

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Westwood, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES
April 23rd, 2024

Attendance and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:01pm by Chair Tony Mullin. Also present were: Maya Khuri Plotkin, Dorothy Parmelee, Amanda Phillips; and JoAnna French. Superintendent Tim Piwowar, Assistant Superintendent Allison Borchers, and Director of Finance and Operations Lemma Jn-baptiste were present on behalf of the district.

Westwood Media Center was recognized for providing a recording of the meeting.

Harley Pease recorded the minutes.

Superintendent's Report

Assistant Superintendent Recommendation

Superintendent Piwowar announced that he is recommending Ms. Caitlin Ahern to be the next Assistant Superintendent of the Westwood Public Schools. Ms. Ahern will be replacing Ms. Allison Borchers.

Pine Hill Principal Search Update

Superintendent Piwowar announced the Pine Hill Principal Search is underway. Supt. Piwowar announced that Principals Matt Kuklantz and Deb Gallagher are chairing the committee.

Facilities Study Update

Superintendent Piwowar announced that the Town and Schools have selected Dore & Whittier as the firm to lead the RFQ process.

Third Quarter Financial Update

Director of Finance and Operations Lemma Jn-baptiste provided the Committee with an update on quarter 3. Ms. Jn-baptiste said she feels like this year should be a normal close to the fiscal year. Some lines are over budget but are not cause for concern.

Transportation Policy Timeline

Superintendent Piwowar noted that the administration is hoping to have all remaining policies implemented by the start of next school year, including transportation.

Public Participation

There was no public participation.

School Committee Chair Update/Liaison Reports

Chair Mullin reminded the Committee that Town Meeting will be May 6th at 6:30pm.

Chair Mullin announced that the next school committee office hours will be on May 17th at 9:30am.

Chair Mullin asked the Committee if they would like to disband the policy subcommittee. Amanda Phillips said she would support disbanding the policy subcommittee, as it is not as necessary given that all policies have been reviewed by the subcommittee. Dori Parmelee asked how often the Committee reviews the policy manual. Ms. Allison Borchers said the last time the Committee reviewed the manual was around ten years ago. Superintendent Piwowar said that MASC will continue to be available for us to consult with. Chair Mullin said that it feels like there are around three to four policies, from year to year, that need review. JoAnna French said that some 'hygiene' is nice to have for the policy manual, including cleaning up language to stay current and modern.

Dori Parmelee said that the last office hours/roundtable was well attended. Topics included: sustainability, high school policies (including open campus and absenteeism), and Pine Hill transition feedback, and general comments.

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Maya Plotkin said that Westwood Media Center has put together a few nice videos about Pine Hill. They are on their YouTube channel. Ms. Plotkin said that the fields are still being constructed and parking spots are still being constructed.

Discussion Items

Proposed Revision to Policy IKFA – Graduation Requirements

Superintendent Piwowar announced proposed revisions to graduation requirements – policy IKFA. This policy details the graduation requirements of high school students. Supt. Piwowar recommended instituting a financial literacy graduation requirement and phasing out the public speaking required. Supt. Piwowar said that public speaking would remain a part of the curriculum and would live under the ELA curriculum. Supt. Piwowar said that the change is possible given current enrollment and staffing offsets.

Principal Amy Davenport provided some insight about the current financial literacy program, as well as public speaking curriculum.

This concluded the first reading of the proposed policy change.

Proposal for Deerfield Re-Use Advisory Committee

Superintendent Piwowar announced that he is proposing to create a Deerfield Re-Use Advisory Committee. The Deerfield Committee would be helpful and work in conjunction with the Master Plan of Facilities RFQ.

Action Items

MOTION made by Dori Parmelee to appoint Caitlin Ahern as the next Assistant Superintendent of the Westwood Public Schools, beginning July 1, 2024. Motion seconded by Maya Plotkin.

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 approve the March 14, 2024 meeting minutes. 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 Maya Plotkin to approve the April 1, 2024. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

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)

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to creation the Deerfield Re-Use Advisory Subcommittee. 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

Dori Parmelee asked to have the committee and school administration look at student phone use. Amanda Phillips and JoAnna French echoed sentiments to examine the district's policy and practice surrounding student phone usage.

Principal Amy Davenport announced that there is an advisory committee being formed to address this issue.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to adjourn. 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)

The Committee adjourned at 6:01pm.