

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2016**

Present:

Josepha Jowdy- Chairperson
Carol Lewis, Vice Chairperson
Brian Kelly, Clerk
Tony Mullin, Committee member
Charles Donahue, Committee member

John Antonucci, Superintendent
Emily Parks, Assistant Superintendent
Abby Hanscom, Director of Student Services
Heath Petracca, Director of Finance and Business
Owen Doherty, WHS Student representative

Meeting called to order 7:01 pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting was recorded by WestCAT

Superintendent's report (7:02 pm-7:14 pm)

Introduction of Student Representative Owen Doherty

Dr. Antonucci introduced Owen Doherty, Westwood High School student representative.

Update on solar agreement with town of Westwood

Dr. Antonucci said that after much back and forth over the summer, they did decide they would go through with the solar project, to install panels on the roofs of Martha Jones and Downey Elementary, Thurston Middle School, and the high school.

September Enrollment/Class size update

Elementary enrollment is in good shape, with only a few areas to call out. Martha Jones grade 1 has 23 students in each class. Hanlon grade four has one class with 26 students. A full time Instructional Aide was hired to help in that classroom.

Grade 4 at Deerfield added a teacher/class to keep class sizes reasonable.

Mr. Donahue asked about University Station kids. Do we have advanced warning when families move into the area? Dr. Antonucci said we serve small numbers all the time, and is generally not concerned unless there is a huge influx of residents.

Ms. Lewis asked about average class size at the high school. Ms. Parks said it is the highest enrollment in a while, but the building does have the capacity for 1000 students. Dr. Antonucci will share the class size range report.

Ms. Jowdy asked if teachers have complained at all at the high school? Mr. Bevan said there have been no complaints at all from teachers or other staff.

Partnership with Chyten Educational Services for test Prep

Dr. Antonucci introduced this by saying that test prep leads to better SAT results, so he feels it's a good partnership for us. Deep discounts on the programs are offered to our students.

Chyten can offer scholarships to students if there is a need.

Public participation (7:14 pm)

None

Discussion Items (7:15 pm-8:23 pm)

Thurston Middle School Advisory Programs (7:15 pm-7:50 pm)

Allison Borchers

Ms. Borchers gave us an update on the pilot program. An advisory is a regular meeting with a small group of kids and a student advisor. At Thurston this is about building a relationship between the kids and an adult, who they can go to for support.

Challenges in Middle School students:

1. Cognitive development: kids begin to develop abstract reasoning skills. That development can be overwhelmed by social/emotional circumstances. Kids develop abstract thinking skills at different times.
2. Physical development: going through adolescence is tough, and kids develop at different times. Girls often too early, boys too late.
3. Social/emotional development: kids begin identity formation, getting ready for a transition to adulthood

What research shows is that school connectedness and strong advisors matter with this adjustment.

Advisory groups meet 20 minutes daily, usually mid-morning.

- 2x a week is regular advisory activities
- 1-2x a week independent reading
- 1-2x a week recess

Who are the advisors: All teachers and staff (with the exception of part-timers, the school nurse, and the tech coach)

Groups are 10-12 students per advisor. All students are the same grade level.

Time is taken from X-block, and a restructured morning routine. No time was taken from academic classes.

Professional development for this program began last spring, and there has been great support from the PTO (i.e. provided a consultant to help).

Feedback will come in many forms:

- Seeking direct input throughout the year
- Measuring school connectedness
- Program review and refinement

Mr. Mullin praised the innovative program. He said to really continue focusing on professional development. He thinks information about the program should be communicated to the community.

Mr. Donahue also thanked Ms. Borchers for bringing such a program to the Middle School. He asked what success might look like? Ms. Borchers said if we see that struggling students find a place in the school. And for kids to say that it mattered, and that kids want it to continue.

Mr. Kelly asked what the subjects would be during the 20-minute meet-ups? Ms. Borchers said it could be anything, academic or otherwise. Along with some structured activities.

Ms. Lewis thinks the feedback of the program should come from everyone. Do a lot of middle schools do this? Ms. Borchers said yes, many do. We were kind of the exception by not doing it.

Mr. Donahue asked if we have reached out to other schools that did this, to see how the program is faring? Yes, Ms. Borchers said they reached out to Needham and Medfield School districts.

Student Records Retention Policy (7:50-8:01)

The issue of retaining and destroying temporary and permanent records was discussed.

- Permanent records (transcripts) must be held for 60 years.
- 1976-present: Temporary records shall be destroyed no later than 7 years after the student graduates, transfers or withdraws.

- 1947-75: district can use its discretion in applying the states requirement to retain or destroy the records.

A WHS alum corresponded and said that we should really hold on to all records, for historical purposes.

But student records are highly confidential and cannot be shared under any circumstance. The question before the committee is: Should we keep or destroy records pre-1975?

The district has already made an effort to contact Alumni to let them know the records were available if they wanted them. Mr. Bevan said they fulfilled about 125 requests or so.

Committee opinion is to keep them another 6 months. They will commit to advertising quarterly, to be fair to alumni.

After the 6 months the Committee agreed the records should be destroyed.

Update on Space and Capital Needs Study process (8:01-8:12)

May 11 was the last public forum. Since then, there was a meeting with the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority- they are who we apply to for reimbursement for any large construction projects). We were advised to slow down, we can't get ahead of them.in this process.

This January to April we can submit a Statement of Interest, most likely for the Hanlon School, the neediest building. This will be the start of the process with the MSBA. We will know in November (2017) if we are part of the first cycle.

Mr. Donahue asked if there was any concern about all the code violations? Will we lose accreditations? Also, how do we compare with other towns as far as age of buildings?

Dr. Antonucci said there is nothing of imminent danger with any of the code violations.

DESE Kindergarten Grant (8:12-8:15)

Westwood no longer relies on the Kindergarten Grant in the operating budget. Dr. Antonucci's recommendation is that we don't apply for the accreditation any more. The application process results in too much work for not much benefit.

The Committee agreed with the recommendation to not apply for the accreditation.

First Reading: Revised Student Activity Agency Accounts Policy (8:15-8:23)

Policy revisions reflect recommendations made by auditors last spring. Staff is much better protected with the new policy and there is a better level of control over the accounts.

No major discussion points at this time.

Action Items (8:23-8:29)

Approval of Donation from Westwood Pop Warner

Westwood Pop Warner recently disbanded. Because it is a 501c3 organization, their money had to be handled in a specific way. \$20,000 is the amount of the donation they wish to make to the Westwood Public Schools, and the money must be used for football/cheerleading.

Motion to accept the donation was made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official vote: Unanimous approval.

Approval of 2016-17 Model UN Trips

Two trips are on the schedule, one to Brown University and one to Dartmouth.

Mr. Donahue asked if kids have an option to get help with funding these trips?

Mr. Bevan answered that this is accounted for in the budget.

Motion to approve the Model UN trips made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Mr. Kelly.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes June 16, 2016

Motion to approve the June 16 2016 minutes made by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

New Business (8:29-8:31)

Ms. Lewis mentioned she participated on a wellness task force, and wondered what happened to that. Ms. Parks confirmed it was completed. Ms. Lewis asked if there is interest in adding the CPR certification to our wellness program? Ms. Parks said she would look into that, she thought we did offer this at one point.

Public Participation (8:31)

None

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting adjourned at 8:31