

**Westwood School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
October 9, 2018**

**Present:**

Charlie Donahue, Chairperson  
Tony Mullin, Vice Chairperson  
Joseph 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 - not in attendance

**Meeting called to order 7:00 pm  
Pledge of Allegiance**

*Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center*

**Superintendent's Report (7:00-7:28)**

Thirteen students and two teachers are visiting from Spain for ten days. The students are being hosted by student families from the high school. The students participate in two school days while they are here and the rest of the time they are touring sites in the area.

Oct. 1st Enrollment

Not much has changed since September. The enrollment is down one student from enrollment from last month.

MSBA Project Update

Confirmed MSBA meeting will be held on 10/29. Attending the meeting from the school department will be Ms. Parks, Mr. Petracca, Mr. Donahue, Ms. Plotkin and from the town will be Mr. Walsh and Mr. Jaillet. This is the meeting to discuss enrollment projections. By the end of November, Westwood and the MSBA need to agree on that projection number. Our current projections are a little bit higher than the projections that were done a few years ago.

RFP process is getting started. Westwood has a sample from another district to work with.

Ms. Parks has a draft letter to send out to the residents to keep them up to date with where the process is at this point. She will send the draft to School Committee members to take a look at and receive their input. The letter will be sent out on list serve and placed in the local papers. There is a dedicated page on the school web site. It is being updated and want to remind the public that it is there.

### Q1 Financial Report

Mr. Petracca reported that the expenditures are on track for the first quarter. One item he wanted to bring to their attention was the lower percentage of Salary Expenditures which is lower than this time last year. The reason is that in FY '18, the first teachers' paycheck of the 2017-2018 school year was issued in August prior to the teachers' first day of work. In keeping with that pay cycle, the first paycheck for the 2018-2019 would have been even earlier in August. To alleviate this situation, the District worked with the WTA and agreed (on a one-time basis) to adjust forward the date of the first paycheck for 2018-2019 into September, thereby alleviating the problem for the next several years. Moving forward, he recommended they may want to propose new contract language during negotiations to permanently solve this issue.

Ms. Jowdy had a question why the expended amount is high for Contracted Services and Other Expenses? There are a lot of expenses in the summer time to get ready for the new school year.

Ms. Plotkin had a question why the expended amount for Contracted Services was so much higher at Hanlon than compared to the other schools? Mr. Petracca didn't know of any particular reason. Ms. Parks explained it is typically special education services. Ms Hanscom, who is not at the meeting tonight, could probably answer that at a later time.

### FY'20 Budget Development

Ms. Parks included the FY'20 tentative budget calendar which is very similar to the budget calendar from last year. This lists the dates involved to get the FY'20 budget developed. At next month's, meeting there will be the initial School Committee discussion about budget priorities. The budget steering committee is beginning to meet and they meet monthly throughout the budget season. Ms. Parks met with the FinCom Education subcommittee; Tony Mullin is the School Committee liaison. There is a new chair for this subcommittee. Some very preliminary numbers were discussed. This is the last year for the teachers' contract. Negotiating will begin in January. Enrollment numbers need to be addressed in the high school for English and social studies. This is year two of backing out of the fee for full day kindergarten. Need to look at J-Term costs and how to maintain this program for the next year. Not expecting a lot of capital expenses for the coming year. Need to look at curriculum leadership models at the middle school. Similar model for English and social studies currently in the math and science departments. A FTE teacher receives a stipend to take on the curriculum leadership role.

Ms. Borchers spoke about the science vertical leadership team. Ms. Borchers had the high school, middle school, and elementary school science coordinators come together and visit many school classrooms at all levels during a day to see how the science curriculum is used throughout the entire school district.

Ms. Parks reported that the central office coffee was successful and was well attended. Had good conversation and plans to host more of these. There were a lot of parents who attended, some who had just moved to Westwood.

Ms. Borchers, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Donahue, and Ms. Parks met with the Celtics that has a corporate partnership with GE and the science mobile. We can't get in on their program, but got some ideas from them and will visit the science mobile in January. The cost is \$150-200K for the equipment, but a lot of the expense is from the branding with the Celtics and GE.

The school calendar is on the agenda as an action item. Ms. Parks and Ms. Lewis met with the Rabbis from Temple Beth David last week. Received a lot of letters from concerned residents. Ms. Parks looked at the TEC schools with their schedules and 10 out of the 13 have Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah as holidays. Westwood is not in step with the majority of the other TEC schools.

### 2018-2019 School Calendar

Ms. Jowdy made a motion to include both Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah as holidays for the 2019-2020 school calendar. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **Public Participation (7:28-7:30)**

Resident wanted to thank the committee on considering and voting to add Rosh Hashanah as a holiday for the school calendar.

Resident who has lived in Westwood for 40 years thinks having the two holidays, Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah is wonderful. Not only for the Jewish families but for all of the residents who can learn and understand other religious beliefs.

### **Discussion Items (7:30-8:07)**

#### 2018 MCAS Report

Ms. Borchers presented. There were different types of tests.

- Legacy MCAS - all high school tests paper-based.
- Next Generation MCAS - grades 3-8 Math and ELA, computer-based, aligned to new standards, different tasks, expectations, scoring.
- Hybrid - one year only STE grade 5 and 8 based on "overlapping" standards.

Critical, next generation information

- New test, established higher expectations
- Cannot be compared to "legacy" MCAS
- 2017 results serve as baseline
- Fewer students statewide in top performance categories
- 2018 - first year to measure against baseline for accountability

## MCAS 2018 New Accountability System

Overall goal of accountability system

Year 1 of new system

Westwood - top category "meeting targets" among 17% of districts - 68 districts out of 394 districts, 24 of these districts are k-12 districts

New factors added into calculation:

- Lowest performing quartile subgroup
- Chronic absenteeism
- Advanced coursework
- Progress toward learning English (ELLs)

District level accountability

- Old system: district rated by lowest performing school
- New system uses aggregate
- Westwood percentage was 75%-"Meeting Target." The "Meeting Target" range is 75%-100%.
- Improved participation rates from last year, 2017

School level accountability

- All elementary schools "meeting targets"
- TMS and WHS "partially meeting targets"  
Westwood received two recognitions (there were 52 statewide)
- Martha Jones- exceeding targets
- Downey- high achievement, exceeding targets, high growth

Spring 2019 New High School Tests

- Last year, WHS students participated in new question pilot
- Spring 2019: Sophomores take new Next Generation ELA and Math tests
- Possible "Recalibration" of performance standards
- Possible impact on competency determination for graduation

Spring 2019: Fully Revised STE Tests grade 5 & 8

- "Phase in" process for Science, Technology and Engineering test in grade 5 & 8
- 2017 - Old standards (adopted 2001, revised in 2006)
- 2018 - Overlapping standards
- 2019 - New standards (adopted in 2016)
- High School - still under review by DESE

2018 Comparative Data

Why look at comp data? Want to make sure all students are over the proficiency bar. It also allows us to compare Westwood to other comparable districts to make sure we are in sync with them.

Updated FinCom comparable districts are Canton, Concord, Holliston, Medfield, Needham, Sharon, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston. These are based on comparable financial information.

DART comparable districts from DESE are Duxbury, Easton, Grafton, Groton-Dunstable, Longmeadow, Lynnfield, Masconomet, Nashoba, North Reading, and Reading. These are based on comparable student information like enrollment, the way your schools are organized, etc.

Grade 5 ELA Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

Westwood 86%

Grade 8 ELA Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

Westwood 65% There is a dip and 20% points from the first ranked district. The middle school is already aware of this percentage and is looking into it.

Grade 10 ELA Proficient or Advanced

Westwood 98%

Ms. Jowdy asked why is there always a dip in middle school? There is no real reason. Looking at the schedule, there are very short class blocks. There is a very strong curriculum alignment at the elementary level and not as much at the middle school. The English curriculum review is occurring this year and that is one item that will be looked at to ensure the middle school ELA curriculum is in alignment.

Grade 5 Math Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

Westwood 76%

Grade 8 Math Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

Westwood 71%. Still a dip, but only 13% points from the first ranked district.

Grade 10 Math Proficient or Advanced

Westwood 96%

Grade 5 STE Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

Westwood 80%

Grade 8 STE Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

Westwood 59% Still a dip, but not as much and comparable to where we were last year.

Grade 10 STE Proficient or Advanced

Westwood 94%

Statewide trends

ELA scores dropped in middle school Grade 7 & 8

Achievement gaps

ELA gaps increased from 2017 to 2018 for critical subgroups (African American/black students, Hispanic students, English language learners and students with disabilities)

Gaps also widened slightly in math for most groups (exception: African American/black students)

Since 2007, gaps have closed for most groups (exception English language learners)

Girls out-percentage boys in achieving proficient or higher scores on all high school tests.

Next steps: Analysis and Response

School and grade level teams (Individual student needs, intervention)

Department - led (alignment, instruction)

District - wide (major trend, gaps)

What can we learn from other districts?

What can we learn from successes here in Westwood (e.g. Downey, WHS)

Gap size from non-disabled students vs students with disabilities.

8th grade STE Meeting or Exceeding Expectations

Westwood 68% non-disabled students to 18% students with disabilities. Looking at other districts and work with the other districts that have a lesser gap to learn what they have done to accomplish this.

Mr. Mullin would like to hear, after the budget process, at a School Committee meeting, what is being done at the Middle School and being planned for the long term on addressing the dips in the test scores.

Mr. Donahue is happy to see that the percentage difference between non-disabled students and disabled students has decreased in STE.

### **Action Items (8:07–8:30)**

Approval of Minutes: September 13, 2018

Ms. Parks wanted to make a change on the 4th page. The 4th grade class size is large was the parent's perspective, not Ms. Parks' perspective.

A motion to approve the September 13, 2018 minutes with the correction was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### Cell Tower Lease - recommendation to not renew

Mr. Mullin asked if the legal paperwork had been reviewed. The lease was reviewed by Town Counsel and his advice is there are no grounds to break the lease and would advise not to break the lease.

Ms. Plotkin made a motion that the School Committee does not plan to renew the cell tower lease. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### Approval of TMS Field Trip to Trinity Repertory Company - out-of-state

Ms. Jowdy made a motion to approve the TMS Field Trip for the 7th grade students. Seconded by Ms. Lewis

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### Approval of TMS Field Trip to Washington, DC - out-of-state

Mr. Mullin commented that there was not feedback from parents last year about this trip. There needs to be feedback from parents each year after a trip as big as this one.

Ms. Lewis made a motion to approve the TMS Field Trip for the 8th grade students to Washington DC. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### Approval of WHS Model UN Trips- out-of-state

Ms. Lewis made a motion to approve the WHS Model UN Trips. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### Approval of Superintendent's Goals

The goals are part of the Superintendent's evaluation process. There is a Professional Practice Goal, Student Learning Goal, and two District Improvement Goals.

Ms. Plotkin had a question about the second District Improvement goal about diversity. Why was only race included? Ms. Parks explained that the district goal is not just race, but includes supporting LBGQT students, students with disabilities, etc. Her personal goal was focusing on race due to programs she is currently involved in. Ms. Plotkin asked what was being done at the middle school. It seems to her that there is a drop in programming in this age group. There was professional development last year for LBGQT. There was a student-led initiative with an acceptance day. Ms. Plotkin stated the kids are talking about it and we need to make sure they have good information, not just for LBGQT but all forms of diversity.

Mr. Mullin wondered what Ms. Parks felt would be the hardest goal on her list. He wasn't expecting an answer tonight, asking her to give it some thought. She will give that some thought.

Ms. Lewis made a motion to approve the Superintendents Goals. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### **New Business/Liaison Reports (8:25-8:26)**

Ms. Jowdy stated there was the Long Range Planning Meeting and she will give more information about that at next month's meeting.

#### **Adjournment**

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

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:26pm**