



**EDUCATION411** is a volunteer, non-partisan citizen organization. Its mission is to celebrate Westwood's long tradition of educational excellence and to inform residents of key issues facing our public schools today and in the future.

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## In This Issue:

- School Committee Notes – November 18, 2010
- Next School Committee Meeting- December 16, 2010

## School Committee Meeting Notes

November 18, 2010 Meeting

### Present:

Josepha A. Jowdy  
Brian T. Kelly  
John J. O'Brien  
Ellen Mason  
Carol Lewis

John Antonucci  
Heath Petracca  
Dr. Avalin Green  
Audrey Seyffert  
Harry Clapsis

### Superintendent's Report

#### Student Recognition

On behalf of the School Committee, Mr. Antonucci and Ms. Jowdy presented Certificates of Recognition to several students for their writing in a local writing contest and to one for finishing first place in cross country, and breaking the course record.

#### Introduction of Student Liaison

Mr. Antonucci introduced Harry Clapsis as the Student Liaison. He will serve on the committee as the representative of students. He will also serve as Westwood's student representative on the state level Student Advisory Board.

### **(Action Item)**

#### New Library Related: Amendment to Colburn School Transfer

Library Director, Tom Viti, requested that the Committee take the following action to revise the property line for the Deerfield/Colburn School site:

"To move to amend the vote taken at the April 7, 2004 School Committee meeting supporting a revision to dimensions of Parcel A (drawn by Carol Balduf in 2004) that was transferred along with the Colburn School to the care, custody and control of the Board of Selectmen by unanimous vote on Article 24 at the Annual Town Meeting, whereby the rear lot line between the Colburn School parcel and the Deerfield School parcel as shown on the attached plan so as to provide sufficient additional land for the proposed parking lot and a necessary ten foot buffer."



Mr. Viti explained that the amendment was required since the current boundaries did not allow for the ten foot building setback per local zoning rules, preventing the surveyors involved in the new library construction from producing a certified plot plan. The Planning Board and Town Planner also sought the revision. The Town Manager and Town Counsel recommended adoption of the amendment.

Mr. Viti stated that, while all of the property remains town property, the revision in the property line would theoretically limit future building on land controlled by the School Committee to the extent that the ten feet of the Deerfield School is transferred to control of the Board of Selectmen. The additional ten feet for the Colburn School site will not be paved for the new library parking lot. The Westwood Youth Soccer Board reviewed the proposed revision and confirmed that it would not adversely impact soccer participation on the Deerfield fields.

This request was unanimously approved.

### Second Reading of Bullying Prevention Policy

Mr. Antonucci presented his revised draft of the Bullying Prevention Policy for a second review by the Committee. The final draft of the plan will be transmitted via List Serve in early December and there will be two weeks for public comment on the plan. The plan is due to the state December 31, 2010.

The Committee discussed removing several redundant passages and revising some wording for clarity. Review and proposed revisions included:

- Where bullying is prohibited, including in particular: "non-school related locations and through non-school technology or electronic devices, if the bullying affects the school environment"
- discussion focused on the language: "if the bullying affects the school environment" A SC member expressed an opinion that the language was vague and proposed clearer language
- Definition of bullying
  - A SC member questioned the definition of "bullying", suggested adding greater thresholds to emphasize only "significant" conduct would constitute bullying, and proposed deleting from the definition items which he felt were encompassed in the catch-all item of the definition
  - Mr. Antonucci emphasized that the definition was copied from the state statute
  - The Committee concluded to keep the definition unchanged
- Obligation to report incidents of bullying
  - A SC member noted that, instead of encouraging reporting, an obligation to report incidents of bullying might create an environment of over-reporting
  - A SC member suggested changing the obligation to report from "immediately" to "promptly"
  - The Committee concluded to revise the reporting obligation to "promptly"



- Investigating incidents of bullying
  - Language was added to emphasize that action to prevent further acts of bullying would be taken subject to applicable laws related to confidentiality (e.g., discipline given is confidential)
  - Mr. Antonucci explained the deletion of language concerning “restoring a sense of safety” because it was ambiguous
  - A SC member inquired whether school bus drivers and other non-employees of the school would be subject to the policy
    - Mr. Antonucci explained that the school had an obligation to train those non-employees (like bus drivers) who have contact with students to comply with the policy
  - Mr. Antonucci explained revisions to language formerly placing a burden on principals to report incidents of bullying to law enforcement to provide that principals “may” consult law enforcement
    - A SC member expressed concern over how the statute obligated principals to report incidents to law enforcement but that the revision which provided discretion might expose the principals’ decision to later questioning. He felt it was better to make such things automatic in order to protect principals.
    - A SC member expressed support for the revised language
    - The Committee concluded to revise the language
  - Mr. Antonucci noted the deletion of a monthly reporting obligation by principals to the superintendent.
- Public Involvement in Drafting Process
  - A SC member reported attending a SEPAC meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup> at which the Committee was criticized for not adopting a “plan” and not allowing enough time for public comment on the policy, particularly given the holidays. A SC member took exception to the criticism with respect to the policy and how it was disappointing and discouraging in how it diminished Mr. Antonucci’s efforts.
  - Mr. Antonucci expressed irritation about the spreading of “misinformation, if not outright lies” regarding the process
  - Mr. Antonucci stated the internal deadline of December 1<sup>st</sup> for creation of a plan with the hope that it be transmitted via List Serv by December 4<sup>th</sup> with a two week public comment period. He also emphasized the intent to have site councils and work with the various school PTOs. Mr. Antonucci noted the lack of public attendance at the meeting which included discussion of the bullying policy as an agenda item.

A SC Member inquired about changes to the student handbook to reflect anti-bullying policy and a SC member indicated the Committee’s plan to discuss the handbook at one future meeting.



## Professional Development: "What Happens on Short Wednesdays"

Dr. Green presented a summary of Westwood's Professional Development with a stated intent to improve the communications to the community about the value of professional development. Methods of communication include: newsletters, calendar, website, PTO meetings, site councils and presentations to the Committee. The professional development program helps attract and retain high quality teachers.

Early Release allows all teachers from the five elementary schools to meet at one location to collaborate. The goals of the meetings of teachers with supervisors and curriculum specialists include:

- Unit design
- Develop assessments
- Analyze assessments
- Plan instructions
- Improve subject matter competency

High School Principal Emily Parks, Middle School Principal Allison Borchers, Hanlon Principal Beth Herlihy, Elementary Literacy Coordinator Barbara Lindsay, and Elementary Math Coordinator Nancy Buell presented detailed examples of professional development activities and how they are then integrated into the current curriculum. One presenter described the Literacy Wiki available online for teachers by the district's consultant, Dan Fiegelson, and its benefits.

A SC member asked how long the professional development break-out meetings lasted. Such meetings are scheduled in two hour blocks. A SC member inquired how the early release days are divided up throughout the year. Mr. Antonucci explained that the amount of days has been the same for the past fifteen years and that the days are scheduled on an *ad hoc* basis. A SC member asked about teacher feedback concerning professional development. The district takes surveys from the teachers and reviews student achievement results in the substantive areas identified for development. A Member questioned what portion of the school budget was allotted for professional development. Mr. Antonucci described how it was a "miniscule" part of the budget but that it represented a significant sacrifice of time. He stated that grants are also utilized, including a significant grant from WEF.

The consistent message of the lengthy presentation stressed the importance of professional development in the district. The Committee generally commented that the presentation was "excellent."

## Teacher Evaluation: Westwood and State Requirements

This agenda item was skipped.

## **Additional Action Items**

### Approval of School Calendar for 2011-2012

The 2011-2012 School Calendar was unanimously approved.



*Donation to Martha Jones School*

A \$6,000 donation to purchase new technology equipment was made to the Martha Jones School. The request to accept the donation was unanimously approved.

*High School Musician Trip to Pennsylvania*

Principal Parks made a request for the high school music ensembles to travel to Pennsylvania to perform in two concerts. The trip would take place Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and involve 108 student participants. The Committee's approval was sought because the trip involved taking a day off from school and students traveling out of state. The request was unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

**Next School Committee Meeting- December 16, 2010**

**The School Committee meets on Thursday December 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:30PM in the High School Little Theatre. E411 will forward the agenda when it is available. It is expected that the SC will be voting to approve the Westwood Bullying Prevention Policy.**