

**Westwood School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
June 13, 2019**

**Present:**

Anthony Mullin, Chairperson  
Josepha Jowdy, Vice Chairperson  
Carol Lewis, Clerk  
Charles Donahue, Committee Member  
Maya Plotkin, Committee Member

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 7:07pm  
Pledge of Allegiance**

*Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center*

**Superintendent's Report (7:07-7:14)**

MJ and Downey State House Recognition

Ms. Parks reported. Ms. Gallagher, Ms. Tobin, Ms. Parks and some teachers went to the State House, as the Downey School and Martha Jones School were both recognized by the Commissioner of Education as schools for recognition. Rep. McMurtry was there too. A proclamation was presented to both schools based on the achievement on MCAS and targeting achievement gaps.

Other Items

J-Term is off and running. News stories will be on Channel 4 and Channel 7 tonight for J-Term. A couple other journalists are coming out tomorrow for radio and print stories.

Follow up from last meeting: Ms. Jowdy, Ms. Lewis, Ms. Jn-baptiste, Ms. Parks and Mr. Aries met with Tom Philbin, the Town's Energy Manager, to discuss solar projects. Suggest moving forward to maximize our roof space for solar panels. There is also an opportunity in the land where panels can be in the woods on the Hanlon site. We need to check to see if that parcel of land could be used for this project.

## MSBA Project Update

Ms. Plotkin reported. On June 3, 2019, Westwood had the OPM review meeting with the MSBA. Compass was selected as the choice for our OPM. Compass is officially on board after that meeting. MSBA wanted to have Ken Aries as member of the School Building Committee, so that will be officially voted on at this meeting. On June 6, 2019, the School Building Committee had a meeting and Compass presented. Next step is the architect selection. RFS has been submitted to the MSBA. MSBA chooses the architect. There will be three representatives on the design selection panel from Westwood which will be Ms. Plotkin, Ms. Parks, and Ms. Hyde. Westwood is on the agenda for the October 1, 2019 meeting to finalize the architect. Community engagement will start right after the architect is selected.

Ms. Parks has a draft of a letter to send to residents to update them where we are in the process. School Committee will review the letter so it can be sent out.

### **Public Participation (7:14-7:14)**

None

### **Discussion Items (7:14-8:10)**

#### 2018-2019 College Admissions Update (7:14-7:37)

Ms. Medsker presented.

Class of 2019 had 261 students: 50% male 50% female.

- 98% continue their education; 97% attending 4 year colleges
- less than 1% attending 2 year colleges
- 2% Post-graduate year, Gap Year, or full time employment

#### 4 year college statistics

- 63% private schools, 37% public schools
- 2215 transcripts sent out this year
- 8 - average number of applications per student

#### Early Decision (binding agreement)

- 21% applied
- 51% accepted

#### Early Action (non-binding agreement)

- 62% applied
- 98% accepted

#### 34 students attending UMass

- 53% of the class applied
- 69% accepted
- 3.77 avg. accepted GPA /1314 SAT (regular)
- 4.03 avg. accepted GPA/ 1352 SAT (early)

#### Other Massachusetts State Colleges and Universities

- 7 students attending UMass Lowell, 5 students attending UMass Boston,

5 students attending UMass Dartmouth  
2 students attending Bridgewater State  
1 student attending Worcester University  
1 student attending Westfield State  
1 student attending Framingham State  
1 student attending Mass Art.

#### Out of State Public Colleges New England

- 11 students attending UNH
- 3 students attending UVM
- 1 student attending UCONN
- 1 student attending URI
- 1 student attending Plymouth State

#### Private Colleges in New England

- Over 20 schools will have students attending from Westwood.

#### Out of State Public Colleges outside of New England

- 15 schools will be students attending from Westwood.

#### Private Colleges Outside of New England

- Over 20 schools will have students attending from Westwood.

#### International Colleges

- 4 colleges in Canada and 1 in Scotland will have students attending from Westwood.

#### Senior Exit Survey

Students identified the most important factors in choosing a college:

- Location/distance from home (76%)
- Size (59%)
- Fit or “vibe” (57%)
- Affordability (51%)
- Major/program (49%)
- School spirit (40%)
- Internships (39%)

#### National Trends

- Admit rate decreasing at Ivy League colleges and the application rate is increasing
- College admission scandal

What doesn't matter:

- “Where you go is not who you'll be” by Frank Bruni

What does matter:

- Making the most of the college experience, contributing in the classroom and to the campus community
- Taking advantage of volunteering, research and internship opportunities
- Employers value work experience over all else

Recruiters tell colleges they are much more focused on the experience of a candidate than where they went to school.

The vast majority of colleges have over 50% acceptance rate.

Tamping down the pressure in the college application process

- Increase number of junior seminars to provide students with more time to research colleges, complete college application tasks
  - Assist students in expanding their searches, beyond the schools they know
  - Writing college essays in junior English classes
- Helping students to be good consumers in the college search process
  - Educate early on about cost, student debt
  - Emphasis on value, return on investment

Prior to the college application process

Course selection process

- Select courses to provide challenge and success
- Importance of electives
  - art, drama, video, chorus
- Balance academics and activities/athletics/down time

Programming to support students' social emotional well-being

- Stress management seminar
- SOS program in ninth and twelfth grade
- SBIRT Screenings in tenth grade
- Mental health awareness week

Ms. Lewis thought the programming to get through the college application process was very good. She also had noticed that more schools seem to be test-optional in the last couple of years. Ms. Medsker agreed, there are more test-optional schools; over 1000 schools. University of Chicago is now test-optional. Ms. Lewis also re-connected with a college classmate who is a UMass Amherst reader and she indicated application/essays from Westwood are great.

Mr. Donahue wanted to get feedback from students after they have graduated on feedback on what was well here at Westwood; classes they took, programs, etc. This is the second year collecting e-mail addresses from students and collecting this information. Data on this will be collected.

Ms. Jowdy had a question about Adversity index. College Board has initiated this, guidance department is not happy with this initiative. Score determines how a student will do in college.

Mr. Mullin is glad to have the cost/value programming included in the guidance program.

### 2019-2020 District Improvement Priorities (7:37-7:53)

Ms. Parks put together the draft to be discussed to make sure the School Committee is in agreement with these priorities. The priorities will carry over a lot from this year to next year; the action steps would change in the second year.

Mr. Mullin wondered where homework at the middle school and high school was listed. It is listed in Meaningful Learning Experience, as well as Healthy and Supported School Community. Suggested highlighting this on page one of the improvement plans, so it is seen by all right away, instead of looking for it in a hyperlink.

Ms. Plotkin asked if there was discussion about elementary homework. There is not at this time.

Ms. Jowdy has heard from parents that elementary school homework is too much. School Committee has a policy on this and will look at that again to see if it needs to be adjusted in the early fall. Ms. Lewis questioned homework over vacation--homework hiatus--then double up the next day.

Mr. Donahue is interested in finding innovative ideas/strategies to share with our teachers.

Mr. Mullin had questions about technology and the use of ASPEN and 1-1. What are the outcomes now that this has been implemented for some time? What is the digital perspective on the whole school system; electronic permission slip at one school but paper at another. Can paper be eliminated?

Ms. Plotkin has a concern about the 1-1 and how the student can only use the Chromebook for homework but can easily surf the web which can distract the student.

Mr. Mullin wants the school start time discussion to get started again. Dover/ Sherborn has 8:35am start time now. Start this year on what Dover/Sherborn did to implement this, set up for future year to discuss this for Westwood. Set up internal discussions prior to community engagement. This is under 3.1 on draft, "Develop and implement a district-wide plan for meeting students' social and emotional learning needs." Mr. Mullin suggested changing this wording to include physical health as well.

Mr. Donahue wanted to make sure that achievement gaps are continually being watched.

### Superintendent's Evaluation (7:53-8:05)

Mr. Donahue wanted to point out that this week Westwood ranked 11th best high school in Massachusetts.

Process to write the evaluation: Mr. Donahue wrote this with the assistance of Ms. Lewis who was that past chairperson as well as input from the other School Committee members.

Four areas the State asked us to look at:

- Professional practice
- Student learning
- District improvement goal
- Organizational

State system:

Instructional leadership

Transition process as Superintendent has gone well,

- Improvement in interaction with teachers
- J-Term was developed, ran successfully, made changes and was very good.
- Diverse Learning
- Courageous Conversations programs: 8 workshops, 2 new courses, 25 educators are part of the Westwood Schools' welcoming group to new students
- Elementary libraries have more diverse books
- Translation of all of Westwood's documents in three different languages
- Supporting LGBTQ students and families,
- METCO Director now part of the Administrative Council

Exemplary rank on Instructional Leadership

Standard: Management and State Rubric Standards

- J-term management
- Eligibility process for the MSBA process
- Respect working with the other administrators
- Security Audit / Town Meeting to get funding
- Process of hiring new Director of Business and Finance went very well
- Budget process was smooth
- Negotiating a new contract with teachers went very smoothly.

Exemplary rank on Standard Management and Operations

Family/Community

Working with students and parents regarding diversity

Websites that have been set up

Newspaper articles

Getting the community involved.

Proficient rank on Family/Community

Professional Culture

Visit to classrooms

Feedback from teachers, administrators

Strength of Administrative Council, developing a shared sense of what is trying to be accomplished

Exemplary rank on Professional Culture

The four goals Ms. Parks had set up for herself received “Exemplary” rank on all of them.

Ms. Jowdy brought up that the Superintendent’s contract renewal process needs to get started. She suggested that a subcommittee should be created to start this contract renewal process so a contract proposal can be brought back to the School Committee. She thought Ms. Lewis and Mr. Donahue could start this since they have both worked with Ms. Parks. Both agreed to do this.

Ms. Parks thanked the Committee for this evaluation. She feels very lucky to be working in Westwood and the team that she works with does a great job and thanks them for their support as well as the School Committee’s support.

#### Review School Committee Liaison Positions (8:05-8:07)

Mr. Mullin suggested talking more about this list at the School Committee July Retreat: Take a look at the list since it hasn’t been updated in a while. Suggest if there are positions to merge, take away, or add.

#### **Action Items (8:07-8:14)**

##### Approval of Minutes: May 16, 2019

A motion was made to approve the May 16, 2019 minutes by Ms. Jowdy . Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

##### Approval of 2019-2020 School Improvement Plans

A motion was made to approve the 2019-2020 School Improvement plans by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

##### Vote to ratify WTA Collective Bargaining Agreement

A motion was made to ratify the WTA Collective Bargaining Agreement by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

##### Approval of FY’20 Non-Bargaining Increases

Mr. Mullin had a question as to why the substitute teacher line is flat. Ms. Jn-baptiste is looking into having a strategic plan to have substitutes return to Westwood.

A motion was made to approve the FY'20 Non-Bargaining Increases by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Acceptance of \$5000 donation for J-Term Shed Project

A motion was made to accept the \$5000 donation for J-Term from the Martha Jones PTO by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Acceptance of \$7000 grant for Emotional Intelligence Training for Middle and High School Teachers

A motion was made to accept the grant of \$7000 by Foundation of Westwood Education by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Ms. Borchers needed to make a correction about the funding for the \$7000 grant. It was from IAMSTRONG.

A motion was made to accept the grant of \$7000 by IAMSTRONG by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Spain Trip, April 2020

Ms. Parks plans to look at the Foreign Travel Policy. She has asked the attorney to look at the current policy. She can bring this in the fall for a discussion.

A motion to approve the Spain Trip in April 2020 by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Vote to Update School Building Committee membership

A motion to update the School Building Committee membership to include the Director of Operations was made by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

**New Business (8:15-8:17)**



Ms. Plotkin heard about the reorganization of TMS and High School guidance. The website at Thurston is not updated. When will the new counselors be announced by grade? Information will be sent to parents by the end of June.

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 8:17pm

**Executive Session (8:21-8:45)**

The School Committee will be going into Executive Session to discuss one issue pursuant to G.L.c.30A, 21(a)(7) - to comply with special law requirements for review of Executive Session Minutes [Open Meeting Law G.L c.30A 22(f)(g)] of which would have detrimental effect on the position of the governing body if discussion were in open session.

**Adjournment**

The School Committee did not return to public session.

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:45pm**