

**Westwood Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
Virtual Meeting<sup>1</sup>  
Tuesday, April 28, 2020  
6:30pm**

**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 6:39pm**

Roll-call attendance:

Mr. Mullin: Present  
Mrs. Jowdy: Present  
Mrs. Lewis: Present  
Mr. Donahue: Present  
Mrs. Plotkin: Present

Mr. Mullin recognized the live stream to provide real-time, public access to the activities of the School Committee. The link was included on the official meeting posting to provide real-time, public access to the activities of the School Committee in accordance with the March 12, 2020 Executive Order of Massachusetts Governor. The meeting was also recorded by Westwood Media Center for later broadcast.

**Superintendent's Report (6:41–7:16)**

Updates regarding extended school closure

- Remote learning plans

Ms. Parks reported. The school closure will remain in place for the rest of the school year. Updated guidance from the Department of Education was received. Westwood had already

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<sup>1</sup> Remote meeting held in accordance with Executive Order of MA Governor, March 12, 2020 (Attached)

ramped up beyond what was expected in the last closure announcement. The Department of Education provided power standards, curriculum frameworks for each grade or discipline that needs to be covered. Westwood is taking a look at those standards to make sure that it is in alignment. Also, the guidance does not prioritize synchronous assignments; feels they want to offer flexibility to students. Westwood is thinking in the opposite direction, to incorporate more synchronous assignments. The District may make changes at the middle school to log in with class during class time. The District will also need to gather information at the end of the year on how students are doing to determine fall learning. Attendance is very strong. Student Services sent out a letter to families last week for students with an IEP; currently working on remote learning plans for all of these students. It was announced today that no waivers will be sent from the federal government for students on special education. That will be a challenge.

The schools have partnered with Westwood Youth and Family Services on programming for parents. The Special Education Parent Advisory Council and school principals are starting to have virtual coffees. Mrs. Jowdy asked what are the most prevalent comments? Comments are all over the place: not enough work, too overwhelming, families are experiencing this a lot differently. Mrs. Jowdy asked about group meetings with elementary students? Not only will the teacher meet with the entire class synchronously they will also breakout with small groups of students. This is also occurring at the secondary schools too. Mr. Donahue asked if all the technology issues have been cleared up as well as making sure all METCO students are not having any trouble connecting. All the technology issues have been resolved. For grades K-2, packets need to be printed. Some families didn't have a printer at home. There is a system now that packets are being distributed to those families. Ms. Parks will be on a call tomorrow with another 20-25 superintendents to talk about the new guidelines received by the state.

- School event planning

The disruption to students was a big one and they are experiencing loss. Principals are aware of these things and are working to keep as many traditions as can be. A June 7, 2020 virtual graduation had been decided on last week. Mr. Bevan communicated this yesterday and he heard back from a lot of students who wanted to wait until August in hopes for a "physical" graduation. The new proposed date would be August 9, 2020 for graduation. July 26, 2020 would be the date to determine if a traditional ceremony could take place on August 9. If not, a virtual graduation will take place on that date. The students are asked to vote on the preferred graduation date by tomorrow to determine the date of graduation. Ms. Parks wanted to thank Mr. Bevan for listening to the students and making changes.

Mr. Mullin would enter this in record later during public participation, but he wanted to acknowledge a message from class president Drew Bass and classmates that they are very grateful that Mr. Bevan and the administration listened and are willing to be flexible and publicly express their appreciation.

A lot of items were left in the buildings. The District is working on a plan on how to clean out lockers, and get other items back to students and staff. The District is waiting to hear more on regulations about summer camps and see what can happen with Summer Enrichment. The State anticipates having this guidance available by mid-May.

- Budget implications

The closure will have a financial impact. There will be some savings, as utility bills will be lower. Additional expenses include increased cleaning protocols and equipment needed for that. The loss of revenue is important for Food Service and Extended Say employees. FY'21 and FY'22 budgets will be impacted more than FY'20 budget. There are a lot of unknowns right now.

Chapter 70 will be impacted negatively in FY'21. Westwood will feel that impact.

There is an offset of \$780K from Circuit Breaker. The District is reviewing that to see what changes may need to be made in order to backfill. Increased special education costs for next year, particularly for compensatory services due to distance learning, are likely.

Will close out FY'20, trying to preserve Circuit Breaker funding. There is hope that Town Meeting will take place so the budget can be approved. The District's leadership team will go back to the budget using the same approved dollar amount of the budget, but may need to make changes as to where the funds will be used. Timeline for how spending is done will be looked at by the leadership team also. Capital projects that were scheduled for the summer are being reviewed. If the budget is not approved, then there is not a capital budget to use for the summer projects.

### **Public Participation (7:16–7:22)**

The public was able to participate via a form posted at [www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live](http://www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live). They were read during the public participation portion of the meeting.

Mr. Mullin wanted to enter into public record a letter written by Drew Bass, Ashley Kutzer and Sarah Roycroft about graduation and wanted to thank them for the well written letter.

On behalf of the Westwood 2020 Seniors, we wish to request that the decision regarding our graduation ceremony be up for discussion at this time, rather than definitely changed to virtual. While we understand the complexity of this crisis, we hold hope of the prospect that the situation may not be as grave in the weeks and months that follow. Therefore, similar to many other districts in our area, we ask that the decision on how to handle our graduation ceremony be delayed until a later date when a more accurate scenario of this situation will present itself. Additionally, along with the constantly changing nature of this crisis, by not making a definitive decision now, we will be given the time to come up with more creative alternatives as opposed to immediately resorting to a virtual graduation ceremony. If the situation later in the summer is that the crisis remains in its current severity, many in the community have suggested some alternatives that include non-virtual social distancing as follows:

- Chairs set up - 10ft apart from each other on Flahive or large open field (mathematically plenty of space for this) - only parents or possibly no families allowed to attend & have graduation live-streamed for those unable to attend.
- Car parade starting at one place and following a route to ultimately end at WHS where students drive up to get their diploma-people stand socially distance throughout route cheering students on.

- Students park in parking lot, go onto field based on homeroom and get diplomas based on home rooms- less people make it more possible to stand further apart from each other.
- Students have normal graduation, but from parked cars- someone on stage announces and student gets out of car and gets diploma and returns to car.

While all of these potential options would require considerable planning and creativity, we want you to know that a multitude of students and parents would be more than willing to help organize a graduation ceremony that would be memorable and help preserve such a major milestone in our academic careers. If by August the situation is still as severe as it is now, and these other alternatives are either deemed unsafe or logistically unrealistic, we can in that scenario always still revert back to virtual graduation as a last resort. However, for now since we are still unsure as to what the condition of the pandemic will be in the following months, we respectfully request that the decision is delayed until a later date.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With gratitude,

Drew Bass: Senior Class President  
Ashley Kutzer & Sarah Roycroft  
Westwood Class of 2020

A resident of Redwood Road had a question about the travel company refund options for the Spain trip: 30% refund of Spain trip or a voucher for two years to use within a family. Would Westwood continue with this same travel company in order for the voucher to work? If plan to use another travel company, families need to know this.

A resident of Weatherbee Drive is frustrated with how the Carousel travel company is only refunding \$700 of \$2300. Also upset that CloseUp is not refunding the deposit for the D.C. trip, too. Westwood has provided these companies with a lot of money over the years and is upset with how they are handling this.

A resident of Strasser Avenue is upset about the refund policy for the Spain trip and has filed a personal complaint with the Attorney General's office.

Another resident of Strasser Avenue is upset about the refund for the Spain trip.

A resident of Hawthorn Street is not happy with Carousel or Close-Up's refund proposals and feel they are taking advantage.

A resident of Thompson Avenue stated that they can't hold people's money hostage. The resident stated that they are in the business, have cancelled many events during COVID-19, and they have all refunded, except for one. That one was the first week of March.

A resident of Summer Street is concerned about the District breaking ties with Carousel and losing out on the \$2300 voucher.

## **Discussion Items (7:22-7:54)**

### Student travel in 2020-2021 (7:22-7:35)

Ms. Parks, is unhappy with the travel companies for the Spain and Washington, D.C. trips and the responses that have been received. The District's attorney has looked at the contracts and there are no legal grounds. All schools districts are dealing with this issue, no matter which travel companies they are using. They are similarly not having any success. Superintendents have reached out to the Attorney General's office to support districts and to get some relief from the tour companies. A letter was sent to these companies that, in order to continue working with their companies in the future, depends on how they respond to this. A link to the Attorney General's office will be sent to the families affected by this in order to initiate a complaint.

For the Spain trip, the company is offering a voucher for the whole amount of the trip, \$2300, good until Spring 2022; or receive partial refund of \$700. School Committee policy states that trips need to be approved six months in advance. That means a decision needs to be made by mid-October and Westwood would need to use the same company. Families need to choose between the refund or voucher by June 10, 2020. A question was asked about whether families could sell vouchers to others? The thought is that this is possible. With the voucher, it is unknown what companies would be around in two years. There was a question about how could the School Committee decide now what type of trip could take place in two years? Could the voucher be put in a third party account so if the travel company does go out of business would still have the funds for a future trip? Information is needed from the Attorney General's Office. Having to make a decision in October for spring 2021 is unlikely. The School Committee encourages families to reach out the Attorney General in order to get their money back. Vouchers are risky. Mr. Mullin wanted to publicly thank Ms. Flanagan for all the work that she has done with this.

### Impact of closure on transportation contracts (7:35-7:45)

Ms. Jn-baptiste reported. She is working with the Connolly Bus and Van Pool student services bus companies. Guidance received has been to pay for critical services, including transportation. Westwood is part of a consortium of district working with Connolly. The proposal is calculated from the daily rate, minus the cost of labor and gas. The equals 58% of the cost of the full daily rate for 17 buses, and 61% for the METCO bus. Ms. Jn-baptiste indicated that this is a fair and reasonable offer, based on what districts have found with other vendors. The plan is to pay the amount as proposed. Ms. Plotkin asked if there have been any discussions of what the rate would be in the fall if not starting at full capacity? This would be another discussion. This rate only cover for this school year.

Ms. Jn-baptiste is still working with Van Pool on getting information from them. She is also working with other districts on this. They didn't lay off their drivers. The latest proposal has been for 78% of the daily rate. She is still working with them to see more financial information to determine how the 78% was calculated.

Mr. Mullin asked about the accounts payable process for paying vendors. Vendors are only paid once services have been rendered.

Mr. Mullin also wanted to publicly acknowledge a question as to why there is not real-time, live participation in the School Committee meeting, He would love to have that but the Zoom platform has had some issues with other town meetings and the platform that the School Committee meetings is using does not offer real-time, public participation.

#### Status of employees funded through revolving accounts (7:45-7:52)

Ms. Jn-baptiste presented. She spoke with legal counsel regarding unemployment and also met with Town Finance Director Pam Dukeman about the furlough process. A budget steering meeting also took place. There is more federal support to offset some of the unemployment costs, as the town is self-insured. If the District were to execute the furlough for only the school year, and not the summer, there is significant risk. This is because employees may collect unemployment during the summer. Unemployment covers twenty-six weeks. Therefore, she recommend paying Extended Day and Food Service employees for the rest of the school year. It would cost less than potential unemployment claims over the summer and collecting for twenty-six weeks.

#### Possible changes to 2020-2021 school calendar (7:52-7:54)

With the Boston Marathon rescheduled for September 14, 2020, the Governor will make it a state holiday. The School Committee will need to adjust the school calendar because of that closure. Ms. Parks recommended waiting to determine what happens for the start of the next school year.

### **School Committee Chair and Subcommittee/Liaison Updates (7:54-7:59)**

#### Building project and community engagement update

Ms. Plotkin reported. April 30, 2020 will be the community forum regarding redistricting and consolidation. The project is moving forward during this time and it is important to keep this going to stay within the Massachusetts School Building Authority's parameters. The Committee is making access to the forum as easy as possible. It will be held on Zoom webinar by Westwood Media Center. There will be live participation at the end of the presentation. It will be recorded to be watched at a later date, too. It is important to hear from the community about this

#### Other Liaison reports

Mr. Mullin met with Budget Steering Committee. Town Meeting has been rescheduled for June 8, 2020. The Town Election has been rescheduled for June 2, 2020; will offer absentee and early voting, but live polls will also be available.

### **Action Items (7:59-8:03)**

#### Vote on status of employees funded through revolving accounts

A motion was made to continue paying employees funded through the revolving accounts by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote:

Mr. Donahue: Aye  
Ms. Jowdy: Aye  
Ms. Lewis: Aye  
Ms. Plotkin: Aye  
Mr. Mullin: Aye

Vote: 5-0

Result: Approved

Approval of Minutes of the April 14, 2020 School Committee Meeting

A motion was made to approve the April 14, 2020 minutes by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote:

Mr. Donahue: Aye  
Ms. Jowdy: Aye  
Ms. Lewis: Aye  
Ms. Plotkin: Aye  
Mr. Mullin: Aye

Vote: 5-0

Result: Approved

Vote to approve policies:

JFABD-Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services  
JFABE-Educational Opportunities for Military Children  
JFABF-Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care

A motion was made to approve the JFABD-Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services policy by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official Vote:

Mr. Donahue: Aye  
Ms. Jowdy: Aye  
Ms. Lewis: Aye  
Ms. Plotkin: Aye  
Mr. Mullin: Aye

Vote 5-0

Result: Approved

A motion was made to approve the JFABE-Educational Opportunities for Military Children policy by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote:

Mr. Donahue: Aye  
Ms. Jowdy: Aye  
Ms. Lewis: Aye  
Ms. Plotkin: Aye  
Mr. Mullin: Aye

Vote 5-0

Result: Approved

A motion was made to approve the JFABF-Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care policy by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Ms. Jowdy.

Official Vote:

Mr. Donahue: Aye  
Ms. Jowdy: Aye  
Ms. Lewis: Aye  
Ms. Plotkin: Aye  
Mr. Mullin: Aye

Vote 5-0

Result: Approved

### **Adjournment**

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

Official Vote :

Mr. Donahue: Aye  
Ms. Jowdy: Aye  
Ms. Lewis: Aye  
Ms. Plotkin: Aye  
Mr. Mullin: Aye

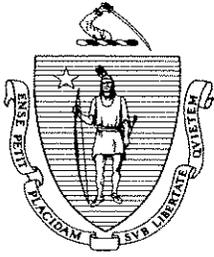
Vote: 5-0

Result: Approved

## **Meeting Adjourned at 8:03 pm**

### List of Documents and Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- Memo from L. Jn-baptiste, dated April 28, 2020, re: Transportation Contracts
- Memo from E. Parks, dated April 24, 2020, re: Foreign travel 2020-2021
- Memo from E. Parks, dated April 24, 2020, re: 2020-2021 Calendar
- Draft meeting minutes of April 14, 2020
- 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



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**  
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**CHARLES D. BAKER**  
GOVERNOR

**KARYN E. POLITO**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**ORDER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS  
OF THE OPEN MEETING LAW, G. L. c. 30A, § 20**

**WHEREAS**, on March 10, 2020, I, Charles D. Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting pursuant to the powers provided by Chapter 639 of the Acts of 1950 and Section 2A of Chapter 17 of the General Laws, declared that there now exists in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts a state of emergency due to the outbreak of the 2019 novel Coronavirus (“COVID-19”); and

**WHEREAS**, many important functions of State and Local Government are executed by “public bodies,” as that term is defined in G. L. c. 30A, § 18, in meetings that are open to the public, consistent with the requirements of law and sound public policy and in order to ensure active public engagement with, contribution to, and oversight of the functions of government; and

**WHEREAS**, both the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (“DPH”) have advised residents to take extra measures to put distance between themselves and other people to further reduce the risk of being exposed to COVID-19. Additionally, the CDC and DPH have advised high-risk individuals, including people over the age of 60, anyone with underlying health conditions or a weakened immune system, and pregnant women, to avoid large gatherings.

**WHEREAS**, sections 7, 8, and 8A of Chapter 639 of the Acts of 1950 authorize the Governor, during the effective period of a declared emergency, to exercise authority over public assemblages as necessary to protect the health and safety of persons; and

**WHEREAS**, low-cost telephone, social media, and other internet-based technologies are currently available that will permit the convening of a public body through virtual means and allow real-time public access to the activities of the public body; and

**WHEREAS** section 20 of chapter 30A and implementing regulations issued by the Attorney General currently authorize remote participation by members of a public body, subject to certain limitations;

**NOW THEREFORE**, I hereby order the following:

(1) A public body, as defined in section 18 of chapter 30A of the General Laws, is hereby relieved from the requirement of section 20 of chapter 30A that it conduct its meetings in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, provided that the public body makes provision to ensure public access to the deliberations of the public body for interested members of the public through adequate, alternative means.

Adequate, alternative means of public access shall mean measures that provide transparency and permit timely and effective public access to the deliberations of the public body. Such means may include, without limitation, providing public access through telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body while those activities are occurring. Where allowance for active, real-time participation by members of the public is a specific requirement of a general or special law or regulation, or a local ordinance or by-law, pursuant to which the proceeding is conducted, any alternative means of public access must provide for such participation.

A municipal public body that for reasons of economic hardship and despite best efforts is unable to provide alternative means of public access that will enable the public to follow the proceedings of the municipal public body as those activities are occurring in real time may instead post on its municipal website a full and complete transcript, recording, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as practicable upon conclusion of the proceedings. This paragraph shall not apply to proceedings that are conducted pursuant to a general or special law or regulation, or a local ordinance or by-law, that requires allowance for active participation by members of the public.

A public body must offer its selected alternative means of access to its proceedings without subscription, toll, or similar charge to the public.

(2) Public bodies are hereby authorized to allow remote participation by all members in any meeting of the public body. The requirement that a quorum of the body and the chair be physically present at a specified meeting location, as provided in G. L. c. 30A, § 20(d) and in 940 CMR 29.10(4)(b), is hereby suspended.

(3) A public body that elects to conduct its proceedings under the relief provided in sections (1) or (2) above shall ensure that any party entitled or required to appear before it shall be able to do so through remote means, as if the party were a member of the public body and participating remotely as provided in section (2).

(4) All other provisions of sections 18 to 25 of chapter 30A and the Attorney General's implementing regulations shall otherwise remain unchanged and fully applicable to the activities of public bodies.

This Order is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until rescinded or until the State of Emergency is terminated, whichever happens first.

Given in Boston at 6:40 PM this 12th day of  
March, two thousand and twenty.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles D. Baker". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

CHARLES D. BAKER  
GOVERNOR  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts