

**Westwood School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
December 14, 2017**

**Present:**

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

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

**Meeting called to order (5:30 pm)**

Official Vote: Unanimous approval to adjourn to Executive Session

**Executive Session**

The School Committee went into Executive Session to discuss issues related to personnel and issues related to litigation strategy which would have a detrimental effect on the position of the governing body if the discussion were in open session.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

*Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center*

The School Committee re-convened to Open Session at 7:04pm

**Superintendent's Report (7:04-7:36)**

Recognition of WHS Girls Cross Country Team

Ms. Parks provided some history about the Girls Cross Country Team. The last time the team won the TVL was in 1981. The current team has won the TVL three out of the last four years. This year they also won the 2017 MIAA East girls division 4 championship. Ms. Parks wanted to congratulate and recognize the varsity team with a plaque and the rest of the team with certificates.

Sarah Conant- League All Star; Emma Harte- League All Star, Kate Hernden; Kira Hobson; Jordan Mula, Jamie Murphy; Bridget Pickard-League All Star; Alex Ponte-League All Star; Ashely Walker-League All Star and League MVP; Mairead Walsh. Ms. Teahan and Ms. Harrison are the coaches.

### Entry Process update

This summer Ms. Parks met with other town officials. In the fall she met with parents, went to PTO meetings, SEPAC meetings; in December she went on a listening tour of the district, visiting all the schools and teachers and staff. She wanted to hear from all to determine what are strengths, what should be preserved, and what could be improved. She is using this input during the budget process so it can work along with what the teachers and staff said.

### Cybersecurity audit findings and TEC Student Data Privacy Alliance

Steve Ouellette presented.

In October, *The Wall Street Journal* published an article about the amount of cyber attacks in K-12 schools. Hackers are getting into data systems, keeping it hostage and looking for a ransom. Some school districts are paying these ransoms.

Westwood has not been attacked. When the network upgrade was completed this summer, an outside cyber company was hired to look at the audit findings. Mr. Ouellette reported Westwood is doing really well with network security with a few suggestions. They will look at software to secure patches, have staff change passwords on a regular basis, and implement a schedule for maintenance for these types of things to make sure they are always current. This will lower the potential for a security breach. The wireless network is much more secure. Users need to authenticate and can determine who was doing something to affect the network. Now that Westwood is using more online resources the district needs to monitor outside vendors to make sure that the privacy acts are being implemented and students' privacy is being secured.

This issue was brought to TEC. All districts are struggling to watch all of this. Since all districts are working on this, TEC created a Student Data Privacy Alliance. They have put a significant amount of money for administrative and legal requirements. Contracts are being sent out to all the vendors from Westwood that this is our data, and that student privacy needs to be adhered to.

### FY'19 Budget development process - adjustments to base budget

#### Emerging Priorities

- High school science class size is very large. Nearly 1/2 of students have a class size of 25 or more.
- Need to enhance the ADA program currently housed at the Downey School. This program has grown and the district is looking into splitting it into two locations.
- There are class size issues for grade 1 next year at Downey and Hanlon.

#### Adjustments based on a review of actual expenditures

- Have been looking back at the actuals from the last 3 years to make sure the budget accurately aligns with what has been spent. Adjustments will be made to line items.
- The requests for fuel and electricity line items will move downward and be reallocated to transportation and maintenance.

#### Review of current staffing levels

- A close look at the current staffing level was taken to see if any staff reductions were needed. It was determined that a .4 FTE at Central Office which is currently not staffed will be taken out of the budget.

#### Incorporation of new positions funded through turnover

- Changes occur in personnel from when the budget gets approved to when school starts. The district may lose a teacher that has a higher salary than the teacher who will be hired to replace that person. This does provide some flexibility. This allowed the addition of a .6 Science Coordinator, a kindergarten teacher and assistant at Hanlon, two IAs and an ABA tutor at Downey. These positions will now be added into the base budget for this coming year.

#### Keeping level services

- A 2.82% increase is necessary to reach level service.

At the last meeting, the School Committee was provided a proposal on how to eliminate kindergarten tuition. The school committee was wanting to eliminate the tuition immediately. Upon looking at the upcoming budget, it would not be advised to eliminate it immediately, but to look at taking it out over the next three years.

#### A general audit of security protocols across the district.

An audit was done about 5 years ago. Gun violence is a concern. Security at the high school is being addressed. The plan is to get the buzzer system to enter the building up and running at the high school.

Ms. Lewis asked will there be a consultant to work with during this review? It was agreed that that would make sense. A lot has changed since the audit was last completed 5 years ago.

Ms. Parks also wanted to thank Westwood Youth and Family Services who were a tremendous support for the school department with the death of student Eddie Thomson.

#### **Public Participation (7:36-7:38)**

A resident is the co-chair of SEPAC. This organization was brought back to life with Abby Hanscom's help. This group meets monthly. If you know of any parent who need this support, please let them know about this group.

#### **Discussion Items (7:38-8:33)**

Update on financial impact of University Station development (Pam Dukeman, Finance Director, Town of Westwood (7:38-8:16)

What has this done for tax revenue for the town?

- FY2018 Revenue budget is \$95M. Most of this money comes from tax revenue; about 6% from state aid. 78% of budget is paid for by tax revenue.

The tax bills fund the operating budget, capital budget, long term liabilities, reserve accounts. Westwood has maintained a AAA bond rating.

The largest spending is the operating budget. \$63M, or 67%, is in the operating budget

How do you move this forward and what needs to grow to maintain level services?

- A 1% increase is \$630K, so a 2.5% increase would cost \$1.57M, a 4% increase would cost \$2.52M

Tax revenue growth per Prop 2 1/2.

- \$70,367,740 is for FY2018 (this comes from prior year). You add in new growth, \$1.2M came from new residential growth and other non University Station business revenue like the car dealerships. University Station will add \$179,000. The exempt debt is what is approved outside of the Prop 2 1/2. This is the high school and library and it is \$1.5M. There are only 5 years left on a 20-year bond for the high school which ends in 2023.
- There hasn't been a general override since 2007
- Typical budget year within proposition 2 1/2 equals \$2.9M

Expenditures:

- Fixed cost increases school/municipal employee benefits which includes health insurance and payroll taxes: \$1.3M
- Net available for operating budgets/other: \$1.6M
- Operating budget cost - each 1% increase is \$630K, so a 2.5% increase would cost \$1.5M. A typical year fund is 2.5% increase to operating budget. It is a challenge to fund operating budgets above 2.5%

What can cause fluctuation to typical budget increase?

- Increase in other revenue, such as State Aid.
- Lower rate of increase to fixed costs.
- Increase in new tax growth.

What can reduce typical budget funding?

- Reduction to State Aid
- Higher than normal fixed costs
- Dramatic reduction to economic driven revenue, i.e. motor vehicle excise.

The main goal of University station would be used to make sure budget is stabilized and not have to reduce it.

University station plan for revenue use:

- Direct costs to service the project.
- Providing for sustainable growth for the school and municipal budgets above the limits of 2 1/2%.
- Fund debt service for major capital projects within Prop 2 1/2.
- Helping to limit the tax bill increase.
- Funding the reserve accounts to maintain a AAA bond rating. Currently there is one account with \$3M.
- Stabilize the split tax rate.

What was hoped for with University Station:

- Increased new revenue \$5M
- Direct cost \$2M
- Net new annual revenue \$3M

Actual new growth

- FY15 \$565K
- FY16 \$3,242,307
- FY17 \$1,171.730
- FY18 \$179K. Had budgeted \$500K for this year. The hotel and new restaurant are not open as of 6/30/17 which is year end. That revenue will come in for future years. A total of \$5.1M has come over the last few years.

University Station is now 2/3 built out.

Student enrollment are at about 1/2 of what was predicted.

Another 100 condominiums will be built instead of rentals. This will start in early FY'18 by going to the planning board. It will take about 18 months.

The rentals are 90% filled.

How have the university station funds been used?

- Operating budget: \$2.6M: \$1.9M went to school, \$733K to the municipal budget
- Direct service cost: \$1.3M. School is \$215K and Municipal is \$1.1M

Capital

- One time capital fund \$975K Debt service - police bond \$800K

Tax Bill Relief

- Unused tax levy last three years \$1.449M This rolls into the next year.

FY18 approved operating budget \$87M

- Budget increases for the School FY16 5.3%, FY17 4.9%, FY18 3.3%

FY19 typical year

- New tax revenue \$3.1M

Operating budget FY19

3% increase to school budget \$1.3M Municipal Budget \$600K

There is a short window for the high school bond to end. \$44M project MSBA money was received. Mr. Kelly asked what we could replace it with. You would need an exempt debt bond to replace that. How much could you borrow? About \$500K.

Mr. Donahue is looking at large amount for spending. Could this be put in the current debt budget, or would a 2 1/2 need to be used? It would all depend on the final cost, if it was being phased in all at once or a little at a time, etc.

#### Update on building project and MSBA process (8:17-8:33)

Westwood received news on December 13, 2017, that the district was invited into the process with 14 other communities. Only 15 of 84 districts that applied got this far.

Eligibility period (up to 270 days)

Westwood begins on 6/1/18, which is when the 270 days start. A lot of things need to happen. Initial compliance, forming a school building committee, and submitting the education profile. The district will collaborate with the MSBA as to what needs are, different models for those solutions, etc. Westwood is agreeing to partner with them to receive this funding and are committing to this process. Money will need to be appropriated at the May town meeting and present to the community for the project and be secured by the end of the eligibility period which ends by February 2019. It then needs to be approved to move on to the feasibility study

During the feasibility study is when Westwood would know how much funding the MSBA could provide. 30% would be approximate funding.

Schematic Design

- After this phase, it will really be known what Westwood is planning to do which is when it will know how much money it is going to cost.

It will take about 6 years before a new school is built

The need right now is to inform all residents about what the school's needs are, understand the issue, and to get on board with this project, building a school for the next 50 years.

#### **Action Items (8:34-8:41)**

#### **Approval of Minutes: November 16, 2017**

A motion to approve the November minutes was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **Class Size Guideline Policy - Second Reading**

A motion to waive the 2nd and 3rd reading of the class size guideline was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **Reauthorization of Medical Emergency Response Plan (MERP)**

Mr. Donahue emphasized the importance of getting to a person with an AED within 3 minutes. He asked if the students know where the AED's are as well as who has been trained to use the AED? All high school students will be trained in CPR in their health classes.

Motion was made to reauthorize MERP by Mr. Donahue. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **Approval of out-of-state trip: J-Term hiking class**

Motion made to approve the out-of-state trip for the J-Term hiking class by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **New Business (8:42-8:52)**

Liaison Reports - no reports

Mr. Donahue is talking to the community about what the school's needs are. He is wanting feedback from the committee about what they are going to say. Ms. Parks noted that Central Office just met today with a person who is a strategic communication specialist and is working on creating a set of talking points to be used by all of them, explaining the capital needs and educational needs.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

**Meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm.**