

WESTWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BUILDING PROJECT COMMITTEE  
Westwood, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES

December 20, 2019

**Attendance and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:00am in the Professional Development Room at Westwood High School by Chair Maya Plotkin. Also present were: Ken Aries, Allison Borchers, Christopher Coleman, Sarah Cronin, John Cummings, Pam Dukeman, Charles Donahue, Abby Hanscom, Nancy Hyde, Josepha Jowdy, Michelle Miller, and Emily Parks. Lemma Jn-baptiste and Anthony Mullin were not in attendance. Nancy Hyde participated remotely by speakerphone. Sarah Cronin arrived at 8:50am. Carol Lewis left the meeting at 8:56am. John Cianciarulo recorded the minutes.

**Chair's Report**

Mrs. Plotkin announced that Nancy Hyde was participating remotely and also recognized Westwood Media Center, which was on-site to record the meeting.

**Membership Update**

Mrs. Plotkin welcomed Christopher Coleman, Westwood's new Town Administrator, to the School Building Committee.

At the previous School Committee meeting, Chair Tony Mullin announced that a community member with an architecture background is being sought for the School Building Committee.

**Project Updates**

Mrs. Plotkin updated the Committee on the progress of the project since last month's meeting. The second set of community forums was held earlier this month and focused on educational programming. Dore and Whittier presented on what it is like to be a student now, how students now learn, and how schools cater to that. Westwood Media Center videotaped the forum and posted it online.

**Discussion Items**

**Presentation on Evaluation of Existing Conditions and Space Summaries and Presentation on Project Space Summary**

Don Walter, Principal of Dore and Whittier, introduced Rob Fitzgerald, Project Manager; Glen Gollrad, Architect; and Jason Boone, Educational Facility Planner.

Mr. Walter provided an update on the work that has recently taken place regarding community input and visioning. The architects, consultants, and engineers have gone through all of the subject schools to evaluate existing conditions.

Mr. Gollrad reviewed the existing conditions of the school buildings, beginning with the Hanlon School.

Mr. Donahue asked if the green area shown on the site plan of the Hanlon School is Town-owned property. The Dore and Whittier team said that it was and that it will be considered as one of the options.

Mr. Donahue also asked about the deficiencies and what the cost would be if the Town had to pursue addressing them without State aid. Mr. Walter said that he would provide written reports, including outlining a repair-only option which would not address space issues or educational needs, but have the building remain viable.

Mr. Gollrad later presented on the existing conditions at Deerfield.

Mr. Fitzgerald continued the presentation, outlining existing conditions at the Sheehan School, highlighting the school's accessibility issues, which is the most significant challenge in the building.

He shared how schools are making-do with spaces that they have (e.g., tables and chairs in hallway for pull-out spaces).

Mr. Fitzgerald continued the presentation by presenting an analysis of traffic.

Mr. Boone provided an update on educational programming, updating the School Building Committee on principal interviews and educational walkthroughs, the faculty and staff visioning workshop, two principals' workshops, school tours in Needham, Milford, and Millis, and community visioning sessions.

He then shared preliminary guiding principles:

- Hanlon Only (315 students) would be three sections per grade
- Hanlon/Deerfield (560 students) would be five sections per grade
- Hanlon/Sheehan (685 students) would be six sections per grade
- Special Education Programs:
  - All current programs will continue
  - Some programs may be relocated and incorporated into project, depending upon scenario
- Grade-level clusters with breakout space
- Project zoned into public and private
- Classroom pairs with small group rooms between
- Classrooms that support multiple activities
- Flexibility at multiple levels (group size, access to technology, mobile furniture, etc.)
- Variety of space, including breakout space
- Opportunities to move and interact with learning environment (exploration and play)
- Intentionally designed special education space
- Leverage outdoors for learning

He then outlined how the analysis will proceed. All of the principal workshops and working groups have been focused on the Hanlon/Deerfield scenario, which can be ratcheted up for a Hanlon/Sheehan scenario, or down for a Hanlon-only scenario; with the understanding that there will be some nuance changes, but the underlying principles are applicable for all three.

The MSBA has a set of guidelines to be used. For this combination, five sections per grade level are being recommended. The summary was outlined as follows with the understanding that the MSBA will make final determinations on eligible space:

- Core academic: 39,100 sf proposed; 25,000 sf MSBA
  - 9,200 may be ineligible
  - 25 classrooms for Gr. 1-5 vs. 20 in MSBA guidelines
  - Extended Learning Areas
  - Student Support Services
  - Staff space (reallocated from other categories)
- Special Education: 10,340 sf proposed; 6,040 sf MSBA
  - Everything likely to be eligible
  - Meets the spatial needs of the programs that are proposed
- Art and Music: 3,800 sf proposed; 3,800 sf MSBA
- Health and Physical Education: 8,300 sf proposed; 6,300 sf MSBA
  - 2,000 will be ineligible
  - Oversized gymnasium
- Media Center: 3,190 sf proposed; 3,190 sf MSBA
- Dining and Food Service: 7,447 sf proposed; 7,687 sf MSBA
- Medical: 610 sf proposed; 610 sf MSBA

- Administration and Guidance: 1,995 sf proposed; 2,425 sf MSBA
- Custodial and Maintenance: 2,160 sf proposed; 2,160 sf MSBA

Mr. Boone recommended initiating a discussion on class size. The MSBA has assumptions on class size, while the District has its own class size guidelines.

- Kindergarten: 18 per class (MSBA)
- Grades 1-5: 23 per class (MSBA)

The District's guidelines are lower. In all discussions, using eighteen across the board was recommended.

Ms. Parks reminded the Committee of the District's class size guidelines:

- Kindergarten-Grade 3: 18-22 (Westwood)
- Grades 4-5: 18-24 (Westwood)

Using 23 for Kindergarten-Grade 3 puts sizes slightly above internal guidelines. Even if tolerable, it puts them at the upper limit with no room for growth or flexibility. An additional five classrooms keeps class sizes low on opening day and within Westwood guidelines moving forward.

Mr. Donahue asked whether elementary schools today are coming up with additional rooms for science or computers; other places within the building that children go to. Mr. Boone responded that, in Massachusetts – and potentially nationwide -- well-designed elementary schools embody more spaces than just classroom for instruction (i.e., rooms for pull-out services, extended learning spaces for movement activities, STEM space) that are over and above classroom count, similar to art/music room. The MSBA allows this, given certain conditions, and districts are eligible for reimbursement under such conditions.

Ms. Parks added that the District is working on the Education Plan, which drives the design. What's unique about Westwood is coding is offered as a special at the elementary level. It is easy, therefore, to say to the MSBA that we need space to support a program that already exists.

Mrs. Plotkin clarified the objective for today's School Building Committee meeting: Should the Town move forward with the proposed sizes for core academic, special education, and health and physical education? This will influence how the architects move ahead in the process.

Mrs. Plotkin then asked Mr. Boone to share how the total sections were calculated and what the financial impact would be on the project.

Mr. Boone explained that the agreed upon enrollment is 560 students divided by 6 grade levels, which then totals how many students per grade. That number is then divided by 18, which yields 5 and a fraction. This is five sections per grade level.

Mr. Bonfatti commented on the financial impact, stating that the estimated total cost impact is approximately \$10M for the additional core academic space (including extended learning areas, student support services, and staff space). Within that, for five additional classrooms, the impact is \$5M, or around \$1M per classroom. It was stressed that these are just estimated figures.

Mrs. Miller sought clarification that everything is tied to the educational plan, not just a "nice to have." Instead, this is a showcase of how children are educated in Westwood. This is, indeed, the case.

Mrs. Plotkin asked if there was consensus that the team should move forward with 25 classrooms. The Committee is in agreement.

For special education, there are a different set of circumstances. The MSBA defers to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education based on what the District provides for services and programs. The delta of 4,000 sf is directly linked to the nature of programs that Westwood offers. Based upon what is known, the Design Team does not believe there is any reason why the MSBA would not reimburse for the additional space needed.

In the health and physical education category, there is a desire for an oversized gymnasium. The MSBA recommends a 6,000 sf gym which can allow for one competition, regulation high school basketball court with a little bit of runoff, and no bleachers; or an elementary-sized, slightly smaller than regulation, basketball court with a little bit of runoff, and some bleachers. The proposal is a high school competition court and a couple of rows of bleachers, which brings the proposal to approximately 8,000 sf.

Mr. Boone drew schematics of options for the gymnasium to be used for discussion.

Mrs. Lewis raised a concern about adding things to the project. Mrs. Plotkin responded that this is the purpose of the School Building Committee: what does the Town want?

Mr. Bonfatti and Mrs. Plotkin shared that the MSBA will reimburse for up to 6,000 sf. Anything beyond that is not eligible.

Mrs. Dukeman responded that there is such a demand for gym space as it is such a big part of the community. Some of the options open this up to more of a community building, beyond just an elementary school.

Mrs. Plotkin asked Mr. Bonfatti to provide some context on the financial impact. Mr. Bonfatti stated that the impact would be an additional \$4M for the largest option. The MSBA will reimburse up to the guideline.

When the MSBA calculates its rate, it does not differentiate between classroom cost and gym cost, regardless of whether it is cheaper to build one type of space versus another.

Mr. Donahue shared that the community use would be youth sports. He suggested asking for their input.

Mr. Aries replied that his department receives many complaints about gym size and availability. He shared that it would be beneficial to investigate options for a full-size gymnasium to meet the demands of Westwood, let alone other outside groups seeking space.

Mrs. Plotkin shared her concern that presenting the largest option to the community, and then having to pull-back, would be difficult stating that, when building a project, that is not how you want to sell it.

Mrs. Jowdy replied that taking away would be a reaction to cost. If the message from the Town is that this is too costly, then it will need to be pared back.

The agreed consensus was to size the gymnasium slightly larger than 8,000 sf.

Mrs. Miller suggested attending a youth basketball game in person to see how the gyms are used.

#### Initial Discussion of Evaluation Criteria

Mrs. Plotkin opened the discussion, stating that the next phase is to have options with different variations. The designer and Owner's Project Manager (OPM) will present and then the School Building Committee will evaluate. Criteria, therefore, is needed. The OPM has developed an initial draft of evaluation criteria.

Mr. Bonfatti responded that the idea with criteria is to create objectivity and transparency. This allows assessing options against criteria. At some point, criteria needs to be decided. This will be done at two levels, when going from a long list to a short list, and again when going from a short list to the final selection. The categories of evaluation criteria include:

- Education
- Site Planning
- Traffic and Circulation
- Community Benefits

- Sustainability
- Construction Logistics and Permitting Impacts
- Consolidation/Redistricting Impacts
- Construction Costs
- District Operating Costs
- Long-Range Planning/Town Vision

Mr. Bonfatti suggested a small, working group to develop these.

Mrs. Plotkin agreed, stating that a subcommittee is needed in order to really make decision on how to move forward with the criteria. The following were recommended as members:

- Mrs. Plotkin, as School Building Committee Chair
- Ms. Parks, on behalf of the District
- Mr. Mullin, as School Committee Chair
- Mrs. Hyde, as Chair of the Town Select Board
- Mr. Cummins, as a member of the Permanent Building Committee
- Mr. Aries, on behalf of facilities

Mrs. Plotkin opened this for discussion and clarified that the role of the subcommittee is to flesh out the criteria. Once the criteria has been developed, then a determination will be made how to score and then present to the full School Building Committee for approval. The subcommittee will also take an initial pass at the options and then present its recommendation for each option to the full School Building Committee. This is a more streamlined process to evaluate.

Mrs. Hyde suggested using the same criteria/process that was used in the recent Public Safety building project.

**Action Items**

Appointment of Evaluation Criteria Subcommittee

**Mrs. Jowdy moved to appoint Mrs. Plotkin, Ms. Parks, Mr. Mullin, Mrs. Hyde, Mr. Cummings, and Mr. Aries to the Evaluation Criteria Subcommittee of the School Building Committee. Mr. Donahue seconded.**

Roll-Call Vote:

Mrs. Plotkin	Aye
Mr. Aries	Aye
Ms. Borchers	Aye
Mr. Coleman	Aye
Mrs. Cronin	Aye
Mr. Cummings	Aye
Mr. Donahue	Aye
Mrs. Dukeman	Aye
Mrs. Hanscom	Aye

Mrs. Hyde	Aye
Mrs. Jowdy	Aye
Mrs. Miller	Aye
Ms. Parks	Aye

**Vote: 13-0-0.**

**Result: Approved (Unanimous)**

Approval of Minutes

**Ms. Parks moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 8, 2019. Mrs. Jowdy seconded.**

Roll-Call Vote:

Mrs. Plotkin	Aye
Mr. Aries	Aye
Ms. Borchers	Aye
Mr. Coleman	Aye
Mrs. Cronin	Aye
Mr. Cummings	Aye
Mr. Donahue	Aye
Mrs. Dukeman	Abstain
Mrs. Hanscom	Aye
Mrs. Hyde	Aye
Mrs. Jowdy	Aye
Mrs. Miller	Aye
Ms. Parks	Aye

**Vote: 12-0-1.**

**Result: Approved**

Approval of Hiring Redistricting Consultant

It has been recommended to hire a redistricting consultant. Funds will be paid from the feasibility budget and there is room within that. A contract will be sought not to exceed \$16,500.

Mrs. Hyde asked if there are people that specialize in this and what kind of professional consultant is available.

Mr. Bonfatti responded that there are professionals that do this work. The initial proposal received is from a firm that also does other demographic work. Mr. Bonfatti will work with Mrs. Miller on the procurement process. As it is direct consultant work, and a low dollar threshold, the quickest route is to have the Town go direct.

**Ms. Borchers moved to approve hiring a redistricting consultant for an amount of contract not to exceed \$16,500. Mrs. Jowdy seconded.**

Roll-Call Vote:

Mrs. Plotkin	Aye
Mr. Aries	Aye
Ms. Borchers	Aye
Mr. Coleman	Aye
Mrs. Cronin	Aye
Mr. Cummings	Aye
Mr. Donahue	Aye
Mrs. Dukeman	Aye
Mrs. Hanscom	Aye
Mrs. Hyde	Aye
Mrs. Jowdy	Aye
Mrs. Miller	Aye
Ms. Parks	Aye

**Vote: 13-0-0.**

**Result: Approved (Unanimous)**

Approval of Invoices

**Mrs. Jowdy moved to approve invoices for period ending November 30, 2019, totaling \$104,170, as recommended by Compass. Mrs. Dukeman seconded.**

Roll-Call Vote:

Mrs. Plotkin	Aye
Mr. Aries	Aye
Ms. Borchers	Aye

Mr. Coleman	Aye
Mrs. Cronin	Aye
Mr. Cummings	Aye
Mr. Donahue	Aye
Mrs. Dukeman	Aye
Mrs. Hanscom	Aye
Mrs. Hyde	Aye
Mrs. Jowdy	Aye
Mrs. Miller	Aye
Ms. Parks	Aye

**Vote: 13-0-0.**

**Result: Approved (Unanimous)**

**New Business**

Mrs. Plotkin reiterated that next few meetings of the School Building Committee are critical and asked members to try to attend all meetings. She shared that the meeting times have expanded to ninety minutes and asked members to notify her if the 8am start time does not work.

Mr. Bonfatti shared that the MSBA kickoff meeting was held this week and it went very well. A meeting to organize around sustainability has been scheduled for early January.

Mrs. Dukeman shared that the first round of bills has been submitted and reimbursement has been received.

Mr. Walter shared that the next School Building Committee will have design options presented.

Mr. Aries shared that Geotech will be on-site over winter break, taking core samplings of school properties. Ms. Parks reiterated that, because of this work being done, no one should mistakenly think construction has somehow started.

**Adjournment**

**Mrs. Jowdy motioned to adjourn. Mr. Cummings seconded.**

Roll-Call Vote:

Mrs. Plotkin	Aye
Mr. Aries	Aye
Ms. Borchers	Aye



Mr. Coleman	Aye
Mrs. Cronin	Aye
Mr. Cummings	Aye
Mr. Donahue	Aye
Mrs. Dukeman	Aye
Mrs. Hanscom	Aye
Mrs. Hyde	Aye
Mrs. Jowdy	Aye
Mrs. Miller	Aye
Ms. Parks	Aye

**Vote: 13-0-0.**

**Result: Approved (Unanimous)**

The meeting adjourned at 9:32am.

List of Documents and Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- MSBA Space Summary Template by Dore and Whittier, dated December 20, 2019
- Meeting minutes of November 8, 2019
- Monthly Vendor Invoice Package for financial period ending November 30, 2019
- School Building Committee slide presentation by Dore and Whittier, dated December 20, 2019