

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 17, 2015**

Present:

Josepha Jowdy- acting Chairperson
John O'Brien, Clerk
Carol Lewis, Committee member
Charles Donahue, Committee member

John Antonucci, Superintendent
Emily Parks, Assistant Superintendent
Abby Hanscom, Director of Student Services
Heath Petracca, Director of Finance and Business
Meredith Brodsky, Student Liaison

Meeting was recorded by WestCAT

Meeting called to order 7:04 PM by Josepha Jowdy

Pledge of Allegiance

Superintendent's report (7:05-7:32)

Recognition of High School teacher Nancy Aykanian, named "French Teacher of the Year" by the Massachusetts chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF).

Ms. Aykanian ran an amazing French exchange this year. Families received 35 students and 3 teachers. She gave a description of the experience, to the committee and audience.

Dr. Antonucci presented a plaque to Ms. Aykanian.

Ms. Aykanian mentioned the exchange won't be happening for the 2016/17 school year, but hopes to have it return in the 2017/18 school year.

Mr. Donahue asked if the kids involved in the exchange gave any feedback on the experience. Ms. Aykanian said they did, and will circulate a report at a later date.

SIPP Dance Marathon (7:14-7:26)

SIPP teachers Katelyn Testa and Mark McGunagle, along with three students, spoke about the SIPP Dance Marathon held on December 13th. The class organized this fundraiser in support of Boston Children's Hospital. It is a nationwide event.

Their goals were to sign up 400 people, and raise \$10,000. They ended up signing up 440 people and raised \$24,000 (2nd highest grossing ever for an initial attempt). The national average for fund raising is typically \$400-\$10,000 so the event was incredibly successful, and a great learning experience for the students involved.

Real life experience includes: project management, how to work with people in the community, professional skill such as making business phone calls and email contact, and how to work independently.

Some of the difficulties encountered included hearing a lot of No's (lessons in perseverance and acceptance), and they were the first high school in MA to attempt this, so there was no working model.

Ms. Lewis asked if they will do this again next year. Mr. McGunagle said they hope to turn it into an annual event. It will be up to the students to decide if they are interested in organizing it.

Dr. Antonucci gave credit to Ms. Testa and Mr. McGunagle. He admitted he was very skeptical when they came to him and Mr. Bevan about the idea, and he was happy to say that he was wrong.

Public participation – (7:26- 7:32)

No public participation at this time.

Ms. Lewis did ask if there was an update on the Board of Selectmen meeting.

Ms. Jowdy mentioned they have not arranged another formal meeting yet. She also mentioned she spoke to a selectman that admitted the Board is less than receptive to the idea for a meeting.

Ms. Jowdy asked Dr. Antonucci for help in asking for a formal meeting.

Dr. Antonucci said the Selectmen have been made aware of our needs.

Discussion turned to the progress of the architectural plans. Mr. O'Brien asked if the additional asks of architects were a result of the PTO visits/feedback. Dr. Antonucci said yes. He expected the architect information in the next few days- probably after the budget meeting. The plan is to have a special meeting to discuss the updated plans.

Discussion Items

Proposed High School trip to Spain in April 2016: Addressing Security Concerns (7:32-7:41)

Dr. Antonucci introduced the trip chaperones, Eileen Flanagan and Liam Kelly

Dr. Antonucci explained they have secured the services of a consultant at a company called Global Secure Resources (referral from Mr. Kelly). They work with people/organizations planning to go abroad. They check over the itinerary and help with risk mitigation. The consultant spoke to Carousel Tours, who organizes the exchange program. His assessment is that there is no concern in those areas of Spain where the students are staying, and the risk is similar to being in Boston

If the trip is approved, the consultant can come in and do a seminar for the kids about how to travel safely.

The cost is nominal for the security consultant services, about \$300.

Ms. Jowdy asked if any students have pulled out. Mr. Kelly said that the Spanish families think we are more of a terror threat (due to gun violence in our country), and don't want to send their kids here. She said the kids will mostly be spending time in smaller towns. She is encouraging everyone to get travel insurance.

Mr. Donahue asked if the security group's work was shared with families? Dr. Antonucci said it had not been shared.

Mr. Donahue also suggested that families be invited to the safety seminar.

The vote to approve the trip is called for.

Motion to approve Ms.Lewis. Seconded by Mr. Donahue

Official vote: Unanimous approval.

Update on Westwood High School's accreditation/self-study status with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) (7:41-7:53)

Mr. Bevan explained that we are currently accredited. He explained that NEASC was not keeping up with the times, and we had a lot of feedback for them regarding changes they needed to make before we would move forward with the self study portion. He explained the changes they are making are making the process more attractive, more targeted and less labor intensive. He feels the self-study would still be a good endeavor.

Ms. Jowdy asked how much longer we could go without it? Mr. Bevan said NEASC is not pushing us, and we are OK being on the sidelines for a bit. We are

in a second year of postponement, and he is targeting fall of 2018 to go through with the self-study.

Ms. Jowdy asked if any schools pulled out of NEASC entirely. Mr. Bevan thought Burlington was one school that did that.

Mr. O'Brien asked if any schools rejoined that have not signed up for the self-study. Mr. Bevan was not sure.

Mr. Donahue asked if Mr. Bevan could do a one-sheeter about this program. What it is about, a synopsis of what NEASC looks like, and how we benefit from this.

Ms. Parks feels we can always find something beneficial from the exercise.

Update on Mental Health Study Group (7:53-8:08)

2014-15 grades 6-12, Sean Bevan and Kyle Grady

The study group consisted of parents from the high school, teachers, members of the community, Ms. Hanscom, and Westwood Youth and Family Services

The group looked over current best practices in order to find the gaps, and made recommendations based on the findings:

- Inventory WPS curriculum
- Site visits (other schools)
- Research adolescent mental health –what students need for support
- Read “Age of Opportunity”

Outcomes:

- WPS well equipped
- There are four areas for growth:
 - Address curriculum needs and gaps
 - Better communication about current programs and curriculum (the program book is on the website)
 - Coordination between levels and buildings
 - Strengthen connections between staff and students
 - SOS- Signs of Suicide- key is finding a trusted adult
 - There is an important culture shift that needs to happen

Mr. O'Brien asked is it the teachers that tend to identify student issues. Mr. Bevan said yes, usually a teacher or guidance counselor. They are most likely to spot changes in a student over time.

Update on new K-2 phonics and spelling program implementation (8:08-8:10)

Josh Baumer

This was a learning and training year for K-2 teachers, who had a full day of professional development and observed model lessons.

Almost all teachers jumped right in and are putting some of these lessons into practice right now.

Draft 2016-17 School Year Calendar (8:10-8:22)

Dr. Antonucci shared a draft of 2016-17 school calendar. He pointed out that 11/8 is the national election, so the inservice day (normally on the Monday after Thanksgiving) would be that day since many schools are used as polling stations. They are thinking of keeping that Monday after Thanksgiving as a day off.

Ms. Lewis expressed that she wants to start school after Labor Day. The kids may be more engaged – that holiday is about family and tradition.

Dr. Antonucci said there are typically no attendance issues when starting school before the holiday. He feels getting out earlier in the summer is more important, as kids may have job, camp, or vacation commitments. He and Ms. Lewis are going to have to agree to disagree.

Ms. Jowdy agrees with Ms. Lewis.

Mr. Donahue asked about the Friday off in April before spring break. It is Good Friday.

The vote on the calendar will be next month.

Dr. Antonucci will post the draft calendar on the website.

Third reading: Revisions of Policy JKAA: *Physical Restraint of Students Policy* (8:22-8:30)

Revised policy will be *Prevention of Physical Restraint of Students* to comply with new state rules.

The policy requires 3 readings, and this is the third reading. Ms. Hanscom asked if there were any additional questions.

Ms. Lewis asked about the training section on page 2. Ms. Hanscom stated that the school system purchases CPI (crisis prevention intervention) training. It

focuses on de-escalation. People not trained should not put their hands on students.

Ms. Lewis asked who gets trained? Ms. Hanscom replied it would be Special Ed teachers, a subset of staff who works with autistic kids, and principals might weigh in on additional staff to be trained.

Ms. Lewis asked what happens if no one is around who is trained, and you are in an at risk situation? Ms. Hanscom replied that there is a disclaimer later in that section that says that if someone is under direct threat they are allowed to defend themselves.

Motion to approve: Ms.Lewis. Seconded by Mr. O'Brien.

Official vote: Unanimous approval.

Mr. Donahue wants to possibly discuss this at a future meeting: do we have protocols in place for training of coaches in first aid CPR? Dr. Antonucci and Ms. Parks said yes we do.

Mr. Donahue asked about concussion training? Dr. Antonucci said we are a leader in concussion protocol. Coaches are required to go through annual training.

Action Items (8:30-8:36)

Approval of Minutes

November 18, 2015

Motion to approve: Ms Lewis. Seconded by Mr. O'Brien

Discussion

Mr. Donahue wanted to be clear that he wasn't disappointed in the meeting with the board of selectmen. He appreciated it, and thought it was a reasonable meeting, given that the main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the First Parish land purchase. The recording secretary will amend the 11/18/15 minutes to reflect his initial comment, and will resubmit them.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

November 9th minutes (joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen)

Motion to approve: Mr. O'Brien. Seconded by Mr. Donahue

Discussion

Mr. O'Brien wanted to be clear that the minutes were from the perspective of the school committee

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Public participation (8:36-8:40)

None

Mr. Donahue mentioned the Middle School science review from our last meeting about MCAS/PARCC test results. He reiterated he thinks it's important to check on the science curriculums of other schools. Ms. Parks assured him they are working on it.

Mr. Donahue also wanted to point out that while the students with disabilities did well on English and math tests, he feels they need more support in science and engineering. Ms. Parks stated they will take that into consideration, and stressed they are working with a very broad spectrum of student needs.

Ms. Jowdy mentioned they should try to restart a list of proposed meeting agenda items (new business).

Motion to Adjourn: Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Mr. Donahue

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting adjourned at 8:41.