the maximum level of experience and education. Ms. Sandra Fryc stated that the School Committee feels the levels for teacher compensation negotiated with the contract are modest, fiscally responsible and help the Town of Shrewsbury.

C. FY15 Budget: Public Hearing

Dr. Sawyer discussed some key issues for the budget report including evidence of the decline in student performance and the Shrewsbury district being downgraded by the state from a Level 1 to Level 2 district. He said the current enrollment for the district is approximately 6,000 students, enrollment is expected to increase slightly, and there is no expected significant decline in enrollment for the district in the foreseeable future. Dr. Sawyer said the vast majority of priorities included in the budget request for the school district are critical to catch up on deferred needs. He said the district's critical needs include additional teachers to reduce class sizes; replacing outdated instructional and technology materials; needed curriculum and instructional support; a new K-8 math program; and additional support for students' psychological and behavioral problems. He said what the Shrewsbury district needs to meet students' needs are sufficient numbers of personnel, adequate tools, appropriate space and successful programs. Dr. Sawyer said the district has high quality staff but not the sufficient numbers or tools to do the job of educating students. He shared that his FY15 budget recommendation to the School Committee is a \$7.8 million dollar request. Dr. Sawyer said it is very uncomfortable for him and the entire community to have the school district in the situation where the needs of students are not being met. Parents, students, teachers, and residents provided commentary to the Committee regarding their views on the proposed budget and priorities. The remarks focused on the difficulties being experienced in the district including overall discontent with class sizes, recognition of the increased pressure on the teachers and administrators in the district, physical space issues/crowded conditions in classrooms, the inability of teachers to meet the needs of their students because of larger class sizes, and acknowledgment that cuts to the program have been occurring for a number of years. Numerous meeting attendees noted that class size was their top priority for the FY2015 budget. Many people spoke of the need for parents and other citizens to become involved and persistently voice their concerns to the Committee and the Board of Selectmen. The committee thanked all the attendees for their time and their input.

Below is a sampling of comments from the Hearing:

- Several parents, grandparents, teachers and students spoke during the Public Hearing about why they believe it is important for Shrewsbury residents to support a budget override and that this is critical to the needs of the Shrewsbury students and the entire community to invest in the schools.
- Parents who volunteer in classrooms stated that they have observed classes are overcrowded and as a result students are not receiving the attention they need to learn at school.
- Parents shared examples of having one child who has learning challenges and another child who is advanced academically. They are concerned because there are not current sufficient resources to meet the needs of their children and other children in the district with diverse learning and educational needs.
- A community member stated that current teachers and staff need to be utilized properly and this should be done before there is a giant increase in the School district budget and not add on to the costs.
- School Committee member John Samia encouraged all the Shrewsbury residents to read the Town's fiscal study report. He referenced some key findings in the report: Shrewsbury does not spend enough on schools, the Town has not kept up with expenses, and now the Town is being asked to spend more.
- A Parent who works in law enforcement shared that he is concerned that if Shrewsbury students are left behind in education and do not receive the right tools and opportunities, this will negatively impact their abilities as adults to take care of themselves and support their families
- Parents and community members stated that it is important for the entire Town of Shrewsbury to support the schools and invest in the community to keep it strong, vibrant and retain housing values.

VIII. Old Business

None

IX. New Business

None

X. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Sandra Fryc requested a motion to approve the School Committee Meeting Minutes for January, 23 2014. On a motion by Dr. B. Dale Magee, seconded by Mr. John Samia, the School Committee unanimously voted to approve the January 23, 2014 meeting minutes.

XI. Executive Session

None

XII. Information Enclosures

None

XIII. Adjournment

On a motion by Dr. B. Dale Magee, seconded by Mr. John Samia, the meeting was adjourned at 9:18 PM. On a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Samia,

Respectfully submitted
Christine Taylor, Clerk

Documents referenced:

- 1) State Aid/Chapter 70 Education Report
- 2) Teacher Compensation Report