

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Westwood, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES
May 10, 2023

Attendance and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm by Superintendent Parks. Also present were: Tony Mullin, Maya Khuri Plotkin, Amanda Phillips, Dorothy Parmelee; and JoAnna French. Assistant Superintendent Allison Borchers was present on behalf of the District.

Westwood Media Center was recognized for providing a live-stream of the meeting.

Harley Pease recorded the minutes.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Parks presented certificates to the High School Academic Decathlon and High School Robotics Team. Superintendent Parks congratulated them on their great successes from their past season.

Public Participation

Tara Themistocles of Clapboardtree St. spoke in support of her husband, Tom Themistocles, in his run for school committee.

Heather Morrison of Magnolia Dr. spoke to share her experience when running for school committee and to share her concern about the current climate of the school committee

Wendy Thurmond of Far Reach Rd. spoke to share her concern about the school committee elections.

Alex Vertikov of Milk St. expressed support for the financial support that the Westwood High School Boosters provides Westwood High School.

Public Participation

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to open the public hearing on school choice. Amanda Phillips seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: **Yes**
Amanda Phillips: **Yes**
Maya Plotkin: **Yes**
Dorothy Parmelee: **Yes**
JoAnna French: **Yes**

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

Eileen Siegel of Alder Rd voiced support of not engaging in school choice.

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to close the public hearing on school choice. Amanda Phillips seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: **Yes**
Amanda Phillips: **Yes**
Maya Plotkin: **Yes**
Dorothy Parmelee: **Yes**

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JoAnna French: **Yes**

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

Superintendent's Report

Student Representative to the School Committee, Riley Harrington, provided an update on the Westwood High School Legislative Council session. Ms. Harrington detailed how the WHS Legislative Council partnered with elementary educators in the District to kick-off an awareness campaign to parents and the greater community about car idling. Additionally, Ms. Harrington detailed how the Legislative Council is working with Ms. Parmelee to compost. Lastly, Ms. Harrington reported that the Legislative Council is working with Director of Finance and Operations and Food Service Director Vinnie Cordon to generate student feedback about student lunches.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education: Overview and Initial Thoughts

Steve Ouellette, Director of Technology, Learning, and Innovation presented about Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education.

Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent, highlighted some questions and concerns about AI in Education. Ms. Borchers highlighted ethical and educational questions and concerns surrounding AI.

Ms. Borchers provided some thinking around potential implications for policy and practice in education. Some of the practices included clarifying goals of instruction, modeling and providing access and opportunities to practice using AI with responsible use, providing teacher training and support, and communicating with families around the purpose of AI and what the goals would be for such use.

Summer Capital Project Priorities

Director of Finance and Operations, Lemma Jn-baptiste, provided a list of priorities for the FY'24 Summer Capital Projects.

DESE Audit

Superintendent Parks acknowledged all of the work that Director of Student Services Abigail Hanscom put into the DESE Audit that took place this week.

School Committee Chair Update/Liaison Reports

Chair Tony Mullin mentioned that he is going to draft a schedule for next year's meeting dates. Chair Mullin noted that there will be a summer school committee meeting. Mr. Mullin mentioned that incoming Superintendent Piwowar will be in the District in the coming weeks.

School building project update

Maya Plokin reported that we are at 50% completion for the school building itself. Using contingency funds, the Permanent Building Committee, on May 10, voted to add in many items, which are, but are not limited to, fencing around athletic fields, athletic benches, a bird house, and more.

Dori Parmelee thanked the PBC for all of their hard work through the process.

Policy Review Subcommittee – Section K

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Amanda Phillips provided an update on changes made to policies in the Policy Review Subcommittee. Sections KCD (community gifts), KF (community use of buildings), and KBE (boosters and parent organizations).

JoAnna French volunteered to join the Policy Review Subcommittee, taking the place of former Chair Charlie Donahue.

Discussion Items

Math Curriculum Review Report

Assistant Superintendent Allison Borchers provided a math curriculum review report. Recommendations included, but were not limited to, implement programs that support equitable access to rigorous, high quality instruction, develop a Prek-12 curriculum map of math concepts and skills, partner with families to support student success by providing more opportunities for engagement and communication, and create regular opportunities for vertical professional development.

TMS Capital Needs Update

Director of Finance and Operations Lemma Jn-baptiste highlighted capital needs, including immediate HVAC needs. An engineering study will be done over the summer to assess capital needs at TMS.

Q3 Financial Report

Director of Finance and Operations Lemma Jn-baptiste provided a report on the Q3 financials. Ms. Jn-baptiste said that she is monitoring certain budget lines so that she can proactively plan for the following fiscal year.

Action Items

MOTION made by Dori Parmelee regarding school choice. It reads as follows:

WHEREAS the Educational Reform Act of 1993 requires that the enrollment of non-resident students under the School Choice provision unless the Committee votes by June 1 not to participate, and

WHEREAS the School Choice provision reallocates funds from the sending district and awards such funds to the receiving district, and

WHEREAS the maximum reimbursement allowed by the School Choice provision is less than Westwood's per pupil expenditure, which means Westwood Public Schools would be required to subsidize each choice student, and

WHEREAS once Westwood accepts a choice student, Westwood must keep such student through graduation, regardless of whether Westwood's demographic situation has changed, and

WHEREAS it is likely that a number of students will return to their sending districts or otherwise leave Westwood, thus creating a potential income loss, now hereby be it

RESOLVED that the Westwood School Committee respectfully declines to participate in the School Choice Program; provided, however, that if surrounding school districts subsequently, and prior to June 1, decide to accept the provisions of School Choice, the Westwood School Committee reserves the right to do likewise in order to protect its fiduciary interests in this matter.

Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes

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Dorothy Parmelee: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

The MOTION to establish the Pine Hill District was tabled to a later date.

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to approve the meeting minutes from April 5, 2023. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Dorothy Parmelee: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to approve non-bargaining wage increases. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Dorothy Parmelee: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to hereby authorize the transfer of \$600,000 from the Special Education Reserve Fund at the Town to a Special Education cost account to be used by the Westwood Schools for allowable operating expenses. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Dorothy Parmelee: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips ratify the Administrative Assistants side letter. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Dorothy Parmelee: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes

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Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to approve out of state travel for J-term. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Dorothy Parmelee: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

Roll-call vote:

Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Dorothy Parmelee: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.