

**Westwood School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
September 13, 2018**

**Present:**

Charlie Donahue, Chairperson  
Tony Mullin, Vice Chairperson  
Josepha Jowdy, Clerk  
Carol Lewis, Committee Member  
Maya Plotkin, Committee Member  
Chris Bezdedeau, 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 (7:00-7:50)**

Introduction of New Administrators

Ms. Parks introduced new administrators. Michael Redmon is the new middle school principal. Matt Kuklentz is the assistant principal for the middle school. Aishleen Flanagan is the acting Dean of Students at the high school.

Review of Summer Programs

Operations and Capital Projects

Mr. Petracca reported it was a very short, but productive summer. He recognized Ken Aries and Greg Baldwin for all the work they do to coordinate all of these projects. Some of the projects were: Replaced a boiler at the Hanlon School; Installed handicap push-button access in doors at the high school; Installed AC units in 5 classrooms at the middle school, one AC unit in a new Downey classroom, STAR program at the Sheehan, and Deerfield Cafeteria; Repointing of masonry wall at middle school; HVAC upgrade at the high school; Repair a large gym door at Hanlon. Carpeting projects throughout the district; Upgrading the lighting control at the high school; Reorganized the Sheehan main office in which a wall needed to be removed; replacement of the elevator at the middle school, which was approved for this summer, is on delay as the manufacturer wasn't able to get the parts needed for this project in time for it to be completed before school

started. This is postponed until next year with the same price. New bathroom at the high school that is accessible for all students, updated the special education classroom as well as kitchen used in this program; New classroom at the Downey, placed a wall to create this room. It is used for music classes, which used to be on the stage which didn't allow these classes to take place when there was lunch, ELL classes are held in this room and when available, teachers can sign up to use it for science labs, etc.

### Technology Projects

Mr. Ouellette presented. There was a wireless upgrade at the Thurston; District Internet capacity upgrade, more than doubled capacity and the price went down; Expansion of 1-1 Chromebook program to grades 3 and 4; Parent orientation on August 23 during the Thurston open house; Second offering of new teacher technology orientation; Privacy contracts rolling in (approx. 100 as of 9/7/18 through TEC). Westwood uses 20 of these now but Westwood can take advantage of the other contracts when/if need to. With the new upgrade and security, the district offered high school students to use their own devices instead of the school Chromebook. About 50-60 students are doing this.

### Curriculum and Professional Development Projects

Mrs. Borchers presented. Summer curriculum development had 70 participants, 22 projects and 835 hours; Big focus on Science, as well as Social/Emotional Learning; Gearing up for literacy/ELA review; Participation split evenly by level: 31% Elementary, 27% Middle, 30% High, 12% K-12.

Continuing education for WPS Faculty. District sponsored PD: 15 courses this year/8 scheduled in summer. Targeted PD for TMS and Sheehan: Project Read/Write and STAR program. Immersive programs and study abroad. Induction program and coaching for new teachers.

### Special Education - Extended School Year

Ms. Hanscom presented. ESY is offered for students at significant risk of regression or for whom the severity of their disability indicates that a ten-week summer vacation is not appropriate. 62 students from all levels (Pre-K, K-5, 6-8, 9-12) 19 programs ran ranging from 4-9 weeks. 15 teachers plus many support staff, specialists, and nurses.

### District Enrollment

Ms. Parks reported. Projected enrollment in June  
projected 1288 students at the elementary level there are 1286 students,  
projected 755 students at the middle school there are 745 students,  
projected 1028 students at the high school there are 1012 students.

More stable summer enrollment. In 2017, net increase of 14 elementary students enrolled in August and 3 elementary students enrolling the first week of September. In 2018 net increase of 1 elementary student in August with 4 elementary students enrolling the first week of September. The buffer zone that was put into place last spring for

the University Station students was a great tool in managing class sizes. Middle school enrollment dropped and teacher/staff remained the same so class sizes are smaller. High school enrollment increased, at a 10 year high, and did hire math/science teachers and can see a difference in class sizes. For next year, need to look at English/Social studies teachers to be hired to help with the larger class sizes.

#### Update on Security Audit

Ms. Parks reported proposals from 8 companies were received. Currently being reviewed and references checked. Next week will meet again with the municipality and, as the RFP requested, the school audits will occur within 90 days. Want the audits and recommendations completed prior to the budget process. The funding that was voted on at the town meeting is to pay for these audits and recommendations so projects could start right, away but others may need to be included in the budget process.

#### Other items

Monday 9/24 the district administration team will be at Downey at 9am to discuss any topic. Please come and ask any questions.

Westwood High school was 1 of 10 MA schools named a National Banner School by the Special Olympics. National Banner Schools demonstrate commitment to inclusion by meeting 10 standards of excellence.

Reception was held to thank the local community businesses and organizations who offer jobs for special needs students.

Correspondence from the Rabbis in Westwood was received today and provided to the committee at the start of the meeting. This should be looked at before the school calendar for next year is voted on.

Cell Tower lease renewal. At the July meeting the consensus from the school committee was not to renew the lease in 2020. Ms. Parks suggested to officially vote on this or at least give Mr. Petracca some guidance on how to move forward with this.

#### **Public Participation (7:50-8:05)**

Resident moved to Westwood because of the school district and the temple. His orthodontist practice is in Westwood. He is concerned about the school calendar only have Yom Kippur off but not Rosh Hashanah. He feels that these two high holidays should be acknowledged. It forces families to choose between culture or education. This is for students and teachers.

Resident questioned if there were changes with the busing for the elementary school. It seems that the Hanlon bus route is a lot longer than in the past. Their child was home by 3:30pm last year. This year they are home by 3:45pm. There has been no changes to the routes, but will check on that route to see if there have been other issues to cause this delay.

Resident in the Sheehan district now picks up her children from school a few days a week because her daughter wasn't getting home until 3:40pm.

Resident was excited to hear that the cell tower lease is not be renewed. Might warrant a sub committee to look what can be done for the next two years about the cell tower. Can it be moved, can the lease be broken earlier than two years?

Resident had a question about the number of students in a classroom. Downey 3rd grade currently is over guideline and has an instructional aid. Her child was in 4th grade in the past at Sheehan with the large class size and didn't receive an aid. Ms. Parks explained that the school committee reviewed and updated the class size guidelines last year. The resident feels her child's 4th grade classroom at Sheehan this year is large at 23 with students from the STAR program being added. Ms. Parks stated these class sizes are not over guidelines and is very comfortable with those classroom sizes and with that being said these classrooms receive additional support from Math and Literacy specialists.

Resident had question about when language courses gets started in Westwood and why it starts in middle school and not earlier. Ms. Parks explained that this has been looked at in curriculum review and most of the districts which offer foreign language in the elementary level only have it once a week and have found that since it isn't consistent every day, that these students are no further along with their language skills than a student starting the language in 7th grade and having it every day.

### **Discussion Items (8:05-8:48)**

#### District Improvement Strategy - 2018-2019 (8:05-8:27)

Why have a strategy for improvement? Because we work with children and parents entrust the district with their children. We have a vision as to what each child should have in education.

Focus and coherence

Visionary and problem-solving

Touchstone for making decisions and allocating resources

This work is all connected to:

Entry findings

Ongoing district goals

Assessments of student needs

The strategy is connected to:

The vision, mission and core values.

The instructional core: The What is curriculum, the How is Instruction, and the Who is the Students.

The Mission Statement for Westwood: To prepare students for college, career, and civic life by providing rich and challenging curriculum, high-quality instruction, and authentic educational experiences. Most school districts will have this same type of Mission Statement.

What makes Westwood different is our Vision and Core Value.

Core Values: Academic excellence and a commitment to improvement; Curiosity and tenacity; Respectful relationships in a caring, collaborative community.

Vision: Graduates of the Westwood Public Schools are skilled, confident, curious and kind: excited for their futures and ready to contribute to their communities.

4 Objectives:

Meaningful Learning Experience  
Coherent Connected Curriculum,  
Healthy and Supported School Community  
Facilities for the Future

The principals all worked on these District strategies and will be in line with their school site council plans.

Mr. Mullin didn't see four items in the strategy. Is the allergy policy being worked on? Yes. Travel abroad program? Is being worked on too. Town voting facilities? Working with town clerk. Achievement gap wasn't listed? Ms. Parks didn't want to forget that and will think about how to put that in the strategy.

A motion to approve the District Improvement Strategy was made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### MSBA Project Update and Next Steps (8:27-8:46)

At the end of this school year we will have formed the project team. Feasibility study will start then and the voting for the detailed design wouldn't be until fall 2020.

Our eligibility period is 6/1/18-2/28/19. Since we already have the funding, we could request MSBA to move our time at the December 2018 meeting. That could help us to start the feasibility study sooner.

Forming project team and feasibility Study (March 2018-Spring 2020)

First task:

Hire owner's project manager - school building committee task  
Select the designer - MSBA led process in collaboration with the district

These two tasks will take about 4-6 months to complete.

Other decisions/tasks for this year.

Begin the feasibility study sooner?

Consider timeline for community input. (This spring?) An educational plan needs to be approved by the School Committee that is then given to the school building committee to work with and come up with our school needs. We need community input to work on this. The School Committee would like to move forward with the feasibility study beginning sooner.

#### 2018-2019 School Calendar (8:46-8:48)

Suggested to postpone vote on this tonight based upon input received tonight about the Jewish holidays. All agreed. Just a reminder about the guideline for determining the first day of school. If Labor Day falls on September 5th, 6th, or 7th school would start the Wednesday before Labor Day.

Request was made to place the cell tower renewal on the agenda for next month so that it can be voted on at next meeting.

#### **Action Items (8:48–8:49)**

##### Approval of Minutes: June 14, 2018

A request to make a change to the minutes. Under the Superintendent's Evaluation change from "Ms. Lewis will present" to "Ms. Lewis did present".

A motion to approve the June 14, 2018 minutes was made by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

##### Approval of Minutes: July 24, 2018

A motion to approve the July 24, 2018 minutes was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

##### Approval of Superintendent as district representative to TEC Board of Directors

A motion was made to approve the Superintendent as the district representative was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of accepting funds:

The Downey PTO would like to purchase new playground equipment for the Downey School and the donation is \$22,525.

A motion was made to accept the gift of \$22,525 from the Downey PTO to purchase new playground equipment for the Downey school was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

**New Business/Liaison Reports (8:49-8:50)**

**Adjournment**

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

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:50pm**