

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Westwood, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES
February 13, 2025

Attendance and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by Amanda Phillips. Also present was Maya Plotkin, Dori Parmelee, JoAnna French, and Anthony Mullin. Superintendent Piowar, Assistant Superintendent Ahern and Director of Finance and Operations Lemma Jn-baptiste were present on behalf of the district.

Harley Pease recorded the minutes.

Superintendent's Report

WHS Athletic Alumni Donation

Superintendent Piowar invited Athletic Director Matt Gillis to speak to the Committee. AD Gillis invited alumni Mike Griffin to speak to the Committee about the donation that was presented to the Committee. The donation totaled \$12,500. The Committee learned that last year's donation was largely spent on new uniforms and equipment.

Seen Around WPS

Superintendent Piowar shared some recent events that happened around the WPS, including a Holocaust survivor speaker at TMS and a robot naming at Downey. Both events were recorded by Westwood Media Center and can be seen on their youtube page. Thank you to Westwood Media Center.

Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Revisions and Fee Rates

Superintendent Piowar shared some revisions to the FY26 budget. Revisions included a fourth pre-k classroom for the 2026-2026 school year, a smaller budget increase (from previous budget presentations) to wellness, and a small budget increase to Mandarin (from previous budget presentations).

Director of Finance and Operations Lemma Jn-baptiste provided the Committee with revenue assumptions, such as fees in athletics, extended day, and building use.

Portrait of a Graduate

Superintendent Piowar provided the Committee with the final content from the Portrait of a Westwood Graduate process. Supt. Piowar provided the Committee with the timeline of the process, as well as the content from the process. Some of the content included four main areas: think critically and creatively, communicate and collaborate, act with integrity, engage locally and globally. The next phase is to develop a graphic representation of the content, as well as amplify student voice in the design process.

Quarterly Financial Update

Director of Finance and Operations Lemma Jn-baptiste provided the Committee with the quarterly financial update. Ms. Jn-baptiste provided details about the quarter, including responding to staffing needs at TMS with turnover funds. The non-salary lines to watch are the recurring services lines, including facilities and student services.

Public Participation

Howard Heppelman, 9 Appleseed Ln., spoke in support of the mandarin program in the Westwood Public Schools and the need for the mandarin program.

Stacey Theofilou, 10 Longmeadow Dr., spoke in support of the mandarin program at the high school. Ms. Theofilou asked for there not to be any cuts to the program. Ms. Theofilou asked the Committee to include the students and parents in future budget discussions.

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Sarah Herilihy, 67 Morgan Farm Rd., spoke in support of expanding the Mandarin program into earlier grades if possible.

Sudha Sarma of 9 Phillips Brooks Rd., spoke in support of the Westwood Public Schools and wanted to express appreciation to the School Committee for the level of academic rigor of the schools.

Liaison Reports

Chair Phillips provided guidance to the community in hopes to norm productive communication for effective participation and problem solving both at school and with the School Committee.

Maya Plotkin asked for an update from Ms. Jn-baptiste on the Ameresco Solar Project. Ms. Jn-baptiste shared that Ameresco authorized payment for trees on the campus on WHS. The panels are now in Ameresco's possession and the inverters are in Ameresco's possession too. The steel canopies are not in Ameresco's possession yet. The steel is being ordered this month, according to Ameresco.

Ms. Jn-baptiste said that the WPS is looking for an on-call OPM.

Dori Parmelee gave a shout out and appreciation to the superintendent for hosting SEPAC office hours sit-downs with the superintendent.

JoAnna French provided an update on the dog park effort in the town of Westwood.

Discussion Items

FY26 Budget Hearing

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to open the FY'26 Budget Hearing. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee. Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

Stacey Theofilou, 10 Longmeadow Dr., spoke about the structure and responsibilities of the School Committee, issues with school bus transportation, and requested her bus stop for her children be reinstated.

Amanda Drainville, 57 Wentworth St., spoke about the wellness program and asked how the WPS became out of compliance in the first place.

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to close the FY'26 Budget Hearing. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee. Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

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Ms. Plotkin applauded the budget process and the work the district administration made to make the budget.

Mr. Mullin provided some reflection from the past two budgets, noting that the budget was under level services two years in a row. Mr Mullin noted that this should be noted to FinCom next year.

Ms. French encouraged the Committee to bring curriculum review changes to the budget in future budgets, if possible given limitations.

Ms. Parmelee appreciated the preschool conversation and hoped to not be as reactionary.

Ms. Plotkin noted that Mandarin was a larger discussion and not as much a budget issue.

Ms. Phillips asked the administration to notify the Committee if they are out of compliance with any other issues (re: wellness).

Ms. French noted that the expanded travel opportunities underscore the importance of the value of globally responsible students, as identified in Portrait of a Graduate.

Action Items

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to approve the January 16 meeting minutes. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Tony Mullin to approve the FY'26 operating budget in the total amount of \$58,761,682. Motion seconded by Maya Plotkin.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Tony Mullin to approve the FY'26 capital budget in the total amount of \$1,140,000. Motion seconded by Maya Plotkin.

Roll-call vote:

Amanda Phillips: **Yes**
Maya Plotkin: **Yes**

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Dorothy Parmelee: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to approve the Extended Tuition Fees. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to approve the Building Use Rates. Motion seconded by Tony Mullin.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Maya Plotkin to approve the Prodigy Program Tuition Rates and Instructor Pay. Motion seconded by Tony Mullin.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Tony Mullin to approve the Robotics Field Trips. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

Roll-call vote:

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

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Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Tony Mullin to approve the Quizbowl Field Trips. Motion seconded by Maya Plotkin.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Tony Mullin to accept the Westwood Athletic Alumni Donation. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Tony Mullin to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Maya Plotkin.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)

The meeting adjourned at 8:01pm.