

**Westwood Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
Westwood High School Little Theater  
Thursday, January 30, 2020  
7:00pm**

**Present:**

Anthony Mullin, Chairperson  
Josepha Jowdy, Vice Chairperson  
Carol Lewis, Clerk  
Maya Plotkin, Committee Member  
Charles Donahue, Committee Member  
Ayesha Tariq, 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 7:00pm  
Pledge of Allegiance**

*Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center*

**Superintendent's Report (7:00-7:04)**

Student Opportunity Act District Plan Update

Ms. Parks reported. She attended a meeting of Massachusetts School Superintendents last week and heard the Commissioner of Education speak. She didn't learn any new information from what she reported at the last school committee meeting. She did confirm that Westwood will need to fill out a short application. The template for the plan will be out this week, she hasn't received it yet. There will be a menu of research-based options and, if this is used, it will automatically be approved. If you go off the menu of researched based options than the district needs to include a plan and then it goes through an approval process. It is hoped to have the information soon so it can be complete by next Friday and ready to present at the February School Committee meeting.

**School Committee Chair and Subcommittee/Liaison Updates (7:04-7:08)**

Building Project and Community Engagement Update

Ms. Plotkin reported. At the Community Forum last week the first look at the options was presented. Engagement of the community has been great. The feedback has been compiled; and

in the process of reviewing it and posting it on the building website. There were a lot of questions about site location, and what would happen to the remainder school. Both of those questions will be figured out. March 2, 2020 is the next community forum where the focus will be looking at costs of the options. This is a very important meeting to get the community input because the sub-committee will take that input for their vote.

#### Other Liaison reports

Ms. Lewis reported on the Hale Reservation Working Group. They are very supportive of the schools. The group will not be jumping in line for funding before the school building project is complete.

#### **Public Participation (7:08-7:08)**

None

#### **Discussion Items (7:08-8:20)**

Presentation of Superintendent's Recommended FY '21 Operating Budget and Capital Budgets (7:30–8:10)

Ms. Parks presented.

- Proposed FY'21 budget allows the District to meet its contractual obligations, address some needs, and move forward priorities.
- Developed by district leadership team with input from cost center leaders and School Committee
- Collaborated with the town through the budget steering process
- Some requests have been deferred to future budgets

FY'20 final budget: \$46,513,031

FY'21 proposed budget: \$48,187,500

Increase of \$1,674,469 (3.6% increase)

School budgets are largely about people

- Salaries make up 87.3%
- Operations maintenance, utilities make up 4.6%
- All other non-salary make up 8.1%

SPED non salary decrease of 10.8%

- Took 1.5 positions out of contracted services and deliver those services through salaried districted employees. (\$128,260) This will allow more service for the same dollars.

Total salaries' incremental change is 4.5%.

- Change from SPED non-salary to salary
- Teachers' salaries determined by a cost of living increase, a step increase, and a lane change (graduate credits). The change for this year is the notifications of anticipated lane changes are known in time for the budget process. Not sure yet if this will be predictable year to year or

not. Still need to back fill for FY'20 and applied \$160,000 that is known lane changes. It should normalize next year.

#### General Education

- Includes all students, including special education
- FY'21 we are proposing maintaining elementary staffing at current levels and making decision about how to allocate staff after the kindergarten enrollment process is complete.

A foundation for FY'20 included several positions related to strategic priorities that provide a strong foundation going into FY'21

#### Proposed staffing changes that address strategic priorities

##### .5 FTE Middle School ELA Specialist \$38,000

- Expand pilot of structured reading intervention program to address student needs in 6th grade.
- This new position would be combined with a reallocation from contracted services to create a full-time position. Having this position will now have two teachers at the position which will allow to cover 6th and 7th grade.

##### Add .4 FTE Director of Safety and Security

- New role dedicated to the continual review of District's safety and security protocols, including annual training for students, teachers, and incident management teams.
- Oversee the continued implementation of the security audit recommendations

The background for individuals applying for this position have criminal justice degrees, experience in law enforcement. Have received a lot of resumes; retired police, security in college campuses, etc. This may not be a forever position. It could take some years to fully implement the audit suggestions. Protocols change over time too.

#### Special Education

- In FY'20, 16.9% of WPS students receive some type of special education services.
- Special Education comprises 26% of the overall budget
- Less than 1% of WPS students are educated in out-of-district placements
  - Reflects our value of educating students to the extent possible in their community.
  - Relies on strong, in-district special education programming.
  - The cost of tuitions (and related transportation) continues to rise.
  - Keeping students in-district often also requires providing in-district Extended School Year programs in the summer.

#### Special Education spending Includes:

##### Town funds

- Money appropriated to the school budget through the Town Meeting process.
- This represents the bulk of how special education is funded

### Federal IDEA Grant

- Amount of grant varies from year to year and has to be estimated during the budget process.

### Circuit Breaker Offset

- State funding that provides partial reimbursement for very high cost special education placements.
- Involves a claiming process.
- Paid in arrears—in a given fiscal year, the district must be able to cover tuition expenses, but can apply circuit breaker funding in subsequent years as an offset to the budget.

The proposed budget number to be voted by Town Meeting does not include approximately \$1.6M from grants and circuit breaker that is applied to SPED costs. The overall budget for SPED has increased for FY'21. The decrease in the non-salary category reflects a change (cost neutral) from contracted services to the salary category.

### SPED Trends

- Increase in preschool aged students with significant, often complex, special education needs
- Increased need for therapeutic programming, particularly for elementary aged students with emotional and behavior challenges
- Increase number of students in the transition program for students age 18-22
- Increased need to respond to students experiencing acute mental health issues who require short-term, out-of-district placements.

### Proposed Staffing Changes in Special Education

- 1.0 FTE Elementary Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) tutor \$40,000
  - This position (along with some staff reallocation) will increase support for elementary aged students with emotional and behavioral challenges by expanding the STAR Program capacity.
- 1.0 FTE Preschool Instructional Assistant (IA) \$26,00
  - To provide identified services of students' IEPs at the Integrated Preschool
- 2.0 FTE High School Instructional Assistant (IA) \$52,00
  - To provide additional service in the FLEX program
  - To provide additional services in the transition program related to job site and community college placements
- Reallocate 1.5 FTE SLP/OT/PT and Reading Services from contracted services to salaries: \$0
  - Some specialized services are currently provided through contracted services rather than district employees
    - This model makes sense when the service is short-term, highly specialized, or the number of hours provided does not warrant hiring a district employee
- Based on an analysis of IEPs, it makes sense to bring certain services in-house in FY'21
  - This decision will change FTEs and where the service is charged to in the budget
  - This reallocation will allow the District to do more with the same dollars (i.e., eliminate agency fee)

#### Non-salary Changes in Special Education

- Planning for a 3% escalation for known tuitions.
- Budget builds known increases in transportation related to transportation contracts

#### FY'21 Capital Budget Ms. Jn-baptiste presented

Budget is made up of Technology, FF&E, HVAC, Roofing, Repair/Maint, Copiers, Vehicles

FY'19 \$867,000 request, FY'20 \$1,017,000 request, FY'21 \$1,017,000 request

FY'20 \$0 for vehicle, FY'21 \$60,000

#### Other requests:

- Approval of FY'20 Chapter 70 education state aid allocation (\$160,182) that was released after FY'20 Town Meeting.
- Increase Special Education Reserve Account (\$350,000)
  - \$350K represents the approximate cost of 1 residential placement and 1 moderate day placement
- Fund two additional capital projects
  - Continued security upgrades (\$150,000)
  - Final phase of Thurston Middle School HVAC Univent project (\$150,000)

#### Budget requests that were deferred:

- Special education staffing to increase the capacity of the PEER Program
- Increase in special education contracted services allocation
- Additional literacy support at the middle school
- Increase in English Language Learner (ELL) staffing to respond to increased regulatory demands
- More instructional assistants at all levels
- An additional elementary science specialist

#### How does Westwood compare?

- FY'18 district per pupil spending is in the median of the comparison group of *Boston* magazine's top 25 high schools (2019)

#### Next steps

- Meeting with Finance and Warrant Commission (FinCom) Education Subcommittee on Feb. 4th
- Presentation at Fin Com on Feb. 11th
- School Committee Budget Hearing on Feb. 13th
- FinCom budget hearings throughout March
- Annual Town Meeting on May 4th

Ms. Plotkin had a question about the Special Education Reserve account. If approved and funded, and if spent this year, would continue replenish the SPED account and ask the town in the future to fund? Yes.

Mr. Donahue asked if more information could be researched about the Chinese School and then publicize to the public that this could be an option to have your child learn Mandarin at an earlier age.

Ms. Plotkin wanted to confirm the chart of the top 25 high schools was on ranking, not on spending. That is correct.

Mr. Mullin had a question about the number of FTEs for specials; Library, PE, Art, General Music. There are 4.6 FTE librarians, 3.7 FTE for PE, 3.6 FTE for Art, 3.9 FTE for General Music. Art, General Music, Instrumental Music, PE are clearly based on sections. Common grade-level planning time is scheduled when special occurs. Library is not driven by the number of sections. We want the library to be open and to be able to go into classrooms too.

Ms. Plotkin suggested thinking of ways the librarian could fill in the gaps since they are an instructor too. The library position could be built for that.

Mr. Mullin had question about the repair/maintenance line. The \$50,000 amount for security could that be increased? It is tight for this year.

### **Action Items (8:20–8:25)**

#### Approval of Minutes: January 16, 2020

A motion was made to approve the January 16, 2020 minutes by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

#### Vote to approve policy JJH-E: International/Out of Country Field Trips

A question placed to the attorney was could language be put in the policy that would indicate that the bus drivers would have security background checks. Ms. Parks reported that the attorney recommended not to place that language in the contract because it isn't realistic and policies shouldn't be aspirational, but reflect something that can be implemented. She feels it is already covered with having chaperones and have a rule of "threes," where students are always in no fewer than three student groups.

Ms. Plotkin still had unanswered questions about this. Ms. Parks suggested to have the attorney come to speak to the Committee and explain her reasoning and to table this approval until a future meeting.

#### Vote to appoint MSBA Signatory

A motion was made to appoint the School Committee Chairperson as the Duly Authorized Representative of the School Committee to sign all appropriate MSBA documents made by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

## **Adjournment**

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

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

## **Meeting Adjourned at 8:25pm**

List of Documents and Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- Proposed FY'21 Budget binder
- Proposed FY'21 Budget presentation
- Meeting Minutes of January 16, 2020
- JJH-E: International/Out of Country Field Trips
- Memo explaining appointment of MSBA Signatory