

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2013

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

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

Members of the Shrewsbury High School A Capella Choir sang *The National Anthem* and *From a Distance* to begin the 2013-2014 School Committee Meetings. Dr. Sawyer thanked Ms. Bonnie Narcisi and students for joining them this evening. Dr. Sawyer congratulated Nathan Kessel as the first Shrewsbury music student ever accepted to perform with the All National Honors Choir and shared that Nathan will be traveling to Nashville, TN in October to perform.

I. Public Participation

None

II. Chairperson's Report and Members' Reports

None

III. Superintendent's Report

A. Dr. Sawyer recognized and congratulated teachers and staff members who received awards for professional excellence and service.

B. Dr. Sawyer discussed the District's initiatives to utilize social media as one of the communication tools to help people stay connected and informed. There is information on the district's website page for Facebook pages and Twitter accounts (including the district's and Dr. Sawyer's Facebook pages and Twitter accounts).

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Celebration in the Garden Funding: Vote

Members of the Celebration in the Garden Host Committee (Hannah Kane, Kathleen Keohane, Melissa Pride-Fahs, Karen O'Brien and Mary Casey) provided highlights of the event that was held for the 5th consecutive year and asked the School Committee to accept their donation of \$50,000. Proceeds from the event are divided equally between all the Shrewsbury Public Schools so each student in the district benefits. Some of the funds will be used for technology initiatives to bring items such as projectors, interactive whiteboard projectors, document cameras and iPads into additional classrooms. Dr. Sawyer and the School Committee Members acknowledged the importance of the donation and recognized the tremendous contributions and hard work of the volunteers present at the School Committee Meeting, the event hosts and all the volunteers and sponsors who contributed to the success of the fundraising event.

On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the \$50,000 donation.

B. Summer Programming: Report

Ms. Mary Beth Banios presented highlights and short videos for the 2013 Shrewsbury School Summer Programs. During summer 2013, there were 1,492 registrations for the Programs that serviced students in the pre-K through high school levels. The different programs provided students with opportunities in the areas of Special Education, Academic Support and Enrichment. Ms. Banios shared that the high quality, reasonable priced programs provide a large benefit to the community with many students being served and the costs of programs are covered by tuition fees. Student-teacher ratios are low for the Summer Programs and some Shrewsbury High School Students fulfill community service requirements by serving as Professional Role Models and working with participating students.

C. Personnel Update: Report

Ms. Barbara Malone presented an update on new staff hiring for the 2013-2014 school year and shared that the majority of the hiring process to fill key positions in the district has been completed. To date 36 full and part-time professionals and 21 paraprofessionals and support staff members have been appointed throughout the district. These positions were open due to retirements and resignations, extended leaves of absence, the expansion of the kindergarten program at the Beal Early Childhood Center, the mandated need for Special Education personnel, and a very small number of non-renewals. This year the district launched a new recruiting tool called schoolspring.com that enabled the district to attract candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds, including top recent graduates from Bachelor's and Master's Degree teaching programs, as well as talented experienced educators. Ms. Malone shared that at an upcoming School Committee Meeting she will present a complete staffing chart to show the actual staffing levels throughout the district versus the staffing levels that were projected when the budget was approved at the Town Meeting in May. At this School Committee Meeting she will report on the hire of door monitors/greeters, whose roles were created as part of the district's security protocols.

D. State of the District: Report

Dr. Sawyer presented Part 1 of the "State of the District" report and shared that while the district has many strengths, the current situation is very challenging and does not place the district in a strong situation. The three key messages from the "State of the District" report: 1.) We have insufficient resources to meet student needs 2.) We are innovating and collaborating to try and cope with increased demands 3.) We are concerned that the quality of the education provided to Shrewsbury students is declining. Dr. Sawyer discussed the issues of class sizes that are too high and shared an example of a classroom he observed at the Floral School. This class has twenty-eight students and as a result students receive less individual attention and there is physical crowding in the classroom. In addition, Dr. Sawyer shared that the resources the district has are insufficient to meet students' needs and the quality of the education being provided to students is deteriorating. Some of the specific problems Dr. Sawyer has observed include test results demonstrating that students are not on par in certain areas as well as out-of-date curriculum, instructional materials and technologies. Dr. Sawyer stated there are insufficient resources for mental and behavioral health needs. Mr. Jason Palitsch asked Dr. Sawyer if it was correct to assume that it will take a few years before student test scores begin to decline as a result of current educational challenges and insufficient resources. Dr. Sawyer confirmed this assumption and shared that he will be submitting data at the next School Committee Meeting. A link for the Part 1 "State of the District" presentation slides that includes specific information is located on the district website and Dr.

Sawyer will be presenting Part II of the report at the September 25 School Committee Meeting, which will include state accountability data for the Shrewsbury Schools.

V. Curriculum

None

VI. Policy

None

VII. Budget

A. Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Guidelines: Discussion

Mr. John Samia and Mr. Jason Palitsch presented information and led the discussion for the School Committee Members to provide specific guidance to the Superintendent and the School Department administration regarding the development of the Fiscal Year 2015 School Department Budget Proposal. They shared that the School Committee recommends that the 2015 budget proposal should reflect district needs and strategic priorities so that there are specific allocations for all of the following: Engaging and Challenging All Students, Enhancing Learning Through Technology, Promoting Health and Wellbeing and Increasing Value to the Community. Mr. John Samia stated that this is the first step in the process for creating the 2015 budget and that he and the School Committee Members want to make sure Dr. Sawyer and Mr. Hurley have enough information to proceed. Dr. Sawyer suggested that the School Committee Members allow him and Mr. Hurley to take this feedback, reshape the draft of the guidelines, schedule another meeting with the Subcommittee, and then put together a version for public review. Dr. Sawyer said they will begin to work on this.

B. Daily Substitute Rates: Discussion & Vote

Ms. Barbara Malone shared that the rate of pay for daily substitutes has not been adjusted in over five years, the district is having difficulty hiring substitutes because they are working at other school districts, and the administration predicts that if the rate of pay for substitute teachers is not increased there will be an ongoing shortage that will impact the educational programs. Ms. Malone proposed a recommendation that would raise the rate from \$65 to \$75 a day to better match the market and shared that this can be accomplished with minimum impact on the appropriated budget due to other factors. School Committee members discussed this recommendation and the conclusion was that this was the cost of doing business. On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Canzano, the Committee voted unanimously to raise the daily rate for substitute teaching pay from \$65 to \$75.

VIII. Old Business

None

IX. New Business

None

X. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Ms. Canzano, seconded by Mr. Samia, the School Committee voted unanimously to collectively approve the minutes for the School Committee Meetings for May 8, May 29 and June 5, 2013

XI. Executive Session

At 8:50PM, on a motion by Ms. Canzano, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the School Committee voted to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of negotiations and the residency status of a student. On a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Samia, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes.

XIII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Canzano, seconded by Dr. Magee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:14PM. On a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Samia, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes.

Respectfully submitted
Christine Taylor, Clerk

Documents referenced:

- 1) 2013 Summer Programs report, slide presentation and short videos
- 2) Annual Report on Personnel Hiring and slide presentation
- 3) State of the District Report and slide presentation
- 4) Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Guidelines Report
- 5) Daily Substitute Rate Report