

## Westwood School Committee Meeting

July 24, 2018

Present:

Charles Donahue, Chair  
Josepha Jowdy  
Carol Lewis  
Maya Plotkin  
Tony Mullin  
Emily Parks, Superintendent  
Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent

*Call to order: 7:33 PM*

### I. Committee Appointments

#### A. School Building Committee

Mr. Donahue indicated need to appoint membership this evening to the SBC. Ms. Parks updated the committee about representation from the Board of Selectmen. The chair (currently Michael Walsh) will serve on the SBC during his time as chair. Once the role of chair changes, the new chair will serve on the SBC.

Mr. Donahue proposed that anyone from WSC who wants to serve on the SBC should be able to serve. He nominated Ms. Plotkin to serve as chair of the SBC.

Members discussed the role of the school building committee versus school committee in terms of oversight and decision making. All committee members confirmed that they would like to serve on the SBC.

Ms. Parks reviewed a list of other possible committee members that would meet the requirements of the MSBC for SBC composition. Ms. Jowdy proposed contacting Peter Paravalos to join the SBC as a community member with "architecture, engineering and/or construction experience." Mr. Donahue will reach out to Mr. Paravalos.

The committee agreed to invite community members to the SBC who live in each of the five different elementary districts so that there is representation from throughout Westwood.

The committee discussed scope and organization of the SBC work.

8:01 - Motion to approve committee as discussed<sup>1</sup> (Mr. Donahue).  
Second (Ms. Plotkin)  
Approved (5-0)

#### B. Other SC Liaison Appointments

---

<sup>1</sup> See attached list: "WPS School Building Committee (SBC) Members July 2018"

Mr. Donahue passed out proposed liaison positions. Committee reviewed/discussed roles and assignments. Mr. Donahue passed out draft goals and objectives from Open Space & Recreation committee. Mr. Mullin suggests that it might be a good idea to have a liaison to the planning board.

8:28 - Motion to approve liaison roles as listed<sup>2</sup> (Ms. Jowdy).  
Second (Ms. Plotkin)  
Approved (5-0)

## **II. New Business**

Mr. Donahue passed out reproductions of Westwood scenes by a local artist donated to Board of Selectmen. The committee agreed to display the paintings in the schools.

Mr. Donahue passed out a summary of specific school building issues identified by SMMA during 2015-2016 capital needs study and a list of competitive districts that have built new schools recently.

## **III. Update on District Improvement Strategy Development**

Ms. Parks shared a draft strategy for district improvement. She described the process for generating a revised vision, mission and core values statement as well as strategic objectives and priorities and explained that the objectives would be 3-5 year goals whereas the priorities would change from year to year. WSC members asked specific questions about supporting peer-to-peer SEL, homework in elementary grades, whether physical health was included in the scope of objective 2, if WPS is looking at hiring practices in order to diversify faculty and staff, and if the coding pilot would expand. Mr. Donahue asked about whether the district had surveyed recent graduates. Mrs Parks indicated that personal email addresses were collected from this year's graduating class, which will allow for future surveys. Mr. Donahue asked about whether journalism students might write stories about school news in order to keep the wider community informed. Ms. Parks indicated that the district had looking into a model used in Walpole for publishing student news articles that would support this goal while maintaining the broader curricular goals of the journalism class. Mr. Mullin suggested making an explicit connection between priority 4.3 (security audit and implementation of recommendations) and objective 2 ("Healthy and Supported School Community").

## **IV. Other business**

Ms. Parks shared the most recent projections<sup>3</sup> of elementary class sizes for the 2018-2019 school year. Families have moved in and out of the University Station buffer zone. Given the current numbers, the district is waiting before placing families. Though when the buffer zone was established, the discussion centered around placing students at Deerfield, Ms. Jowdy suggested that Hanlon might be considered an option as well. The SC examined the current elementary enrollment chart and agreed that Hanlon may be the better option for placement this year. Ms. Parks indicated that class lists will be sent out August 17, so that the district can continue to monitor numbers and have as much information as possible before making final decisions.

---

<sup>2</sup> See attached list: "2018-2019 Liaison Positions"

<sup>3</sup> See "2018-2019 Enrollment" (July 24, 2018)

Ms. Parks shared that at the July 24 meeting of the task force, members shared information gathered about various security firms and processes. The group confirmed the process for putting out an RFP. Goals are to hire a firm by mid-September and have the audit completed and recommendations shared by the end of the calendar year.

Ms. Parks shared that the town is currently planning to use school polling sites (Downey, Hanlon, Sheehan) during the statewide primary, which takes place on the first day of school (September 4). Committee members voiced concerns about safety. Mr. Mullin proposed that the committee share concerns with the Town Clerk, Ms. Powers. Ms. Parks will contact Ms. Powers to relay concerns.

Ms. Parks informed the SC that she had contacted the Superintendents in Ashland and Dover, as requested, in follow-up to a residents' comments during public participation in June  
Ms. Parks findings were as follows:

According to the superintendent, Ashland has never had a cell phone tower on a school. A resident raised the issue during a safety campaign. In response to the resident's efforts, the Ashland Schools share a "best practices" related to cell phones and other wireless devices safety flyer with families.

The Dover-Sherborn School Committee considered a possible cell tower lease agreement. After studying the issue, the school committee concluded that the town bylaws would not allow for this use of school property.

Committee members discussed the timeline for making a decision about nonrenewal of the lease. Ms. Parks asked the committee to consider whether they would like to nonrenew or to gather information from an outside source before making a decision.

Ms. Plotkin asked that the school calendar for 2019-2020 be on the first agenda of the year. She also indicated that she had been asked questions by a resident about the number and frequency of early release days.

Ms. Jowdy asked if during this past hiring season, the district had made any progress in terms of hiring more diverse candidates. Ms. Parks shared that the district has recently joined a consortium of nearby district that works together on recruiting and hiring diverse faculty.

9:40 PM      *Motion to Adjourn (Ms. Jowdy)*  
                  *Second (Mr. Donahue)*  
                  *Meeting adjourned (5-0)*

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Borchers  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Westwood Public Schools