

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Westwood, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES

May 20, 2021

Attendance and Call to Order

The meeting, held remotely¹, was called to order at 8:30am by Chairperson Maya Plotkin. Also present were: Vice Chair Charles Donahue, Clerk Anthony Mullin, Carol Lewis, and Amanda Phillips. Superintendent Emily Parks, Director of Student Services Abby Hanscom, and Director of Business and Finance Lemma Jn-baptiste were present on behalf of the district. Emily Parks also recorded the minutes.

Mrs. Plotkin recognized the live stream of the meeting, which was provided for real-time, public access to the activities of the School Committee. Members of the public were able to view a live stream of the meeting via the Internet at www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live. Westwood Media Center also recorded the meeting for later broadcast on their platforms.

Public Participation

Members of the public were invited to participate via Zoom.

There were no members of the public that wished to participate.

Discussion Item

Second reading of Revised Policy EBCFA: Face Masks

Chairperson Plotkin stated that the School Committee is playing catch-up on the face mask policy. Last week, the Committee held its first reading of the revised policy. Subsequently, Governor Banker held a press conference on face masks and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued additional guidance regarding their use. DESE's guidance indicates that students do not need to wear a facemask outdoors at recess. The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association also issued guidance whereby students playing sports, spectators, or officials do not need to wear face masks outdoors. The mandate remains in-place when indoors.

Therefore, there has been subsequent revision to the policy for review:

A face mask that covers the nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings and on school transportation, even when social distancing. Masks must be worn on school grounds at large gatherings or events in accordance with DESE's Supplemental Guidance for Student Groups and School Events for School Year 2020-2021.

Anthony Mullin made a further suggestion, including language specific to indoor mask breaks and meal breaks, whereby face masks will not be required if appropriate social distancing is enforced. This suggestion was incorporated into the revision. Superintendent Parks noted that, generally, mask and meal/snack breaks take place outdoors.

Amanda Phillips raised two concerns. She asked why the DESE guidance indicates that staff still need to wear masks. Superintendent Parks did not know why that was the case, but given the change in the State's mask requirements announced for May 29, the point will probably soon be moot.

Mrs. Phillips then asked whether the district would be enforcing the requests of families that would like their children to continue wearing masks outdoors. Superintendent Parks remarked that teachers are unable to track and enforce each family's circumstances. However, teachers are using language to normalize the option (e.g., some students wear sunscreen at recess, wear a hat, etc.).

Superintendent Parks reported that the Commissioner has indicated that summer programs will be considered as part of the current school year. Therefore, this guidance applies for the summer as well. Guidance for the fall is anticipated in early June. The policy will certainly need to continue to be revised.

¹ Remote meeting held in accordance with Executive Order of Massachusetts Governor, March 12, 2020

Superintendent Parks then reported that new graduation guidance was issued yesterday. The high school administration is reviewing this over the next couple of days. A lot of planning for graduation and other events has already taken place. Any new updates or changes will be shared with families.

The Superintendent asked the community for flexibility and understanding as there is limited capacity to redo the plans for all of these end-of-year events. Chairperson Plotkin echoed the sentiment.

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to waive the third reading of the policy. Seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Roll-call vote:

Carol Lewis: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Charles Donahue: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

MOTION made by Carol Lewis to approve the revised policy as further amended today. Seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Roll-call vote:

Carol Lewis: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Charles Donahue: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Carol Lewis.

Roll-call vote:

Carol Lewis: Yes
Maya Plotkin: Yes
Charles Donahue: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

The meeting adjourned at 8:47am.

Documents / Exhibits Used at Meeting

- Revised Policy EBCFA – Face Masks for the Committee’s discussion