

**Westwood School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
April 9, 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  
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 (7:00-7:26)**

MSBA Project Update

Ms. Parks reported. The ad was placed in the Central Register, *Hometown Weekly*, and *Boston Globe* for OPM services. The OPM RFS was finalized with the MSBA and released. All necessary documents are posted on the town's website under "Procurement." The Subcommittee of the School Building Committee will be meeting on April 11 to prepare for the OPM interviews at the end of April.

FY'20 Budget/Staffing Update

Ms. Parks reported. Taking a look at the budget as the preschool director is retiring at the end of this school year. Thinking about restructuring the leadership oversight of the preschool. Thinking of having the Preschool Director report to one of the elementary Principals to establish a more vertical alignment from the preschool to the elementary school. If this proposal goes through, there would be a .5 FTE still open to reallocate. There could be an opportunity to add to guidance either 1 FTE to the high school or middle school guidance. Ms. Parks will plan to talk about this at the May meeting.

Q3 Financial Report

Mr. Petracca created the report before he retired. Ms. Parks wanted to point out an anomaly under student services. The State circuit breaker money (reimbursement received from the State

to help with the expense of extreme funding needed for student services) hasn't been transferred yet, so it appears overextended.

### Other Items

Congratulate Thurston Middle School on the production of 42nd Street.

Chris Bezdedeau participated in Student Government day at the State House. He worked in the House of Representatives. He worked on two bills, a vaping bill and a bill questioning if 7th grade students and under should be involved in tackle football. Neither passed in the House. He described it as a very real experience.

Hanlon students, under the direction of Music Teacher Katelyn Pickering, sang at the Providence Bruins hockey game.

Ms. Parks participated in an AP government class. The class took a Supreme Court case and argued it in front of Faculty Justices. The students did a great job.

The Westwood High School robotics team competed in two regional competitions. The team created a robotic ramp. This ramp was used to allow other robots to complete other tasks. It is a great experience for the team. Ms. Parks wanted to highlight that the Robotics Team mission statement includes promoting the STEM program to the elementary students.

Ms. Lewis wanted to bring to the Committee's attention a program called "Speak About It" that was part of the Courageous Conversations series at the High School. This was presented to juniors and seniors. The topic was consent and healthy relationships. The topics related to relationships, date rape, healthy relationships, what's appropriate, and not leaving a friend behind. Mr. Bevan was thanked for bringing this program to the high school.

Mr. Donahue didn't mention from last meeting that there was a listing of the 34 J-term courses that are being offered this year. Also, a listing of the 14 students participating in the SIPP program. The Committee can still sign up to participate in the students' presentations. He also wanted to highlight this is the fourth year that a Dale Carnegie program is being offered.

### **Public Participation (7:26-7:36)**

A resident had a question about the possibility of moving 1 FTE to the high school guidance or middle school guidance. What is the ratio of student to guidance counselor currently at the middle school and what is the recommendation? Ms. Parks said both would be looked at, before a recommendation is made for either school. Another question on the update of the GSA at the middle school. It is rolling out the week after April vacation.

A resident spoke on behalf of all the current Hanlon 1st grade parents. Forty-six parents signed a letter that was sent to the School Committee last month about their concern of the proposed 2nd grade classroom for next year. They want to work together to find a better solution to stay within the 18-22 student per classroom guideline; advocating for a third classroom. With the enrollment for the incoming kindergarten now at 24, is the plan to still have two classrooms for kin-

ergarten? Ms. Parks stated they continue to watch those numbers; it's too early to make a decision on this. By June, there would be a good sense of where the numbers are. There have been changes in August if need be. Does the current 1st grade class have students from the buffer zone in the class which is causing the larger number? Ms. Parks would need to look into that. If that was the case, the students would not be moved to another school.

A resident was concerned about the current Hanlon 1st grade class size. It is very boy heavy. Has there been other options to break the classroom up?

A resident who is a parent of a current 1st grade child in the K/1 classroom shared their appreciation for this set up, but is concerned about the boy-heavy classroom for next year; not just the numbers but the dynamic makeup of the children.

### **Discussion Items (7:36-8:00)**

#### Town Comprehensive Plan - Community Facilities (Tom Viti) (7:36-7:42)

Tom Viti presented. Mr. Viti is a member of the 18-member Comprehensive Plan Committee. His responsibility is to talk to all the committees who have facilities in the Town. He is looking for a statement from each committee as to what they have.

A survey has been to residents that closes April 17, 2019. A total of 350 responses have been received to date. Public participation is important. In May, there will be public program.

Whatever plans are put in there, it isn't the committee's job to say it is a good plan. It is just putting it all together and it is still the Select Board and/or the Planning Board responsible for addressing any changes.

Mr. Mullin asked about the objective. It gives residents a global view of where Westwood is. It helps facilitate the conversation. It allows for more public participation.

Once all the data is gathered, it would be presented to the Planning Board. It will be presented to the Select Board and it would be approved at Town Meeting.

#### Report of Middle School Principal Entry Findings (7:42-8:27)

Mr. Redmon, Thurston Principal presented.

Objectives:

- To understand how Thurston Middle School operates/functions daily.
- To understand the Thurston Middle school student experiences.
- To assist in the development of strategies that promote the best middle level practices aligned to the WPS strategy for district improvement

Process/Information Gathering:

Mr. Redmon surveyed staff last June and shadowed a 6th grade student for a day. He met with leadership during the summer. He had parent focus groups, grade -level focus groups, PTO focus groups, staff focus groups, and Site Council focus groups.

#### Key Finding #1 TMS Culture

- Strong sense of community
- Highly skilled and dedicated staff
- Family
- Supportive teachers
- Welcoming and safe

#### Student response TMS Culture

- Middle school independence
- Parent involvement
- 5th/6th grade transition
- Easy to make friend
- Supportive

#### Questions to consider

1. How do we continue to maintain and improve the positive professional and student culture at TMS?
2. How can we continue to support students in their transition from 5th to 6th grade and 8th to 9th grade?
3. How can we best meet the needs of our parent community so that we have a strong partnership that will promote the best environment for all stakeholders?

#### Key Finding #2 Curriculum and Instruction

##### Math/Science department

- Math/Science coordinator
- Classroom visits and collaboration
- After school offerings
- Math level
- Rigor

##### ELA/Social Studies Department

- New History and Social Studies frameworks
- ELA review
- Curriculum leadership

##### Intervention

- Literacy Pilot
- STAR Assessments

## Schedule

- 43 minute classes
- 8-9 three-minute transitions a day
- Same class/same time & day

## Exploratory offerings

- CACE
- Music
- Health
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- PE
- Drama

## Questions to consider

1. What should the process be for reviewing and revising the TMS schedule?
2. How do we create an intervention model/opportunities for students to receive extra support within general education or extension?
3. How will our new instructional leadership team (ELA/Social Studies;Math/Science) help design more authentic learning experiences for students?

## Key Finding #3 Structures

### Teaming

- Red and Blue Teams
- Interdisciplinary Collaboration
- Team size
- Scheduling challenges

### Communication about students learning and progress

- Mastery
- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Communication

## Questions for consider

### Teaming

1. Are teams collaborating across disciplines in the most effective way?
2. How does the teaming model impact the schedule?
3. What is the right number of students on a team?

### Communication and Student Learning and Progress

1. How can we ensure that students understand their learning goals and know what they need to do to achieve them?

2. How can we ensure that parents have timely and helpful feedback about their students' progress?
3. Are there other models for parent conferences that improve the communication of student progress?

#### Key finding #4 Social Emotional

##### Advisory

- Supports social and emotion development
- Positive Relationships
- Meet twice a week/8-12 students
- Need for Consistency/Curriculum/Program
- Additional training
- SEL Coordinator

##### Homework

- Varying Perspectives
- Unclear Purpose
- Inconsistent Amounts
- Professional Development

##### Questions to consider

###### Advisory

1. How do we develop an advisory program that has a consistent structure and curriculum that supports the social/emotional learning needs of TMS students?
2. What further training/resources do advisors need to implement an effective advisory program?
3. What is the right schedule/amount of time/time of day for advisory to occur for students?

###### Homework

1. What is the purpose of homework?
2. What does homework at TMS look like?
3. What is a reasonable amount of homework for TMS students?
4. How do we support students so that they manage homework expectations in a healthy way?
5. How are teachers on a team communicating with each other about homework?

##### Needs/Next Steps

- TMS Leadership Team
- ELA/SS Coordinator
- Schedule Work/Consultant
- Future Staffing needs
- Resources

Ms. Plotkin agreed that the schedule is tough and would encourage a change. She also thought that the advisory model needs to be more consistent. She was interested in learning more about 1-to-1 Chromebook initiative findings. There are some disadvantages to it. What do the students/teachers think? Parents concerned students see so much on the screen, read an article is on the screen, you can't print it. Since homework is using the Chromebook, internet surfing occurs, not homework. Homework Google Docs/interface is struggling with the My Homework application. She also agreed that teachers did create a family atmosphere, students feel like the teachers really want them to do well and are supported.

Chris Bezdedeau stated that he knows that math is currently leveled. Any thought to level other courses other than math? Mr. Redmon is having conversations about how we can better articulate to parents the distinction between math levels.

Ms. Jowdy commented that the District has gone full circle with leveling at the Middle School. All classes used to be leveled, took it all away and now just math is leveled. Differentiation is currently used in the Middle School. This allows flexible grouping within a classroom; it could be skill, style of learning.

Mr. Mullin is interested in the Chromebook assessment. He also asked whether there should be more investment in professional development for teachers in instruction. With the ELA/Social Studies coordinator coming on, this will be embedded in professional development. There has been a drop in MCAS from 5th to 6th grade. What are the thoughts? Met with Elementary Math specialist and making sure it has vertical alignment.

Ms. Lewis asked about the teams at the Middle School. Are you considering taking away the teams and going to a department structure like the high school? No, would keep teams but looking into updating.

#### First reading of revised Non-discrimination policy (8:27-8:33)

Ms. Parks explained this consolidates four previous policies into one comprehensive policy. It provides for equal, consistent treatment and response to all protected classes. It updates investigation and response approach.

Next Step: public discussion and review, creation of implementation guidelines (protocol), and training on a new policy and protocol.

A motion to waive the first reading was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### Parents Rights Workshop was coordinated by the Westwood SEPAC

- The District funds the Special Education Parent Advisory Council's membership in the Massachusetts PAC organization.
- The District and the SEPAC collaborate to ensure that there is an annual training for any interested parents on Parent's Rights.
- This year, the trainer, Liz Topaz, was from the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) and was an original author of the training.

- Training slides and contact info can be found on the district website.

### **Action Items (8:33-8:35)**

Approval of Minutes : March 26, 2019

A motion was made to approve the March 26, 2019 minutes by Ms. Lewis . Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Vote to accept donation from Norwood Bank for J-Term

A motion was made to accept the donation of \$500 from Norwood Bank for J-Term by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Vote to accept grant from Dedham Savings for Integrated Preschool Playground

A motion to accept the grant of \$14,000 from Dedham Savings for Integrated Preschool Playground was made by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Mr. Mullin .

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

### **New Business (8:35-8:36)**

#### Superintendent's Evaluation Process

Mr. Donahue asked for the Committee to get their feedback to him on the Superintendent's goals and the rubric. Ms. Parks will do a self-assessment in May.

A motion was made to adjourn to Executive Session by Ms Jowdy. Seconded by Mr Mullin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval.

Adjourned to Executive Session at 8:36pm

### **Executive Session (8:36-9:30)**

To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body.

To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto.

### **Adjournment**



The School Committee will not return to public session.

**Meeting Adjourned at 9:30pm**