

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 16, 2019**

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
Lemma Jn-baptiste, Director of Business and Finance
Abby Hanscom, Director of Student Services

**Meeting called to order 7:08 pm
Pledge of Allegiance**

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center

Reorganization of School Committee (7:08-7:17)

A motion was made to nominate Mr. Mullin as Chair of the School Committee by Ms. Jowdy.
Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

A motion was made to nominate Ms. Jowdy as Vice Chairperson of the School Committee by
Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

A motion was made to nominate Ms. Lewis as Clerk of the School Committee by Ms. Jowdy.
Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Mr. Mullin wanted to thank Mr. Donahue for his term as Chairperson.

Mr. Donahue made some remarks.

Superintendent's Report (7:17-7:31)

Ms. Parks welcomed Ms. Jn-baptiste as the new Director of Business and Finance.

MSBA Project Update

Ms. Parks reported. The School Building Committee has completed the process to identify an Owners Project Manager (OPM). There was a subcommittee that examined applications from 12 different companies. The School Building Committee voted to have the company, Compass, to be the OPM. The package was submitted to the MSBA identifying this as our selection; now awaiting a response from the MSBA with the hope to be invited to the June 3rd MSBA meeting so this can be finalized. After this is finalized, the next step would be to start the process to identify a designer/architect. That should be completed by the end of September. When this is all in place, then start working with the community on this process. The next School Building Committee meeting is 6/6/19 in the professional development room.

FY'20 Budget/Staffing Update- Guidance Staffing Recommendation

Ms. Hanscom reported. After the school budget was passed, the Preschool Director announced her retirement. This position will be restructured and this allows an opportunity to look back at the wish list. With the help of the Administrative Council, the recommendation is to add a 1.0 FTE guidance counselor for the middle school as well as changing the original .6 FTE guidance counselor at the high school to a full 1.0 FTE guidance counselor. Ms. Lewis asked with the shift at the high school, how many kids will be affected and would need to move to another guidance counselor? That number isn't clear yet, but guidance would make a thoughtful decision and communicate to families as soon as possible. Ms. Plotkin commented about the addition of the guidance counselor at the middle school. This would restructure the guidance by grade level. Mr. Mullin asked what the number of guidance counselors at the high school would be with the additional high school guidance counselor. It would be 5.5 full time guidance counselors. Chris Bezdedeanu wanted to thank them for the additional resource. The School Committee likes this addition and gave approval to move forward with this recommendation.

Security Audit - Implementation

The School Committee has met to discuss the results of the security audit report. It was approved at Town Meeting to appropriate \$100,000 to start work on implementing priority recommendations. The implementation has begun. Still awaiting to hear on a grant for \$60,000 that Westwood applied for from the State Office of Public Safety. A letter was sent to all parents updating them about the vote at Town Meeting and about moving forward with the implementation as well as emphasizing the commitment the district has for prevention.

Summer HVAC projects

Ms. Jn-baptiste reported. At Town Meeting, it was approved to appropriate \$1,017,000 for school capital improvements; \$192,400 would be used for HVAC projects. At Town Meeting, the appropriation was approved along with an amendment specifying that "In all instances whereby the Town will consider installation of new or replacement of existing HVAC systems in all buildings owned by the Town, the Town will consider a cost/benefit analysis of at least one alternative which involves utilization of renewable energy." In collaboration with Thomas Philbin, the

Town's Energy Manager, Mitsubishi brand units that fall in the top 10% of the industry in terms of energy efficiency ratings and are also known for day-to-day reliability were selected. Mr. Philbin has advised that, to his knowledge, there are no specifically renewable energy air conditioning units that meet our technical specifications for existing classrooms and offices. However, as units are installed, we are offsetting any increased energy consumption via a concurrent expansion of our commitment to purchase renewable energy.

Ms. Jowdy asked if purchasing in volume could we go with TEC to get a better purchase price? This is not high volume, only affects 5-6 classrooms.

Mr. Mullin asked about the TMS elevator replacement and if that was being scheduled? It is on schedule to be completed this summer.

Other

Mr. Philbin met with Ms. Parks about other solar opportunities. Ms. Parks sent this information to the School Committee and asked for their input on how to proceed. Ms. Jowdy suggested a subcommittee needs to be established to see if there is more information to understand before the School Committee makes a decision.

Public Participation (7:31-7:37)

Resident requested that the School Committee eliminate or consider to eliminate the use of Glyphosate-containing herbicides on the school fields and playgrounds. It has been banned in 8 out of 10 Provinces in Canada and across 23 states. It has been banned in seven towns in Massachusetts. It has been classified as a probable human carcinogen. It has been in the news a lot now as lawsuits are being filed by grounds keepers who have cancer. It is sprayed on all fields in April and the end of the summer. Ms. Parks sends out this notice for the Town, but the Town is responsible for the fields. When the resident has spoken with the Public Works Department, they acknowledge her concern but they say that it is still legal to use in the state of Massachusetts. Resident asked if the School Committee could weigh-in with a recommendation to the Town on what they want for the school fields. Mr. Donahue offered to investigate to get more information to present back to the School Committee.

Discussion Items (7:37-8:43)

SEPAC/Special Education Program Update (7:37-8:03)

Ms. Hanscom reported that there are 571 students with IEP's out of a total of 3107 students; is 18%. 18.6% is the state average.

Broken out into 11 Federal/State categories of "Primary" disability:

- Physical -3 students
- Sensory/Hearing -2 students
- Sensory/Vision -3 students
- Intellectual - 8 students

Developmental Delay - 61 students
Autism - 69 students
Emotional- 72 students
Neurological - 49 students
Communication - 81 students
Specific Learning Disability - 80 students
Health - 143 students

The Health category is where ADHD falls. Not everyone in this category has ADHD, but a majority do. Ms. Hanscom wanted to point out the Neurological category, it is being debated and will be refined in the coming years because everything can be considered neurological. This category currently is for seizure disorders, head trauma, and other neurological-based disabilities.

Level of need: 174 students in low, 337 students in moderate, 60 students in high (determined by how many minutes a day they need to be taught by special education teacher). 80% per day is high, 40% per day is moderate, 10% a day is low.

Approximately 20 students in "Out of District" placements. Approximately .6% of all students. All others students (551) are served by programming "In District."

Ms. Jowdy asked if 18% has changed over years? It has remained around 18% for many years.

Mr. Donahue would like to understand the skill set for all the teachers who work in this program.

Ms. Hanscom stated September would be a good time to report on all the staff when everyone is hired.

Ms. Hanscom reported that usually around 12 students choose not to receive their diploma and stay until age 22.

SEPAC presentation by Megan Brenk and Meggan Flaherty.

Our mission is to work for the understanding of, respect for, and support of children of all abilities in our community.

SEPAC has monthly meetings where there is a speaker. 5-15 parents/professionals come to every meeting.

Plan to scale back on formal presentations and have more social events next year. Have found that the social component is very important for the families. It becomes a wonderful support system.

Westwood SEPAC: District Advocacy

Bullying: Identified need for district-wide consistency in guiding parents/caretakers on how to report bullying & investigation process.

Report on District Improvement Goals (8:03-8:41)

Ms. Parks wanted to articulate four strategic objectives that are intended to guide the district's work for 3-5 years.

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

Under each objective are three strategic priorities for this particular year.

The identified priorities are:

- Focused on the instructional core
- Interconnected and complementary
- Reflective of the need to be both visionary and problem-solving

Wanted to highlight three priorities that haven't been talked about much this year but have been pretty significant this year.

Ms. Borchers reported.

Coherent, Connected Curriculum Priority 2.2

Promote coaching, peer observation and peer feedback within and across schools in order to help students progress toward learning goals from year to year/building to building without unnecessary repetition and gaps.

Surveyed the faculty.

"The visit helped me identify ways to improve instruction"

46.2% strongly agree

34.6% agree

19.2% neutral

"The visit helped me to see how I can reduce gaps and reputation in the curriculum"

38.5% neutral

38.5% agree

11.5%strong agree

11.5% disagree

Next steps:

- Create structures and tools to support meaningful peer observation (e.g., calendar, observation guides, debrief process).
- Clarify purpose(s) of observations and gather immediate feedback.
- Continue expanding substitute teaching pool.

Ms. Parks reported.

Healthy and Supported School Community Priority 3.2

Implement programs and instructional practices that recognize and support the needs of students and families in an increasingly diverse community.

Focus on programs for students, programs for parents, programs for teachers.
Surveyed the students on the courageous conversations presentations. It was an overwhelmingly positive experience.

Parent programs had a year's worth of programming. This was rolled out at the beginning of the school year and really promoted these programs.

Professional Development: A couple of fall training sessions with organization called IDEAS. Full professional day was organized with METCO Director. Keynote speaker David Johns and 5 METCO students also spoke about what could be better in Westwood. Because of this, 26 teachers/administrators volunteered to be a part of a working group to keep this conversation going.

Healthy and Supported School Community Priority 3.3
Expand efforts to help students navigate the technology-infused environment in a way that is safe, effective, healthy, and well-balanced.

Mr. Ouellette reported. Responsible Use for All Students
Focused on Grade 5 to Grade 6 students

Move grade 6 responsible use lessons into advisory program
With regards to students being off-task/distracted when using their Chromebooks:
82% of teachers have reported that students in grade 6 are "Better" or "Far better" than last year.

WHS Digital Citizenship Seminar: all incoming ninth grade students as well as upperclassmen new to the district. Its purpose is to orient students with best practices that will set them up for success as they navigate the high school and the world at large.

Students have three choices:

- Install an app or extension that helps with focus.
- Write a plan/pledge to self for managing your time/distractions.
- Keep a log of screen time.

What's next?

- Input from School Committee about priorities.
- Identify 2019-2020 action steps.
- Articulate and monitor early and "lagging" indicators of attaining intended outcomes.

Ms. Parks wanted any input from School Committee members at the June School Committee meeting in order to roll out priorities at the beginning of the school year.

Ms. Lewis suggested that this could be an open discussion between the School Committee members at the June meeting.

Second reading of revised Non-discrimination Policy (8:41-8:43)
ACAB- Non-discrimination policy including harassment and retaliation

Ms. Hanscom. A question from last month's reading was in the event a harassment claim is made against the identified investigator, what would you do? Consulted with the lawyer: hire an independent work place investigator.

A motion to waive the second reading of revised Non-discrimination Policy made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

A motion to approve the revised Non-discrimination Policy was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Action Items (8:43-8:50)

Approval of Minutes : April 9, 2019

A motion was made to approve the April 9, 2019 minutes by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Ms. Parks asked for a modification. Math currently leveled, not planning to level other courses. Mr. Redmon is having conversations about how we can better articulate to parents about the distinction between the math levels.

A motion to approve the April 9, 2019 minutes with the modification was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Annual Vote on School Choice

WHEREAS the Educational Reform Act of 1993 requires that the enrollment of non-resident students under the School Choice provision unless the Committee votes by June 1 not to participate, and

WHEREAS the School Committee provision takes away money from the sending district and awards it to the receiving district, and

WHEREAS Westwood's per pupil expenditure is greater than the maximum allowable reimbursement, which means Westwood would subsidize each choice student, and

WHEREAS there is no provision for selecting students who might better fit Westwood's educational system, and

WHEREAS once Westwood accepts a pupil it must keep the pupil through graduation even though Westwood's demographic situation might change considerably, and

WHEREAS it is likely that a number of students will return to their sending districts or otherwise leave Westwood, thus creating a potential income loss, now hereby be it

RESOLVED that Westwood School Committee respectfully declines to participate in the School Choice Program with the provision that should surrounding school districts subsequently and prior to June 1 decide to accept the provisions of School Choice, the Westwood School Committee reserves the right to do likewise in order to protect its fiduciary interests in this matter.

Moved by: Ms. Plotkin

Seconded by: Ms. Jowdy

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Donahue voted Yea
Ms. Jowdy voted Yea
Ms. Plotkin voted Yea
Ms. Lewis voted Yea
Mr. Mullin voted Yea

Vote to update School Building Committee membership

The Select Board will be reorganizing at its May 13, 2019 meeting. They previously determined that their representative to the School Building Committee would always be the current chair throughout the duration of the project. As such, the School Committee needs to modify the membership of the School Building Committee to remove the outgoing Chair and add the incoming chair.

A motion to remove Mike Walsh from the School Building Committee and add Nancy Hyde was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Vote to approve 2019-2020 School Committee meeting dates

Thursday, September 12
Tuesday, October 15
Thursday, November 14
Thursday, December 12
Thursday, January 16
Thursday, January 30 (if needed)
Thursday, February 13
Thursday, March 12
Thursday, April 9
Thursday, May 14
Thursday, June 11

A motion to approve the 2019-2020 School Committee meeting dates was made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

New Business (8:50-8:51)

The School Committee wanted to thank Chris Bezdedeau for his participation on the School Committee this year. He will be attending Syracuse University next year and received a gift with Syracuse swag.

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

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Adjourned to Executive Session at 8:51pm

Executive Session (8:58-9:15)

To discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation which, if discussed in an open meeting, would have a detrimental effect on the position of the public body.

Adjournment

The School Committee did not return to public session.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15pm