

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Westwood, Massachusetts

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**September 9, 2021**

**Attendance and Call to Order**

The meeting, held in the Josepha Jowdy Theater at Westwood High School, was called to order at 7:04pm by Chair Maya Plotkin. Also present were: Vice Chair Charles Donahue, Clerk Anthony Mullin, Carol Lewis, and Amanda Phillips. Superintendent Emily Parks, Assistant Superintendent Allison Borchers, Director of Business and Finance Lemma Jn-baptiste, and Director of Student Services Abby Hanscom were present on behalf of the district. John Cianciarulo recorded the minutes.

The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance.

Maya Plotkin recognized the live stream of the meeting, which was provided for real-time, public access to the activities of the School Committee. Members of the public were able to view a live stream of the meeting available online at [www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live](http://www.westwood.k12.ma.us/live). It was also recorded for later broadcast on Westwood Media Center's platforms.

The meeting was also presented via Zoom, permitting the public to both view the meeting and to participate in public comment.

**Superintendent's Report**

**High School Girls' Lacrosse Team**

The High School Girls' Lacrosse Team was recognized by the Committee for winning the Division 1 State Championship. Members of the team received a plaque.

**Introduction of New Administrators**

Matt Kuklantz was introduced as the Interim Principal at Hanlon School. Nicole Haberman is serving as Interim Assistant Principal at Thurston Middle School while Matt Kuklantz is at Hanlon. Tom Millett, the new High School Assistant Principal was introduced. Aishleen Flanagan is serving as High School Interim Dean of Students.

**Welcome New Student Representative**

Ruby Fyffe, one of the Committee's student representatives, was introduced.

**School Reopening**

There has been a lot of turnover during the summer, particularly with last minute resignations of Instructional Assistants and Paraprofessionals. The district is continuing to seek substitute teachers and Extended Day employees.

Contract nurses have been hired for Extended Day, as it was not possible to secure staff nurses.

Interim Extended Day Director Michael Fagone was thanked for his work to restore the program. Enrollment in both the before and after-school programs has increased from two years ago.

Superintendent Parks remarked that she has received feedback from parents regarding the notification of curriculum and materials relative to sex education. The district has received a few requests to review such curriculum materials and to opt out of lessons.

The district is also committed to valuing differences and ensure that schools are safe, but also to following its own policies, acting with transparency and understanding concerns. Superintendent Parks advised that the School Committee review some policies to ensure that there is clear language, suggesting the

formation of a subcommittee to do this work. The Committee agreed. Superintendent Parks will share a list of policies for suggested review at the October meeting.

The first COVID-19 vaccine mobile clinic was held last week. Seventeen students and three adults participated. The vendor stated that it was their second-largest clinic to-date. The next clinic will be held on Saturday, September 25 at Sheehan School from 9am to noon.

Superintendent Parks then shared charts showing the COVID-19 case count, the average daily incidence rate, the percent positivity over time, and community vaccination rates.

The district is working with the State's new COVID-19 testing vendor, CIC Health, to provide routine weekly COVID-19 safety checks. Information on registration was sent to families earlier today. The district's COVID-19 Monitoring and Response Team may be contacted with any questions.

### District Enrollment Update

Enrollment by level was reviewed:

- **Preschool**
  - FY'20: 45
  - FY'21: 45
  - FY'22 (projected): 45
  - FY'22 (actual): 43
- **Elementary**
  - FY'20: 1266
  - FY'21: 1238
  - FY'22 (projected): 1197
  - FY'22 (actual): 1242
- **Middle School**
  - FY'20: 706
  - FY'21: 683
  - FY'22 (projected): 684
  - FY'22 (actual): 666
- **High School**
  - FY'20: 1007
  - FY'21: 993
  - FY'22 (projected): 980
  - FY'22 (actual): 963
- **District Total**
  - FY'20: 3,024
  - FY'21: 3,000
  - FY'22 (projected): 2,906
  - FY'22 (actual): 2,914

Elementary enrollment by classroom and school was reviewed.

Superintendent Parks then shared that an email was sent to families this afternoon regarding the twentieth anniversary of the attacks on September 11, 2001. This year, the district is joining with Project 351, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and the Massachusetts Military Heroes Fund to participate in a moment of silence to honor those who lost their lives.

### Financial Update

Director of Business and Finance Lemma Jn-baptiste updated the Committee on grant offsets.

#### *IDEA Grant Offset*

Funding from the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) grant was traditionally applied toward tuitions and contracts supporting students with IEPs. In the proposed budget, the original plan was to charge approximately \$800k to the grant. However, districts may not claim Medicaid reimbursement for expenses paid through a federal grant; and it is believed that the district may be eligible for partial reimbursement for tuition expenses if paid through Town funds. As salaries for Instructional Assistants are not reimbursable through Medicaid, and they are an allowable use of IDEA grant funds, she recommends that approximately \$800k in Instructional Assistant salaries be charged to the IDEA Grant.

#### *One-Time IDEA American Rescue Plan Funding*

Westwood will be receiving an additional \$198k in funding to support the mission of the IDEA; and an additional \$17.5k to support early childhood programs. Districts are encouraged to use these funds to consider the challenges related to the pandemic. Districts have until September 2024 to use the money.

#### *ESSER III Funds*

The district has been allocated \$170k in ESSER III (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds. At least 20% of these funds must address lost instructional time due to the pandemic. Stakeholders, including PTOs, SEPAC, and surveys to families, will be part of the process to determine the use of these funds. The funds are available through June 30, 2022 and, at the district's request, the timeframe may be extended through September 30, 2024.

### **Public Participation**

Members of the public were invited to attend the meeting or to participate via Zoom.

Adrian Webb-Johnson of Curtis Street expressed concern about diversity curriculum.

Tom Donnelan of Curtis Street spoke in support of Mr. Webb-Johnson's comments. He requested a better avenue for communicating with residents about what is taking place in schools.

Eileen Siegel of Alder Road urged the Committee to include diversity, equity, and inclusion in its core values.

Ken Foscaldo of Norfolk Avenue expressed concern for students who do not fit into a minority group.

Heather Morrison of Magnolia Drive conveyed her thanks for the district's before and after-school Extended Day programs. She expressed concerns regarding lunch and would like to see it improved. She also asked that the School Committee follow the DESE plan and metrics related to the mask policy once they are provided.

Mandy Taft Pearman of Gay Street spoke in support of the district's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Martha Sullivan spoke in support of the district's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Christina Martin of Brookfield Road would like to follow-up on communicating with the community. She believes it is a great idea as a lot of people don't understand what is going on in the classrooms. She would also like the district to explore a more expansive sexual education curriculum.

Antigone Grasso asked why the district still has a medical advisory group that is overruling state experts.

Megan Brenk of Briar Lane thanked the district for its work on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**MOTION** made by Anthony Mullin to extend public participation for twelve minutes to accommodate the four people in the queue. Motion seconded by Carol Lewis.

**Result: 5-0-0 – Approved**

Donna Morrison of Oak Street addressed the concussion policy. She requested that the Committee think it through, as it affects all students, not just athletes.

Melissa Morabito of Canton Street thanked the Committee and expressed support for the district's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Rania Kelly of Blue Hill Drive expressed appreciation for efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Steff Bhatti of Sunrise Road was appreciative of the successful start to school, the district's mask policy, and testing opportunities. She is also appreciative of the diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

**School Committee Chair Update/Liaison Reports**

**School Building Project Update**

A forum is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 14. This is another opportunity for the community to learn about the project.

The Special Town Meeting will be held on Monday, October 18 at 5pm on Flahive Field. The Special Town Election will take place on Tuesday, October 26.

**COVID-19 Medical Advisory Group Update**

Anthony Mullin is hopeful that additional guidance on metrics for masking will be provided soon by DESE. The Group will be meeting next week.

**School Start Times Subcommittee**

Anthony Mullin reported that he and Amanda Phillips are seeking one to two parents to serve on the subcommittee to review secondary schools' start times.

**Other Liaison Reports**

Amanda Phillips reported that the Special Education Parent Advisory Council is hosting a popsicle social on September 19.

**Discussion Items**

**Review of Summer Programs/Projects**

***Senior Independent Project Program (SIPP)***

Middle School Humanities Department Head Katherine Stewart led SIPP over the summer. She outlined the timeline for this summer's cohort:

- March: Series of information sessions held to solicit interested students
- April/May: Students submit applications, sit for interviews with high school faculty, and are notified of acceptance into the program
- June: Individual meetings held to research and determine mentors
- Summer: Conduct self-directed projects. The cohort met weekly via Zoom.

Students shared information about their projects, including their mission statement and mentor. The students that participated were: Ria Dani, Owen Dunton, Angelina Dong, Quinn O'Brien, Caroline

Kundrat, Will Hanson, Eliana Hutchins, Sai Reddy, Megan MacDonald, Cam Roberts, Sofia Zhao, and Emily Liu.

*Extended School Year and Intervention Programming*

The Committee agreed to table this discussion to a future meeting.

Policy JIIF – Concussion Management in Extracurricular Athletics

Athletic Trainer Paul Lilla provided the Committee with a revision that reflects a different program being used for testing. The policy is reviewed every two years.

Status of DESE Mask Mandate and District Face Covering Policy

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's mask mandate is in place until at least October 1. Additional information on metrics is anticipated in late September.

**Action Items**

Approval of August 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

**MOTION** made by Carol Lewis to approve the meeting minutes of August 17, 2021. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

**Result: 5-0-0 – Approved**

**New Business**

Charles Donahue shared *Boston Magazine's* school ranking. Westwood was ranked fourteenth of all high schools in eastern Massachusetts within Rte. 495. A copy of the article was distributed to the Committee.

**Adjournment**

**MOTION** made by Charles Donahue to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Anthony Mullin.

**Result: 5-0-0 – Approved**

The meeting adjourned at 9:21pm.

Documents/Exhibits Used at Meeting

- 2021-2022 enrollment chart updated September 2, 2021
- DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) Memo on Implementation of DESE Mask Requirement
- Draft meeting minutes of August 17, 2021 for the Committee's review and approval
- Memo from L. Jn-baptiste to School Committee regarding IDEA Grant Offsets and ESSER III, dated September 9, 2021
- Memo from P. Lilla to E. Parks regarding Concussion Policy Review and Update, dated August 19, 2021
- Policy EBCFA: Face Masks
- Senior Independent Project Program (SIPP) Program overview
- Senior Independent Project Program (SIPP) slideshow presentation
- Summer Programming 2021 slideshow presentation
- Superintendent's Report slideshow