

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

**Present:**

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

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

**Meeting called to order 7:02 pm  
Pledge of Allegiance**

*Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center*

**Superintendent's Report (7:02-7:48)**

Student Recognition: TMS MathCounts

Ms. Parks wanted to recognize some Thurston students who competed in the MathCounts competition. Four students won 1st place in the regional competition: Ellie Durant, Eric Yamaguchi, Baili Jiang, Jason Guo. This is the best TMS has ever done. The team placed 20th in the state competition.

Ms. Parks also recognized David Lamb who is the faculty volunteer for MathCounts; and Mr. Durant for being a parent volunteer for the group.

Other Recognitions:

The High School robotics team was nominated by Senator Rush for a grant and awarded them \$2,000. The grant will be presented April 23.

The WHS Girls Ice Hockey team was awarded the James F. Mulloy Sportsmanship Award for 2018 by the MIAA. The four team captains will be recognized this weekend at TD Garden.

Encounters with the Arts will be held on March 22nd at 7pm. It is a showcase of the arts programs in the district. This is a family friendly event.

The High school musical, "The Drowsy Chaperone," is this weekend.

## TMS Principal Announcement

Ms. Parks announced that Michael Redmon was hired as the TMS Principal. He is currently the principal at St. Johnsbury School in Vermont. He will be in the district next week to attend a leadership team meeting to discuss hiring practices. He hopes to find times to meet parents before the school year starts.

Ms. Parks announced that Matt Kuklantz has been hired as the permanent Assistant Principal at Thurston. He has been serving as the Interim Assistant Principal this year and has done an outstanding job.

## Building Project Community Engagement Updates

The school tours were recorded by Westwood Media Center and can be watched by the public. Ms. Parks was interviewed for "Inside Westwood" by Westwood Media Center which can also be watched by the public.

Ms. Parks spoke to the Martha Jones PTO and High School PTO.

An article was in the *Westwood Press* as well as the first page of the Westwood Community Newsletter that is sent to all Westwood households.

Upcoming events:

3/20 7pm Community Forum Hanlon  
3/21 7pm Deerfield School PTO meeting  
3/22 9am Community Forum Sheehan  
4/3 7pm Sheehan PTA meeting

Mr. Petracca and Ms. Parks were at the FinCom meeting regarding the warrant article to secure the funding needed to move ahead with the MSBA.

### Warrant Article: Borrowing for Feasibility Study

- Approval to the town to borrow an amount not to exceed 1.75M to fund the feasibility study.
  - Contract an OPM Owners Project Manager
  - Design services (architect)
  - Preliminary design proposals (looking at every possible solution)
  - Preferred schematic report whittle down options; determine preferred option
  - Schematic design (e.g. square footage, classroom configuration, site issues, etc)
- Environmental and site study/testing
- Other/contingency funding
  
- Approval of this article does not need an override. If the project goes forward, this money goes into the total amount of the project which is included in the reimbursement formula from MSBA.

Ms. Jowdy asked Mr. Petracca if we could use the master plan that was created a couple of years ago. He replied that, yes, it can be used.

Mr. Donahue asked what FinCom was asking. They wanted to understand what you get for the 1.75M for the feasibility study and Ms. Parks felt they were very clear on listing everything out. He also asked if there was a sense that this was a town priority. There is not a feeling that this would be an issue. The Selectmen have been very supportive of this project and consider it top priority.

A 2/3 vote is needed at town meeting to pass the warrant. It is very important that residents attend the town meeting to vote for this warrant.

Ms. Parks reported that Westwood needs to secure the funding by February 2019 to continue in the MSBA process.

Ms. Lewis wanted to clarify that the study from two years ago will be used along with this feasibility study. All options are on the table. It doesn't mean the "super school" at the Hanlon site will be the final answer. There is no decision without town approval.

Ms. Jowdy replied that the FinCom has questioned the cost of the architecture part of the feasibility study. Mr. Petracca indicated this is the highest cost of the study but looked at other town studies and we are right on line or a little below cost of other towns.

#### Safety and Security Task Force Plan

Ms. Parks reported at the December meeting it was decided to reconvene our safety and security task force. This is in the works. There is going to be another warrant article via Selectmen to secure funding for a comprehensive review of all municipal buildings, which includes the schools. Ms. Parks asked if the implementation cost could also be included. The warrant should include all of the this. Interviews have started with firms that assess safety and security. Their proposals will be received within the next week. Assuming that looks reasonable, then an initial assessment of all the buildings will take place in 90 days. Then it could roll out and be implemented in the fall.

Mr. Mullin asked what is considered safety. It includes going through all buildings, physical plant, where are cameras, looking at doors, then interview people to understand the protocols, best practices, etc.

#### J-Term Update

##### Initial course placement

- 58% of students received their 1st choice
- 89% of the students received one of their top 2 choices
- 97% of student received one of their top 3 choices
- 36 courses offered in total
- An average of 20.8 students per class

### Remaining Needs

- Additional logistical planning is still needed (e.g. attendance, responding to administrative needs)
- Developing a plan to assess the success of J-term
- Teachers in courses with travel will send permission slips home this spring
- Equipment and supplies will begin to be ordered next week
- Instructional aides to be assigned to courses for special education needs this spring.

[www.whsjterm.org](http://www.whsjterm.org)

### Report of Entry Findings

This will be discussed in April because the task force hasn't met as planned due to the weather the last couple of weeks.

### University Station

Ms. Parks wanted to follow-up with questions brought up at the February meeting regarding University Station

#### Phase 1

- 350 rental units now fully built out
- Estimate was for between 49-63 students
- There are 38 students as of today
- Mitigation payment from developer prior to start of project was for the amount of 2.25M. Mr. Kelly asked where this money is. It is currently in an account and can be used when the number of students exceeds the 63.

#### Phase 2

- 100 condos; 1 and 2 bedrooms
- Estimate is for up to 12 students
- There is no opportunity to negotiate additional mitigation as total is still under 63 students

#### Phase 3

- There is a theoretical balance of 200 additional units possible under the original approval for University Station
- Any additional residential units would require either a Planning Board special permit or Town Meeting approval
- The Board of Selectman and the developer recently agreed that no additional housing may be considered until construction has begun on a significant amount of commercial development, so that any additional housing component is offset by 3 times as much commercial floor area as residential area.
- This agreement makes additional new housing proposals unlikely in the foreseeable future.

### Other Developments:

### 331 Washington St

- 12 1-bedroom apartments
- None currently have school-aged children

### Proposed Islington redevelopment project

- Proposal for 18 condo units in mixed used building
- Estimate is for up to 3 students (Hanlon School)

### Westwood Estates

- 10 single family homes
- Planning Board has no legal authority to consider fiscal impact of proposed subdivision
- May contribute between 10-30 students (Downey School)
- There is no opportunity for mitigation from developer.

Westwood hosted educators from Ireland to discuss science, technology, engineering, and mathematics curriculum and education policy. Mr. Donahue was thanked for coordinating this event.

### **Public Participation (7:48-8:00)**

A resident asked about use of recreation space for summer camp. It is currently staffed for 250 students. The camp is currently over subscribed. Registration opened at 10am and by 10:10am she was on a wait list for a week to register for the camp. The Recreation Department is trying to open up a playground program at Deerfield. She would like to advocate for the space the Recreation Department can use in the school buildings for these camps. If not this year, for at least next summer.

A resident stated March has had very stormy weather. Her child was signed up for 12-5:30 spot in the recreation camp because the Enrichment Program would be held in the morning. Now the start date for enrichment has moved back one week. These ½-day recreation campers don't have a place to go in the morning. There is a need to better coordinate between Enrichment, run through the school department, and the Recreation Department camps.

Ms. Parks will be working with Recreation Department regarding the Enrichment Program coordination.

Ms. Parks will look at the space and will be in communication with the Recreation Department to see what can be done.

A resident spoke regarding the building project. There is a need to make sure there are grass-roots advocates to talk up the need to approve the funding for the feasibility study. She was surprised how many of her peers didn't know about this at all.

Ms. Lewis stated that when people hear the presentations, they are asked to talk it up with their friends and neighbors.

Mr. Donahue emphasized the need to make sure people attend Town Meeting and it isn't easy to get a 2/3rd majority vote.

A resident spoke about the upcoming Town Meeting and thinks people will be predisposed to say no. It is very important to get the pitch right. The resident went to the tours of the elementary schools and thought it was great, very educational, and would love to help with the pitch.

### **Discussion Items (8:00-8:36)**

#### Update on District Goal - PD to support students' social/emotional learning (8:00-8:29)

Ms. Borchers reported some highlights from this year with regards to this district goal

The high school has a group called courageous conversations. It is set up to engage students and staff within diversity in school. A Holocaust survivor spoke. This was a very good program for high school and middle school students.

The high school held mental health awareness week.

They also expanded their ally week. Unfortunately, it got snowed out. They hope to host this next year.

Elementary school - Inclusive schools in the disabilities awareness program.

Librarians across all schools are looking at the collections to make sure it is diverse.

#### District Goal #8

Standard IV Professional Culture

Develop and support practices that acknowledge the diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges of students.

Specific action steps

- Provide professional development for teachers focused on concrete states for supporting diverse students including LGBTQ students and students with social and emotional needs.

Focus on creating a safe and supportive environment for students and families.

- Partnership safe schools initiative and welcoming schools program.
- 3 sessions were held for teachers at Thurston Middle School.
- Workshop offerings for all WPS faculty during November in-service day.
- Expanded Ally Week activities at WHS

Peer leadership program at TMS

- Based on ADL World of Difference institute

- This program supported by Thurston PTO
- Up to 30 students selected from 7th and 8th grade applicants
- Students trained to run anti-discrimination classroom activities for their peers.
- Full faculty training in January to support program implementation.

#### Social Emotional Health

- Work with Dr Nadja Reilly
  - Anxiety/depression in young students
  - Infusing play and joy in classroom
  - Parent panel: raising kind and resilient kids
  - Book group (thank you FWE) for funding this.
- WPS presenters and topics
  - Mindfulness
  - Social emotional learning
  - ABA Principles
- Mental health Awareness week at WHS

There is a need to focus on Social Emotional Learning.

WPS faculty are seeking more opportunities for professional learning

- Interest in November SEL workshops
- PD Council survey results
- Area of concern nationwide and in Massachusetts
- MA has joined Collaborating States Initiative

Stand alone lessons (i.e., Open Circle)

- Integrated Lessons - SEL concept and skills reinforced through core academic curriculum (e.g., learning about practicing perseverance while problem solving in mathematics)
- Classroom Practices - routines and norms within classrooms that help students develop SEL competencies

Recommendation

- A comprehensive review of SEL Curriculum and Instruction K-12. Preschool is not included because they already have a strong SEL Curriculum

In the 2015 review it only focused on Grades 6-12.

- Focus on identifying and supporting at risk students.
- Review of specialized programs SOS and services
- Strengthen communication and support at secondary level.

The proposed review would include Grades K-12.

- Focus on learning needs of all students
- Review of curriculum resources and instructional practices
- Improve curriculum and instruction at all levels

Time line:

- April: Outreach to prospective committee members
- May-August: Review of curriculum resources
- September-October: site visits
- November 1: recommendations completed in time for budget cycle

Wanted to report the school is seeing a reduction in the students going out for hospitalization

- 22 students were hospitalized in 2015-2016
- 17 students were hospitalized in 2016-2017
- Only 5 students have been hospitalized this year

These numbers are very encouraging.

Mr. Donahue is very impressed with the programs. He was glad to hear what has worked and what can be done better.

Mr. Mullin asked if this review is just curriculum instruction or including programs as well. The district is looking at all, but focusing on curriculum. Looking at the K-12 range will be a big difference.

#### Life-Threatening Allergy Policy - First Reading (8:29-8:36)

- Ms. Hanscom reported:  
Policy, not guidelines, directs the Westwood Schools to “Establish a school-wide prevention and emergency management plan.”
- Age-appropriate guidelines for students and schools.
- Three-fold focus: minimize risk of exposure, educate community members, plan for individual student needs.

Next steps after approval to create guidelines

- Convene stakeholder meeting to get input from all relevant constituents
- Parents and students
- Food service, building and grounds, transportations
- Teacher, instructional assistants, principals, guidance, and special educate teachers, nursing, physician.

Mr. Donahue asked if other schools drafted this. Ms. Hanscom replied yes. She has those and will work with them while developing our policy.

Mr. Mullin asked whether guidelines will come back to the committee. Ms. Hanscom replied that they will.

#### **Action Items (8:36-8:40)**



## **Approval of Minutes: February 15, 2018**

A motion to approve the February 15, 2018 minutes was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

## **Transfer of Special Education Reserve Funds**

Mr. Petracca reported that a Special Education Reserve Fund was set up to retain access to Medicaid reimbursement. This allows the School Department to maintain its ability to utilize funds. A vote by School Committee is needed and then Selectmen can transfer from this fund to another account set up by the Town known as the Special Education Cost Account. Once the funds are transferred, the district can charge against this account directly as it had with the previous Medicaid Account.

A motion to approve the Westwood Public School Committee to hereby authorize the transfer of \$250,000 from the Special Education Reserve Fund to the Special Education Cost Account was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

## **Grade 7 Field Trip to Providence, RI**

A request for the 7th grade field trip to be held at the Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, RI. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Mullin, seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

## **New Business (8:40-8:45)**

### Liaison Reports

Mr. Mullin asked if the screening report will be placed on the April meeting agenda. It will.  
Ms. Lewis stated that the building presentation to High School PTO was excellent. She hopes it is received well at the other meetings.  
Mr. Donahue suggested getting a fact sheet to give to PTOs that could be given to parents.  
Mr. Kelly asked if the class trips are funded for those if they can't afford it. They are.

On April 5th, from 6-8pm at the high school library, a reception will be held to celebrate Mr. Kelly's 20 years of service on the School Committee.

## **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue

Official Vote: Unanimous approval.

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:43pm**