

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2017**

Present:

Carol Lewis, Chairperson
Brian Kelly, Vice Chairperson
Charlie Donahue, Clerk
Tony Mullin, Committee Member
Joseph Jowdy, Committee Member
Danielle Sutrich, WHS Student Representative

Emily Parks, Superintendent
Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent
Heath Petraccia, Director of Business and Finance
Abby Hanscom, Director of Student Services

**Meeting called to order 7:00 pm
Pledge of Allegiance**

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center

Superintendent's Report (7:00-7:15)

October 1 Enrollment

Ms. Parks explained enrollment as of October 2017. Enrollment overall has dropped over time. Downey is up one student overall and the Preschool is up in enrollment.

Two classrooms are currently over the guidelines: Hanlon grade 5 at 26 students and Downey kindergarten at 23 students. An Instructional Assistant will be hired at the Downey school to cover Kindergarten enrollment.

Enrollment at high school and middle school has increased over the last couple of years. Ideal range is 15-24 students per class. Classes of 25-30 students are higher than liked. For example, 19 of the 59 science classes in the high school fall in 25-30 students per class. This needs to be looked at during the budget process.

Ms. Jowdy asked what is being done this year with these classes that are 25-30. Ms. Parks said keeping as is with no changes.

Ms. Lewis asked of the 19 of 59 science classes at the 25-30 students, how many are lab classes. Ms. Parks didn't have that answer but felt it did include classes with labs.

Mr. Donahue asked if data is available to see if other districts have the same issue with class size. Ms. Parks will look into this and see if the other schools will share this information.

Q1 Financial Report

Mr. Petracca stated that the first quarter expenditures are on track and consistent with historical data.

Mr. Mullin requested that the capital and maintenance expenses be broken out in detail when discussing the upcoming budget.

Superintendent's Professional Goals

Ms. Parks explained her goals for the 2017-2018 school year. Her goals should be working within the district goals. That being said, goal 3 and 4 are goals from the district goals for 2017-2018.

1. Professional practice goal: Develop skills in strategy development, data analysis, and instructional leadership by completing the first year of the New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP)
2. Student learning goal: Advance progress in narrowing the gap between general education students and students with disabilities by 5% in Science, Technology and Engineering, as measured by state assessments.
3. District Improvement Goal: Engage the community around the current status of our school buildings, with a focus on education needs, in order to developing a set of priorities to guide the capital improvement plan.
4. District Improvement Goal: Develop and support practices that acknowledge the diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges of students.

A motion to accept the Superintendent goals for 2017-2018 was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Water Testing

There has been a lot of media coverage about lead in water at schools. Ms. Parks wanted to explain how Westwood handles checking water.

There are 3 potential sources of lead:

- 1: The water source coming into the school building could contain lead. Since our water is provided by the Dedham-Westwood Water District, it is required to comply with state and federal lead-in-drinking water standards, as well as testing for lead on a regular basis.

2: Some older schools in Massachusetts have lead water pipes coming into the building. However, this is not the case in any school in Westwood.

3: The solder that is used to connect the pipes and or fixtures may contain lead. Prior to 1986, most solder contained 50% lead and 50% tin. Today, plumbing code requires that use of lead-free solder for all potable water sources nationwide. The older buildings are checked annually to test water. Samples are taken from drinking and non-drinking fixtures. If result is higher than acceptable, that fixture is immediately shut down and it is replaced and retested before brought back on line. In the older buildings, the custodians flush out every fixture every morning to mitigate any settling that may have occurred in the lead content overnight. Also, the district has taken several systemic, preventative steps. All traditional drinking fountains have either been shut off or removed in our elementary classrooms and hallways. Each school now has a least one water dispenser for refillable bottles with an internal filter. Also pipes or fixtures in the bathrooms are replaced or being replaced in the older buildings.

Ms. Jowdy asked what is being fixed? It was explained that the entire fixture which connects to the piping in the wall is being replaced.

Mr. Donahue asked if other districts test more than once a year? Asked what the standard is? It was explained that the standard is to test once a year.

Discussion Items (7:16-8:28)

Review of Elementary Class Size Guidelines (7:16-7:44)

Looked at 10 year trend of elementary class sizes. Enrollment is decreasing. Average class size is going down.

Westwood class size are very comparable to Medfield, Needham, Natick. And in some classes Westwood is smaller than the other districts.

Focused on grade 3 class size. Westwood is comparable to Needham and Natick. Medfield was different in this grade because all in one building and divide the class size evenly within the classes. Westwood has neighborhood schools so class size has ranges.

The Star research, conducted in 1986 in Tennessee, is older research but has some findings.

Qualitative data gathered in studies shows that teachers do not change approach when class size is reduced. For example, a teacher doesn't personalize or differentiate more when class size is reduced. Teachers are teaching the same way when they have 25 students versus having 15 students.

Westwood is always seeking and attracts high quality teaching.

Why is class size a concern?

- Academic outcome is just one possibility

- Parents' comments tend to focus on their child's daily experience.
- Concern could also be about fairness: class sizes have varied quite a bit both within schools and between schools.

Bottom line: Everyone wants the best for their child

Ms. Lewis brought up a question that when talking with the community about the schools capital needs if bringing up the possibility of reconfiguring our current schools as a possible option? This would allow for same grades being in the same school and could create classroom sizes evenly.

Class size guidelines haven't been reviewed by the school committee since 1998.

Class guidelines in area districts were discussed. Some have a range along with guidelines, some have a target number but has a language to explain what it means, not necessarily a drop number.

Westwood has other educators supporting our classroom:

Professional staff all have teaching license. i.e. literacy, math and science specialists, instructional technology coaches, special ed, ELL teachers, Occupational Therapists, Speech and language pathologists, physical therapists, psychologists.

Support staff Paraprofessional: 23 of 89 instructional assistants hold a teaching license.

A classroom snapshot of a 4th grade classroom was explained detailing all of the additional supports provided to the teacher for the students from the professional and paraprofessional staff.

There would be a cost to implement class size reduction

- If all sections were 18 students per classroom it would cost \$980,000. This is just salary, not additional costs like furniture, curriculum materials, supplies and various personnel costs such as increased time with interventionists.
- If all sections were 20 students per classroom it would cost \$745,000. This is just salary, not additional expenses.
- If all sections were 22 students per classroom it would cost \$385,000. This is just salary, not additional expenses.

Another very important point is all of the above figures ignores the fact that the schools do not currently have classroom space to accommodate additional classroom teachers.

Recommended guidelines:

Recommended class sizes with the understanding that these are guidelines rather than absolute limits requiring strict literal adherence and should serve as a guide for budgeting purposes and in response to the enrollment of new students into classes that are near or at the numbers listed below:

Grades K-3 18-22 students

Grades 4-5 18-24 students

Grades 6-12 reasonable class size (18-24), ideally not higher than 28, with the exception of traditionally large group classes (e.g. band)

In the event that a class in grades K-3 reaches 23 students or a class in grades 4-5 reaches 25 students, or if a principal believes that a particular class is not functioning properly, the Superintendent, in consultation with the building principal, may recommend one of the following actions:

1. Reallocate or increase literacy or math specialist support
2. Reallocate or increase literacy paraprofessional support
3. Assign an instructional assistant to the class for part or all of the day
4. Provide an additional teacher in a co-teaching model
5. Open an additional class section at that grade
6. Use other practical solutions as may be deemed appropriate

If, in the judgment of the Superintendent, it is necessary to take action that would affect the budget, such as increasing professional staffing, a recommendation will be brought to the School Committee for approval.

Changes from the 1998 guidelines to the current recommended guidelines:

- Moved grade 3 to be included in the class size guideline previously for K-2
- Identifies a “trigger” for when we consider additional supports
- Articulates what supports might be recommended when the “trigger” number is reached

The entire committee thought this recommended guideline was very thorough and clear.

Mr. Donahue really liked the principal being involved in identifying how to handle additional class size concerns.

Mr. Mullin reinforced that having all the other professional and paraprofessional help needs to be emphasized every year. Good to have data to compare from other communities.

Ms. Jowdy recommended this to be a policy. This will be presented at future meetings for readings to then be voted on as a new policy.

Building Project Community Engagement Planning (7:45-8:27)

Ms. Lewis asked how we can engage the community about what is going on with the WPS Capital Project Community engagement planning:

Ms. Parks reported that MSBA was applied for. Find out in December if Westwood will be invited into the process. If not invited, Westwood would need to reapply in the spring if it chooses to try again with the MSBA.

Westwood school department, School Committee, and other town officials met with MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Association) on 9/27/17. Westwood is 1 of 82 districts that applied this year. The MSBA eliminated 1/2 of these; Westwood was not eliminated and is still in the process. The MSBA is funded by the state receiving 1 cent of all sales tax. This determines how much money the MSBA has to provide to the districts in this application process. MSBA asked a lot of questions. Westwood selected the Hanlon project to enter into the application process. Once in the process, then can expand to other schools. It was a positive meeting.

Mr. Kelly asked if Westwood is asked to continue into the process, when will the reimbursement percent be known? It is not known at this time.

Tonight is a working meeting where notes will be taken on the discussion of the WPS Capital Project Community Engagement Planning. After tonight's meeting, the notes will be analyzed by Ms. Lewis, Mr. Mullin, Ms. Parks, and Mr. Petracca to finalize the project plans and then a document will be created to be provided to the public.

Phase 1 Inform (January - February 2018)

Inform community what is trying to be done. This needs to be for all residents, not just parents with students in the school system.

Phase 2: (March -April 2018)

Listening phase: Develop criteria to be used when assessing various building project options

These first two phases are being done no matter if we get invited into the December phase with MSBA or not.

If asked to enter in December phase with the MSBA:

Phase 3 Examine options

Evaluate various building project option using criteria developed in phase 2

Phase 4 Decision making phase

Determine which option to move forward

Questions for the School Committee discussion:

1. What mechanisms will we use to engage the community in this process?
2. What activities do we need to engage in order to achieve these objectives?

Invite the public to the upcoming school committee meetings, use all social media options. Should there be a separate website with only this topic or use current website? Hold forums, hold coffees, presentations, surveys, use cable TV?

Mr. Mullin felt a multi-blast approach was necessary. Newspaper, social media, sending letters to every household, invitations to forums and presentations and completing a survey. Each resident should hear about this at least 3-4 times.

Ms. Lewis asked “What is the message that we need to get across?” It is important to explain how educational needs have changed and our current elementary buildings aren’t all able to support that.

Mr. Donahue felt the middle school needs to be included in educating community in our school needs. Needs of each school: code violations, school-by-school other capital needs (roof, etc.) Where are problems with educational services (closets being used for non-closet options) Compare with other districts

Mr. Kelly felt we need to zero-in on specific needs and articulate that to the community.

Mr. Donahue stated it is important to be talking with the town officials about the town funding this project. University Station revenues are a resource and that this needs to be talked about at Town Meeting.

Ms. Jowdy agrees that this needs to be determined soon. Schools should be included in the revenues that come from University Station, not be left out.

Ms. Parks, Ms. Lewis, and Mr. Mullin are currently on a committee with other town officials that talk about town building needs. The school department is being included in these discussions which includes the new fire station, police station, and talk of a new town hall.

3. Should we hire a consultant to run phase 1 and 2?

Ms. Parks expressed the need to do a lot in a short amount of time. There is money in the budget to cover the expense of a consultant.

Mr. Donahue and Mr. Kelly didn’t agree to hire a \$25,000 consultant to determine phase 1 and 2. We do need them, but at a different phase. The School Committee should be able to determine how to get the information out to the community.

Ms. Jowdy, Ms. Lewis, and Mr. Mullin would be okay if a consultant was hired for phase 1 and 2.

4. Who should be involved in the process?

Town leaders, parents, principals, teachers, staff, residents.

5. Should the listen phase include a committee that is inclusive of, but larger than, the School Committee?

It could be School Committee, parents, staff, students, etc? This committee would gather all the information.

The committee felt the more that are apart of this committee the better to advocate to the rest of the community for this project.

Ms. Lewis thought it would be important for the School Committee to visit all the elementary schools during the school day to really understand what the needs are.

If all 5 School Committee members go together to the schools then it is considered an open meeting which makes it a public meeting and could add more people to these visits than would make sense. May break out in less than 5 members and then report back. Ms. Parks will set up these visit dates.

Mr. Mullin asked that the media needs to take pictures that can be used to show our specific needs.

This topic will be on upcoming meetings agendas and Ms. Lewis, Mr. Mullin, Ms. Parks, and Mr. Petracca need to meet before the scheduled November 16th meeting.

Action Items (8:28-8:37)

Approval of Minutes: September 7, 2017

A motion to approve the September minutes was made by Mr. Kelly. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Vote to Establish Special Education Stabilization Account

Mr. Petracca explained that school districts can now set up accounts for special education Medicaid reimbursement. This account can be used as needed for Special Ed and is like a savings account.

Mr. Kelly made the following motion:

“Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 13E, to establish a reserve fund known as the Special Education Reserve Fund for the purpose of reserving funds to be utilized in the upcoming years, to pay, without further appropriation, for unanticipated or unbudgeted costs of special education, out of district tuition or transportation.”

Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Out-of State Music Trip

There will be 100 participants for this trip.

Mr. Donahue was supportive of the trip, but had a question about security. Do we need to send security with our children's trips? Should Westwood be concerned about this? Ms. Parks will check with Chief Silva on his advice regarding. This discussion hasn't happened yet.

A motion to approve the out-of state music trip was made by Mr. Kelly. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Model UN Trips

There are three trips. One in Providence, RI at Brown University, one in Boston at Boston College, and one in Hanover, NH at Dartmouth.

The School Committee would like to invite the students from the UN trips to present on their experience at a future School Committee meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Kelly to approve these trips. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Needham Bank Donation to METCO program

A \$5,000 donation from Needham Bank to the METCO program.

A motion was made by Ms. Jowdy to approve this donation. Seconded by Mr. Kelly.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

New Business (8:37-8:44)

Mr. Donahue went to the most recent SEPAC panel discussion. It was a wonderful presentation and hoped it could have been recorded by Westwood Media Center and publicized for more to be able to experience this panel discussion.

Mr. Donahue asked if Westwood has AEDs in the schools. What happens at public events, football games, basketball games, etc.? How can public be informed so at these events it would be available. The Athletic trainer has this at the games. Staff has CPR training. Either 9th or 10th grade will receive CPR training this year in their Wellness class.

Mr. Donahue provided a national youth risk report publication on 50,000 students on behavior. Eating, health, substance abuse questions were asked.

With the High School social worker and WYFS, are we covering these types of issues that are listed on this publication? Are any of these issues in Westwood? Yes, the school does work on this and will be participating in the Massachusetts Youth Risk report this year.

Mr. Mullin asked if public participation could be added back into the agenda before Action items? Ms. Lewis said that it was taken out because it didn't seem to flow very well, but would be okay with adding it back into the agenda.

Public Participation (8:45-8:56)

A resident asked if they had a follow up question based on the meeting, but felt it not appropriate to ask at the public meeting, who do you follow up with? It would be the Superintendent or Chairperson of the School Committee.

A resident asked how old the Sheehan school building was. It was built in 1948 and updated in 1960. The resident wanted some clarification on testing for lead in the water. Water is tested once a year. Retest all pipes every year. First draw and then flush test, and if comes back high will come back to retest. Water filtered bottles are in all schools. Filters are changed regularly.

A resident spoke about the length of time it would take to make any sort of capital changes to the current schools. Would the School Committee ever consider restructuring the current schools by grade to help with class size? This could be considered when the Capital Project Plan is being discussed.

A resident thanked the committee about all the research on the classroom size and asked when the budget process start for 2018-2019? The current 3rd grade at the Martha Jones School is at two classrooms of 24 students with now 2 more going to register to make numbers 25-25. Ms. Parks stated enrollment is looked at every day. October is when the budget process starts, presented in November with what are some highlights from the proposed budget, and present the proposed budget in January.

A resident thinks social media is way to go with getting information out to the public regarding the Capital Project Plan. It was also recommended to have two parents be a part of the upcoming School Committee elementary school visits. It could help to provide some more specific concerns regarding each school.

A resident brought up the concern about drinking at the football games this fall. A letter went out from Principal Bevan to parents and there weren't any issues at that last game. The next game is 10/20/17 and the school will implement the same policy at that game. Parents need to partner with the school and it made a difference.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting adjourned at 8:56pm