

**Westwood School Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2017**

Present:

Carol Lewis, Chairperson
Charles Donahue, Clerk
Joseph Jowdy, Committee Member
Tony Mullin, Committee Member
Danielle Sutrich, WHS Student Representative

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

Meeting called to order 7:03pm

Pledge of allegiance

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Media Center

Ms. Jowdy thanked Ann Brown- the Assistant to the Superintendent who retired after 44 years (assistant to 8 superintendents).

Superintendent's Report (7:06-7:43)

Introduction of new administrators

Ms. Parks introduced the following people:
Zeffro Gianetti- Interim Principal, Thurston Middle School
Matthew Kuklentz - Interim Assistant Principal, Thurston Middle School
Allison Borchers, Assistant Superintendent

The enrollment chart was updated for the start of school. Mr. Donahue asked if they are comfortable with Martha Jones' class sizes in grade 3. Ms. Parks said they are within the current class size guidelines.

Review of Summer Projects

Mr. Petracca: Facilities Maintenance, 112 projects completed:
Projects include: Replaced 2 boilers, AC installed, Security card access at the Deerfield School, sprinklers, doors, carpeting, re-lamping, etc.

Ms. Lewis asked if other schools need AC installation? Mr. Petracca said the Middle School and Martha Jones second floor.

Mr. Donahue asked about solar panel savings. Mr. Petracca said credits are starting to come in; they are trying to figure out the billing with Eversource. Mr. Donahue asked for a report in the future. Ms. Parks reminded everyone that there is a kiosk in the high school with real-time solar panel stats.

Mr. Mullin would like to know what we are spending on capital expenses vs. maintenance, as we get into the next budget season.

Mr. Ouellette: Spoke about summer tech projects.

- Network upgrade
- Expansion of 1-1 Chromebook to grades 5 and 6
- Development of grade 3 coding curriculum
 - Ms. Parks thanked Mr. Donahue for donating Lego robotics for a pilot program. Those kits will be adopted as part of the new curriculum.
- First ever new teacher technology orientation

Ms. Jowdy asked about whether technology is evaluated every year, like using Chromebooks. Mr. Ouellette said the Chromebooks work very well now, but he will continue to look at other options that may be available.

Mr. Donahue asked how we compare with other towns. It is more the norm now to have a 1:1 environment. Mr. Ouellette said that of 13 nearby towns, over 50% have 1:1 model.

Mr. Donahue asked how low can 1:1 go. Mr. Ouellette said the plan has always been to go down to grade 3.

Ms. Parks said they might want to roll out a technology showcase at a future meeting, to further explain how these programs will help the students.

Ms. Borchers: Curriculum Development and Enrichment Program
60 teachers, 30 projects, 1112 hours

Curriculum, largest focus was in Science (at all grade levels):

- Baseline tests
- K-5 new earth and space units
- WHS Marine biology course

Enrichment:

- 24 courses offered K-5
- High school students as volunteers or paid assistants

- Enrollment in 6-8 program increased 46%

Mr. Donahue asked if we have a relationship with the Mandarin School. He said it might be a very good resource for the Mandarin language program.

Ms. Hanscom: Special Education

Ms. Hanscom discussed the Extended School Year (ESY) for students with disabilities.

This is a program offered to continue working with kids through the summer, that helped about 120 students, pre-k through 22 yo.

There is a process during the winter and spring to determine ESY eligibility.

Superintendent's Entry

Ms. Parks spoke about her entry process. Her write-up is on the district website. She will be focused on 3 questions:

- What are the strengths of the district/schools?
- What does the district/school need to work on?
- What do you think the district/school must maintain at all costs?

Ms. Parks will provide an update on this in late winter/early spring.

Ms. Parks will also be participating in NSIP (New Superintendent Induction Program), a 3-year professional development program.

Discussion Items (7:43-8:49)

Elementary class sizes (7:43-8:30)

Allison Borchers presented some findings on class size research. She stated we will be revisiting the current guidelines at the October meeting.

Goal of the research and this presentation is not advocacy for a position; she is merely sharing what was found by researching credible sources.

Class size lookback: Ms. Borchers said that the range of elementary class sizes has been very stable over the past 10 years, with a slight downward movement in class size mean.

Class Size Data from Comparable Districts: In comparable districts (2015-16), Westwood was ranked on the low end of average class size, out of 69 schools.

No positive correlation between STE MCAS performance and class size.

2017 Medfield/Needham/Natick- we're all working in the same ballpark for K and 3rd grade class sizes.

Educational research challenges: Ms. Borchers said it is a messy science, when looking at correlation vs. causation, effect size, randomization, and what's measurable vs. what's important.

Next steps:

- Review current elementary professional staffing guidelines- reaffirm or revise
- Analyze cost and benefits of changing the guidelines
- Create a consistent process for responding to classes that are outside of the guidelines

Mr. Donahue thinks it would be good to know the skill-set/experience of IAs in the classes, to help parents understand there is additional support in the classrooms. Or better communicating the definition of the support teams available to the students.

Ms. Jowdy suggested we put an executive summary of Ms. Borchers' presentation on the website so parents are better prepared for next month's meeting.

2017-18 District Goals (8:30-8:46)

Ms. Parks went over the 2017-18 District goals. She said that while the 8 goals have not really changed, the initiatives associated with those goals have changed.

Ms. Parks made a special call out to goal 4:

"Engage the school community around the current status of our school buildings, with a focus on educational needs, in order to develop a set of priorities to guide capital improvement planning."

MSBA Statement of Interest result will come in December. Ms. Parks said we made it through the first round of cuts, which she said was promising.

The visioning process will be on the agenda in October. This is a time to engage stakeholders and establish a set of criteria to evaluate/assess building project options. Per the MSBA process, Ms. Parks said it is OK to engage in these types of vision conversations.

Mr. Donahue asked if they don't make the cut, will the MSBA say why. Mr. Petracca feels we could get that information if needed, but usually it's because another school made the case for greater need.

Ms. Parks reiterated we need to be working collaboratively with the town as well, stressing that the schools should be a high priority.

Mr. Mullin feels we need to help determine the communication plan on this. Are there different means to have these conversations, different technology options?

District Goals will be posted on the website, and Mr. Mullin said it would be helpful to get updates on these goals later in the year.

School Calendar (8:46-8:49)

School start day guidelines were suggested. If Labor Day falls on or before September 4th, the first day for students will be the Tuesday following Labor Day. If Labor Day falls after September 4th, the first day will be the Wednesday before Labor Day (School closed the Friday before Labor Day in this instance).

Motion to approve 2018-19 calendar (start 9/4/18) was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official Vote: Unanimous approval

A motion to approve the school start day guidelines was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Donahue.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Action Items (8:49-8:51)

Approval of Minutes: June 15, 2017

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

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes: July 11, 2017

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

Official vote: Unanimous approval

Approval of district representative to TEC board of directors

Historically the superintendent is the voting member of the TEC board of directors.

A motion to approve Emily Parks as district representative was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.

Official vote: Unanimous approval

New Business (8:51-8:56)

Mr. Donahue brought up the ranking of Boston's top schools 2017 in the latest edition of Boston Magazine. He thinks it would be a good idea to take a look and make sure the information is accurate in the article. Ms. Parks offered to take a closer look.

Public participation (8:56-9:00)

A resident thanked Ms. Borchers for the presentation on class size research. She asked that as we assess the guidelines next month they should discuss at what class size aides may be added to help teachers.

A resident (new to the district) learned about the cell phone tower on top of the middle school. She would like to invite more discussion on that, and the science on the electromagnetic radiation exposure data. The lease will be up in 2 years.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Jowdy. Seconded by Mr. Mullin.
Official vote: Unanimous approval

Meeting adjourned at 9:01