

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2016**

Present:

Josepha Jowdy- Chairperson
Carol Lewis, Vice Chairperson
Brian Kelly, Clerk
Tony Mullin, Committee member
Charles Donahue, Committee member
Owen Doherty, WHS Student representative

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

Meeting called to order 7:12 pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting was recorded by WestCAT

Superintendent's report (7:12-7:16)

Dr. Antonucci will be leaving the Westwood school system at the end of the fiscal year.

The committee is happy that he has a new opportunity, but are sad he is leaving.

Coordinated Program Review Mid-Cycle Report

Ms. Hanscom reported that we were in compliance with everything DESE looked at. There were no additional questions.

First meeting of the school start time sub-committee

The first 2 steps are underway:

- Visiting other schools that successfully do the later start time or have looked into the later the start times
 - Sharon
 - Newton
 - Dover (decided not to make the change)
 - Medway
- Community surveys

Public Participation (7:16-7:17)

A resident congratulated Dr. Antonucci on his new opportunity, and asked if a formal communication would go out to parents?

Ms. Jowdy said yes a communication will go out, and that this topic is on the agenda for later in the meeting.

Dr. Antonucci said he will send something out under his own signature as well.

Discussion Items (7:17-8:12)

Results From Kindergarten Schedule Survey (7:17-7:29)

Ms. Parks reminded the committee that they are considering changes to K schedules. Currently there is a ramp up of half-days for several weeks, and there is a half-day every Wednesday throughout the school year.

There were 263 respondents.

Ramp up period

- Ramp up presents logistical challenges, and a majority said they have little to no concern about eliminating the ramp-up period.
- Pervasive suggestion from parents was to shorten the ramp up period and maybe consider other ideas to ease the transition (i.e. have lunch in the classroom)

Half-day Wednesdays

- Most parents said there was little to no concern to changing them to full days

- Open responses indicated please eliminate the half day Wednesdays

Ms. Lewis said if this is the decision we might need to clarify every other week professional development days (half-day Wednesdays).

Those who want to keep the half-day Wednesdays said it was good for kids to have the down time, and that parents enjoyed having that time with their kids.

Teachers were also surveyed and the opinion is that they should go forward with full day Kindergarten.

Ms. Parks said the plan is to reflect the data back to parents on 12/16, and a final decision would be made by the end of January 2017.

Mr. Donahue asked how do other towns handle Kindergarten schedules. Ms. Parks looked at other communities, and they do not have half day kindergarten, so we are unique in that sense.

Status Update on High School “J-term” program (7:29-7:57)

(Ms. Parks)

The J-Term program was introduced in the June 2016 meeting. It would be a 5-day program for Freshman-Juniors.

- Formed a planning committee in September
- Solicited additional questions and input from teachers
- Created the vision statement
- Created high level timeline
- Developed Professional Development (PD) for Nov. 8 during which the faculty began to think seriously about what J-term would look like

There were focus groups with students. Mr. Doherty participated and said that most students indicated preference for hands on experiences, though some would prefer more traditional courses.

Preference for occupational or life skill courses (medical, legal, car maintenance)

Upper classmen expressed concern about student motivation in June, if that is when it would happen.

Mr. Kelly asked about blowing off this to prep for finals? Ms. Parks did not really agree that would be an issue. One idea might be that teachers would not assign homework that week.

Ms. Lewis asked where could some of these courses take place? Dr. Antonucci said that would be a logistical issue about finding outside places and transportation, etc.

He also suggested there are some guidelines and rigidity about how and what is taught. Ms. Parks said we need to have good QC.

Mr. Donahue said maybe students or mentors from the SIPP program could help. He also asked if there is a plan B if some people don't want to do it?

Ms. Parks said there isn't a realistic way to do that. Goal is to create an array of courses that many kids would be interested in, and multiple places to check in along the way.

Mr. Donahue: did we explore the private schools who do this? Ms. Parks said yes they did.

Ms. Jowdy said it seems like an overwhelming undertaking? Time and money going into this to what end? Ms. Parks said yes it's a lot of time and money. But the faculty is really excited and invested. They are creating a unique and exciting learning experience for the kids. Additional bonuses are cross communication between departments, and building new curriculums.

Dr. Antonucci said the energy in the room during the PD time was really great.

Ms. Jowdy asked how many courses? Ms. Parks thinks it will be more about courses offered. They need to be highly engaging and valuable.

Mr. Mullin also has some concerns, undertaking an 18-month project when there are other things they need to be concerned with, but is very supportive.

Mr. Bevan said the faculty is very excited about this.

Mr. Doherty said in regards to final exams, students value review time with teachers. Ms. Parks said they have not yet had conversations about the timing of the J-term.

Mr. Doherty said there was enthusiasm in the focus group, even seniors who couldn't do this program. If they could strike the balance between the academic and experiential, he thinks it would be very successful.

Ms. Lewis asked if every teacher is required to be a part of it? Yes, the ratio is 10:1. There will be teaching partnerships, with faculty committing to what they want to develop, and forming their teams. Decisions must be made by January.

Capital Funding Request for Network Upgrade (7:57-8:06)

(Steve Oulette)

Mr. Oulette mentioned that WPS is soliciting quotes for network upgrades at all 7 schools (and the fire station).

He and Mr. Petracca did a presentation to see if the town will fund this outside the school operating budget. It was very well-received by the Long Range Planning committee.

A few reasons why a more robust network is needed:

- Next gen MCAS will be fully online
- Expansion of 1:1
- Increased reliance in internet based applications
- Current access points are not dense enough
- Aging- current tech is 6 years old
- Better reliability
- Future proof the Westwood schools for years to come.

Mr. Oulette also spoke about the E-rate Program. We qualify for 40% reimbursement through the program

Ms. Jowdy asked how long the upgrades would be good for? Mr. Oulette said 6 years, but it is hard to predict.

Policy Review: (8:06-8:09)

- First Reading: Physical Examination of Students (JLCA)
- First Reading: Administering Medicines to Students (JLCD)

Nurses conducted a review of the policies. There is a need to reflect our current practice, and clarifies storage of health data.

There were no questions at this time about either policy.

Mr. Mullin asked that they also consider how communication is handled about outbreaks or public health concerns.

Update on Superintendent search process (8:09-8:12)

Ms. Jowdy mentioned that a search consultant will be hired (Future Management Systems), and the process will begin immediately. A communication will go out to the community.

Action Items (8:12-8:16)

Approval of Donation from Westwood Pop Warner

Dr. Antonucci said we have received a 2nd donation from the liquidation (\$15K) and must be used to support football and/or cheerleading

A motion to accept the donation was made by Ms. Lewis. Seconded by Mr. Mullin

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of anonymous donation for school travel

A \$10,000 donation was given to help students get access to travel for school programs.

Mr. Donahue asked that the high school newspaper report that this is available.

A motion to accept the donation was made by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes Nov. 11, 2016

A motion to approve the November minutes was made by Mr. Mullin. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

New Business (8:16)

None

Public Participation (8:16-8:25)

Regarding the Kindergarten schedules, a resident said she feels the pre-school to full time kindergarten will be a really hard transition, and doesn't think it's fair to support one group of family decisions over others.

She also said the schedule may be hard for more introverted students, and for the younger kindergarteners. She feels the half day Wednesdays are critical for kids to be successful.

Ms. Jowdy asked if there is an opt out? Ms. Parks said there is the half-day kindergarten program.

The same resident also really wishes she had heard the news about Dr. Antonucci from someone from the school, and not on Wicked Local.

Dr. Antonucci said the process doesn't help, it's a very public, and he said that news came out even before he personally received the offer.

Another resident said her POV on the new Kindergarten schedule was that her kids liked being at extended day on Wednesdays. They didn't want to be different than the other kids. She understands it's a hard balance, and not everyone will be happy.

She also said she went to a college that had a J-term, and loved it. She is concerned about the timing of when it will happen (around final exams). Kids could have more stress and may not appreciate the opportunity.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Donahue. Seconded by Ms. Lewis.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting adjourned at 8:25