

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2016**

Present:

Brian Kelly - Chairperson
Josepha Jowdy- Vice 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

Meeting called to order 7:04

Pledge of Allegiance

Superintendent's report (7:05-7:42)

Report on Chinese Exchange at Westwood High School (7:06-7:18)

Steve Oulette and Lisa Spollen

Mr. Oulette gave an overview of the program, which began on January 31 with Chengdou No.7 School.

There were 3 goals of the program:

- Learn more about exchange opportunities in China
- Provide WHS Mandarin students a chance to meet native speakers
- To raise cultural awareness

Ms. Spollen said the exchange students spent substantial time in the Mandarin classes, helped the WHS students with presentations, and let WHS students interview them. Ms. Spollen recognized what wonderful teachers they were.

WHS students were surveyed about the program. One main theme was that the kids were happily surprised with how much they had in common.

Ms. Spollen said they are very interested in having a 2-way exchange, as early as next year (WHS students visit China).

Ms. Jowdy asked how long the exchange would be? Ms. Spollen said it would be a 7 or 8 day exchange

Dr. Antonucci recognized many other people who helped with the program.

Follow up on change to breathalyzer Policy in regards to MIAA Chemical Health policy (7:18-7:24)

Sean Bevan

New policy, outlined at last month's meeting, notes that breathalyzer tests will no longer be given at offsite parties.

Mr. Bevan said he met with the captains of the winter sports teams and the AD to go over the policy change. He also did speaking and listening lunch sessions with seniors. In the last couple of days a letter went out to all families about the update, and news about the change will also go out via email and social media.

Ms. Jowdy asked that if a child was at a party and the police come, can a parent request they be given a breathalyzer test? Mr. Bevan said that yes, they can always request it. Dr. Antonucci clarified it would not be at the scene, and the Police do not have to honor the request by the parent.

Mr. Bevan said the students were concerned, and that we are in a time of calibration. He feels they will start to understand as time goes on how police will act. Students felt more comfortable after learning that the Student Resource Officer would be the single conduit for information received from the police.

Request by DESE for Westwood to Administer PARCC field test (7:24-7:29)

PARCC testing happens in May in May. Dr. Antonucci said the Department of Education contacted us, and said Westwood was randomly selected to administer a PARCC field test, on top of the actual test. Dr. Antonucci politely declined, as the test will most likely be obsolete soon.

Mr. Donahue asked what would be the benefit to us? Dr. Antonucci said there would be no benefit, really. The benefit is really to the Dept. of Ed., and would be to see if the test questions are worthy/valid.

Ms. Parks clarified it would have been an additional testing session for grades 3-6.

The committee agreed that declining this request was the right call to make.

Follow up on Feb 8 meeting on Space and Capital needs (7:29-7:38)

The February 8th meeting was cancelled due to a snow day. Dr. Antonucci is looking at wed, Feb 24th as a possible reschedule, or we kick it out a few more weeks.

The intent was to deliver an SOI to the Massachusetts School Building Authority on April 8. Dr. Antonucci thinks this will be delayed. MSBA wants more of a commitment /consensus that we all agree on a single plan, and/or word from the town that we have the funding.

Ms. Lewis asked if this a guideline change? How do they define consensus? Dr. Antonucci said no, this is not a change, and he does not know how they define consensus.

Dr. Antonucci said it doesn't mean a town meeting vote. They need to speak to the Finance Committee, and the Board of Selectmen. No one wants to rush it.

Mr. Kelly asked what does it mean the town has to show they can fund it. Heath answered it would be a debt exclusion. Dr. Antonucci also thinks they are looking for a signal that there is not massive town opposition.

Mr. Donahue suggested that they come up with a 5 level test for the town support to be gauged. Dr. Antonucci said this is something they can consider.

The Committee agrees we should wait on the SOI.

For next steps, Dr. Antonucci said the priority is to present the 4 new options from the architect to the public. Ms. Lewis suggested we push it out so we don't have another snow day. Dr. Antonucci will put out some March dates to consider.

Public participation – (7:38-7:42)

Resident asked if it matters if we do the SOI this year or next year? Is there any benefit to making the April deadline? Dr. Antonucci said no, there is no financial benefit. Though waiting will push the entire project schedule out by one year.

In regards to the school calendar agenda item, a resident wanted to go on record saying that she strongly favors the pre-Labor Day start.

Discussion Items

Presentation of FY17 School Department Operating Budget] (7:43-8:15)

Ms. Jowdy motioned to open our meeting to public forum. Ms. Lewis seconded.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Dr. Antonucci took everyone through a few slides.

Operating budget increase history was shown, to show how the budgets were managed during tougher economic times. It's been a very slow climb back to 4-5% increases.

Ms. Jowdy agrees we would appreciate being stable, and it was admirable to see the administration responded well with what was going on in the economy. She feels this year's ask is reasonable for the needs.

Dr. Antonucci mentioned Mr. Donahue asked about student services/special education, and how much of the total budget was allocated for that. The answer is 21.6% of our total budget is allocated to student services/special education, for 18% of our student population. (Dr. Antonucci clarified it does not include pre-school, guidance, and school health, but would include speech, psychologist).

Ms. Jowdy asked if this cost was in line with state average? Dr. Antonucci replied yes.

Ms. Lewis asked what is our expectation of this person, licensure? Broadly, responsibilities would be clinical work with students and interagency work. They would have an MSW (masters in social work) or LMHC (licensed mental health clinician).

Ms. Lewis asked how do they work with the students? Per Ms. Hanscom it would be 1:1, group work, professional development for staff, and outreach workshops.

Ms. Jowdy asked if anyone spoke to Youth and Family Services about the role? Ms. Hanscom did not go to them to vet the position. Ms. Jowdy clarified, and asked if they agree this position is beneficial? Ms. Hanscom is not sure, but we know they do not have the staff to help do what we need to do.

Ms. Lewis sees the need, but is worried about middle school kids? The HS social worker would liaise with the middle school adjustment counselor.

Mr. Donahue said most people have no idea how much work the school department does for students outside of traditional education. We're doing more than what many people appreciate.

Dr. Antonucci went on to address the question from last meeting on the per pupil expenditure. Looking at neighboring towns, towns in our tech collaborative, or Boston Magazine top 25 schools, they reviewed 33 communities. We are in the middle of the pack. State average \$14.5K per pupil. We are \$15.3K (FY13 is the most recent data).

Total increase in per pupil expenditures FY05-FY14 was 32%. State average grew at 36.9%, so we were increasing at a slower pace.

Mr. Petracca addressed the Capital Budget. It is a total of \$756K (HVAC, roofing, tech, repair, office machinery).

There was a call for public comments. There were none.

Dr. Antonucci mentioned some key dates:

- Feb 23 is the Education sub committee meeting.
- On March 8 Dr. Antonucci will present the budget to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Donahue asked the Finance Sub-Committee if there has been pushback on the proposed budget? They replied they have guidance of a 4% increase, and we are coming in at 5.7%. They need to balance all of the different needs of the town.

Dr. Antonucci feels the town needs to ask the community how they want to spend their money. March 7 and 8 is the public hearing on the warrant. The Finance Committee reps in the audience said they want public participation at these meetings.

Mr. Kelly said that in respect to the police station- they pointed out they want to fund it within prop 2.5, so they don't have to go out for debt exclusion (and get voter approval). It's not supposed to take away money from the schools.

Dr. Antonucci said that one thing a debt exclusion does- it promotes dialogue. People actually come out and voice opinions on priorities.

A resident said the charts are phenomenal, and voiced the need to maintain the level of service the residents expect in regards to the quality of the schools and education.

Barb Delisle from the Finance Committee feels there has been a lot of discussion about tax relief (from the new income coming in from University Station). This might go into the mix.

Draft 2016-17 School Year Calendar (8:15-8:24)

Two options were discussed, a pre and post Labor Day Start.

Pre labor day start- For this option Dr. Antonucci recommend teachers come back the Wednesday preceding Labor Day. The teachers union surveyed their entire membership, and this was their preferred option as well.

Nov 8th would be a day off (Election Day), and the Monday after Thanksgiving would also be off (need one of those days to be professional development day)

Mr. Kelly asked if we do the Election Day off for the professional development day, why do we need the Monday after Thanksgiving off? Dr. Antonucci replied that people like that day off. But if we take back that Monday we get out one day earlier.

Mr. O'Brien asked if there was a contractual obligation that the professional day had to be that Monday after Thanksgiving?) Dr. Antonucci said no, there is not.

Committee is in favor of axing the Monday after Thanksgiving for this upcoming school year.

Motion by Ms. Jowdy to start school on 8/31 (finish June 15), remove 11/28 as a day off, use November 8th (election day) as a professional development day.

Seconded by Mr. O'Brien.

Official Vote: Unanimous Approval

Action Items (8:24-8:28)

Approval of overnight and/or out-of-state travel requests:

Girls Lacrosse team to Manhasset NY (April 18)

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

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

Boys Hockey team to Martha's Vineyard (Feb 13-14)

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

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of minutes January 21, 2016

Motion to Approve: Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. O'Brien.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

New Business (8:28)

No new business at this time

Discussion

Public participation (8:29)

None at this time

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

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting adjourned to executive meeting at 8:30