

Westwood School Committee Agenda
Virtual Meeting¹ via Zoom
Community Forum
Thursday April 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- Not in Attendance

Emily Parks, Superintendent
Lemma Jn-baptiste, Director of Business and Finance

Meeting called to order 7:02pm

Roll-call attendance:

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

Mr. Mullin recognized the live stream courtesy Westwood Media Center to provide real-time, public access to the activities of the School Committee. He also shared credential information for the public to participate in the forum.

Discussion Items (7:02-7:57)

Elementary Schools Building Project Update on Redistricting Options

Ms. Parks presented.

Building Project Feasibility Study Update

- School Building Committee has narrowed list to seven options
- Options being evaluated to determine a preferred option in June
- Final solution may involve consolidation of either the Hanlon and Deerfield Schools; or the Hanlon and Sheehan Schools

¹ Remote meeting held in accordance with Executive Order of MA Governor, March 12, 2020. (Attached)

- Redistricting Consultant (Cropper GIS) reviewed the existing district boundaries to examine impact of two potential consolidations

She explained that the Westwood elementary schools were in the lowest quartile of student size within the TEC Cooperative schools, as well as some other schools that Westwood compares themselves to regarding MCAS scores. Out of the list of schools, Lexington and Needham have five or more elementary schools, but they have a lot more students than Westwood. She also showed a chart explaining the enrollment numbers used in developing the FY'21 budget for Deerfield and Hanlon. She explained how some of the numbers are not the best as far as either being too big for one classroom, yet too small of a number to break out into two classrooms. She then showed a chart that combined both Hanlon and Deerfield and the numbers come together a lot better as breaking out into class sizes within guidelines. She did the same comparison for Sheehan and Hanlon.

Additional Staffing Impacts

- Reduces need for part-time staff or sharing staff across buildings, allowing for more flexibility and efficiency in scheduling (e.g., Currently one art teacher travels between Hanlon and Deerfield).
- May be some reduction in staffing levels of specialists and other service providers, although staffing is largely a function of the student/staff ratios, so reductions would probably be modest.

Operation Budget Impacts

Consolidation of two schools would have a positive, long-term impact on the non-salary operating budget, specifically in two areas:

- The District will get more for its utility dollars. Oldest buildings are inefficient from a water and energy standpoint. A consolidation takes two buildings quickly offline, reducing waste and improving comfort.
- Maintaining four buildings vs. five buildings is expected to be less costly in the area of service and maintenance plans (e.g. fewer HVAC systems).

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
- Examples 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), \$200-\$550K in each stage

Redistricting Report:

Cropper GIS was tasked with:

- How best to redistrict for a Hanlon-Deerfield consolidation at Hanlon
- How best to redistrict for a Hanlon-Sheehan consolidation at Hanlon
- How best to redistrict for a Hanlon-Sheehan consolidation at Sheehan

Factors that Cropper GIS examined include:

- Enrollment projections
- Student population densities in each district
- Length of bus rides
- Traffic patterns
- Walking opportunities
- Location of the schools within districts
- Neighborhoods
- Real estate projections, including housing turnover

Ms. Parks showed a map of consolidated Hanlon and Deerfield, with 560 students on Hanlon site. It included the existing District Map and the Proposed District Map. If the line between Deerfield and Hanlon is removed, it doesn't affect the other three districts. It affects the fewest number of students.

She then showed a map of consolidated Hanlon and Sheehan, with 685 students on Hanlon site. It included the existing District Map and Proposed District Map. All of the elementary districts would be changed, except for the current Downey district. The number of elementary students affected would be 464.

Ms. Parks then showed the map of consolidated Hanlon and Sheehan, with 685 students on the Sheehan site, referred to as option 1. It included the existing District Map and Proposed District Map. All of the elementary districts would be changed. The number of elementary students affected would be 528.

She then showed the map of consolidated Hanlon and Sheehan, with 685 students on the Sheehan site, referred to as option 2. It included the existing District Map and Proposed District Map. All of the elementary districts would be changed. Ms. Parks indicated that it is not an improvement from option 1.

Consultant's recommendation:

Deerfield & Hanlon at the Hanlon site for 560 students

The recommended option:

- Impacts smallest number of students/families
- Least impact to current traffic patterns
- Resulting elementary school district boundaries are reasonable for:
 - Student population density (where students are concentrated throughout)
 - Geographic layout (using major roads/physical landmarks to set boundaries)
- Greatest potential for student walkers across the district
- Maintains existing neighborhoods

- Creates favorable utilization across schools

Next Steps:

- May 29: School Building Committee meets to review 7 short-list options with cost
- June 2: Community Forum to review options with cost
- June 11: School Committee meets to vote enrollment/redistricting
- June 12: School Building Committee meets to decide on sustainability options
- June 19: School Building Committee meets to determine and vote on preferred solution

Stay informed

- Watch meetings and updates from Westwood Media Center
- Visit www.westwoodschoolbuilding.com
 - Subscribe to email list
 - Submit questions
 - Review reports, presentations, and minutes

Q & A

A resident of Pine Lane asked why didn't the redistricting study look at redrawing lines for all five elementary schools to relieve overcrowding and to increase learning space? The consultant was not asked to look at that because if only a new Hanlon with 315 students was built, then there wouldn't be a need to redistrict other schools. The Committee wanted to look at the consolidation options for redistricting.

Another resident of Pine Lane asked to elaborate on the potential of the buses being parked at the Hanlon site, rather than the high school parking lot and how that would look and impact the Hanlon district/neighborhood. Because of the parking shortage at the High School, the District wanted to look at what options there might be to have them park at the Hanlon. This is just being explored as a possible option. Additional traffic studies will be conducted if this is to move forward.

A resident asked how the remaining older school would be brought up to code. The School Committee is aware that there would be one or two schools that would need to be updated. The School Committee has already allotted some money to start a study on the updates needed at the other school. Once the decision is made in June, the work on that study can begin.

A resident asked about considering putting in buffer zones as part of redistricting? Yes, that would be considered. There is currently a buffer zone at University Station which has worked.

A resident asked to what extent sustainability is being considered in the short list. The School Building Committee has established a sustainability subcommittee. Along with some members of the School Building Committee, it includes Tom Philbin, the Town's Energy Manager, and a representative of the Westwood Environmental Action Committee. They are reviewing the sustainability options and will come up with a recommendation to the School Building Committee as to what it should look like.

Mr. Mullin asked about the maps that were shown tonight. Ms. Parks wanted to clarify that the maps shown were not street-by-street. That would be looked at that very precisely if the Committee moves forward with redistricting.

Ms. Plotkin commented if Hanlon and Sheehan were consolidated, it would leave Deerfield, which is a very small school with regards to number of students. Small enrollment is as much of a challenge with class sizes as it is with large numbers.

A resident asked how much growth is being anticipated with the new project. Design enrollment of 560 with Hanlon/Deerfield consolidation and 685 with Hanlon/Sheehan consolidation reflects enrollment projections and accounts for new growth.

A resident asked whether the Deerfield School could be used for an after-school community center to alleviate the library overcrowding. If there is a consolidation, the School Committee would determine if they would continue to maintain the unused building by the School Department. If not, then the Town gets the building and the Town, along with the residents, could make a determination on how to use that building.

A resident asked on the one out of two schools left out of the project, will the State be willing to help fund through MSBA for repairs/new building ,or does Westwood need to pay for all of it? It is not likely to be included in a new MSBA project, when in a current project with them. It is assumed that any work to the remainder school/schools will be on the Town to fund.

Mr. Donahue commented how important it is for residents to keep being involved and ask any questions regarding the project.

A resident asked if Deerfield was redistricted, and the building was vacant, could the school turn it over to the Town to subsidize the cost for the repairs of the remaining school? If the school is vacant then the school is required to turn over to the Town. Then the Town would determine the use. No financial exchange will take place.

A resident asked what would be the timeline with the other building repairs along with the new project? May 2021 would be the vote for a new building. At that same meeting, ask to fund design money for the other building. Then go back to the town after that to fund the construction. It would be approximately 6-12 months behind the other project.

Adjournment

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

Official Vote:

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

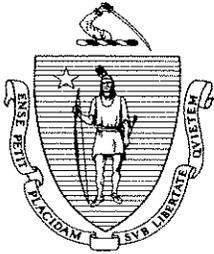
Vote: 5-0

Result: Approved

Meeting adjourned at 7:57pm

List of Documents and Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- Elementary Schools Building Project Update on Redistricting Options presentation



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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, reading "Charles D. Baker". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR
Commonwealth of Massachusetts