

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2018**

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 Petracca, 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 (7:00-7:30)

Carol Lewis wanted to hold in our thoughts those students who lost their lives in the Parkland Florida school shooting along with their families. No community expects this to happen. We are fortunate that we live in a community that takes safety and security very seriously in our schools and it is continually being monitored. She asked for the Committee to take a moment of silence.

Student Recognition: Brewing Independence

Ms. Parks wanted to recognize students from Westwood High School working in a program called Brewing Independence. She asked Robin Fabiano, Special Education Department Head, to present to the Committee about this wonderful program. Julie Kilroy, Special Education Teacher, thought up this program. It combines students from three programs at the high school, providing an opportunity to practice vocational and communication skills.

The program is best pictures as a Keurig on a cart, providing coffee for teachers and administrators who can sign up three times a week. Orders are placed through a Google Doc. Students make the orders and then deliver on a cart. There are about 20 orders a day. Students can practice communication, vocational, budgeting, inventory restocking, monthly billing, single pay billing. They have gotten out and about in the community in the high school and Central Office. Skill level has really blossomed and it is hoped it will move into an internship in the community. Students are baristas, cart pusher, and behind the scenes (restocking/billing). They feature Starbucks coffee. Carol Lewis wanted to congratulate them for their hard work. Now they have vocational skills that are wonderful to have. Certificates were handed to the students.

Another student was recognized for knitting 30 hats with a knitting machine which were donated to the American Heart Association benefiting newborns with cardiac disease.

Life-Threatening Allergy Policy - upcoming draft policy

It was brought to Ms. Parks' attention from some parents in the community that the School Committee currently doesn't have a policy on how the school deals with life-threatening allergies. She couldn't find any reason this wasn't included other than merely being an oversight. She would like to suggest that a draft policy be put together and brought to next meeting so the Committee would have three readings before the end of the school year and have the policy in place before the beginning of the next school year.

SBIRT Update/Action Plan

Ms. Hanscom presented that the State of Massachusetts clarified in late December the requirements regarding the Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) Initiative. This is now a requirement; it is no longer voluntary. Screening of two grade levels (at the middle and/or high school levels) will be required. The district has convened a steering committee with input from WPS administration, guidance and wellness departments which recommend that only one grade level at WHS implement screening next year with TMS coming on board in 2019-2020, with input and direction from the new principal.

Mr. Donahue asked if Ms. Hansom could describe the purpose of this screening. It is a screening for substance abuse risk of a full grade level at the high school. This is a mandate from the state. This is a public health initiative coming through the school department. A six question screener has been developed by the state. District staff will be trained this spring in preparation to implement in January 2019. A teacher interviews each student one-on-one and then, based on the results, could have a referral for outside intervention. This would take place during wellness or guidance time.

Mr. Donahue wondered what has been found out from districts who have already implemented this. They have discovered some students who do need help with this.

Mr. Mullin asked what it meant to be out of compliance next year with only implementing in one grade level. She would like the committee to think about this and discuss at next month's meeting. There are no tangible financial sanctions and thought it would make sense for the next TMS principal to be a part of this conversation before implementing anything at the middle school. The committee needs to be comfortable knowing they would be out of compliance if the current recommendation is followed.

TMS Principal Update

The district received 47 middle school principal applications. Ms. Parks, Ms. Borchers, and Ms. Hanscom interviewed 13 candidates. Five semi-finalists were identified and met with the search

committee. The search committee identified two finalists. This week the two finalists visited and interviewed in the district for a day. Ms. Parks is in the process of going through the feedback, checking references, and hope by March 1st or sooner to announce the next Thurston Middle School principal. After the principal is announced, then the attention will turn to the Thurston Assistant Principal search.

Website accessibility improvements

Steve Ouellette presented that the current website was built from scratch a couple of years ago and improvements continue to be made. He has been working with Ms. Hansom to continue accessibility improvements. For example, vision impaired users could hover over an image or hyper links and words would be spoken to describe the image or hyper link. The site is currently not in compliance for that so the district is now working with the website developer to make the website accessible to all. Those links are being developed.

Building Project Update

Ms. Parks explained March will be a busy month.
Saturday 3/3 building tours 10am-12pm, Sunday 3/4 building tours 2pm-4pm.
Tours will run every twenty minutes.

Tuesday 3/6 MJ PTO meeting
Thursday 3/8 community forum at Sheehan
Monday 3/12 HS PTO meeting
Tuesday 3/13 Sheehan PTO meeting
Wednesday 3/14 Preschool PTO meeting
Tuesday 3/20 Community forum at Hanlon
Wednesday 3/21 Deerfield PTO meeting.

The community forums will open up with a brief description of the building project plan and then open it up and listen to questions/concerns from the community. The district is hoping to have these sessions recorded so they could be watched by community members if unable to attend the sessions. Ms. Parks explained that approximately every 6 weeks a communication will be sent out to residents to keep them up to date on the project.

Ms. Parks would also like to remember the Florida tragedy. She sent a message to all parents about this and has received comments back from parents wondering what policies we have. The District has an active shooter trained plan. These plans were developed with the Westwood Police Department, the Massachusetts State Police, and the Norfolk County District Attorney's office.

Mr. Kelly asked if we had police presence in the schools. There is one school resource officer assigned to all the schools.

Safety and security was brought up at the December School Committee meeting with the plan to re-evaluate policy and procedures regarding the safety of our schools. This will continue as planned and Ms. Parks will inform parents as it moves forward.

Discussion Items (7:30-8:15)

Recommendation to Create "Buffer Zone" at University Station (7:30-7:45)

Ms. Parks presented the current distribution of students residing at University Station: Preschool 1, Downey 20, Deerfield 1, Sheehan 1, TMS 10, WHS 6. A total of 39 students.

Mr. Kelly asked what was projected as the number of students with this project. It was 63 students so much lower than what has occurred.

Mr. Donahue asked what the second phase would project. The second phase with condos has a projected number of another 12 students. Ms. Parks indicated that the projected 63 students was for the entire project, both phases.

Ms. Jowdy wonders now that it is condos, not rentals, if more mitigation money can be requested for the projected numbers.

Class size as of 2/1/18 varies between Downey and Deerfield. There is a big difference between both schools. Deerfield will have 171 students next year.

A buffer zone is proposed for University Station. As new students enroll, they could be assigned to either Downey or Deerfield based on which school could accept those students in each classroom. Current students won't be asked to move; siblings would stay together in school. Both schools are on different schedules and there is currently only 1 bus for that area. A van would be used to transport students to Deerfield at a cost of approximately \$18,000. At this point, a second van is not necessary, but could spend an additional \$18,000. Each van can transport 8 students. This can be accomplished within the current transportation budget.

Ms. Lewis thought this was a good, short-term solution

Mr. Mullin is a big supporter of this. He suggested seeing if current students may want to volunteer to move to another school for a smaller class size.

A motion to create the buffer zone at University Station was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

FY'19 Budget Hearing: Public comment on FY'19 Proposed Budget (7:45-8:25)

Ms. Parks would like to make some recommendations to the current proposed FY'19 budget.

For next year's Grade 1 at Downey and Grade 4 at Martha Jones, Ms. Parks would like to add one additional classroom at both of these grade levels. She was very happy to have so much dialogue this year with parents regarding the budget.

At Downey, propose to build a wall to create a room in the solarium to make a classroom. This will cost about \$35,000. This would be a part of the capital budget. This would not be an additional request for the capital budget, other proposed projects would simply move down the list of needs. There are no changes to the staff cost, because instead of hiring 2 literacy specialists, the district would hire 1 teacher.

At this time, 1 class at Martha Jones is 1 student over the guideline. After a lot of conversations with Ms. Tobin, it was determined that 25 has been a very intolerable size. The recommendation is that another class be added. The District will not hire 2 aides and will hire one teacher instead.

Four months were spent this year to update the class size guideline, looking at other districts that we are compared to. Our guidelines are in line with those districts. The actual class sizes were very much in line with the other districts. Looking at the 10 year trend, and the ranges have stayed pretty much the same. The average class size has gone down because more classrooms are below guideline than 10 years ago.

This is not a long-term solution with a lot of classrooms at the elementary level that are below guidelines. It is hoped that the interest will continue with the new building project to move to a more viable solution for the district.

Mr. Kelly encourages all to attend the town meeting to vote in the budget. As there are many parents who had students go through with a lot larger classrooms and may not vote the budget in seeing so many classrooms that are under guideline.

Mr. Donahue mentioned that the community also needs to vote in the money from the town to get funds to move ahead with the MSBA project.

Open up the floor for any discussion on the budget:

A resident with Downey and Thurston students went through this with her sixth grader, saying that when they split to 3 classrooms it made a big difference. With the developments occurring across town, trying to smooth out the classroom sizes within Downey. How much input does the School Committee have with the planning board in making recommendations to stop some projects? Has it been looked at to move the specialized program to another location? Ms. Parks commented that it is cost effective to keep specialized programs in-district and not cost effective to have only small numbers of students at each school with specialized programming.

Ms. Lewis commented they are connected with the other boards and are looking at how projected projects could affect the school district.

A resident on behalf of the Martha Jones 3rd grade parents thanked the committee for listening and working with them. She also wanted to thank the two teachers who have done the best they can with the large class size this year.

A resident commented on the slide of 2013-2014, showing Sheehan enrollment of three classrooms of 25 students per classroom. That number of students made for a very tough year for the students.

A resident who is a parent from the Downey School note that a lot of adults/aides that may or may not work with your students are in the classroom because of the specialized programs. There are transient students. It is tough for his children with large class size and kids moving because of rental housing at University Station. He also asked if the projected number of students was based on so many years. It is based on build-out, not years of it being built.

A resident and parent asked if the projected number of 63 students was based on 100% build out. It was.

A resident parent/teacher at 1st grade Downey thanked them for their choice in adding the new classroom

Action Items (8:25-8:24)

Approval of FY'19 Budget

A motion to approve the FY'19 budget for \$44,903,135 and \$867,000 capital budget was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes: January 11, 2018

A motion to approve the January 11, 2018 minutes was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

One correction needed. Under the Meditech donation section a last name was incorrect. Change from Howard Nesson to Howard Messing.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Public Participation (8:24-8:30)

Mr. Kelly is not pulling papers to re-run for School Committee. He has served on the Committee for 21 years. He is looking forward to participating as a public participant.

Ms. Lewis wanted to thank Mr. Kelly for his commitment and dedication. A lot of credit goes to Mr. Kelly for getting the new high school built.

A resident wanted to thank Mr. Kelly for his push to improve the math program. He made sure to keep everyone on track to make sure math was supported.

A resident asked about school safety and whether there are any safety protocols for space outside the school buildings. Emergency protocol does include the outside for an active shooter if classroom was outside at the time (i.e., recess).

New Business (8:30-8:31)

Liaison Reports

No reports.

Adjourn to Executive Session

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

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Executive Session (8:31-8:50)

The School Committee went into Executive Session to discuss the potential sale/transfer/lease of real estate property, which would have a detrimental effect on the position of the governing body if discussion was in open session. The Committee did not return to public session.

Adjournment