

WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2017

ATTENDANCE:

John Antonucci, Superintendent
Emily Parks, Assistant Superintendent
Abby Hanscom, Director of Student Services
Heath Petracca, Director of Business & Finance

Joseph Jowdy, Chairman
Carol Lewis, Vice-Chairman
Charles Donahue
Owen Doherty, Student Representative

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting was recorded by WestCAT

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Antonucci began by relaying that he had provided the Q2 Quarterly Financial Report to the School Committee. He asked if they had any questions for him or the other Administrators at this time. There were no questions.

- Follow up on School Start time Committee's visit to Sharon High School

A group went to the Sharon High School to learn about their experience in the change in start time of the school day. Sharon has been doing it for about 8 years. Ms. Jowdy stated that another visit is scheduled to Dover Sherborne because they are a school that chose not to change their start time after much evaluation. Sharon has their late start begin at 8:05 am. The feedback is that there is still a struggle with time for after school events and activities. Ms. Parks said a noticeable difference is that their elementary start is 9:00 am. They don't want elementary to start earlier due to darkness in the morning. The Teachers told our group that the later start time gives less time for after school help. The reasons for the change were quality of life, studies that touted the later start time, change etc. Ms. Jowdy wants to know if any schools start after 8:30. The studies say that it's not worth doing unless the start time is at 8:30, but is something better than nothing? Ms. Lewis asked if a lot of kids need early dismissal due to the later end of the day. Yes, some sports teams did, especially those who can't play

sports at night in dark. Mr. Donahue is interested in the idea, but thinks early start time does not impede lifestyle. Ms. Lewis said at a PTO Meeting a parent stated that a friend had a later start time which instigated a later bed time.

Owen shared that at the Legislative Council the students spoke of this topic. Many students were in favor of later start time. The Teachers in attendance were also fond of starting the school day later.

- Follow up on J-Term/Professional Development questions

Ms. Parks began this section by stating that after meeting with the teachers at a steering committee, she feels that there is capacity to design a curriculum next spring for J-Term.

The High School does not have spring conferences which allows additional time and flexibility for the teachers to plan. The teachers seem very engaged in this project based curriculum.

Ms. Lewis asked if this term will be before or after exams. Ms. Parks replied that she is looking for feedback on this. The question of should we think about the current exam schedule and should this change has come up already in Teacher meetings. According to Mr. Bevan, there is already a conversation happening in regards to exam schedules and what that means for J-Term.

The School Committee unanimously felt that it is better to pursue this term after exams and Ms. Parks will go with that since she can make it work either way.

Public Participation

Ms. Jowdy asked if there was anyone who had a question at this time but no one did.

Budget Summary:

Dr. Antonucci begins by stating the budget will ask for a 3.34% increase which is actually less than the 4% guideline that was agreed upon by town officials during last year's budget process.

This budget allows us to meet many of our needs:

Contractual Salary increase \$967,862

Addition of 6.96 FTE district-wide, which includes 4.93 for SPED

Ms. Parks states that district enrollment is trending down, although the Middle School is still in a bubble and the High School is starting to feel the bubble.

Dr. Antonucci concludes with what are the unfunded needs or what's missing? – There are always unfunded needs, however we are in really good shape. On his wish list would be to add teachers although space is needed for that; more science specialists with materials and coordinators; additional increase in equipment and tech for science and engineering; needs in operations and maintenance; elimination of user fees for Rec.

Mr. Donahue has some questions. At a SEPAC meeting a parent mentioned that the doors at the High School are not handicap accessible – is that in the budget? Mr. Petracca states that the building is built to code but buttons will be added so that the student can have easier access. Mr. Donahue then asks about the Science courses in the Middle School and at the elementary schools. The state tests are not showing results due to the changes that have been implemented. How does the budget support 8th grade low percentage in test results? Are we doing enough? Ms. Parks feels that with continued efforts in the new curriculum we will see some improvement in a short period of time.

- Status update on MSBA Statement of Interest Process – Heath Petracca
Mr. Petracca reports that the online form is almost ready to be submitted. Based on the States’ priority list, our project falls under # 7 out of 8. This does not mean we have a low chance of receiving the funds, it just shows where the project falls within the categories listed by the state. Further discussion and voting will happen this spring.

- Policy Review:
Second Reading: Physical Examination of Students
Dr. Antonucci reminds the Committee that there has been no change and asks if are there any questions?
Ms. Hanscom feels that we need to have some conversations with the community.

Second Reading: Administering Medicines to Students
No Change since the last reading. There were no questions at this time.

- Update on Superintendent search process
Ms. Jowdy states a letter was sent to the community regarding the search. The firm has put an ad out and they are actively recruiting candidates. A survey went out to the parents. Over 50 people sent a letter of intent wanting to help the search process.
Focus groups are meeting. Ms. Jowdy hopes to appoint a new Superintendent by April.

ACTION ITEMS

- Vote to approve change to Kindergarten schedule (follow up from last month’s meeting)

Ms. Lewis makes a motion to approve and Mr. Donahue seconds. The vote is unanimous.

- Approval of Minutes: December 16, 2016
Ms. Lewis makes a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Donahue seconds. The vote is unanimous.

Overnight hockey tournament in February

Ms. Lewis makes a motion to approve the trip. Mr. Donahue seconds. The vote is unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A resident asks about staffing requests at the Downey. The incoming class size looks high, and class size is growing. Dr. Antonucci appreciates the comment and the Committee says they will keep an eye on the class size and if there seems to be a need the school committee will address it.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Lewis makes a motion to adjourn at 8:45 pm. Mr. Donahue seconds. Vote is unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.