

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Westwood, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES

December 9, 2021

Attendance and Call to Order

The meeting, held remotely¹, was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Maya Khuri Plotkin. Also present were: Vice Chair Charles Donahue, Clerk Anthony Mullin, Carol Lewis, and Amanda Phillips. Superintendent Emily Parks, Assistant Superintendent Allison Borchers, Director of Business and Finance Lemma Jn-baptiste, and Director of Student Services Abby Hanscom were present on behalf of the district. John Cianciarulo recorded the minutes.

Chair 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 available online at www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live. It was also recorded for later broadcast on Westwood Media Center's platforms.

Chair Plotkin advised the Committee and the public that the technical issues requiring a fully remote meeting in November and December have been resolved. The Committee will resume meeting in-person in January.

Superintendent's Report

COVID-19 Updates

Superintendent Parks shared charts showing the total case count and average daily incidence rates of COVID-19.

Current COVID-19 Cases

Preschool: 1
Deerfield: 3
Downey: 6
Hanlon: 2
Martha Jones: 8
Sheehan: 2
Middle School: 6
High School: 5
District: 2
Total: 35

Primary

Preschool: 1
Kindergarten: 2
Grade 1: 3
Grade 2: 3
Grade 3: 3
Grade 4: 5
Grade 5: 2

Secondary

Grade 6: 4
Grade 7: 0
Grade 8: 2
Grade 9: 2
Grade 10: 1
Grade 11: 0
Grade 12: 1

¹ Remote meeting held in accordance with an Act relative to extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the State of Emergency.

Of the 28 student cases, four are fully vaccinated and six are partially vaccinated. All of the staff cases are of fully vaccinated individuals.

Percentage of 5-11 Year Olds with At Least One Dose

Wayland: 92%
Sherborn: 82%
Hopkinton: 82%
Medfield: 81%
Needham: 80%
Natick: 72%
Dover: 68%
Holliston: 67%
Ashland: 52%
Westwood: 48%
Canton: 48%
Medway: 47%
Walpole: 44%
Dedham: 44%
Millis: 38%
Norwood: 36%

A second vaccination clinic for district students ages 5-11 took place today.

Elementary lunch will return indoors in school cafeterias following vacation.

As of next week, principals will no longer send letters to the school community for each positive COVID case. The dashboard will be updated every Wednesday, the same day it is reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The link will be sent to all families by email each week.

Director of Facilities Search

Director of Operations Ken Aries is retiring at the end of the month. The district has hired Tom Carey as the Director of Facilities, effective later this month. He previously held the same position at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

FY'23 Budget Development

The district leadership team continues to work on developing the proposed FY'23 budget. Superintendent Parks stated that the proposal will likely include additional counseling supports across the district and a Dean of Students at the Middle School.

Superintendent Parks then shared some photos of students engaged in learning activities throughout the district.

Public Participation

Members of the public were invited to participate via Zoom.

Brendan Reeves of Parker Street spoke in support of the district's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and in expanding the METCO program to the elementary level.

Juliana Belding of Oriole Road spoke in support of expanding the METCO program to the elementary level and the district's equity audit.

Patty of Hawthorne Street spoke in support of expanding the METCO program to the elementary level.

School Committee Chair Update/Liaison Reports

Chair's Update

The School Committee held its first session of office hours last month. The next session will be January 6.

School Building Project Update

The project is in its final stages before moving to the contractor selection process. The Aesthetics and Design Subcommittee met today to finalize interior finishes and material selections and provide feedback to the design team. An additional meeting will be scheduled in January to make a formal recommendation to the full School Building Committee.

Cost estimates at 60% are anticipated next month. It is anticipated that some value engineering will need to take place due to higher market costs.

A contractor will be on board in the spring, with ground breaking expected sometime in the summer.

COVID-19 Medical Advisory Group Update

There was no update.

School Start Times Subcommittee

The Subcommittee held a kickoff meeting last week. Subsequent meetings have been scheduled through June.

Policy Review Subcommittee

The Policy Review Subcommittee is in receipt of many materials. A meeting will be scheduled soon.

Other Liaison Reports

Charles Donahue asked about information on families that have chosen to withdraw from the district. Superintendent Parks will examine the data.

Discussion Items

METCO Program Expansion

Assistant Superintendent Borchers and METCO Director Lateefah Franck presented on the proposed METCO program expansion.

The presentation began by highlighting the district's LTARCE (Let's Talk About Race, Culture, and Ethnicity) group and other METCO events for students and families.

METCO Program

- Most (30) are K-12 programs. Westwood is one of just three districts that starts in middle school.
- METCO Structure
 - The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provides oversight of the program statewide, including grant disbursement.
 - METCO, Inc. is contracted by DESE as the student applications and support vendor.
 - METCO districts manage the daily operations of the program.
- Funding: Allocations for the next fiscal year are based on a three-year enrollment lookback.
- Westwood METCO grant covers the transportation, METCO Department staffing, professional development, and community programming.

METCO Funding

The METCO Program is classified by DESE as a marginal seat program.

FY'22 METCO Budget

The total budget for Westwood's program is \$341,076.

- Transportation--\$100,500
- Salaries: \$177,000
- Professional Development: \$26,500
- Community Outreach and Partnerships: \$11,076
- Educational Resources (Tutoring, Materials, Stipends): \$26,000

Opportunity for Expansion

- METCO Inc. and Legislators lobbied for increased funds
 - Per-pupil funding increases for FY'20, FY'21, and FY'22
 - Lobbyist and legislators support METCO vision for program expansion
- Legislature and DESE intend to use increase in FY'22 funding for expansion support
- Conversations in spring and early fall lead to a preliminary proposal
- Approval pending School Committee support

Enrollment Grades

- Fall 2022
 - 32-36 students across all grades, Kindergarten through grade 5, in one school
 - 4-6 students per grade
- In subsequent years, focus on K-2 as much as possible
- Flexibility to add seats in any grade

Anticipated FY'23 Budget (Includes Elementary Students)

The total budget for Westwood's program would be \$588,038.

- Transportation: \$202,500
- Salaries: \$321,000
- Professional Development: \$22,500
- Community Outreach and Partnerships: \$13,038
- Educational Resources (Tutoring, Materials, Stipends): \$29,500

FY'22 Supplemental Funds for Planning and Preparation

- Equity Audit
- Staffing (Elementary Coordinator, Liaison/Bus Monitor, expanded role for Director)
- Professional Development
 - Summer Institute for staff (curriculum, school culture)
 - Equity Leaders (training)
 - Family workshops (PTO, Site Council, Welcome Club)
- Program space preparation
- Materials
- Dedicated transportation (van)
- Robust onboarding program for students (summer)

Expansion of the program also provides an opportunity to diversify staff.

It is anticipated that the initial cohort will be at the Hanlon School, which, geographically, is a good location. In addition, bringing METCO students into Hanlon will keep class sizes within or below School Committee guidelines.

First Reading of Policy JFABB – Acceptance of International and Exchange Students

The Committee held a first read of the Acceptance of International and Exchange Students policy. Chair Plotkin recommended an edit to clarify that the host organization would provide support for the host family for the duration period.

Review of Anti-Bullying Plan

Director of Student Services Abby Hanscom stated that the district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan must be re-authorized every two years. Some edits were made for accuracy and clarity. The plan is compliant with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requirements. Public input will be sought.

Proposed 2022-2023 School Calendar

The proposed calendar is fairly standard. June 19, Juneteenth, is now a State holiday, which has been incorporated into the calendar.

Superintendent Parks recommended, and the Committee agreed, that Friday, December 23 should be an early release day for students.

First Reading of Revised Policy EBCFA – Face Masks

The Committee held a first read of a revised Face Masks policy, which addressed the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's exemption for schools with a vaccination rate of 80% or more students and staff. The Committee determined that it should take effect January 18, 2022.

Action Items

Approval of METCO Program Expansion

Carol Lewis experienced technical issues and was unable to vote.

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to expand the METCO Program. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: **Yes**
Charles Donahue: **Yes**
Anthony Mullin: **Yes**
Carol Lewis: No vote
Amanda Phillips: **Yes**

Result: 4-0-0 – Approved

Approval of Rates for Tuition-Based Programs

The working group to review revenue-based activities met to further analyze financial information. The group's proposals are being put forth to the Committee as a full recommendation.

The rates include:

- Prodigy Program Tuition (FY'23, FY'24, and FY'25)
- Before School Tuition (2022-2023)
- Extended Day Tuition (2022-2023)
- Integrated Preschool Tuition (FY'23)
- Extended Day Group Leaders, High School Interns, and Other Hourly Non-bargaining Staff pay scale (FY'22)

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve the rates for tuition-based programs. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

Approval of Rates for Building Use

Lemma outline the proposed rate structure for building use for FY'23, FY'24, and FY'25.

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve the rates for building use. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

Approval of Superintendent's 2021-2022 Goals

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve the Superintendent's 2021-2022 goals. Motion seconded by Charles Donahue.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

Vote to Change School Building Committee membership

With Tom Carey being appointed the new Director of Facilities, the membership of the School Building Committee must be updated.

MOTION made by Carol Lewis to appoint Tom Carey as a member of the School Building Committee. Motion seconded by Charles Donahue.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: Yes
Charles Donahue: Yes

Anthony Mullin: Yes
Carol Lewis: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

Approval of November 9, 2021 meeting minutes

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to approve the meeting minutes of November 9, 2021. Motion seconded by Charles Donahue.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

Acceptance of Gift from Westwood High School PTO

MOTION made by Carol Lewis to accept a gift in the amount of \$2,432.50 from the Westwood High School PTO. Motion seconded by Charles Donahue.

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

New Business

Chair Plotkin thanked Ken Aries for his thirteen years of service to the district. The Committee echoed her sentiments.

Charles Donahue requested feedback from the School Committee's Office Hours. Chair Plotkin will include on next month's agenda.

Adjournment

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

Roll-call vote:

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

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

The meeting adjourned at 9:11pm.

Documents/Exhibits Used at Meeting

- Building Use Fee Increase (FY'23, FY'24, and FY'25)
- Draft 2022-2023 School Calendar
- Draft Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
- Draft revised policy EBCFA – Face Masks
- Draft policy JFABB – Acceptance of International and Exchange Students
- Draft meeting minutes of October 14, 2021 for the Committee's review and approval
- Memo from J. Cianciarulo to School Committee regarding Westwood High School PTO grants, dated December 3, 2021
- Memo from E. Parks, L. Franck. and A. Borchers to School Committee regarding Proposed Elementary METCO Expansion, dated November 29, 2021
- Rates for Tuition Based Programs
 - Prodigy Program Tuition (FY'23, FY'24, and FY'25)
 - Before School Tuition (2022-2023)
 - Extended Day Tuition (2022-2023)
 - Integrated Preschool Tuition (FY'23)
 - Extended Day Group Leaders, High School Interns, and Other Hourly Non-bargaining Staff pay scale (FY'22)
- Superintendent's Goals, 2021-2022