

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Westwood, Massachusetts

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 14, 2026**

**Attendance and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:31pm by Maya Plotkin. 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.

**Superintendent's Report**

*Introduction of Sheehan Principal*

Supt. Piwowar introduced the new Sheehan principal, Stacy Mahoney, and welcomed Ms. Mahoney to the Westwood school community. Ms. Mahoney shared that she would be attending an upcoming Sheehan PTA meeting, Sheehan Cultural Night and Incoming Kindergarten Information Night to start meeting families in the district.

*WHS Principal Search Update*

Supt. Piwowar explained that the search for the next Westwood High School principal is on target, and the kickoff meeting for the screening team occurred. Supt. Piwowar stated that the job posting would close after the April school break and first-round interviews would occur the first week of May. Finalist site visits and interviews are scheduled for mid-May, with the plan to announce the appointment the last week of May.

*Kindergarten Registration Update*

Supt. Piwowar updated the Committee that there are currently 176 Kindergarten registrations and district leaders met to look at preliminary enrollment numbers. Supt. Piwowar stated that the district will aim to notify any affected families in the first week of May.

*Statement of Interest Update*

Supt. Piwowar shared that the SOI for the MSBA for Thurston Middle School has been written and will be submitted officially to the MSBA later in the week. Ms. French asked Supt. Piwowar to remind the community of how likely it is to be accepted into the MSBA pipeline. Supt. Piwowar explained that the age and state of Thurston puts the district in a good position to have a site visit. Supt. Piwowar added that a successful track record with other school building projects helps the district's position. Ms. Phillips asked about how other capital projects in town affect the possibility of receiving MSBA funding. Ms. Plotkin responded that the needs of the town are something that could be discussed with the MSBA.

**Chair's Update**

Ms. Plotkin reminded the community that the next School Committee Office Hours session are May 11.

Ms. Plotkin shared that the Long-Range Financial Planning Committee recently discussed that a consultant would be coming in to distill the town/school Dore + Whittier study. They would create a suggested plan for how to engage with the community about what the priorities should be and how to fund them.

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Nancy James of the Long-Range Financial Planning Committee came forward to add that a consultant would help guide the engagement in town so that community members can understand and weigh in on the priorities of town projects that address needs not just for the next five years, but the next 10 or more years.

**Liaison reports**

Ms. French shared that she attended the MASC Day on the Hill event with two high school students, who were able to share directly with representatives what challenges Westwood faces as a school district. A few examples are the circuit-breaker rate, reimbursements for tuition costs and funding for the METCO program. Students also spoke to representatives about the Thurston building.

Ms. French updated the Committee that the district would be rescheduling the annual PTO Forum meeting to May.

Ms. French asked Supt. Piwovar for an update about the Community Coalition to Combat Hate Speech. Supt. Piwovar stated that the first Coalition meeting would take place in May to review the problem and start work on a plan of action, with more updates to come at the May School Committee meeting.

Ms. Phillips gave a shout-out to the Thurston performing arts program for their production of Matilda.

**Public Hearing Regarding School Choice**

Supt. Piwovar explained that the Committee must vote annually on whether Westwood will participate in School Choice, a program which allows non-resident students to attend the local school district. Supt. Piwovar recommended that the Committee vote not to participate in School Choice.

**MOTION** made by Anthony Mullin to open the public hearing for School Choice. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

**MOTION** made by Amanda Phillips to close the public hearing on School Choice. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

**Public Participation**

Beth O'Malley of 43 Greenacre Road spoke about the possibility of the Sheehan school closing, if Option 6 was selected in the facilities plan in which a potential new middle school would be built and Sheehan would close. Ms. O'Malley spoke about the importance of neighborhood schools and a belonging school community. She pointed to the exceptional educators and asked that the district develop a working group to explore other options that would not risk closing Sheehan.

Nancy James of 158 Oak Street expressed appreciation for the district's commitment to performing arts and remarked on the quality of the recent Thurston production in which students were able to take on the roles that felt most comfortable for them.

**Discussion Items**

**Non-Bargaining Salary Rates**

Ms. Jn-baptiste explained that she makes recommendations for non-bargaining salary rates each year and that this year's recommendations are similar to last year's. Ms. Jn-baptiste explained that Prodigy program tuition would be increased to accommodate increases in those staff members' salary rates.

**Action Items**

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**MOTION** made by Anthony Mullin to approve non-bargaining salary rates set forth in the memo.  
Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

**MOTION** made by JoAnna French:

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 Choice provision reallocates funds from the sending district and awards such funds to the receiving district, and

WHEREAS the maximum reimbursement allowed by the School Choice provision is less than Westwood's per pupil expenditure, which means Westwood Public Schools would be required to subsidize each choice student, and

WHEREAS once Westwood accepts a choice student, Westwood must keep such student through graduation, regardless of whether Westwood's demographic situation has changed, 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; provided, however, that if 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.

Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

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 March 18, 2026 Executive Session public minutes.  
Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

**MOTION** made by Anthony Mullin to approve the Westwood Gridiron Club scholarship. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

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Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

**MOTION** made by Anthony Mullin to approve the March 19, 2026 meeting minutes. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)

**New Business**

Ms. Plotkin shared that today was Amanda Phillips' final School Committee meeting. Ms. French started as a School Committee during the pandemic in 2020 and had a tremendous impact, particularly through the policy committee and gun safety event, as well as the cellphone policy work. Ms. Plotkin thanked her for her work and calm demeanor and said that the Committee would miss her tremendously, thanking Amanda for her six years of service.

Ms. Phillips thanked the Committee for their mentorship and leadership.

**Adjournment**

**MOTION** made by Anthony Mullin to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by JoAnna French.

**Result: 4-0-0 (Approved)**

The meeting adjourned at 7:17pm.