

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2019**

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

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

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center

Superintendent's Report (7:00-7:19)

MSBA Project Update

Ms. Parks reported. The district has completed the requirements for the eligibility period. Westwood will be on the agenda at the February 13, 2019 MSBA board meeting. Mr. Petracca and Ms. Parks will attend this meeting and are hoping someone from the School cCommittee could also attend. Ms. Parks asked if Ms. Plotkin could attend this meeting since she is the chair for the school building committee. The district is on track to be voted into the feasibility study.

Mr. Donahue asked what is next. Once Westwood is voted into the feasibility study, the school building committee begins to meet. There are two tasks that need to take place: hire the Owners Project Manager, which is completed by the School Building Committee; and go through the designer selection process which is an architect. That process is led by the MSBA and we are a part of that. These two tasks take 4-6 months to complete. At that point, we can begin to look at different options. This is the time to engage with the community. The School Committee is charged with creating the Educational Plan. That is the criteria the school building committee would use to decide on the preferred design. The plan is to get dates out before the summer break to the community so it can be started right away in September 2019 with the community engagement process.

Security Audit Update

Ms. Parks reported. Consultants are wrapping up visit to schools this week. They will be meeting with the police and fire chiefs as well, as it pertains to school safety. Ms. Parks will be meeting with them in early February to get a status of their report.

Mr. Mullin mentioned that at the last FinCom meeting it was asked why there isn't a final report. It had been indicated that the report would be complete by the end of December, not February. It should be communicated to the community that there is a delay. There was a delay in getting the process started. Ms. Parks has indicated there might be a funding article presented at the Spring Town Meeting in order to implement the update suggestions instead of waiting until the next school budget to get the funding. The District is working with Ms Dukeman and Mr Jaillet to see if this might happen.

Q2 Financial Report

Mr. Petracca stated that the Q2 finances are right on track. There were no questions from the Committee.

Town Comprehensive Plan

Ms. Parks reported. Two members of that committee did reach out to her about the facilities. They would like to come to the February School Committee Meeting. They want to see if School Committee Members would like to share any information with them.

Ethics disclosure

Mr. Donahue reported. Ms. Parks had brought to the school committee members' attention that the district will be negotiating with the teachers and that two teachers are family members to her and didn't want that to be a conflict of interest. The School Committee has already voted to accept this.

Other Items

Ms. Parks received some sad news that Leo Crowe passed away. He was a long time administrator in the Westwood Public Schools and was the Assistant Superintendent for many years. She wanted to acknowledge the impact he had on the school district and to extend her condolences to his family.

The Thurston Middle School has started their own Model UN Team. Mr. Akers, a newly hired social studies teacher, started this group. Three students received outstanding delegate awards for their opening statements and negotiating skills.

The School Department has collaborated with the DPW to apply for a federal grant program with safe routes to school for Martha Jones School. If awarded, this would allow the town to make improvements on sidewalks, crosswalks, and lights around the Martha Jones School. It could be as much as one million dollars. Not sure when the grant notification will be completed. The town is hopeful for the grant.

Tom McCusker has retired as the Westwood Town Counsel and there will be a reception for him on Thursday January 17, 2019.

Public Participation (7:19-7:19)

None

Discussion Items (7:19-8:41)

Presentation of Superintendent's Recommended FY'20 Operating Budget and Capital Budgets

Ms. Parks presented.

The FY'20 budget was developed by the district leadership team with input from cost center leaders and guidance from the School Committee.

- Meeting contractual salary obligations and fixed costs
- Addressing shifts in enrollment and maintaining reasonable class sizes
- Continuing to make progress on objectives in the Strategy for District Improvement

Worked with the Town through the budget steering process.

The proposed budget amply provides for the district's needs, while leaving some "wishes" unfunded.

Proposed 3.47% increase over FY'19 - \$1,559,896 increase with the proposed budget of \$46,463,031

- No cuts to programs or services.
- Funding for contractual salary increases (WTA contract expires this spring)
- Reallocation of several positions among levels in the district to reflect shifting enrollment
- Year two of a plan to eliminate the full-day kindergarten fee

History of budget increases

FY'16 5.39%, FY'17 5.97% FY'18 3.3% FY'19 3.4% FY'20 3.47%

There has been no override since FY'08.

Salaries are the largest budget driver, accounting for 86.7% of the total budget.

Shifting District Enrollment

Enrollment has been pretty stable over the last 10 years; where the students are in the district has been changing.

Ten years ago, the largest classes were in the elementary. Now the largest classes are in the high school.

Reallocation of Faculty FTE

- Reduce 3 FTE Elementary
- 2 FTE at TMS
- Add .6 High School Guidance Counselor
- Increase .4 ELA/Social Studies Coordinator
- Add 1.0 PreK-8 SEL Coordinator/Coach
- Add .5 Elementary Social Studies Coordinator
- This has a net .05 FTE decrease from last year.

Staffing requests

Elementary level

- Decrease 3.0 FTE Teachers
- Examined current class sizes with respect to class size guidelines (see no need to adjust in FY '20)
- Examined incoming kindergarten numbers to determine number of sections needed.
- Using the census data for FY'20 eligible kindergarteners. There is room for growth in the proposed sections at each elementary school.
- Outgoing sections vs incoming sections. Down a classroom at Deerfield, Martha Jones and Sheehan.

Middle school Enrollment

- Enrollment is starting to decline. Drop from 747 this year to 713 next.
- Over the last several years, as the enrollment has increased at Thurston, numerous positions were added in both core academics and the arts.
- Enrollment began to decrease this year and will decrease again next year.
- In FY '20, are able to make incremental staffing reductions in multiple departments.
 - Reduce 1.0 FTE MS ELA Teacher
 - Eliminates 4 sections
 - Reduce .2 FTE MS Science Teacher
 - Eliminates 1 class section, but maintains co-taught science model between general education and special education.
 - Reduce .4FTE MS Math Teacher
 - Eliminates 2 sections, while maintaining ability to run both supported and accelerated classes
 - Reduce .4 FTE MS PE Teacher
 - Eliminates 2 class sections while keeping enough flexibility to effectively schedule PE and arts rotation

High School Enrollment

It is now at a highest enrollment over the next couple of years.

- Add 1.0 FTE high school ELA
 - Adds 4 class sections
- Add 1 FTE social studies
 - Adds 5 class sections to lower class size
- Add .06 FTE high school guidance counselor
 - Reduces counselor case load to 200:1

Staffing requests due to program needs and strategic priorities

- Add .5 FTE elementary social studies coordinator
 - Strategic objective “Coherent Connected Curriculum”
 - Currently have Elementary curriculum leadership in Math, ELA and Science
 - New state curriculum frameworks in social studies, new state requirement for project-based civics assessment in lieu of traditional MCAS
- Increase .4FTE Middle School ELA/Social Studies Coordinator
 - Will be combined with an existing allocation to create a .8 FTE ELA/Social studies Coordinator
 - Leadership for ELA curriculum review and meeting new social studies expectations.
 - In combination with Elementary positions, will provide a vertical line for the social studies program.
- Add 1.0 FTE Social emotional learning Coordinator/Coach Pre-K-Grade 8
 - SEL Review indicates need for significant teacher training and support, as well as parent and community outreach
 - Will steer program selection process
 - More cost effective investment in in-house expertise, as compared to using outside providers
 - FY '20 staffing request operations and support staff
- Add 1.0 FTE custodian
 - Increased building use during school year and in summer
 - Position will work a “swing shift” (afternoon at HS, evening at Downey or providing district coverage as needed for sick calls)
- Add .5 FTE Middle school administrative assistant
 - Will be combined with .5FTE reallocated for HS to create a full-time MS position
 - Current level of administrative support at Middle School is insufficient for size of Thurston
- Increase short-term substitute teacher line item
 - Will assist us in adjusting daily sub rate to be more competitive with surrounding towns.

FY '20 staffing in special education

- FY '20 budget does not request any additional staffing in Special Education
- FY'19 budget included 5.6FTE largely to create an additional ABA program

- Since the FY'19 allocation was approved, changing student needs has required the addition of several incremental positions and IAs within the appropriation.

Non-Salary requests

Special Education

- Tuition and Transportation
 - Net decrease of \$66,802
- Increase contracted services
 - District purchases some legally mandated services from vendor (e.g. teacher of visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialist, adaptive physical education)
- Increase extended school year
 - As more students have remained in-district, there has been a corresponding growth in ESY services via in-district summer programming

Kindergarten Tuition Reduction

- Reduced Kindergarten tuition this year from \$1,800 to \$900
- In FY '20, will eliminate the fee
- Impact to the FY '20 budget: an \$85,000 reduction to the kindergarten tuition offset
- Will need to continue to reduce this budget offset by \$85,00 per year in FY '21 and FY '22

Non salary changes

The net change in all non-salary accounts is \$95,123. Some of these changes include

- Decrease in utilities \$50,000
 - Savings realized from the solar panel installation
- Increase in regular transportation \$30,000
 - Cost increase in the bus company contract
- Increase in project based learning \$10,000
 - Strategic priority , WHS j-term program, elementary coding and makerspace initiative
- New transportation offset (University station) \$50,000
 - To support additional transportation request from University Station

What's missing

- Additional school psychologist staffing
- An increase in literacy and math specialists at the elementary schools
- Reduction or elimination of user fees for transportation and athletics
- Permanent building substitutes
- An additional custodian, beyond the current request
- Guidance counselor at the middle school

Per pupil Spending

Westwood \$17,708. State average is \$16,015

Capital Budget Summary

Mr. Petracca reported an increase by \$150,000 to the base from last year. \$1,017,000 proposed In FY'20 requested \$1,700,000 and received \$1,017,000

HS paving and HVAC project will be included in the \$150,000 increase
MS projects will be the priority

Technology: \$150,000
Furniture, Fixtures, Equipment: \$111,797
HVAC: \$192,400
Roofing: \$100,000
Repair and Maintenance: \$402,803
Copiers: \$60,000
Total: \$1,017,000

Just received news last Wednesday when this report was being printed: Other capital projects can now change to other projects now that the HS Paving and HVAC can be included in the \$150,000 increase. Would like to discuss this more at the February meeting

Getting informed

- Executive summary will be e-mailed to parents tomorrow
- Entire budget document will be available on website tomorrow
- School Committee meeting on 2/7/19 will be the annual Budget Hearing
- If residents have any feedback on the budget, they are welcome to email the Superintendent or the School Committee.

Mr. Donahue asked about possibly starting a Westwood High School volunteer program; could get creative and get parents who are at home that could volunteer in different capacities during the school day. Would like more education on bullying. Who can parents turn to if their child comes home with a problem? Would like better education on what is available.

Action Items (8:41–8:44)

Approval of Minutes December 13, 2018

On page 7, Ms. Hanscom's name was misspelled. It read Hansom.

A motion was made to approve the December 13, 2018 minutes with this correction by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of out-of-state trip - J-Term hiking class

A motion to approve the out-of-state trip was made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

New Business/Liaison Reports (8:44-8:44)

None

Adjournment

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

Official Vote : Unanimous approval

Meeting Adjourned at 8:44pm