

WESTWOOD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Westwood, Massachusetts

SUMMER RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
July 22, 2021

Call to Order

The meeting, held at the Four Points by Sheraton in Norwood, Massachusetts, was called to order at 6:15pm 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 Student Services Abby Hanscom, and Director of Business and Finance Lemma Jnbaptiste were present on behalf of the district. Carol Lewis arrived at 6:40pm. John Cianciarulo recorded the minutes.

Superintendent's Report

2021-22 Planning

Superintendent Parks reported on planning for the 2021-22 school year.

Hiring Updates

The district continues to work on hiring for the upcoming school year. Leadership positions include:

- Director of Visual Arts
- High School Guidance Director
- 0.2 FTE Elementary Student Services Department Head (Martha Jones School)

Additionally, the Middle School Humanities Department Head vacancy is in the finalist phase of interviews.

Hiring status was then reviewed by level.

Superintendent Parks then reported that Hanlon School Principal Sarah Cronin is taking a year-long leave-of-absence. Current Middle School Assistant Principal Matt Kuklantz will serve as the Interim Hanlon School Principal. High School Assistant Principal Nicole Haberman will move to the middle school to serve in the same capacity in the interim. New High School Dean of Students Tom Millett will serve as the Interim High School Assistant Principal. High School English teacher Aishleen Flanagan will serve as the Interim High School Dean of Students.

Class Size Updates

District enrollment to-date was shared. Elementary class lists and secondary class schedules will be distributed in mid-August.

With the exception of grade 2 at Downey School, all other elementary class sections across the district are within guideline.

Development of '21-'22 Priorities

A draft of the Strategy for District Improvement was shared. The district's leadership team conducted a lot of work to prepare it during its retreat in June. The action steps associated with each priority will be devised at the August leadership retreat.

The priorities fall into four objectives:

1. Meaningful learning experiences
2. Coherent, connected curriculum
3. Healthy and supported school community
4. Infrastructure for future

The Committee and the administrative team discussed the priorities.

The Committee took a recess from 6:50pm-7:10pm for dinner.

Upon completing additional discussion, the Committee agreed that the document appropriately captures the priorities for the year ahead. The district will work on action steps associated with each priority.

COVID Guidelines

Superintendent Parks reported on the latest guidance associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): The latest guidance is from May 28, which stated that all restrictions will be lifted in the fall, but they will maintain contact with the Department of Public Health over the summer and may provide additional guidance.
- Centers for Disease Control: Recommends that all unvaccinated students and staff wear masks when indoors.
- American Academy of Pediatrics: Recommends universal mask wearing, regardless of vaccination status, when indoors.

It is anticipated that additional guidance from DESE will be received in the next two weeks.

The district's COVID-19 Medical Advisory Group met Tuesday to review the guidance and recommendations.

Regardless of any decision, the district will support anyone's choice to wear a mask.

The Committee then discussed staff and student testing. DESE is said to be offering a menu of testing options for districts to consider in August.

The Committee discussed the future of the district's COVID-19 Monitoring and Response Team. They agreed that maintaining the lead nurse position is appropriate.

The district is exploring contingency plans for elementary school lunch if six feet between students is necessary. Director of Business and Finance Lemma Jn-baptiste is securing price quotes for outdoor tents.

The Committee agreed to schedule its next meeting for Tuesday, August 17 at 5pm for the purpose of responding to COVID-19.

Discussion Items

School Committee Liaison/Subcommittee Assignments

The Committee determined its liaison/subcommittee assignments.

Aid to the Elderly: Carol Lewis
Budget Steering Committee: Maya Plotkin
Council on Aging: Amanda Phillips
COVID-19 Medical Advisory Group: Anthony Mullin
COVID-19 K-12 Testing Collaborative: Charles Donahue
Curriculum Reviews: Carol Lewis
Deerfield School: Carol Lewis
Downey School: Charles Donahue
Hanlon School: Amanda Phillips
Legislative Council: Maya Plotkin
MASC Delegate: Anthony Mullin
Martha Jones School: Charles Donahue
PTO Forum: Charles Donahue
Permanent Building Committee: Maya Plotkin
Preschool: Anthony Mullin
Special Education Parent Advisory Council: Amanda Phillips
Select Board: Maya Plotkin

School Building Committee Chair: Maya Plotkin
School Start Times: Anthony Mullin and Amanda Phillips
Sheehan School: Amanda Phillips
Thurston Middle School: Charles Donahue
Westwood Environmental Action Committee: Amanda Phillips
Westwood High School: Anthony Mullin

2021-22 School Committee Agenda Schedule

The Committee discussed the agenda schedule for the upcoming year. It was agreed to have a presentation on the High School's Senior Independent Project Program in September and to invite the Special Education Parent Advisory Council in October. Additional topics for the year ahead will include fees and rates and school start times.

Building Project Community Engagement

Superintendent Parks shared a six week schedule of engaging the community in the building project process. These efforts include:

- Mailers
- Coffees
- Meetings with PTOs/PTAs, civic groups, and the Council on Aging
- Newsletter articles
- Videos through Westwood Media Center

Action Items

Update to Memorandum of Understanding between Westwood Public Schools and Westwood Police Department

Superintendent Parks reported that two revisions to the existing Memorandum of Understanding are necessary to align with recent legislation.

MOTION made by Charles Donahue to approve the update to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Westwood Public Schools and the Westwood Police Department. Motion seconded by Anthony Mullin.

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

Approval of June 10, 2021 Minutes

MOTION made by Charles Donahue to approve the meeting minutes of June 10, 2021. Motion seconded by Amanda Phillips.

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

Approval of July 6, 2021 Minutes

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to approve the meeting minutes of July 6, 2021. Motion seconded by Charles Donahue.

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

New Business

The Committee determined that a reception to honor former member Josepha Jowdy will be held on Thursday, September 9, at 6pm (prior to the School Committee meeting) at the High School.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Amanda Phillips to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Charles Donahue.

Result: 5-0-0 – Approved

The meeting adjourned at 8:56pm.

Documents/Exhibits Used at Meeting

- 2021-22 Enrollment, dated July 19, 2021
- Draft Strategy for District Improvement, 2021-2024
- Draft meeting minutes of June 10, 2021 for the Committee's review and approval.
- Draft meeting minutes of July 6, 2021 for the Committee's review and approval.
- Memo from E. Parks to School Committee dated July 16, 2021, regarding revision to MOU between WPS and WPD
- School Committee Liaison/Subcommittee assignment worksheet