

Education411 Newsletter

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS CANDIDATE FORUM



Candidates' Forum for the Westwood Town Election Candidates and for the Special Primary Norfolk 11th District State Representative Candidates

On Sunday afternoon, April 15, the Westwood-Walpole League of Women Voters is

VOTER INFORMATION

Tuesday April 17, Special State Primary. Polls open 7AM to 8PM. Deadline to obtain absentee ballot is Friday 4/13 5PM. The Town Clerk's office is open until 5PM on 4/13.

Tuesday April 24, Town Election. Polls open 7AM to 8PM.

Tuesday May 15, Special State Election. Polls open 7AM to 8PM.

For more information, call the Town Clerk's Office at 781-326-3964.

Absentee ballots can be obtained by mail or in person. Absentee ballots need to be returned to the Town Clerk's office by noon on the day of the election. Office Hours: Tuesday evenings until 7PM. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 8:30AM-4:30PM, Friday 8:30AM-1PM.

IMPORTANT MEETINGS

Thursday, 4/12 7PM Planning Board, Westwood Station Updates, High School

Sunday, 4/15 2:30PM League of Women Voters Candidate Forum, First Parish Church Hall

Thursday, 4/26 7:30PM School Committee Meeting, High School

Monday May 7 7:30PM Town Meeting, High School. Continues on May 8.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING 3/22/07

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MARCH 22, 2007 Notes submitted by Kathy Wallace

AGENDA

- SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT
- THE EDUCATION COOPERATIVE (TEC)
- TEC: TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM
- PRELIMINARY SPACE NEEDS STUDY
- 2007-8 SCHOOL CALENDAR
- PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

planning a forum to present candidates for both the town election and the primary election for the Norfolk 11th state representative seat recently vacated by Bob Coughlin. The forum will provide Westwood's residents an opportunity to meet the candidates (both opposed and unopposed), to hear their views on the concerns facing the town today, and to ask questions of them.

For the town election portion of this event, each candidate for a town office, both opposed and unopposed, will get a minute to introduce themselves and say why they are running. Each group of candidates running for a contested town office (library trustee, town clerk and planning board) will get time to address questions collected from the audience by League members. Each candidate for a contested town office who wishes to respond to a question will have up to 1 minute to answer. Finally, each candidate will have 1 minute to make closing remarks.

The Norfolk 11th district primary candidates will be presented in a similar format. The Republican candidates will be presented together, and then the Democrats will

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

The recently hired principal of the Hanlon School, Beth Herlihy, was introduced. Ms. Herlihy will start on July 1, 2007. Ms. Herlihy has a BA from Tufts University and a Masters from Lesley University and is currently a 6th grade teacher at the Charles Brown Elementary School in Newton. Ms. Herlihy has also taught 3rd, 4th and 5th grades.

The Daily Transcript newspaper had questioned whether it was appropriate for the school website to have the message, "Please vote yes on Question 1." John Antonucci (JA) had checked with the Office of Campaign Finance who had said it was fine to post the message; however, upon the newspaper's question, JA checked with the Ethics Commission who would not give a definitive answer. So as not to cause any disruption, JA took the message off the website.

In the past seven weeks, JA has done 25-30 budget presentations and to ensure that he reaches everyone, he scheduled a public forum for April 4th.

The High School musical, *Once on an Island*, was a huge success and showcased incredible talent. Mr. Howard and Mr. Giurleo did a wonderful job. A matinee performance was added this year to give families a chance to attend.

On March 17th, a Chinese cultural night, organized by a ninth grade student, was attended by 600 people.

Finally, the High School Academic Decathlon team was recognized for placing second in the state competition. Dave Duryea is the advisor and stated that this year, there was a specialized focus on China.

THE EDUCATION COOPERATIVE (TEC)

John Connolly, Executive Director of TEC, made a presentation to the School Committee.

Westwood is one of 15 members of TEC, which according to Mr. Connolly is considered to be one of the finest of the 31 collaboratives in the Commonwealth. Prior to joining TEC, Mr. Connolly was a School Superintendent for 32 years.

The other towns in TEC are: Canton, Dedham, Dover, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Medfield, Natick, Needham, Norwood, Sherborn, Walpole, Wayland and Wellesley.

appear together. Each candidate will have a minute to introduce themselves, followed by questions collected from the audience by League members. Each candidate who wishes to respond to a question will have up to 1 minute to answer. Finally, each candidate will have 1 minute to make closing remarks.

The event will be held at First Parish Church Hall on the corner of Nahatan and Clapboardtree Streets starting at 2:30 PM on April 15, 2007.

Quick Links...

- [School Budget Documents](#)
- [Education411.org](#)
- [State Aid to Education Summary](#)
- [The Education Cooperative](#)

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TEC has many functions. It is a support system for the 15 Superintendents to assist them with issues such as how to deal with town meeting or how to pass an override. The districts collaborate on legislative initiatives to speak as one voice. Mr. Connolly stated that John Antonucci did a great job at the State House showing how limited Chapter 70 money does not just impact poorer communities.

The main purpose of a collaborative is to deliver services to a district more efficiently. TEC may provide the program for an autistic child so that the child does not have to go to an outside placement. TEC also has great purchasing power. The 15 districts bid on paper together and save hundreds of thousands of dollars. TEC offers professional development, grants, internships and a program called "Job Alikes." A "job alike" offers school personnel the opportunity to attend monthly meetings with counterparts in other districts to exchange best practices.

Recently, TEC launched the Legislative Initiative, consisting of three TEC School Superintendents and three TEC School Committee members. John Antonucci is on the committee. The initiative for legislative change has to be a win-win for all communities and not suburbs versus cities. One of the first things that they are looking to change is to expand their bidding capabilities for supplies with Office Depot. TEC would like to collaborate with other similar groups to increase their purchasing power. Currently, suppliers by law can only respond to bids from municipalities not from other entities and these discounts can be 60% off of retail.

A School Committee member asked what is the TEC assessment to each district. The assessment is \$300,000 shared by 15 districts or \$20,000 per district.

TEC is also lobbying the Commonwealth to include transportation in the circuit breaker for special education. Currently, the State pays 75% of the tuition above \$30,000 for an out placement but pays nothing for transportation costs.

TEC is proposing a pilot program to lower transportation costs. The focal point now is on the district sending the student. TEC proposes to make the focal point the destination school so that other students along the way could be picked up rather than each district sending only their student(s).

TEC is also suggesting that the State should help towns with regular education transportation to reduce fees.

TEC is also lobbying on behalf of districts regarding the School Building Assistance. There is not enough money available to support the construction needs across the state.

Chapter 70, State Funding of Education, passed in 1993, needs reform. There were no curriculum frameworks in 1993 and these mandates need to be supported. The Massachusetts Budget Policy Center cites that Massachusetts is 35th out of the 50 states for education funding. If we moved to the national average, this would infuse \$113 million more in to public education. According to MSN.com, Massachusetts ranks 6th in property taxes in the country.

The TEC website has a legislative action center where you can learn more about proposed actions. In closing, Mr. Connolly said that we need to be more effective with the legislature. They do not get why a community like Westwood and other similar communities are struggling to fund their schools.

TEC: TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM

TEC was awarded a Teaching American History grant by the federal government. The purpose of this three-year grant is to provide teachers, administrators and Library/Media Specialists in TEC districts free professional development in American history. These professional development courses have been designed to meet three main objectives: (1) to improve the American history content knowledge of teachers and Library/Media Specialists; (2) to allow teachers to work collegially with teachers from their own school and district as well as others; (3) and to have a positive impact on student achievement in the area of American history. For the first year of this three-year grant period (2006), the graduate courses were offered to elementary educators only. The courses are designed for secondary educators in the second year (2007).

For the course offerings, TEC has partnered with UMass Boston as well as a variety of nationally renowned museums in Massachusetts. This unique partnership has worked together to create high quality programs designed to engage educators in a study of American history. These offerings focus on the development of important historical skills (such as the ability to learn from primary source documents), content related to events in Boston leading up to and during the American Revolution, the in-depth examination of the work of Paul Revere and his (artist and political) contemporaries

within the context of Revolutionary Era American history, learning about the past through the stories of legends as well as ordinary folks, and the economic, social and political aspects of life in rural New England in the early part of the century following the American Revolution. Each of the courses is aligned with the most recent version of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in History and Social Science, with an emphasis on the related US history standards.

Three Westwood fifth grade teachers are participating in the program: Amy Faulkner, Deerfield, Julie Galante, Deerfield and Rena Rizzi, Hanlon. Each of the teachers spoke about their participation in the program, what they have brought back to the students and how they will be sharing this information with other colleagues in Westwood.

PRELIMINARY SPACE NEEDS STUDY

Symmes Manni and McKee Associates (SMMA) was hired by Westwood to do a space needs and enrollment study funded by \$80,000 from Cabot, Cabot and Forbes. The enrollment study was presented in December. [Click here](#) to refer to E411's 12/14/06 newsletter on our website.

John Antonucci introduced SMMA and said this is a very preliminary draft to enable an assessment of possible reconfigurations.

Methodology: Enrollment Analysis and Existing Site and Program Analysis

Criteria of Development Options: Grade Configurations and Level of Renovation

Enrollment Projections: The Elementary Schools are about to peak and the Middle School will peak shortly thereafter. The major space need is at Thurston Middle School.

Much work has been done at Thurston just to keep up, but in a few years, we will not be able to fit the kids. A member of the School Committee asked if they had looked at adding a second floor to any school and SMM said that it has never been cost effective to build over a structure that was not designed for a second floor.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS

1. Change Grade Configurations, i.e. establish a K-2 school or have all K in one school.
2. Types of Renovations: Minimal renovations and/or additions to accommodate students. This does not address deficiencies, such as no art or music room. Comprehensive renovations which would deal with

student population and space deficiencies.
3. Consolidation of 2 or 3 schools.

When the final report is complete, it will be voluminous. JA summarized to say that they are looking at 3 possible grade configurations: K-5, K-2 with 3-5 and K with 1-5. They are looking at how to accommodate the population but also how to enhance the space.

A School Committee member asked when they would see more about this. JA replied, sooner rather than later.

A SC member asked why they chose these options? JA replied that they should be looking at this from an education perspective and not simply as space needs. What is the best education model for Westwood. JA believes that people like the current configuration of neighborhood schools, but there are tradeoffs. It was stated that currently 45% of Elementary students walk to school so there could be an increase in transportation costs that need to be considered. JA stated that this time next year, they will be talking about improving the Middle School for the 2010-11 school year.

2007-8 SCHOOL CALENDAR

Three major changes were suggested:

1. Friday September 14th was the observance of Roshashana. They are moving this to Thursday September 13th which is the more significant day.
2. Veteran's Day is the only holiday observed on the actual day: however, Mass state law says that if it is on a Sunday then you observe it on the following Monday 11/12.
3. An all day in-service was scheduled for Friday 3/7. However, the national primary is on Tuesday 3/4 and many schools serve as polling places so they will move the in-service day to 3/4.

A School Committee member commented that the last day of school in 2008 is 6/23 and that other towns are out before Westwood. A request was made that we look at other TEC districts calendars.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A resident asked what the hope was that the State will fund the Building Assistance Program. Answer: There is no update, no one really knows.

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web: <http://education411.org>