

**Westwood Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
Westwood High School Professional Development Room
Thursday, March 5, 2020**

Present:

Anthony Mullin, Chairperson
Joseph 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 7:03pm
Pledge of Allegiance**

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center

Superintendent's Report (7:03-7:26)

Upcoming Student events

Ms. Parks reported. The high school musical, "The Addams Family," is Friday, March 13, 2020 and Saturday, March 14, 2020. Ayesha Tariq, the High School's School Committee Student Representative, is the playing the lead role of Morticia. The cast has gone around to the elementary schools and performed clips from the show and then did activities with the students.

March 19, 2020 at 7pm will be Encounters of the Arts at Westwood High School which show-cases visual and performing arts.

Change to van 7D license requirement

The District assessed how the passenger van was being used. How you use it determines if it is considered a school bus or a school vehicle. It is being used as a school vehicle. We do not need the 7D license for this vehicle. There will be in-house training on safety regulations for the use of the van.

Middle School Schedule Review

Mr. Redmon and Mr. Kuklantz interviewed and have now contracted with a scheduling consultant. The consultant will start in May. Focus groups will be held in the spring and will work through next November. There will be a committee that will work with the consultant and then

will make a recommendation to Mr. Redmon. Mrs. Lewis volunteered to be the School Committee representative on the scheduling committee.

Update on Coronavirus

Ms. Parks sent a letter yesterday to the community and an update again tonight. She has been in touch with the state Department of Public Health who gets information from the Centers for Disease Control. Guidance changes day to day. The risk is still considered low in Massachusetts. The guidelines for persons who travelled overseas has changed as of today. The district will be implementing that guidance.

If student or family member has traveled to China, South Korea, Italy and Iran, they will need to stay home for 14 days after they return home. This includes students and family members. This guidance is retroactive. The district will implement this.

Ms. Parks wanted to commend the Operations Department staff who have been working hard the last several days. They have cleaned and disinfected all school buildings last weekend and will do so again this weekend. Disinfecting of high touch areas, door knobs, etc. are being conducted daily. The school has an inventory of all cleaning supplies. The hand sanitizer supply is well stocked. Nurses are going into elementary classrooms for instruction on proper hand washing. If it became necessary to close a school it could be directed by the Department of Public Health or Department of Education. There could also be the possibility that if something relevant to Westwood occurs, the district would make a decision to close. If the school was closed for 1-2 days it would be a snow day make up policy. If longer, then the district would have to be in contact with Department of Education as to what the process would be to make up and reach the 180 days of school. There is a waiver that is possible for this. Safety is the primary goal. Providing continuity of instruction is a second priority. The District is looking at options such as online teaching with classroom, or doing tasks on your own.

Ms. Parks and Ms. Hanscom had a conference call with the district nurses today. Tomorrow they will attend a meeting as participants of the town Emergency Management Team to review the town's established protocols. Ms. Parks will be a part of a superintendents meeting with the Commissioner of Education. Ms. Parks will update the community when there are any new updates.

The Governor has asked for schools to cancel international trips. Ms. Parks needs to recommend to cancel the trip to Spain that was originally scheduled for April vacation. Mr. Donahue wondered if possibly another date might work out if this clears up? Possibly. Of the 33 students enrolled in the trip, 28 of the students are sophomores so would have other years to participate in an overseas trip. Also parents are asking about 8th grade trip to Washington, D.C. April 10th is the deadline for cancellation. The District will keep watch on this. Mr. Redmon will let the parents know about this to see how they feel about their children going on the trip.

Mr. Donahue asked if there is an extended period of time of not being in school have those plans been figured out? These plans have been worked on and have had meetings about this and will make sure that every student would have internet access.

Cell Phone Tower

The cell tower lease is not being renewed. The District has reached out to AT&T and will have it removed by the end of the calendar year. Asked where the tower is being moved? Don't know at this point, but AT&T will definitely be looking for another place to lease in the area. Will make sure the building is being restored to the way it was before the tower was installed.

School Committee Chair and Subcommittee/Liaison Updates (7:26-7:49)

Building Project and Community Engagement Update

Ms. Plotkin reported the School Building Committee Evaluation Subcommittee presented seven options to be recommended for the short list. The options are a Hanlon-only renovation, Hanlon addition/renovation only for 315 students, new build Hanlon-only for 315 students, three options of consolidating Hanlon/Deerfield at the Hanlon site, one option consolidating Hanlon/Sheehan at the Hanlon site, and one option consolidating Hanlon/Sheehan at the Sheehan site. This was presented to the community on March 2, 2020.

The March 20, 2020 meeting of the School Building Committee will vote on the short list. Then the Evaluation Subcommittee will look at more detail at these seven options to get down to one option for the School Building Committee in late May and will be presented to the community on June 4, 2020. The School Building Committee will take a vote on the final option in June. Either one remaining or two remaining schools would need to be addressed based on the decision.

First option would be to submit a statement of interest to MSBA for both Deerfield and Sheehan in April 2020 and find out if accepted in December 2020. In June, when the final decision is made, if the school is being consolidated, that statement of interest could be pulled from the MSBA. The OPM called and asked the MSBA about this possible option. We are more than likely not going to be asked to continue in the process, but there is no harm in submitting this application. Members of the School Committee didn't feel it is a good use of time to submit this application. Ms. Parks would submit the application if it was their decision to do this. If you get through, then it is about a 5 year process from start to finish. It would be quicker to make a decision and do the project without the MSBA. Ms. Parks will look into getting this MSBA application started next week to see if it could be done by April 8, 2020. If doable, she will let the School Committee know next Friday.

A second option is that the School Committee could allocate some funds to do a study for the remaining school. Can allocate the funds now and then decide which building once the final option is submitted in June and then start on the design option. Approximately \$30,000 would be needed to fund the study for Deerfield or Sheehan. Starting in June 2020, the study could start using those funds for the building. The May 2021 Town Meeting would be the presentation for funding for design money for the other building. Then go back for construction funding in May 2022 Town Meeting for construction building. The new building would be complete in 2024-2025. There is a need to reassure the community that the other building is still sound and safe and the students will still learn as they have been.

Other Liaison reports

None

Public Participation (7:49-7:49)

None

Discussion Items (7:49-8:45)

Student Screen Usage Update (7:49–8:13)

Mr. Ouellette presented. He has presented this to his colleagues in the TEC collaborative and presenting a workshop at a conference.

Looked at 6th graders in 2013 vs 2019. In 2013, 48% of 6th graders didn't have a smart phone. In 2019, 48% of 6th graders do have a smart phone. All students have a lot of access to technology.

Guiding questions:

- What does the research say about screen time in general?
- What does our own data show us about screen time use in Westwood?

Based on these findings, what adjustments can the Westwood Public School make, if anything, to address the way school-based technology is used by our students?

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* and American Academy of Pediatrics are the leading authorities in research on this topic. Both have moved away from focusing on the amount of hours being used, to how it is being used.

It is important for schools to teach technology for strategic purposes with a responsibility to build these skills on technology use.

Survey Data: Typical day

- Middle School students averaging 300 minutes a day of using technology
- High School students averaging 364 minutes a day of using technology

Academic use about the same amount for each age group, but non-academic use is a lot higher at high school level.

Opinion Questions:

Students strongly prefer doing writing assignments digitally rather than by hand.

Middle school students prefers digital handouts instead of paper

High school students prefer paper instead of digital handouts

Spend too much time looking at a screen (school and personal)

Neutral at middle school

Strongly agree at the high school

Findings & Considerations

Encourage intentional use of technology (SAMR framework, promoted by ITC's)

- All things being equal, consider non-tech options

Share report with teachers

- Middle School teacher collaborative study: Effects of Technology on Students: Promoting Healthy habits in/out of School

Responsible Use instruction for students and teachers

- District PD course: The Digital Citizen: How to Implement and Promote a Safe, Effective, Healthy, and Well-Balanced Digital Presence.

Partner with families

Parent programming (Dr. Elizabeth Englander, Screenagers, etc.)

Deledao parent portal

Parent "how to" workshop

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

Proposed increases to Summer Enrichment and Extended Day Rates (8:13-8:29)

Ms. Jn-baptiste reported. The Summer Enrichment Program has not broke even the last two years. Proposed a tuition increase plan over the next 3-year period.

- 2019 was \$150 for 1 week, \$120 for 2-4 weeks
- 2020 \$190 for 1 week, \$170 for 2-4 weeks
- 2021 \$220 for 1 week, \$200 for 2-4 weeks
- 2022 \$240 for 1 week, \$220 for 2-4 weeks.

Mr. Donahue asked if scholarships are available. Yes they are.

A motion was made to approve the Summer Enrichment Tuition by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval.

Extended Day rates haven't changed in ten years. The Program has not broke even for 3 of the last 5 years. Staffing has needed to change; ABA, Tutors, Aides, and Nurses are now on staff.

- 2019-2020: \$4.25 per hour \$280.50 per month.
- 2020-2021: proposing \$4.80 per hour, \$316.80 per month.
- 2021-2022: proposing \$5.50 per hour, \$363 per month. '
- 2022-2023: proposing \$6.10 per hour, \$402.60 per month.

Will take a few years with increases to get to where we should be. A 43% increase over 3 years.

Mr. Mullin is concerned about this and would like to see more data about this suggested increase before making a decision to support this or not. Ms. Jowdy was shocked this hadn't been looked at in 10 years. The budget needs to be monitored more closely with the new staffing model. These programs need to break even or it affects the operational budget. There are scholarships for Extended Day, too. Ms. Plotkin would like to see the chart for all the fees for the proposed increase. With the strong concerns, the School Committee meeting chose to table this discussion for its next meeting.

Initial discussion about revising building use rates (8:29-8:41)

Ms. Jn-baptiste reported. At next month's School Committee meeting, want to propose revised rates for building use. School facility is intended to be a community-based function and to charge for cost/not to make a profit. It has been twelve years since this has been reviewed.

Key loss drivers:

- There are new custodial contracts in place. It has increased 7.7% since user group fees were last approved.
- Currently do not charge for custodial staffing on weekdays and a flat fee is the same if use is 2.5 hours or 4 hours, so overtime costs for custodians can incur. The fee currently isn't determined based on the type of event (i.e., food events have more clean up).
- The use of school facilities drive expenses in the areas of utilities.
- Full time Building Use Coordinator is paid from the building use account.
- If there is damage, unless reported right away, is hard to know when or who is responsible.
- There has been a deficit of \$15,000 a year for the last 3 years in the budget use account.

The School Committee's opinion was sought on how to drive these rates. Mr. Donahue: How do other towns do this? Use that as a guide for creating the recommendation. Ms. Plotkin suggested a flat fee that would go to the damage fund and is non-refundable. Damage to property isn't a high priority. Covering custodial cost, Coordinator salary, as well as utilities are the top priority to fund.

Proposed policy changes (8:42-8:45)

- BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings
- JFABD - Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services
- JFABE - Educational Opportunities for Military Children
- JFABF - Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care

Ms. Parks reported this is the first reading of the policies. These policy changes are updated for DESE requirements. The JFABD, JFABE, and JFABF are straight forward. There was a court case in Massachusetts about public comment which stems for this BEDH policy. This proposed policy is a guideline. Suggested the Committee take a look at the BEDH policy to discuss at the next meeting.

Action Items (8:45-8:52)

Approval of Minutes: February 13, 2020

A motion was made to approve the February 13, 2020 minutes by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Vote to accept the Education Plan for submission to MSBA

A motion was made to accept the Education Plan by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of the Student Opportunity Act Plan for submission to DESE

A motion was made to approve the Student Opportunity Act Plan by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of JJHE - International/Out-of-Country Field Trips

A motion was made to approve policy JJHE - International/Out-of-Country Field Trips by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Vote to transfer funds from Special Education Reserve account

A motion for the Westwood School Committee to hereby authorize the transfer of \$285,000 from the Special Education Reserve Fund to the Special Education Cost account was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Adjournment

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

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting Adjourned at 8:52pm

List of Documents and Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- Student Screen Usage Update
- Proposed increases to Summer Enrichment and Extended Day Rates
- Initial discussion about revising building use rates
- Proposed policy change to BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings
- Proposed policy change to JFABD - Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services
- Proposed policy change to JFABE - Educational Opportunities for Military Children
- Proposed policy change to JFABF - Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care
- Meeting Minutes of February 13, 2020
- Education Plan for submission to MSBA
- Student Opportunity Act Plan

- JJH-E - International/Out-of-Country Field Trip
- Memo to transfer funds from Special Education Reserve account