

Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 15, 2017

Present:

Carol Lewis, Chairperson
Brian Kelly, Vice Chairperson
Charles Donohue, Clerk
Josepha Jowdy, Committee Member
Tony Mullin, Committee Member
Danielle Sutrich, WHS Student Representative

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

Meeting called to order 7:00

Pledge of allegiance

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center

Superintendent's Report (7:01-7:41)

Ms. Lewis thanked Dr. Antonucci for all he's done in his 12 years as Westwood Superintendent.

Introduction of new School Committee student representative, Danielle Sutrich

Dr. Antonucci welcomed Danielle to the School Committee.

Student Recognition

Stock Market Game

Ms. Tobin and Ms. Cronin recognized the 2017 Stock Market Game winners. Students are given \$100K to invest over 10 weeks. 94 teams participated in spring session.

The Martha Jones team (the Royal Rich Men) came in first place. The Hanlon team ran as a mini-course, and they came in 4th out of 101 fall teams.

Mrs. Tobin thanked Mr. Goguen and Mr. Bartlett for their help with this program.

8th Grade scholar leader award

Ms. Borchers and team leaders recognized the following students for their academic excellence and for setting a great example for their peers:

Ellen McNamara
Ryan Mazzola
Jayson Onanian
Sarah Bernardo

MIAA Division II Unified Track and Field State Champions

This is a collaboration between Special Olympics and MIAA that brings together athletes with intellectual disabilities and athletes without intellectual disabilities to train and compete on the same team. The Westwood team was recognized as state champions, and each athlete received a plaque.

Miscellaneous Agenda items

Ms. Parks announced that WPS are now considered a Level I district, which shows the achievement of our students and progress we are making in closing gaps.

Ms. Parks announced that the Interim Principal of Middle School will be Zeffro Gianetti. A full principal search will begin in January 2018.

Dr. Antonucci announced that Kyle Grady, middle school Assistant Principal, will be leaving to be principal at Hale middle school in Stow.

Elementary enrollment (7:33-7:41)

Dr. Antonucci said nothing has changed since the last meeting regarding incoming grade 3 in Martha Jones (23 and 24 projected). The administration is monitoring it on a daily basis, and is currently not recommending any staffing changes right now. They still have the option to make changes over the summer.

Ms. Parks reiterated that we get several hundred applications for elementary school teachers. The General Education Instructional assistant (currently allocated to grade 1) will now be reallocated to grade 3.

Mr. Donohue asked how many more kids need to become enrolled in 3rd grade before a change is made. Dr. Antonucci said historically when the class size reaches 26.

Ms. Tobin said other teachers are involved (Math, Literacy, Special Ed) and come in and out of classes.

Ms. Parks will send enrollment updates throughout the summer to the Committee.

Public Participation (7:41-7:57)

A resident said she understands that 26 students is historically the cut off, but this is one of the largest classes in the school. Maybe 26 is higher than necessary. She asked if there was still a teaching position open?

Dr. Antonucci said yes, we can add the class if needed. It is in the 2017-18 budget (noted as teacher turnover, retirement). He also clarified that he never said 26 is acceptable, but it is the trigger to make the change.

Ms. Parks clarified that the one teaching position has already been allocated.

A resident said that even with reading and math help, she is still worried that kids are not being noticed. She said her daughter gets lost in the mix, and is concerned that even though she may be meeting 2nd grade expectations, she is not getting the right push or help to see if she can move beyond that.

A Sheehan parent raised concerns about 3rd grade class sizes, currently at 23, 24, and 25. Will there be any additional help there? Ms. Parks clarified they are at 23,23, and 22. Ms. Parks said they rely on the principals to allocate the resources, and trust they are making good decisions. The same resident also said she noticed many homes have been sold in her neighborhood, but isn't sure if families have kids, and if so, what grade.

Dr. Antonucci said there is also no more class space at Sheehan. But they can allocate an aide if needed.

A resident asked about Hanlon kindergarten incoming class size? And also asked if there are sources they can share on research about class sizes. Ms. Parks said classes are still at 22 and 22.

A resident (MJS parent) who is also a 3rd grade teacher in another district, said it's hard to meet individual needs of students in large classes, even with extra support. Based on her experience with larger class sizes she is worried about the kids, and a large class size also puts stress on the teachers.

A resident (MJS parent) thanked the School Committee for listening to their concerns. She said she also has teacher experience and agrees larger class sizes are difficult to manage. She is concerned about the consistency of the aide, can teachers count on them to be in the class on the same dates and times?

Ms. Lewis said there is an incredible amount of dialogue between the teachers, principal, and administration. She feels the teachers would speak up if feel they did not have the right resources.

Ms. Jowdy said she appreciated that the parents are coming and sharing their thoughts.

Ms. Parks said they will be revisiting class size guidelines later in the year.

Mr. Donohue said he is impressed with the parent involvement, and knows that attention will be given to their concerns.

A visiting non-resident from California asked what is the avenue where teachers can give feedback? Do they know the correct way to log their concerns with the administration?

Ms. Parks said yes, the professional culture in westwood is very open to dialogue and concerns. The Teachers Association also has a committee that teachers can go to to bring concerns.

Discussion Items (7:57-8:27)

College Admissions updates

Lynn Medsker

The college decision profile is given to members of the School Committee every year.

- 2017 had 250 graduates from WHS, a pretty even split between male and female
- 98% attending 4-year colleges, 2% 2-year colleges, military, Post Grad/prep school
- 80% applied for early decision/early action - 64% early decision accepted, 76% early action applicants accepted

Mr. Kelly asked how many early decision applicants were athletes? Ms. Medsker didn't have the data yet.

- 36% public schools, 64% attending private colleges
- Flagship campus- UMASS amherst

Mr. Kelly asked how many kids got into Ivy's? Ms. Medsker said 9 students will be going to Ivy League schools.

Ms. Medsker said that in the student exit survey, students requested more information around college costs (such as difference in price between public and private schools).

Ms. Lewis said talking about safety options, like public school, and scholarship money (schools that show interest in you), should also be discussed.

Something new is a program called "So you are in, now what?" which reviews such topics as paying for college, transferring schools, etc. Past WHS graduates share their experiences.

Trends in college admissions:

- Emphasis on access and affordability
- Diversity
- Some liberal arts classes filling up to 50% of their class with early decision applicants (athletes and legacies)
- Importance of demonstrated Interest- colleges want to accept students truly interested in their campuses through such avenues as Campus visits, college fairs, high school visits, email contact

Ms. Jowdy asked how early kids should be thinking about this? Ms. Medsker said in 9th grade some information is delivered in a classroom setting. Individual meetings happen once a year in 9th and 10th grades.

Mr. Donohue asked if they ever interviewed schools about the Westwood kids? Ms. Medsker says she speaks to admissions people who come to college fairs, and they are generally very impressed with the rigor of our coursework.

Mr. Kelly asked about the Naviance tool? Ms. Medsker said they do still use it and It has been very helpful for us.

Ms. Lewis made the comment that having recently gone through this with her kids, the process is amazing and so helpful. She feels kids really know the process. She also asked why do we do Pre-ACT and PSAT testing? Will we continue to do both tests? Ms. Medsker said they would like kids to try both; that way they can decide which one they prefer when it comes to time to take the actual test.

Ms Jowdy asked about the alumni survey? How is it going? Dr. Antonucci said it's been a little slow, and they need to do another push.

Mr. Mullin thought it would be helpful to look at trends/key metrics over time for college admission information.

Action Items (8:28-8:29)

Approval of out of state trip - girls hockey

A motion to approve the trip was made by Mr. Kelly. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of non-bargaining salary increases

A motion to approve was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donohue.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes: May 18, 2017

A motion to approve the May minutes was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.
Official vote: Unanimous approval

New Business (8:29-8:40)

Mr. Donohue asked if the school committee will be able to look at the survey and recommend new questions for the future? He also asked if we can collect emails of outgoing students.

He would also like to get an analysis on towns that have fees for Kindergarten or sports? He would like to revisit this.

Regarding SBIRT Mr. Donohue thinks it may be valuable to ask high school students for feedback, and have a chance for parents to come in and ask questions. Ms. Hanscom said these are already on the agenda for the fall.

Mr. Donohue also asked about capital planning, and asked should we be looking at other options if we don't get the state (MSBA) money in November? Dr. Antonucci clarified we should do some research into municipal options and reiterated that MSBA does not want the town getting ahead of the MSBA process (meaning we can't announce plans to the public, or move forward with meetings with architects, etc.).

Mr. Donohue wants to be sure the town sees the urgency of the school needs? Dr. Antonucci agrees we should maybe introduce a number for the project to the town council.

Public participation (8:40-8:41)

A Resident reminded the Committee to vote on the next school year start date in the fall.

Mr. Mullin said we should come up with a "rule of thumb" - what is the solution if it is an early or late Labor Day.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.
Official vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting adjourned at 8:42