

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Westwood, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES
February 23, 2026

Attendance and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by Maya Plotkin via Zoom. Also present were 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.

Roll-call:

Maya Plotkin: **Yes**

JoAnna French: **Yes**

Anthony Mullin: **Yes**

Amanda Phillips: **Yes**

Superintendent's Report

Director of Student Services Search Update

Superintendent Piwowar updated the Committee that the District did not make a hire from the recent Director of Student Services search process. Supt. Piwowar announced that Lori Cimeno would remain as Interim Director for the rest of the school year. Supt. Piwowar and Ms. Plotkin thanked Ms. Cimeno for her work this year.

Statement of Interest Update

Supt. Piwowar stated that the District is on track to submit the SOI in April and vote on the SOI at the March 19 meeting, followed by approval at the Select Board meeting on March 23. Supt. Piwowar explained that submissions for the MSBA core program have decreased in recent years. In addition, the District is in conversation with the MSBA and may need to submit an SOI for both Thurston and Sheehan, because one of the Thurston scenarios would affect the Sheehan building. The District last submitted an SOI for Sheehan in 2023, so it may be possible to update that SOI. Supt. Piwowar clarified that Thurston would remain the priority project identified in the SOI submission.

Mr. Mullin and Ms. French asked clarifying questions around whether the school or the site is the subject of the SOI, and how many submissions the MSBA receives in a typical year.

Chair's Update

Ms. Plotkin reiterated that Dori Parmelee, who recently stepped down from the Committee, cares deeply about the students and school system in Westwood and that the Committee is deeply in debt to her for her work over the past few years. Ms. Plotkin thanked Ms. Parmelee for her service to the School Committee. Ms. Plotkin explained that two seats are up for reelection this year, with three-year terms, in addition to Ms. Parmelee's seat which would carry a two-year term.

Committee members echoed how much they appreciated Ms. Parmelee's service and would miss her friendship and care for the community.

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Liaison reports

There were no liaison reports.

Public Participation

Eileen Siegel of 257 Alder Road expressed appreciation for the buffer zone strategy as a creative solution to the large class-size issue.

Discussion Items

FY27 Budget Hearing

Supt. Piwowar explained that the original proposed budget in January required that material personnel reductions be made. The District then developed three new budget scenarios and recommended to the Committee that the second scenario – which restores three elementary classroom teachers and adds a classroom teacher at Pine Hill – be approved. Supt. Piwowar explained that the four classrooms that would have been above class-size guidelines would be brought under the guidelines with this scenario. Supt. Piwowar added that the District would not recommend further increasing fees in the new scenario.

Ms. Plotkin opened the budget hearing for public comment.

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to open the public budget hearing. JoAnna French seconded.

Roll-call:

Maya Plotkin: **Yes**

JoAnna French: **Yes**

Anthony Mullin: **Yes**

Amanda Phillips: **Yes**

Eileen Siegel of 257 Alder Road spoke about the challenges of the budget process and expressed appreciation for the School Committee members working to address the inequity of the budget in relation to the Town budget after the initial Select Board presentation.

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to close public comment. JoAnna French seconded.

Roll-call:

Maya Plotkin: **Yes**

JoAnna French: **Yes**

Anthony Mullin: **Yes**

Amanda Phillips: **Yes**

Buffer Zones Update

Supt. Piwowar explained the guidelines for implementing buffer zones, including: existing school assignment zones will remain unchanged; siblings will remain together; families in buffer zones will be able to state their preference; buffer zone assignments will be used when the volume and pace of student registration suggests that enrollment will exceed class size guidelines. Ms. Jn-baptiste added that the goal would be to make families happy wherever possible. Ms. Plotkin stated that it should be made clear in the registration process that buffer zones would only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Supt. Piwowar explained that buffer zones would be used only if classroom enrollment reached certain thresholds. Bus disruptions would be minimized wherever possible, and the Superintendent has the final

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discretion. Supt. Piwowar shared a timeline explaining that families affected by buffer zones would be notified of their school assignment in relation to when they registered their student.

Mr. Mullin and Ms. French expressed concern about what would happen if there were a large amount of summer move-ins. Supt. Piwowar responded that the bulk of kindergarten registrations should come in before May 1, and the District would have a good sense of where upper grade levels stand since those are existing class cohorts. Because of those aspects, the District would have a good idea of the enrollment numbers for all grades well before the planning for the 2026-2027 school year begins.

Supt. Piwowar thanked Ms. Jn-baptiste for her work developing the buffer zone maps, address list and overall strategy.

Ms. French reiterated that the District should consider students' social development when assigning schools. Supt. Piwowar assured the Committee that that guideline would be followed through the process of minimizing bus detours.

Mr. Mullin expressed concern about the walker zone area between Martha Jones and Sheehan. Supt. Piwowar explained that that zone would be a last resort. The Committee discussed whether to remove the walker zones from the list or incorporate them now and plan to use them only if necessary. Supt. Piwowar recommended that the District make it explicit that any families in walker zone buffer zones would be affected only as "tier 2" priority. Ms. Plotkin asked that the District be more explicit about the principle of keeping students in neighborhoods together wherever possible.

Revision to Policy ADF: School District Wellness Program, First Reading

Ms. Ahern explained that the existing policy was narrow, and a committee convened to review and update it. The new draft policy adds language around supporting student mental health, digital wellness, and social emotional learning. These three areas would be addressed through explicit instruction, targeted interventions, and regular assessment to ensure the health and wellness of students.

Action Items

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve the Fiscal Year 2027 budget of \$61,648,582. JoAnna French seconded the motion.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: **Yes**

JoAnna French: **Yes**

Anthony Mullin: **Yes**

Amanda Phillips: **Yes**

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve the Fiscal Year 2027 annual capital budget of \$1,280,000. JoAnna French seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: **Yes**

JoAnna French: **Yes**

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Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to vote to establish buffer zones for school attendance areas with the guiding principles as discussed. JoAnna French seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes
Anthony Mullin: No
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 3-1-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve high school Spanish out-of-state field trip. JoAnna French seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to accept Westwood Athletic Alumni fundraising donation. JoAnna French seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by JoAnna French Vote to approve October 3, 2023 Policy Subcommittee minutes.
Amanda Phillips seconded.

Roll-call vote:

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Maya Plotkin: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve January 21, 2026 meeting minutes. Amanda Phillips seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Anthony Mullin to approve January 28, 2026 Budget Office Hours minutes. JoAnna French seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to approve February 5, 2026 meeting minutes. JoAnna French seconded.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: Yes
JoAnna French: Yes
Anthony Mullin: Yes
Amanda Phillips: Yes

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

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New Business

There was no new business.

Adjournment

MOTION made by JoAnna French to adjourn and enter into executive session for the following purposes: to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if it may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the Committee. The Committee will not return to open session after executive session. Motion seconded by Anthony Mullin.

Roll-call vote:

Maya Plotkin: **Yes**

JoAnna French: **Yes**

Anthony Mullin: **Yes**

Amanda Phillips: **Yes**

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

The meeting adjourned at 7:53pm.