



**School Committee
Meeting Book**

**April 8, 2020
7:00 pm**

**Town Hall -100 Maple Avenue
Selectmen's Meeting Room**



SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

AGENDA

April 8, 2020 7:00pm
Town Hall—Selectmen’s Meeting Room
100 Maple Avenue

THIS MEETING IS NOT OPEN TO PHYSICAL PARTICIPATION BY THE PUBLIC. TOWN HALL IS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC. IF AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF REMOTE PARTICIPATION FOR THE PUBLIC BECOMES AVAILABLE WE WILL PUBLISH THAT INFORMATION SEPARATELY.

On March 12, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Executive Order modifying certain requirements of the Open Meeting Law, to enable public bodies to carry out their responsibilities while adhering to public health recommendations regarding social distancing.

The Executive Order relieves public bodies from the requirement in the Open Meeting Law that meetings be conducted in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, provided that the public body makes provision to ensure public access to the deliberations of the public body through adequate, alternative means. “Adequate, alternative means” may include, without limitation, providing public access through telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body in real time. A municipal public body that for reasons of economic hardship and despite best efforts is unable to provide alternative means of public access in real time may instead post on its municipal website a full and complete transcript, recording, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as practicable afterwards.

In addition, all members of a public body may participate in a meeting remotely; the Open Meeting Law’s requirement that a quorum of the body and the chair be physically present at the meeting location is suspended.

All other provisions of the Open Meeting Law, such as the requirements regarding posting notice of meetings and creating and maintaining accurate meeting minutes, as well as the limited, enumerated purposes for holding an executive session, remain in effect.

Items

Suggested time allotments

- | | | |
|------|--|-------------|
| I. | Update regarding the school district’s response to the COVID-19 school closure | 7:00 – 7:15 |
| II. | School Calendar Revision re: April School Vacation: Vote | 7:15 – 7:40 |
| III. | Approval of Minutes | 7:40 – 7:45 |
| IV. | Executive Session | 7:45 - 8:30 |
| | A. For the purpose of a student residency issue | |
| | B. For the purpose of negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers, and non-represented staff | |
| | C. For the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes | |
| V. | Adjournment | 8:30 |

Next regular meeting: April 15, 2020



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **I. Update regarding the school district's response to the COVID-19 school closure** MEETING DATE: **4/8/20**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The situation regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to evolve. The district is currently closed until at least May 4, 2020 per mandate by Gov. Baker for all schools in the state. At the meeting, Dr. Sawyer will provide an update on how the school district's response to the pandemic has evolved during the past week.

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

That the School Committee hear the report and take such action as it deems in the best interest of the school system.

MEMBERS & STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools



SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

**ITEM NO: II. School Calendar Revision
re: April School Vacation: Vote**

MEETING DATE: **4/8/20**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

At the School Committee meeting on March 18, 2020, Dr. Sawyer recommended that the Committee approve an updated calendar for the current school year that would make Friday, June 19, the last day of school for students, and that would convert any remaining early release days to full school days, based on guidance from MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley relative to updated regulations for public school calendars in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommendation and revise the school calendar.

Since that time, the district has further developed its remote learning plan that provides continued connection between students and educators, additional structure, and increased engagement with learning.

Given the circumstances where students are homebound and this next phase of remote learning has just begun, the question of whether to hold the April school vacation week as scheduled was raised by some families and staff. While Monday, April 20 cannot be a remote learning day due to legal observance of the state holiday, Patriots Day, if any days from April 21-24 that would have been vacation days are converted to remote learning days, those days then would be subtracted from the end of the school year. In order to determine the preferences of the largest possible number of families and staff on this topic, an online survey was sent on the evening of Tuesday, April 7 and was kept open through 3:00pm today. The response was exceptional, with 2,304 families and 740 staff providing their input. Dr. Sawyer will provide a slide presentation to share key data and findings from the survey.

The feedback from both families and staff demonstrates a significant preference to continue with remote learning days during what is currently scheduled to be the April school break. In light of this, and in consultation with the leadership team and staff leaders, Dr. Sawyer will recommend that the school calendar be adjusted to hold remote learning days from Tuesday, April 21 through Thursday, April 23, thereby changing the last day of the school year to Tuesday, June 16. Please see the enclosed memorandum from Dr. Sawyer for details of his recommendation.

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

That the School Committee vote to adjust the 2019-2020 school year calendar so that Tuesday, April 21 through Thursday, April 23 are changed from school vacation days to remote learning days, thereby changing the last day of the school year to Tuesday, June 16.

STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools



SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Margaret M. Belsito
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Amy B. Clouter
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Patrick C. Collins
Assistant Superintendent
Finance & Operations

Jane O. Lizotte, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Community Partnerships & Well-Being

Barbara A. Malone
Executive Director
Human Resources

April 8, 2020

To: School Committee

From: Joe Sawyer

Re: Proposed revision to 2019-2020 school year calendar – change to April Vacation

Dear School Committee:

Given the circumstances of the pandemic, where students and their families are homebound, and given that our schools have just embarked on a new phase of remote learning, it is natural that the question of whether to hold the April school vacation week as scheduled has been raised by some families and staff.

First, it is important to note that Monday, April 20 cannot be a remote learning day (where educators would be working to support students) due to legal observance of the state holiday, Patriots Day. However, the remaining days of that week (April 21-24) could become remote learning days should the School Committee vote to change the school calendar. The Commissioner of Elementary & Secondary Education, Jeffrey Riley, has informed school districts that any days during the scheduled April school vacation that are converted to remote learning days would be allowed to be subtracted from the end of the school year in June, so long as no school district ends the school year prior to the 181st day of the scheduled year; in other words, remote learning days held during April vacation would “count” towards the state requirement.

Regardless of whether the calendar remains as is or is changed, the maximum number of days when educators may work is 184, per the collective bargaining agreement between the Shrewsbury Education Association and the School Committee. These days include the meeting day prior to the first day of school for students, two professional development days

held in September and October, and the parent conference day/professional development day held in November. The three snow days in December and the first two days of the pandemic closure were not work days for educators, which is why the final day of school had been rescheduled for June 19, as this would be the final paid contractual day for educators. Therefore, if any days are converted to work days during what is now April vacation, they will need to be subtracted from the current June 19 end date.

In order to determine the preferences of the largest possible number of families and staff on whether they prefer to alter the April vacation to have some number of remote learning days, an online survey was sent on the evening of Tuesday, April 7 and was kept open through 3:00pm today. The response was exceptional, with 2,304 families and 740 staff members providing their input, so there is no doubt of the statistical significance of the feedback. The survey results have been provided under separate cover, but the key findings are as follows:

- 1) 84% of families agree that the district should convert some April vacation days to remote learning days (65% strongly agree and 19% agree)
- 2) 71% of SPS staff agree that the district should convert some April vacation days to remote learning days (38% strongly agree and 33% agree)

Given this very strong preference by families and staff, and based on my consultation with the leadership team, I am recommending that the calendar be changed to convert some of the April vacation days to remote learning days.

It should also be noted that families and staff were asked whether they preferred to have three remote learning days or four remote learning days over the course of that week, and responses were as follows:

- 1) 65% of families preferred four days and 35% preferred three days
- 2) 57% of staff preferred four days and 43% preferred three days

However, it should be noted that when breaking down the data further, the preference of the educators who would be providing the learning experiences was 53% for four days and 47% for three days, and for the district leadership team it was 44% for four days and 56% for three days. Many staff and parents, in the survey comments, indicated that they would both like to see more days in June preserved for actual school days if we are back in session by then, and that ending the school year with a half day on Monday, June 15 would not be preferable. Additionally, several staff and families indicated that having some time during the April vacation week beyond Patriots Day to attend to their family needs would be important. As a result, my recommendation is that we convert three days to remote learning days (April 21-23) and end the school year on Tuesday, June 16.

I look forward to answering any questions you have regarding my recommendation at the meeting this evening.



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **III. Approval of Minutes**

MEETING DATE: **4/8/20**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on April 1, 2020 are enclosed.

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

That the Committee accept the minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on April 1, 2020.

STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:

Ms. Sandra Fryc, Chairperson

Dr. B. Dale Magee, Secretary

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

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Present via virtual participation: Ms. Sandy Fryc, Chairperson; Mr. Jon Wensky, Vice Chairperson; Dr. B. Dale Magee, Secretary; Ms. Lynsey Heffernan; Mr. Jason Palitsch; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Ms. Amy B. Clouter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Ms. Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; Ms. Barb Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources; and Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools.

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, this meeting was not open to physical participation by the public, but was broadcast live on SELCO Channels 29 & 329 and streamed live on the Shrewsbury Media Connection website. A complete audio/video recording of this meeting is available on the Shrewsbury Public Schools website.

The meeting was convened by Ms. Fryc at 7:01 pm.

I. Public Participation

Ms. Fryc advised that public participation was suspended due to the meeting not being open to physical participation, but noted viewers could email questions and comments to the School Committee.

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

None.

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer thanked everyone involved in the public health effort around the COVID-19 pandemic, including Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) Director of Nursing, Noelle Freeman; Town Leadership; medical professionals; first responders; community members; and SPS staff, students, and parents.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

A. Update on School District's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Report

Dr. Sawyer began the report by providing an update on the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic with an overview of key facts and messages; advising how best to communicate with the district during school closure; noting where coronavirus information could be found on the district's website; describing efforts to date; and noting challenges going forward. Ms. Clouter described current efforts and next steps around curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the district. Ms. Belsito discussed current practices and next steps relative to the Department of Student Services, noting known hurdles and ongoing messaging from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

The Committee asked clarifying questions about expectations for more intense interactive learning experiences for students, and Ms. Heffernan and Mr. Wensky (who are also parents of SPS students) noted differences around learning opportunities, over time and by grade level, for students. Dr. Sawyer and Ms. Clouter provided additional information on state and federal guidance relative to previous and new learning, and required and optional learning; and noted challenges around coordinating the timing of instruction opportunities for the various grade levels in the district.

V. Curriculum

None.

VI. Policy

A. Succession planning for district administration: Vote

Ms. Fryc noted that there is currently no formal School Committee policy in place in the event of the Superintendent of Schools being unable to fulfill the duties of the office. Dr. Sawyer went on to provide a detailed summary of the recommended policy, and requested - in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the operational nature of the proposed policy - that the customary second reading be waived so that the policy could be voted on at tonight's meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to approve proposed School Committee Policy 243: Establishment of an Acting Superintendent. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

VII. Finance & Operations

A. Update on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Finance & Operations: Report & Vote on Current Year Tuition Payments

In his report, Mr. Collins provided an update on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the district's finance and operations. Topics included COVID-19 related unbudgeted expenses, preliminary estimated budget savings, and revenue loss estimates; a recommendation for payments/credits relative to tuition-based programs at SPS; grant funding and field trips; pay continuity planning and the associated decision making; and ways the community can help during the pandemic crisis. In response to questioning from the Committee, Mr. Collins advised that withdrawing a student from the Extended School Care program would result in the loss of their slot. Committee members and Dr. Sawyer voiced support for the recommendation to adjust current-year tuitions as detailed in the report.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to waive tuitions for Full Day Kindergarten, Preschool, and Extended School Care on a per diem basis for all days schools are closed by the State or District due to COVID-19, and provide tuition credits to be applied for future payments due for the current year, and only provide refund checks in those cases where the tuition already paid exceeds the revised tuition due for the 2019-2020 school year, and further affirm that all other payment terms such as notice for disenrollment and late payment fees still apply. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

B. Payroll Continuity for All Staff During School Closure Period: Vote

Dr. Sawyer advised that payroll continuity had been addressed by Mr. Collins as part of the previous agenda item, noted the extension of the current school closure by Gov. Baker, advised that payroll continuity would be addressed again at the meeting on April 15, and recommended that the Committee vote to approve the continued compensation of SPS employees through at least April 17. In response to a question from Dr. Magee regarding employees providing future services for compensation currently being received, Mr. Collins advised that further investigation was necessary due to legal concerns around hourly wages being highly regulated and some employees being represented by collective bargaining agreements.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the continued compensation of all Shrewsbury Public Schools employees through at least April 17 of the mandated school closure for the COVID-19 pandemic, including both salaried and hourly employees, at their contractual rates of pay based on their typical time worked per pay period. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

C. Full Day Kindergarten 2020-2021 Tuition Recommendation: Vote

Noting the School Committee policy to step down tuition incrementally over time with the goal of providing free full day kindergarten to all SPS students to coincide with the opening of the new Beal school, Dr. Sawyer recommended lowering tuition by \$195 (versus lowering it by \$1200, as originally planned) for FY21, citing existing FY21 budget challenges and new fiscal pressure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Committee members expressed reluctant support for the recommendation, noting that budget pressures constrained the ability to step down tuition as planned and directed by the policy. Dr. Magee polled members to see if there was support to keep the tuition rate the same for FY21. Dr. Magee made a motion to freeze tuition at the current rate for the coming year. The motion was not seconded.

On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the adjustments to Full Day Kindergarten tuition for Fiscal Year 2021 as illustrated in the Superintendent's recommendation memo. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

D. Extended School Care Program 2020-21 Tuition Recommendation: Vote

Dr. Sawyer thanked Ms. Karen Isaacson, Director of Extended Learning, and Mr. Collins for their presentation at the last School Committee meeting on the Extended School Care (ESC) program. He added that Ms. Isaacson proposed a tuition increase of 7.0% at the meeting, and that he concurs with the recommendation. Ms. Fryc added that one email with feedback was received after the previous meeting with a suggestion relative to parents having an hourly fee for pickup and dropoff at the ESC program.

On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to adjust Extended School Care tuition by an increase of 7.0% for the 2020-2021 school year. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

VIII. Old Business

None.

IX. New Business

None.

X. Approval of Minutes

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on March 18, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

XI. Executive Session

A. For the purpose of negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, and the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers.

B. For the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes.

Ms. Fryc requested a motion to adjourn to Executive Session for the purposes of negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, and the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body; and reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes; and return to Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening. On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, on a roll call vote: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes; the School Committee voted to adjourn to executive session at 8:46 pm.

XII. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Wensky, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch: yes; Mr. Wensky: yes; Ms. Heffernan: yes; Dr. Magee: yes; and Ms. Fryc: yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

Documents referenced:

1. Update on COVID-19 Response Report Slides
2. Administration Succession Policy Memo
3. Impact of COVID-19 on Finance & Operations Report Slides
4. Payroll Continuity During School Closure Memo
5. Full Day Kindergarten Tuition Recommendation Memo
6. Extended School Care Tuition Recommendation Memo
7. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **IV. Executive Session**

MEETING DATE: **4/8/20**

- A. For the purpose of a student residency issue**
- B. For the purpose of negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers, and non-represented staff**
- C. For the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Executive session is warranted for these purposes.

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

That the School Committee enter into executive session for the purposes of a student residency issue; negotiations with the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A, Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, the Shrewsbury Cafeteria workers, and non-represented staff, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body; and reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes; and return to Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening.

STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Barbara A. Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources

ITEM NO: **V. Adjournment**