

**Westwood Public Schools
School Committee Minutes
Westwood High School Little Theater
Thursday, February 13, 2020
7:00pm**

Present:

Anthony Mullin, Chairperson
Joseph Jowdy, Vice Chairperson
Carol Lewis, Clerk
Maya Plotkin, Committee Member
Charles Donahue, Committee Member
Ayesha Tariq, WHS Student Representative - Not in Attendance

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 7:03pm
Pledge of Allegiance**

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center

Superintendent's Report (7:03-7:05)

Scholastic Art Awards

Ms. Parks reported. Twenty-three Westwood students received awards. More than 10,000 pieces of art and writing were submitted to this competition. Westwood students received a total of 29 awards: 9 Gold Key awards, 6 Silver Key awards, and 14 Honorable Mentions. Gold Key award winners works will be on exhibit at Tufts University from March 14-22.

Other

Thurston Middle School Math Counts team just competed in Metro South Math Counts competition. Mr. Lamb, the advisor, had special congrats for the team who took 1st place team overall and will advance to the state competition. A student received 1st overall and will advance to the state competition, another student received 3rd place overall, and yet another student received 1st place in the countdown round.

Thurston Middle School teacher Ms. Cecere and her class worked on a service project and wanted to do something for military service members. The students had an idea of collecting video games. Ms. Cecere reached out to her neighbor who is currently serving in Afghanistan and he thought this was a great idea. The class received 20 new/used games and sent them

over to Afghanistan. A letter was received thanking the class for the games as well a flag that flew over the base in Afghanistan. The school will display these items.

Ms. Jn-baptiste received an e-mail from a parent this week showing a picture of an exterior window at the Sheehan School where caulking had fallen off the window into the mulch bed. She wanted to provide an update. The parent thought asbestos or lead would be in the paint from the caulk. This is a reasonable question given the age of the building. An inspection was completed last summer for asbestos at Sheehan. The report didn't address exterior caulk for asbestos. Ms. Jn-baptiste looked at guidelines from the State regarding asbestos and learned that, when intact, not to disturb it. Per the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, when there is some damage, assessing the size of the area would then determine how to fix it. A visual inspection of caulk will take place to determine the scope of damage and then we can test for asbestos. A similar approach is taken with lead paint. It is quite possible there is no lead paint. When there is, it is mostly a concern where chipping and peeling. If we see this, we would test and respond. The District will conduct this over February vacation. Ms. Jn-baptiste also stated that the District conducts regular building checks with more frequency in the winter. She expressed appreciation for the note from the parent.

School Committee Chair and Subcommittee/Liaison Updates (7:13-7:15)

Building Project and Community Engagement Update

Ms. Plotkin reported. The school Building Committee met this morning. The Evaluation Subcommittee recommended 7 of the 15 designs to a short list. The Committee will vote on this in March to see if those will move forward. The next Community Forum will be on March 2, 2020 at 7pm at the Thurston. This will be an opportunity for questions and feedback. The detail from this morning's meeting was recorded and is available from Westwood Media Center.

Other Liaison reports

None

Discussion Items (7:15-8:32)

FY '21 Budget Hearing (7:15-7:17)

Ms. Parks presented the FY'21 budget at last month's meeting. She has met with the Finance Commission Education Subcommittee as well as the full Finance Commission this week.

Public Comment on FY '21 proposed budget

No comments on the budget.

Proposed Student Opportunity Act Plan (7:17-7:26)

Ms. Parks included a draft of the plan to the Committee. With the new legislation, this will increase funding to public schools. Every district needs to submit this plan by April 1, 2020 to identify how the district would spend the increased funds to support the sub group of students to

close in on the achievement gap. About \$30 per student will be received. This money was already accounted for in the FY '21 budget. It is not extra money that will come in after the budget. Students with disabilities is the sub group and will focus on the English Language Arts gap in grades 7 and 8.

Public Comment on Student Opportunity Act Plan

No comments on the plan.

METCO Program Update (7:26-8:00)

Ms. Lateefah Franck, METCO Director, presented. The vision is bridging two communities for 50 years. Westwood came into this program during the second wave of towns joining the METCO program.

What is METCO - Historical Overview

The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) Program is one of eight voluntary inter-district school desegregation programs in the U.S. and the second longest running program of its kind

In the past, parents would put their child's name on a waitlist soon after birth to get into the METCO program. The list never seemed to move much. Now there is no longer a waiting list. It is a yearly lottery. Westwood has 54 students. The number of students who graduate determines how many seats are open each year.

Successes of WPS METCO

- Boston resident students from WHS class of 2020 have been accepted into 17 colleges and universities
- LTARace (Let's Talk about Race, Culture, and Ethnicity) High School student group
 - 50+ students are in this group.
- The Tenacity Challenge
 - This year, sending two teams with a mix of Boston residents and Westwood residents on the team
- Courageous Conversations "Mr. Joy"
 - Received a grant to bring this play. Will be shown at the Norwood Theater on 3/16/2020. Field trip for students during the day and an evening production as well. There will be a talk back after the production at both the day and night productions.
- METCO Director's Association Educator conference.
 - This includes faculty from elementary, middle, and high school.

How Can the Westwood community continue its support of METCO?

- Advocacy Day is March 19, 2020
 - State funding has been on an upward trajectory over the last four years. Hoping to get a 6% increase for funding of this program for the next school year. Mrs.

Franck encouraged getting in touch with the State Representative to indicate how important this funding is for this program.

Q & A

Mr. Donahue commented that Westwood starts in 6th grade and that it is a hard age to start and leave behind friends. Has there been thought on starting the program earlier? Ms. Franck has been going through Westwood's history with METCO and at one time did enroll elementary students, then there was a time with only high school students, and now it has been 6th-12th grade. The District that she came from enrolled students in METCO grades Kindergarten-Grade 2. Advantage is that the students only know this program, however there has to be a lot of support in place for the students and parents as this is a lot different from where they come from. Advantages of starting in middle school is that the student understand what school is and commit to knowing the rigors of Westwood vs the school they are coming from. Middle school is a tough age no matter who you are, so that is always a challenge.

Ms. Plotkin asked if any programs are presented within the schools for the entire school district? The LTA Race program is open to all Westwood High School students. On February 27, 2020 the African American Read-In will take place at the High School and is open to all students. At the middle school, students can stay after and participate in after school activities and high school students have come down to talk with them about diversity. This past Tuesday was one of those meetings and the middle school students wanted to open this discussion up to more students and that is being looked into.

Initial Considerations about Potential School Consolidation (8:00-8:32)

Ms. Parks presented. Comparing the five elementary schools in enrollment with TEC schools, Westwood is amongst the lower enrollment. She showed enrollment for Deerfield, Hanlon as individual schools within each classroom. She then showed enrollment with the two schools combined. She showed enrollment for Sheehan, Hanlon as individual schools within each classroom. Showed enrollment with two schools combined. In both scenarios, having two schools combined makes the enrollment numbers better to break out into classroom sizes within the suggest guidelines.

Ms. Jn-baptiste followed.

Capital budget impacts:

- Consolidation of two schools leads to immediate and significant cost avoidance because the maintenance on our oldest buildings will be expensive in the coming years.

Examples of projects within the next year at Deerfield and Sheehan:

- \$35K boiler replacement
- \$12K in doors and fence repair

Example of projects within the next 5-7 years at Deerfield and Sheehan:

- HVAC replacements or repairs, exceeding \$400K
- Electrical panel, \$100K
- Cafeteria floor, \$30K
- Roof work in stages, at \$200K-\$550K in each stage

Operation Budget impacts:

- Consolidation of two schools would have a positive, long-term impact on the non-salary operating budget, specifically in two areas:
 - We will get more for our utility dollars. Our oldest buildings are inefficient from a water and energy standpoint. A consolidation takes two buildings quickly offline, reducing waste and improving comfort.
 - Maintaining 4 buildings vs. 5 buildings is expected to be less costly in the area of service and maintenance plans. For example, fewer HVAC systems.

Ms. Plotkin explained there are three pieces to consolidation. Education, Operational, Redistricting piece. The report on the redistricting piece has not yet been received. It will be presented at the April School Committee meeting. She stated that going from five to four schools should be seriously considered.

Ms. Lewis agrees that we need to be educationally and fiscally responsible to consolidate. We get more out of the funding from the MSBA with a consolidation, than just a repair and/or building a new Hanlon.

Mr. Donahue has learned from this process that the current school buildings are not built to support how education is taught today.

Mr. Mullin brought up how administratively having 4 buildings will help with staff needing to go to different schools and could be consolidated into one location.

Public Participation (8:32-8:33)

None

Ms. Jowdy stated that she has decided not to run for re-election. She has served on the School Committee for 27 years and said that she has enjoyed every moment.

Action Items (8:33–8:37)

Approval of FY '21 Budget

- Approval of FY '21 operating budget
- Approval of FY '21 capital budget
- Approval of Chapter 70 education state aid increase

A motion was made to approve the FY'21 operating budget of \$48,187,500 by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

A motion was made to approve the FY '21 capital budget of \$1,017,000 by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

A motion was made to approve the FY '20 Chapter 70 education state aid increase of \$160,182,000 by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes: January 23, 2020

A motion was made to approve the January 23, 2020 minutes by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes: January 30, 2020

A motion was made to approve the January 30, 2020 minutes by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Vote to accept gifts

- Gift of \$502.50 from Westwood Boosters Club
- Gift of \$800.00 from Hanlon School PTO

A motion was made to approve a gift for \$502.50 from the Westwood Boosters Club to purchase celebratory gifts was made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

A motion was made to approve a gift of \$800.00 from the Hanlon School PTO to purchase a virtual reality sandbox was made by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Adjournment

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

Official Vote : Unanimous approval

Meeting Adjourned at 8:37pm

List of Documents and Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- Scholastic Art Awards
- Proposed Student Opportunity Act Plan
- METCO Program Update
- Initial Considerations about Potential School Consolidation
- Meeting Minutes of January 23, 2020
- Meeting Minutes of January 30, 2020
- Memo explaining gift of \$502.50 from Westwood Booster Club
- Memo explaining gift of \$800.00 from Hanlon School PTO