

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Westwood, Massachusetts

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**December 10, 2025**

**Attendance and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:31pm by Maya Plotkin. Also present were Dori Parmelee, JoAnna French, Anthony Mullin and Amanda Phillips. Superintendent Timothy Piwowar, Assistant Superintendent Caitlin Ahern and Director of Finance and Operations Lemma Jn-baptiste were present on behalf of the district.

Alyssa Provazza recorded the minutes.

**Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Piwowar and Ms. Plotkin thanked Sheehan principal Kristen Evans for her 18 years of dedicated service to the Westwood Public School community and wished her a long, happy and healthy retirement. Supt. Piwowar shared photos of Ms. Evans engaging with students and staff over the years.

**Sheehan Principal Search Update**

Supt. Piwowar provided an update on the upcoming Sheehan principal search. Donna Tobin has been appointed interim principal for the remainder of the school year, allowing the district time to conduct a full and inclusive search for a permanent principal.

Supt. Piwowar stated that the process will mirror other recent leadership searches. A screening committee will be formed, with representation from administrators, professional and support staff, families, and a School Committee member. This group will review applications, select candidates for first-round interviews, and recommend finalists. Finalists will participate in site visits at Sheehan, providing opportunities to meet with staff, families, and students. The job will be posted in early January, with a preliminary offer in early March and a public announcement at the March School Committee meeting.

**Chair's Update**

Ms. Plotkin shared that the Long-Range Financial Planning Committee has reconvened, including representatives from town boards, residents, and school leadership. Ms. Plotkin explained that its goal is to develop a flexible, town-wide long-term plan addressing capital and facility needs across both municipal and school buildings. Ms. Plotkin emphasized that while priorities can be outlined, unexpected building needs may require adjustments over time.

Ms. Plotkin reminded the public that the district's facilities study page is available on the website, including a new FAQ document. Additionally, the next School Committee Office Hours will be held on January 12.

Ms. Plotkin thanked Melinda Garfield, outgoing Executive Director of Westwood Media Center, for her leadership and contributions, and welcomed Charlotte Lynch as interim director.

**Liaison reports**

Ms. Parmelee provided updates from the Legislative Council, including student initiatives around sustainability, study spaces, new feminine product dispensers, and school spirit and citizenship. Ms. Parmelee also reminded the community about the Special Education and MTSS parent survey.

**Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**Discussion Items**

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MSBA Statement of Interest

Supt. Piwowar explained that the Statement of Interest (SOI) is the first step in seeking potential partnership and funding from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Supt. Piwowar added that an SOI identifies the district's priority school; it does not commit funding or finalize a project. The SOI must be submitted by April 2026, with an MSBA decision expected in December 2026.

To inform the decision, the district conducted a survey, which received 1,550 responses, including strong participation from students, parents/guardians and staff. Supt. Piwowar reported that the large majority of respondents selected Thurston Middle School, which was consistent when disaggregated by role and by school affiliation. In the open-ended question, respondents cited the urgency of Thurston's needs, building condition, disruptions to learning, health and safety concerns, and the fact that Thurston serves all students in the district.

Committee members discussed the value of an anonymous survey, as well as the importance of student voice. Members acknowledged misinformation in some comments, particularly regarding excess capacity at Pine Hill and the idea of converting Pine Hill into a middle school. Ms. Phillips reiterated that Pine Hill is fully utilized. Ms. Plotkin explained that Pine Hill is too small for middle school enrollment, designed specifically for elementary use, and could jeopardize MSBA reimbursement if repurposed.

Ms. Plotkin provided context regarding prior building decisions, including why Hanlon and Deerfield were prioritized and how facility conditions can change over time. On the topic of enrollment projections, Mr. Mullin reiterated that another demographic study would be done later in the MSBA process.

Supt. Piwowar recommended that the School Committee direct him to prepare an SOI for Thurston Middle School. Committee members agreed that the data supports Thurston as the priority, and emphasized that this step does not determine final design, grade configuration, or whether a project ultimately proceeds.

FY27 Budget Update

Supt. Piwowar shared an FY27 budget update focused on tuition and fees for self-sustaining programs. A 4% increase was proposed for Extended Day tuition. Other fees that may require increases include bus transportation, due to camera installation and an upcoming bid process, and athletics, particularly for ice hockey rental space and other venue access fees. Committee members favored gradual increases and requested updated benchmark data before recommendations are finalized.

Supt. Piwowar shared that the district will be looking for a \$140,000 increase above FY26 in the FY27 base capital budget. Funds will prioritize roofing, technology, and building improvements, including: replacement of devices purchased during COVID; security needs identified by principals; other building improvements guided by the Dore + Whittier facilities study. Mr. Mullin emphasized the need for alignment between budgeted and actual expenditures.

Action Items

**MOTION** made by Anthony Mullin for the Superintendent to put forth the Thurston school to draft a Statement of Interest. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

**MOTION** made by Amanda Phillips to authorize Chairperson Maya Plotkin to sign the renewal amendment for Superintendent Piwowar's contract. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

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**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to approve the November 20, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

MOTION made by Dori Parmelee to approve High School out-of-state travel for Student Council. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to approve a High School service-based learning trip to Peru. Motion seconded by Anthony Mullin.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

MOTION made by Dori Parmelee to approve a High School travel-based learning trip to Japan. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

MOTION made by Dori Parmelee to approve a High School travel-based learning trip to the Galapagos Islands. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve the 2026-2027 school calendar. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

MOTION made by JoAnna French to waive the third reading of the DESE Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve the DESE Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy. Motion seconded by Dori Parmelee.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

**New Business**

There was no new business.

**Adjournment**

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**MOTION** made by Dori Parmelee to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

**Result: 5-0-0 (Approved)**

The meeting adjourned at 7:27pm.