

**Westwood Public Schools  
Community Forum  
Sheehan Elementary School  
Thursday, April 12, 2018  
7:00pm**

**Present:**

Carol Lewis, Chairperson  
Brian Kelly, Vice Chairperson  
Charles Donahue, Clerk  
Anthony Mullin, Committee Member  
Joseph Jowdy, Committee Member

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

**Meeting was called to order 7:05 pm  
Pledge of Allegiance**

*Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center*

**Superintendent's Report (7:05pm-7:20pm)**

Ms. Parks opened up the meeting. There have been a series of community events that have been held regarding the building project. She will share information and then open up the floor for questions and comments.

Westwood is known for its schools and for being a community that invests in its education. Three of the elementary school buildings are in need of modernization. Deerfield and Hanlon were built in 1950s and Sheehan was built in the 1940s.

What are we doing?

- Need to figure out how to address our school building needs. Doing nothing isn't an option. But we need to decide how to move forward.
- It makes sense to get funding from the State with the MSBA
- Westwood received significant State funding in the past for the high school, Martha Jones, and Downey.

- Westwood has been invited into the eligibility phase for our next project. Now we need to take the next step with the State this spring if we wish to continue in the funding process.

### Hitting the “reset button”

Some work was done a couple of years ago to think about possible solutions to our building needs, but it was realized that we needed to do a better job engaging the community in the decision-making process as well as realizing that we wanted to work with MSBA and had to work within their prescribed process.

### MSBA Process

- Recently, the district took initial steps towards receiving grants from the Mass. School Building Authority (Reimbursement around 31%-34% of the cost of the project)
- The MSBA voted to invite Westwood into its eligibility period (9 Months)
- During the eligibility period, the community is asked to approve borrowing to undertake a feasibility study.
- If funding is secured for the feasibility study, then the community has the opportunity to engage in a long process to identify all possible projects and determine the preferred option (30 months)

### Deerfield School

- It was built in 1953
- This building was originally designed to be a bomb shelter
- Modular addition in 1995 brought total square footage to slightly more than 35,000 sq. ft.

### Paul Hanlon School

- It was built in 1951
- A three room modular addition was put on in 2004
- The building is slightly less than 35,000 sq. ft.
- The buildings sits on approximately 36 acres of land

### William Sheehan School

- This is the oldest and largest of the Town’s elementary schools
- It was built in 1948
- An addition in the 1960s brought the total square footage to 50,000
- The building sits on approximately 4.27 acres of land

### Tours of the three buildings have taken place

- While we continue to care for and maintain critical building systems, like HVAC and plumbing, they are old, inefficient and approaching the end of their useful life.
- Air quality and temperature problems caused by old, faulty HVAC systems have a negative impact on learning.
- The designs of these buildings were not built like the modern schools of today.
- Classroom sizes are not the standards for modern teaching standards. Today the standard classroom (grade 1-6) ranges from 950-1300 sq. ft. Kindergarten classrooms are

1,100-1,300 sq. ft. The majority of Hanlon's classrooms are 895 sq. ft. The Kindergarten classrooms are extremely small.

- At the Sheehan, classrooms in original 1948 portion of the building are 685 sq. ft. In the 1968 addition, they are 900 sq. ft. Kindergarten rooms are approximately 1,100 sq. ft. Approximately 90% of Sheehan's classrooms are undersized by today's standards.
- At the Deerfield, there are four classrooms that are approximately 800 sq. ft. The remaining rooms are 1,056 sq. ft. (within today's standards)

Pictures were displayed showing how space is carved out to make art rooms, library space, special education space in hallways as well as an example of an office space for the psychologist office and how it can only be accessed by entering the speech therapist's office. This is not ideal for these type of services.

The District is in the process of learning how to make fiscally responsible decisions to transform schools into modern places of learning that are ADA compliant, respectful of the needs of all students, and able to accommodate current and anticipated educational methodology.

### Next steps

At Town Meeting, an article to approve borrowing an amount not to exceed \$1.75 Million to fund the feasibility study

The feasibility study is the process for:

- Determining as a community how we might address our school needs
- Deciding the community's preferred solution
- Getting the MSBA to work with us and provide funds for project

### Important info

- Westwood has had successful projects with MSBA before. (High School, Downey, Martha Jones) and the State reimbursement was really important to funding the projects.
- If project ultimately goes forward, funding for feasibility study is eligible for MSBA reimbursement.
- The borrowing for this phase will be paid for as part of Town's debt service - no override, no impact on school budget

Ultimately if a project goes forward, it would be 6-10 years before renovated or newly-constructed schools open.

The process for deciding as a community what that project will be is still more than a year away. Right now the only question is whether or not to go forward with the feasibility process

### Stay informed

- [www.westwoodschoolbuilding.com](http://www.westwoodschoolbuilding.com)
- Twitter: @westwood\_ps
- Local newspapers, Town newsletter, Westwood Media Center

**Public Participation (7:33pm-7:52pm) approximately 20 attended**

Ms. Lewis wanted to thank the community who has come to listen to this presentation.

A resident stated there are a lot of projects that have been happening in town. This is as important as the other projects. Do you think the residents will be overwhelmed about adding another project in Westwood? There is a building project committee that is for the town and the school department is a part of this. That committee has put the school project at the top of the list.

With the MSBA process and receiving 1/3 funding, this is an opportunity that Westwood needs to move forward with. Doing nothing is not an option. One thing to consider is that property values are driven by our schools and need to think about that as why to move forward with this project.

It is hard to get a 2/3 majority vote at town meeting. It is very important to ask friends to attend this town meeting on Wednesday, May 30th to support this warrant article.

When comparing to other communities we compare ourselves to, many have already built new elementary buildings. Westwood needs to move in this direction too.

This presentation has been presented in about 10 different forums. It has been great and has been good to hear a lot of positive feedback. It is still so important that people attend the town meeting to support this warrant article.

Resident asked about keeping the community involved in this process. After the vote for the feasibility study, community thinks there will be no more involvement with the community with this project. Would like to understand the next steps so that could be explained. The feasibility study process is 30 months. There will be a building committee during this process which will include certain town officials as well as community members. But also during this process there will still be a lot of community forums to see what options are being developed so the community will be involved to make this a transparent and open process.

Mr. Mullin asked if \$1.75M for the feasibility study cover the cost to look at environmental and site testing? Yes.

Town meeting is May 30th at 7pm for check in. The meeting starts at 7:30pm at Westwood High School Gym.

Ms. Parks wanted to clarify what she has heard in the community. The comment is that there wouldn't be any community engagement because we have to use MSBA plans. That is not correct. We select who we work with and what plans we want to work with. There might be an incentive program to use a certain plan, but that is not a requirement.

### Adjournment

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

**Adjournment 7:52pm**