

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

April 10, 2017

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:12 PM at Boston Police Headquarters, 1 Schroeder Plaza, Roxbury by Mrs. Danielle Black, Chair. In attendance were Mr. Alex Cobb, Dr. Ed Heller, and Mr. John Henry of the School Committee; Mrs. Cheryl Antoine, METCO Representative to the School Committee; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Mrs. Pamela Bator, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; and Mrs. Cynthia Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations. Not present: Dr. Sanjay Saini.

Also in attendance were Mr. Anthony Parker, Weston High School Principal; Ms. LaToya Rivers, Weston METCO Director; and members of the Weston METCO staff Cyril Kakulu, Theresa Dryden, Riola Lazo, and Theresa Burns.

Mrs. Black welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the evening's agenda. She noted that Mrs. Elizabeth Nagarajah, Alternating METCO Representative to the School Committee, was out of the country.

I.B. Chairman's Report – None.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly highlighted recent student achievements in the district, reporting that Middle School student, Andrew Yao, qualified again this year to participate in the USA Junior Math Olympiad, and the WHS Math Team placed second in the medium-sized school division at the state playoffs. Dr. Connolly indicated that the World Language Department has three trips over April vacation, a high school trip to France, a middle school trip to Italy, and a combined middle and high school trip to China. She also reported that MCAS is occurring across the district and seems to be going smoothly. She suggested parents continue to encourage their students to do their best.

Dr. Connolly highlighted the recent Field School Art Show and noted that Country and Woodland Schools' Art Days would be later this week. She mentioned the Music Department Pops concerts, noting she was able to attend one "phenomenal" performance, and acknowledged that Weston had been awarded a "2017 Best Communities for Music Education" recognition by the NAMM Foundation. Dr. Connolly mentioned the successful PTO Science and Math Family Night, and expressed appreciation to the PTO Science and Math Council, WEEFC, and the families and students who volunteered. She noted the recent Country School Paint night, and Woodland School Bingo Night, both PTO-supported community-building events and the Grade 2 "People Who Make A Difference" presentations. Dr. Connolly also noted that that Spring sports are underway.

Dr. Connolly shared some recent staff achievements, including the selection of Ms. Kimberly Young, WHS Social Studies teacher, as a Grosvenor Teacher Fellow who will be exploring the Arctic on a fully funded study tour with National Geographic; Ms. Georgeanne Bossers, WMS Social Studies teacher, who will receive the *John Reilly Award for Teaching Excellence in Geography* at the Mass Council for Social Studies' annual awards night in May; and Dr. Kerry Dunne, Grade 6-12 History/Social Studies Department Head, as President of the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies.

Dr. Connolly updated the Committee on her first week as Superintendent, noting she has begun her entry plan by visiting and touring the schools, and meeting with Town Manager Donna VanderClock and Assistant Town Manager Lisa Yanakakis, PTO Leadership, Director of Technology Dr. Lee McCanne, and several School Councils. She reported she looks forward to meeting with and hearing from more stakeholders in the coming weeks and months. Dr. Connolly noted that a survey will be going out this week to administration, faculty, staff, families and some students.

Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that the Administrative Team is working with a consultant from the Planning for Success Program in DESE to begin development of a strategic plan and new vision statement. She reported they are in the early planning stages and will involve School Committee, parents/guardians, teachers, staff and students in the process.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports –

PTO - Mrs. Black reported it is a busy week ahead, with a PTO Board meeting, Weston PAC evening presentation of “Swim Team,” and School Committee/SAC meeting.

I.E. Open Forum – Mrs. Black noted that the Open Forum time will be held at the end of the regular business meeting this evening.

II.A. Discussion of Weston Education Enrichment Fund Committee Proposals

Mrs. Bator presented WEEFC project grant proposals for Committee approval. She highlighted two Science and Math Council grants, one for a primatologist for students in grades K, 4, 7, and 10 and “Miraculous Mice” for students in grade 1. She also highlighted the grant request to help fund the high school’s June Academy this year, noting that a good portion of the academy was being funded by the school budget. Mr. Parker made a presentation on June Academy, an innovative program being piloted this year during the last two weeks of the school year in which students will attend two learning sessions per day that are outside of the traditional curriculum. He said they are experiential and “hands on” courses and noted that students will receive two credits for the academy. Mr. Parker also indicated the academy, which offers a wide range of courses, has the total support of the School Committee, teachers and parents. Mrs. Bator said the intent is that many of the items being requested for funding will be reused in future years with June Academy ultimately being fully funded in the school budget.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC grant proposals as presented in memo of March 28, 2017, totaling \$16,458.

II.B. School Committee Response to FinCom Letter

The School Committee discussed how best to respond to a Finance Committee letter published in the February 9 *Town Crier* which critiqued the school budget. Mrs. Black said the School Committee would post a response on the district website and will request Town Hall post the response on the Town’s website with the currently posted Finance Committee letter. Mrs. Black noted some of the misconceptions in the FinCom letter including the misconception that because enrollment is declining, the budget should decline at the same ratio. She noted the faculty contracts have salary increases with both steps and lane changes. She also said that there are many positions that are not faculty or administration, including kindergarten aides and special education tutors, and noted that Weston does not outsource transportation or food services. She also noted the non-direct educational costs of technology. Mr. Cobb said that, regarding technology costs, the Committee must be sure technology is curriculum-driven and supported by principals. Mr. Henry indicated the Start Time/Scheduling Innovation Steering Committee will review the high school’s 8-day rotation but said the School Committee will always do what is best for students, and will make decisions based on education. Mr. Cobb also addressed the FinCom’s mention of the possibility of relocating the administrative offices to the schools, which he said is not feasible. Committee members reviewed a proposed response letter.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously in support of letter in response to Finance Committee’s letter.

II.C. Leadership Transitions

Dr. Connolly updated the Committee on administrative leadership transitions. She reported that Ms. Jennifer Truslow, formerly the Assistant Director of Student Services, as of April 1 as Director. She noted that Ms. Truslow will oversee Special Education, 504’s, Nurses, and Guidance. Dr. Connolly said that the Assistant Director position will be posted for next year and that an interim Assistant will serve two days a week through the rest of this school year.

Dr. Connolly reported that Middle School Assistant Principal Karen Hillman would be leaving to serve as Principal of Dedham Middle School. She indicated the position has been posted, and that Principal John Gibbons will review resumes and conduct initial interviews, leading up to a full day review process with 2-4 finalists.

Dr. Connolly reported that Field School Principal Matt Lucey was leaving in June to be Principal of the Willard School in Concord. She said they will post a one-year interim position for next year with a search for a permanent replacement to begin in December. She indicated that she and Mrs. Bator would review resumes for the interim position. No action taken.

II.D. 2016-17 Report on Weston METCO Program

Ms. Rivers reported on the 2016-2017 Weston METCO Program. She highlighted accomplishments of Weston METCO students, noting there are three National Honor Society members, one POSSE scholarship recipient (with a four year scholarship to Hamilton College), Class President of 8th grade, members of student leadership groups, a member of Boston Mayor's Council, a lead in the Middle School play, and three students are on a Boston swim team. She noted that 96% of Field School students and 92% of grade 3 students participated in after school activities. Ms. Rivers shared college acceptances of the 13 METCO seniors, highlighted achievement data, and addressed the achievement gap. She shared growth in percentage of METCO students scoring proficient or higher in MCAS or PARCC, noting the only decline is at current grade 7. Mrs. Black requested longitudinal data to be sure students' needs are being met. Ms. Rivers noted the 50th anniversary of Weston METCO would be next year and there will be celebrations during the year. She expressed appreciation to Friends of Weston METCO, BWMPO, School Committee, St. Peter's, the Congregational Church, Roxbury-Weston, the School Committee, and the METCO staff.

MOTION: Upon motion by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to receive the report.

II.E. Report on METCO Budget and Funding

Mrs. Mahr discussed the METCO budget for FY18. She indicated there was a \$25,000 increase in funding this year but noted it was too early in the legislative process to know about FY18. Mrs. Mahr indicated the current school budget includes \$9,400 to support the METCO program. Mr. Henry mentioned the FinCom letter and said that Weston students who live in Boston are an integral part of the district and noted the letter does not reflect what the School Committee or Town feel about Weston METCO.

MOTION: Upon motion by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to authorize the school administration to submit the annual METCO grant application.

Mrs. Black introduced Michelle Crawford, Chair of BWMPO.

II.F. Update on Start Time/Scheduling Innovation Steering Committee

Mr. Henry reported on the work of the committee, noting it is a dedicated group looking at school start time as a health concern. He said they are reviewing logistics, stress, homework, health issues, and how to best prepare students for a successful life. He noted that documents would soon be available on the website. Mrs. Black noted that Weston currently has a short elementary school day which could end up being lengthened. No action taken.

II.G. Facility Projects Update (Proctor Field, Case House, Case Complex)

Proctor Field – Mr. Cobb said the current high school track is in disrepair, noting that Weston can no longer host meets. He said the proposal for renovations to Proctor Field and Track would be presented at Town Meeting in May and would include an upgraded track, concession stand with bathrooms, storage, sports wall, new turf field, upgraded lights, safety lights on path and parking lots, and replacement of carpet on existing turf field to include an impact pad to help reduce concussions. Mr. Cobb said the town election on May 6 would include vote on debt exclusion and the capital project, with a total cost of \$4.5 million and will be Articles 17 and 18 at May Town

Meeting. He indicated there would be a public presentation on the project on April 25 and requested the Committee vote to support the articles.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to support Article 17.

Mrs. Black and Mr. Cobb acknowledged the support of the Permanent Building Committee and Fields Coordinator Ben Polimer through the process.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of March 20 and March 28, 2017.

III.B. Business Actions

Certificate of Warrant

Mrs. Mahr presented a Certificate of the Secretary, approval of warrants for payment.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$2,139,864.82 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

IV. Open Forum – No comments.

V. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mr. Cobb, at 8:38 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.