

**Westwood Public Schools  
School Committee Agenda  
Virtual Meeting  
Wednesday, May 20, 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

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 7:02pm**

Roll-call attendance:

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

*Mr. Mullin recognized the live stream 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 in accordance with the March 12, 2020 Executive Order of Massachusetts Governor Baker.*

*Meeting was also recorded by Westwood Media Center.*

**Superintendent's Report (7:03–7:39)**

High School Principal Search

Ms. Parks provided an update on the High School Principal search. The position was posted last week. A message was sent to the community on how they can be involved in this process. A survey for families and teachers to respond to on what they are looking for in the next principal has been prepared. In addition, parents willing to serve on the search committee are being sought. To date, more than 12 parent volunteers have indicated that they are willing to serve on the search committee. Ms. Parks will determine the best representation to serve on the search committee. The interviews will take place on June 12, 2020 and will identify 2-4 finalists to return to Westwood the following week. There will be an opportunity to meet the candidates that week.

The process will be done virtually and all that information will be sent out on how to participate. The plan is to make an announcement the week of June 22nd on who will be hired. June 30th will be Mr. Bevan's last day. Ms. Parks and the School Committee thanked Mr. Bevan for all that he has done for Westwood High School and wished him all the best in his new job at Algonquin Regional High School.

#### Updates regarding COVID-19 impacts

Ms. Parks reported. On May 18, Governor Baker announced a 4-phase plan to reopen the Commonwealth. Information for summer and fall planning hasn't been received yet. There is a working group at the state level that is specifically focused on reopening schools. They will provide guidance in four categories: physical and virtual learning environments, teaching and learning, operations and business services, behavioral health and social emotional learning. This guidance is anticipated by the end of June. The state superintendents board has expressed to the Governor the need for this guidance before the end of June. This message was received and acknowledged and there is hope that it will indeed come before the end of June. Districts will need to identify different scenarios and plan for each. Initial conversations have started to identify questions and categories and what to think about. The district leadership team will have a full-day retreat in a few days to discuss this. After the retreat, they will develop the plans and get groups started. Advisory groups including teachers, parents, and town officials will work on this. The state working on what is possible for summer learning. School buildings are closed for teacher and student learning until June 29th. Summer camp guidance is to come soon, but it seems a little late for what would start July 1st. It is hoped that in-person extended school year programming will continue during the summer. If that doesn't work, virtual learning would definitely take place. The Summer Enrichment Program is still up in the air right now; may not be able to hold this since we don't have guidance from the state. Summer would be very busy operationally, too. May need to change classroom designs, etc. Also Summer Enrichment enrollment may be significantly less for social distancing reasons, which could play a factor on whether the program would be able to run. Ms. Parks has reached out to the Recreation Department to find out what their plans are for the summer, since they use the buildings and need to see what their needs would be.

Mr. Donahue had questions for the State committee: He had read there was testing in Germany for students two times a week since they have gone back to school, can Massachusetts do this? What are the plans for health for teachers/administrators if health risk being with students? Is testing an option or even available? State Superintendents have expressed to the Commissioner of Education the need for coordination between communities in the proposed plan to reopen.

#### Senior Graduation and Events

On May 8, 2020, High School faculty and staff had parades for the seniors. Multiple parade routes were setup to make sure all senior houses were passed by. Four routes were in Westwood and 20 cars went to Boston to make sure the METCO students were included as well. Wanted to thank Ms. Davenport and Ms. Holmes for organizing this.

Graduation task force with 22 students and 5 teachers. Top priority of this committee is to listen to student voices. A traditional graduation ceremony is being attempted for August 9, 2020. Ms.

Davenport is the graduation coordinator, along with Ms. Haberman. Invited Mr. Bevan to come back on August 9, 2020 and he will preside over the ceremony.

May 22, 2020 is senior superlative day. Seniors are driving to the high school parking lot for this event at 9:45am. The superlatives will be announced through the PA and faculty will be placing gold stars on the car of the winners and when they drive out, KISS108FM will be doing a shout out to the class of 2020 playing the song voted on by the seniors. There are plans in the works to return items to the school and receive caps and gowns.

On June 4th and 5th there will be senior photo ops with their diplomas. Students will receive their diplomas. Portraits will be used for slide show for class day.

June 7th Class day at night at 8:00pm, where seniors and families can arrive at the high school, one car per family. Drive-in movie screen will be brought in. Will be giving out the awards, senior video. A recessional of cars will be led by police and fire, to head down Rt. 109.

Ms. Parks also would like to recognize the Westwood Community in Action group. This is made up of parent volunteers. It's a non-profit organization and they run the All-Night Graduation Party. They are looking for the town to support the seniors on June 7th, around 7:30pm to be at the foot of their driveways to send off the seniors by neighborhood as they drive to the class day event. A reverse-911 call will be sent to all residents about this and ask them to be a part.

### **Public Participation (7:39–7:40)**

The public was able to participate via the form posted at [www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live](http://www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live).

There was no public participation.

### **Discussion Items (7:40-8:50)**

#### Discussion of FY'21 budget adjustments (7:40-8:40)

Ms. Parks reported. A lot has changed since the budget was developed.

#### The Budget Landscape

The budget has many unknown variables.

- Chapter 70 funding
  - State revenue projections down \$5-6 billion.
  - No clear estimate how large the resulting impact on Chapter 70 will be.
  - Frame of reference: In 2008, Chapter 70 was cut by 10%.
- Our operating budget includes about \$1.5 million in federal funding grants and “circuit Breaker” reimbursement. This revenue is included as offsets in the operating budget.
  - Significant concern that this funding will be substantially decreased.
  - Circuit Breaker currently reimbursed at 75%; during prior economic downturn in 2009, was cut to 30%.
- Uncertainty about revenue generated through revolving accounts if next year is disrupted.
- Our anticipated costs, or potential costs, have changed since the FY'21 budget was developed as a result of the unprecedented and unanticipated world situation.

- Enhanced cleaning protocols, requiring additional cleaning equipment, supplies, washing stations, and personnel hours
- Increased special education costs related to compensatory services and Extended School Year (ESY)
- Additional technology costs?
- Disrupted or alternate schedules?
- Need for social distancing in classrooms or on buses?
- Staff who require and qualify for leaves of absence?
- These costs could be substantial, but are difficult to estimate with any certainty with current information.

CARES Act- Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds: So far, ESSER funds have been tied to Title 1 formula. Westwood, therefore, has received very little ESSER assistance. Westwood's amount is \$20,000.

#### Stabilizing the Budget

- Need FY'21 to be approved by the end of the fiscal year at proposed level.
- Through Budget Steering process, Town has indicated that it is prepared to fill the gap created by a decrease in Chapter 70 funding.
- Need to change how we allocated funds in the proposed FY '21 budget so that we can "backfill" gaps created by offsets that may be cut and address emerging needs and costs.
- This is challenging given that the school's budget is mostly comprised of salaries.

#### Guiding Principles

- Make decisions around hiring and scheduling this spring that will allow us to preserve programs, stabilize budget, and adapt to this new unprecedented environment.
- To the extent possible, maintain class sizes with SC guidelines. If not possible to do so, continue to prioritize reasonable class sizes in grades K-2 given early literacy and numeracy needs, at moments of transitions (Grade 6 and 9), and vulnerable populations.
- Make hiring/staffing choices that are sustainable given upcoming enrollment trends and potential elementary consolidation.
- Maintain student mental health and social/emotional programming and services.
- Carefully consider HS student elective choices; to the extent possible fill elective sections using student alternates rather than running very small classes.
- To the extent possible, maintain momentum on important priorities and initiatives, recognizing that new initiatives for 2020-2021 will probably be put on hold.
- With all of the above in mind, examine what can be accomplished through attrition.

#### Strategy

- Implement a hiring freeze
  - Examine educational impact of not filling positions that are vacant due to retirements, resignations, non-renewals, or are new.
  - Hire only those positions where the impact is untenable.
  - Create a master schedule and make teaching assignments based on this assumption.
  - If there is more certainty at the state and federal level by August, consider which positions could be filled.
- Carefully examine non-salary items for elimination and/or defer purchasing.

- Continue to make projections about next year's needs and costs by engaging in planning for various re-opening scenarios and structures.
- Assess the level of financial risk that the School Committee is comfortable with.
- Work collaboratively with bargaining units who are currently in negotiations.

Mr. Mullin asked about capital projects and how those were going to be looked at. That has been thought about and will need to re-prioritize summer capital projects. Will plan to talk about this at the next School Committee meeting.

Mr. Donahue asked how is remote learning going for special needs/METCO students and whether any changes need to be made. SEPAC so far feels doing a great job in this challenging environment, but not perfect.

Ms. Lewis asked if there will be any ramp up for summer assignments because of this virtual learning? These conversations have not happened yet.

#### Tier 1

Looking at cutting around \$1million

- eliminate 5.2 FTE teaching positions at the high school.
- eliminate 1.0 FTE teaching position at TMS.
- eliminate 1.0 FTE elementary instructional assistant.
- eliminate 1.0 FTE elementary library position.
- eliminate .4 FTE K-12 Library Director.
- eliminate .4 FTE Director of Safety and Security (new).
- eliminate 1.5 FTE HS instructional assistants (new).
- eliminate daily substitutes at the high school

Total (\$790,000)

Minus anticipated turnover (\$690,000)

Ms. Plotkin asked by removing 1.0 FTE library the money is re-allocated to another area? Yes, librarians would be working across buildings.

Mr. Mullin asked about the security position along with the capital, worries about pushing this off for too long. The Committee pledged to revisit these mid-year.

#### Tier 2

- Eliminate 3.0 elementary classroom teachers
  - Retain 1.0 FTE teacher at Deerfield to co-teach in grade 2 and grade 3 singletons, which are projected to be 3-4 students over guidelines (half day in each class for core academic instruction)
  - Collapse from 3 to 2 sections (grade 3 Downey, grade 3 Hanlon, grade 4 Sheehan)
    - Considers placement of students in substantially separate specialized programs

Total (\$270,000)

Minus anticipated turnover (\$195,000)

Ms. Plotkin asked if grade 3 Hanlon students are being pulled out? No, there is no specialized program at this school. They have had 3 sections for this class since kindergarten. The class size will now be 22 and 23 for each section.

Mr. Mullin wanted to keep an eye on the Downey sections.

Tier 3

- Eliminate .5 FTE TMS ELA Specialist (new).
- Eliminate .5 FTE Administrative Assistant

Total \$70,000

Ms. Parks offered an alternative to this tier. The district leadership team would like to preserve the .5 TMS ELA Specialist position since it is important to continue with providing this support. The Superintendent along with the district leadership team, would like to give back the contractual salary increases to try to preserve the ELA Specialist position. This would make up about 1/2 of this amount. The School Committee members were very grateful for this offer, knowing how hard they all work and deserve their increases.

Ms. Plotkin commented it was a very thoughtful list that was presented. A lot of work went into that. What is proposed makes sense to her.

Mr. Donahue thanked Ms. Parks for the thoughtful prepared list. Also he wanted to share that on Niche, it ranked Westwood the 6th best public school in the state.

Mr. Mullin wanted to talk about capital and security at future meetings.

#### Report on 2019-2020 District Goals (8:40-8:43)

A lot of progress was made until this shutdown.

The four strategic objectives are

- Meaningful Learning Experiences
- Coherent, Connected Curriculum
- Healthy and Supported School Community
- Facilities for the Future

Made a lot of progress on these goals. Some were postponed due to the closure, work to re-examine the TMS schedule, school start time committee, hiring director of safety/security. All others did make progress.

#### Update to building project PDP submission (8:43-8:47)

Ms. Parks reported. The Preliminary Design Program has been submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). It includes how many classrooms we should be planning for in each enrollment scenario. MSBA guidance is 560 student enrollment with 4 classrooms per grade; 685 student enrollment with 5 classrooms per grade. Westwood was planning for additional classrooms, 5 sections for 560 students and 6 sections for 685 students. The additional

classrooms wouldn't be part of reimbursement from the MSBA. A third set of enrollment projections was done. Based on the findings, the District feels that the MSBA proposal is sufficient and there is no need to plan for additional classrooms. Ms. Plotkin commented these are peak enrollment numbers and she feels very comfortable with the MSBA classroom numbers.

#### Remaining 2019-2020 and summer School Committee meeting dates (8:47-8:48)

Proposed adding a couple of meetings in the summer: Thursday July 9th and Thursday August 6th.

#### 2020-2021 School Committee meeting dates (8:48-8:50)

Proposed calendar for next year. Have had two meetings scheduled in January historically and maybe worth to pencil in a few extra dates because of the situation? The Committee agreed to plan for two meetings in January and play it by ear if additional meetings are needed throughout the year. Ms. Parks will bring back the proposed schedule at the June meeting to vote on.

### **School Committee Chair and Subcommittee/Liaison Updates (8:50-9:04)**

#### Building project and community engagement update

Ms. Plotkin reported they works is being done on the Preferred Schematic Report (PSR). The evaluation criteria subcommittee is evaluating the short list of seven options. That will be presented to the School Building Committee next week. The final option will be presented to the community on June 4, 2020. This date changed from June 2, 2020 because the town election is that day. A final decision will be made in mid-June. The preferred design will be submitted to MSBA in July along with the PSR. The District anticipated hearing back in August from the MSBA.

#### Process on addressing changes to budget during year: initial discussion

Mr. Mullin thought it would be helpful to start discussing this, and start changes in this process. Small changes don't need to be engaged, however if there are changes in FTE or possibly large dollar amounts, he feels there should be some notification. He wanted thoughts from other committee members. The committee would like to get some guidance from the administration on this but felt that it would be important to get notification if there would be FTE changes. Also looking for guidance from the administration on possible dollar threshold amounts for notification.

### **Action Items (9:04-9:09)**

#### Annual vote on School Choice

WHEREAS the Educational Reform Act of 1993 requires that the enrollment of non-resident students under the School Choice provision unless the Committee votes by June 1 not to participate, and

WHEREAS the School Committee provision takes away money from the sending district and awards it to the receiving district, and

WHEREAS Westwood's per pupil expenditure is greater than the maximum allowable reimbursement, which means Westwood would subsidize each choice student, and

WHEREAS there is no provision for selecting students who might better fit Westwood's educational system, and

WHEREAS once Westwood accepts a pupil it must keep the pupil through graduation even though Westwood's demographic situation might change considerably, and

WHEREAS it is likely that a number of students will return to their sending districts or otherwise leave Westwood, thus creating a potential income loss, now hereby be it

RESOLVED that the Westwood School Committee respectfully declines to participate in the School Choice Program with the provision that should surrounding school districts subsequently and prior to June 1 decide to accept the provisions of School Choice, the Westwood School Committee reserves the right to do likewise in order to protect its fiduciary interests in this matter.

A motion was made by Mrs. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote:

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

Vote: 5-0

Result: Approved

#### Approval of Minutes of the April 10, 2020 School Committee Meeting

A motion was made to approve the April 10, 2020 minutes by Mrs. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote:

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

Vote: 5-0

Result: Approved

Approval of Minutes of the April 28, 2020 School Committee Meeting

A motion was made to approve the April 28, 2020 minutes by Ms. Plotkin. Seconded by Mrs. Jowdy.

Official Vote:

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

Vote 5-0

Result: Approved

A motion to approve the April 30, 2020 Community Forum Minutes

A motion was made to approve the April 30, 2020 minutes by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Mrs. Jowdy.

Official Vote:

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

Vote 5-0

Result: Approved

A motion to approve the May 11, 2020 School Committee Minutes

A motion was made to approve the May 11, 2020 minutes by Mrs. Jowdy. Seconded by Ms. Plotkin.

Official Vote:

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

Vote 5-0

Result: Approved

### **New Business (9:09-9:21)**

The School Committee wanted to thank Ayesha Tariq for serving as its student representative. They congratulated her as she plans to attend Wellesley College. Wellesley swag is on the way for her as a gift from the Committee. She thanked the Committee and said that she enjoyed the meetings.

The School Committee wanted to recognize Mrs. Jowdy for her 27 years of service on the Westwood School Committee. Ms. Parks wanted to thank her for being a wonderful role model. A big party is being planned for her in the future. Mr. Donahue expressed what a pleasure it has been serving with her. Mr. Mullin expressed she was a pleasure to work with, and appreciated her mentorship and always keeping the kids first. Ms. Plotkin expressed that her advice and guidance have been invaluable. Mrs. Jowdy cares for the kids and the town so much and she has been a wonderful mentor and friend. Ms. Lewis served with her for 10 years and said it has been a pleasure. As a parent, she wanted to thank her for her service. She always puts all the children and teachers first and that has made her a wonderful School Committee member. There will be a dedication and the high school little theater will be named the Josepha Jowdy Theater. Mrs. Jowdy expressed how it has been such a privilege to serve. She wanted to thank the committee, administration, and staff that she has worked with.

### **Executive Session (9:21)**

To conduct a collective bargaining session and to discuss strategy with respect to litigation, both of which would have a detrimental effect on the position of the school committee if the discussion was held in open session. The Committee will not return to public session.

A motion to adjourn the meeting to executive session was made by Mrs. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote :

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

Vote: 5-0

Result: Approved

### **Meeting adjourned at 9:44pm**

List of Documents and Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- FY'21 budget adjustments document
- Report of 2019-2020 District Goals
- Memo discussing remaining 2019-2020 and summer School Committee meeting dates

- Proposed 2020-2021 School Committee meeting dates
- Annual vote on School Choice
- Meeting minutes for April 10, 2020
- Meeting minutes for April 28, 2020
- Meeting minutes for April 30, 2020
- Meeting minutes for May 11, 2020