

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
December 12, 2016

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:03 PM at Case House by Mrs. Danielle Black, Chair. In attendance were Mr. Alex Cobb, Dr. Ed Heller, and Mr. John Henry of the School Committee; Dr. Robert Tremblay, 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 Ms. Kelly Flynn, Weston High School Assistant Principal and Dr. Kerry Dunne, History Department Head, and members of the History Department Faculty.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mrs. Black welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced members of the School Committee and Administration. She noted that Dr. Saini would not be in attendance this evening, nor would either the METCO or student representatives. She acknowledged the presence of many members of the History Department faculty in attendance. Mrs. Black reported the PTO held its monthly meeting last week and WestonPAC would have a presentation tomorrow night.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Tremblay provided follow-up information to the Committee regarding the dropping of science classes by students at the High School and an update on the effectiveness of Learning Assistants at Field School hired in Grade 4 classes with enrollment at the upper end of the class size policy. He indicated that Science Department Head Erica Cole will meet with her faculty regarding the issue of drops; that Dr. McCanne was creating a timeline for the class drops; and that Principal Anthony Parker was working with School Council and Endicott College to collect data regarding homework, rigor, and perceptions. Dr. Tremblay said he was in discussion with Field School PTO representatives regarding the Learning Assistants and indicated the topic would be discussed at a Field School coffee in January. He noted he has also reached out to a parent who expressed concern at the September 12 School Committee meeting.

Dr. Tremblay discussed his goal of branding and a common appeal, noting the new website would incorporate this. He indicated that the branding work put the new website at \$7,000 above the allotted budget but that Dr. McCanne, Director of Technology, would use funds in the Technology budget for now. Dr. Tremblay highlighted some student achievements, noting that Helen Zhang placed 9th out of 40 students in the Women in Science competition. He acknowledged the excellent performances of Weston students, whether on stage, on athletic fields, and in academic competitions.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – Mr. Cobb said there had been a good working meeting regarding the sports wall.

I.E. Open Forum – No comments.

MAJOR BUSINESS

II.A. 2017-2018 Grade 6-12 Program of Studies

Mrs. Bator reviewed the proposed changes to the Program of Studies. The Committee continued its discussion from prior meeting of concerns regarding meeting the needs of all students by offering only College Prep and Advanced Placement level history courses to Grade 10 students without an Honors option. Dr. Tremblay reported on his discussions with the History Department faculty and complimented the team. He expressed confidence in the proposed courses and recommended the Department be given the opportunity to move forward with the proposed offerings under Dr. Dunne's leadership. Mr. Henry expressed appreciation to and respect for the faculty, noting he would likely vote to approve for next year but wanted data and feedback as soon as possible. He noted there are many parents who have

communicated with the Committee about addressing the needs of all students. Mr. Cobb noted he would not support the proposed Program of Studies as presented, citing the need for an Honors level course for Grade 10 students. He said waiting two years for the data and feedback would not be acceptable for concerned parents and students.

Audience member Dr. John McKenzie noted the importance of getting a solid assessment program in place right away to begin scrutiny. Ms. Flynn talked about the difficulty when there are three levels of courses, particularly for the bottom level of students not having opportunity to interact with other students. Parent Spencer Palocz requested the AP course not be diluted to meet the needs of other students, noting students should be challenged, and expressed support for an Honors level. Mrs. Black expressed concerns that the district, no matter how small, has to address the needs of all students. Many other audience members spoke in support of an additional level as well. Mr. Don Benson of the History Department spoke about the rigor in the college prep class, noting it is a “deep and rich course.” Faculty member Susan Bairstow noted that the faculty loves History, works hard to find challenges, and are committed to their profession.

Mrs. Bator expressed appreciation for the respectful dialogue around the issue and noted the urgency of the concerns and need to collect data now. Dr. Heller commented on the interesting discussion taking place, noting that with new leadership in place he suggested the Committee approve the Program of Studies as they proposed. He also noted the importance of a study to add an Honors option.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted 3-1, with Mr. Cobb opposed, to approve proposed additions, changes, and deletions to the 2017-2018 Grade 6-12 Program of Studies.

Mrs. Black thanked the Department for their work and their attendance at the meetings. Mr. Henry also acknowledged the Department and thanked the parents for their input.

II.B. Update on School Start Time/Schedule Discussion

Mr. Henry reviewed steps taken to renew discussion of a later start time for Weston High School students. He reported that he and Dr. Heller, along with the Superintendent and two Assistant Superintendents, have held meetings with various key players, including Principals, Department Heads, and Directors to learn how the schedule works and what is best for everyone. Mr. Henry noted the work of a committee a few years ago but indicated there has been new research that greatly supports a later start time, citing a public health issue, higher test scores, and a decrease in depression when high school starts at 8:30am or later. Mr. Henry noted the impact a schedule change would have on transportation and athletics but indicated this is a vital issue that must be addressed.

Dr. Heller suggested a committee be formed to include Dr. Heller and Mr. Henry as School Committee representatives, the Superintendent, two secondary Principals, one high school teacher, one elementary teacher, one elementary parent, and one secondary parent, whose major focus would be on High School/Middle School though would impact elementary. He proposed forums be held for parents and students and a visibility on the webpage and suggested solicitation for members go out prior to the winter break. Mr. Henry, who indicated a goal of having a proposal before the next budget cycle, said he has been compiling a database of information. Mr. Cobb suggested a public comment/question area on the website. Dr. Tremblay indicated he would discuss that with Dr. McCanne. The Committee discussed communication on the issue. No action taken.

II.C. Facility Project Updates

Proctor Field and Case House – Mrs. Black said no firm updates, noting the PBC was meeting this week regarding both Case House and Proctor Field.

Sports Wall – Mr. Cobb said there had been a robust discussion on location options, noting two major locations under consideration now, the triangle between the pond and Middle School

gym and storage containers and where the current discus cage is between the track and baseball field.

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 December 6, 2016, subject to changes to be submitted by Dr. Heller.

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 Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$1,493,506.38 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Approval of Contract

Mrs. Mahr requested the Committee accept amount of contract for ice time at Rivers School. She noted that hockey parents reimburse the schools but that the district must approve the rate.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept amount of contract for ice time at Rivers Rink in amount of \$36,575.

Acceptance of Gift

Mrs. Mahr presented two proposed gifts, one gift of drafting tables from Lincoln-Sudbury High School to Weston High School's engineering program, and the permanent loan of an Amitron for physical testing of the strength of an object. She said there would be no additional costs but had no further information at this time. Mrs. Black said she would like more information on these gifts before accepting them. No action taken.

IV. Executive Session

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, at 8:47 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session for purposes of discussion of Collective Bargaining and discussion of strategy session in preparation for negotiations with non-unit personnel, with the intent to not return to Open Session, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Dr. Heller voting aye; Mr. Henry voting aye, and Mrs. Black voting aye.

No action taken during Executive Session.

V. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, at 10:40 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn from Executive Session with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Dr. Heller voting aye; Mr. Henry voting aye, and Mrs. Black voting aye.