

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
September 12, 2016

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:00 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; Mrs. Cheryl Antoine, METCO Representative to 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 of the School Committee and Elizabeth Nagarajah, Alternating METCO Representative to the School Committee.

Also in attendance were Mr. Matt Lucey, Field School Principal, and Mr. Michael Harrity, Town of Weston Selectman.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mrs. Black welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced members of the School Committee and Administration. She reviewed the evening's agenda.

I.C. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Tremblay welcomed back all students, describing the school year as off to a great start. He has visited all schools and many classrooms. Dr. Tremblay also explained that all evaluators in our schools attended the first of a three-part professional development program about effective feedback.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – Mrs. Black reported that PTO, PAC, and WEEFC are all up and running having just had or about to have their first meetings of the year.

I.E. Open Forum – Mr. Harrity shared that at the upcoming Fall Town Meeting the Case Campus will come up as three separate articles. The School Committee will include discussion of the topic at a future meeting.

MAJOR BUSINESS

II.A. Solar PV Exploratory Committee Update

Mr. Harrity updated the School Committee on the Solar PV Exploratory Committee's recommendations for future solar PV panels. He reviewed the RFP responses regarding four locations, three of which involved school properties. He indicated they were not recommending the school sites (High School student parking lot, Field School roof, and the Bus Barn at the Middle School) due to structural and/or cost concerns. While the Field School had been built to support solar panels and any additional snow load, the angle of installation and the mounting system (Panel Claw mounting) would require penetrations of the roof, resulting in loss of roof guarantee. The Bus Barn has shading issues, bus circulation issues, and a height of installation adding greater cost. The High School student parking lot also has modest shading issues and additional cost for repaving after installation. All locations had complications that would not suggest ultimate savings. The DPW site will continue as a potential site for solar installation.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to not install solar panels on the school locations at this time.

II.B. 819 Boston Post Road - Town's Right of First Refusal to Purchase

Mrs. Black informed the Committee that the Town received notice of the anticipated sale of 1.92 acres at 819 Boston Post Road and its conversion to residential use from agricultural use. Pursuant to MGL Ch. 61A, Section 14, notice was provided to the Board of Selectmen, Board of Assessors, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission. For a period of 120 days, no later than December 16, 2016, the Town has a right of first refusal and the opportunity to match the purchase price of \$900,000. Although the Selectmen, Mr. Harrity and Mr. Houston (as Mr. Gillespie has recused himself from this consideration) are not aware of a municipal

purpose for this land, they requested Town Boards and Committees, including the School Committee, consider this and report back as soon as possible, preferably by September 30. The Committee held a brief discussion about the precise location and potential use of the property.

MOTION: Upon motion by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously that the School Committee does not see a purpose for this land.

II.C. Enrollment Update (and Class Size Discussion)

Mr. Lucey shared schedules of the two learning assistants being hired this week and next to address large class size. Ms. Margaret Allard, Grade 4 teacher leader, discussed the role of the assistants in the classrooms.

Mrs. Mahr reported that there are currently 190 Grade 4 students in the system. Mr. Lucey indicated the additional enrollment of one more student and another likely to be enrolled, which will bring the Grade 4 enrollment to 192 students, eight sections of 24 students per class. Discussion ensued regarding decision-making and possible shifting of staff from Grade 5 to Grade 4. Mr. Lucey explained that he had been counseled by the prior superintendent not to shift staff. Mrs. Black noted that the class size policy for Grade 4 and 5 has 20-24 students as an acceptable range.

Audience member and parent Richard Lee asked how adding learning assistants will work and how to know it will work. Mrs. Black noted that adding learning assistants to mitigate large class size has not happened in the past. She indicated that the School Committee is not reassessing its class size policy at this time. Mr. Cobb explained the variability of enrollment projection models of late and underscored the possibility of staffing shifts. Mr. Lucey explained that the increase in enrollments occurred in August after the groupings of students had been made and indicated his reluctance to make grouping changes at that late date. Further discussion with audience members continued regarding class size, enrollment monitoring, and effectiveness of learning assistants. Dr. Tremblay stated that the addition of learning assistants should be helpful and noted the class size, though higher than the target, is within the guidelines of the policy.

Dr. Heller requested an update about the effectiveness of traffic flow changes put in place last year. Mr. Lucey said that the new pattern takes the pressure off Alphabet Lane traffic but noted that many parents continue to pick up their younger children at Woodland and Country Schools first. The Committee discussed increased communication with Council on Aging during school dismissal. Audience members Alix Campbell, PTO Chair, Attia Linnard, PTO Co-Chair, and Richard Lee, parent, brought up issues of pickup safety, bus use, and bus tardiness. Mrs. Mahr said she would research the issue of tardy buses. No action taken.

II.D. Field School Field Renovations Update

The Committee discussed information provided by Fields Coordinator Ben Polimer regarding renovations to the Field School field. Mr. Cobb spoke to the issue of a record drought and lack of irrigation. He explained that while Fall is a favorable time to plant seed, rain is still needed. Mr. Lucey commended Fields Coordinator Ben Polimer's work in communicating the process. He also reported that the school nurse has not reported an increase of playground injuries. Alphabet Field will be used when the Field School field is reseeded. Dr. Heller discussed the history of drainage at Field School field and indicated that the Field School construction funds could be used to cover the cost of repair.

Audience member Nina Danforth questioned the use of herbicides as a way to address the field concerns and whether signs would be posted. Mr. Cobb addressed these concerns and added that this is a long process of rehabilitating the soil. No action taken.

II.E. Field Steering- Irrigation Upgrades

The Committee held a preliminary discussion on the fields irrigation proposal. Mr. Cobb explained the proposal of a trial use of automated irrigation systems throughout the town, including the school fields. He noted that school fields were a high volume consumer of water this summer.

Mrs. Danforth asked who is in charge of the trees, citing a need for a consistent approach to watering them. Mrs. Mahr explained that Mr. Polimer oversees the three groundskeepers, and, while understaffed this summer, all groundskeepers are on staff at present. No action taken.

II.F. Discussion of School Start Time Committee

Mrs. Black reported that a small working group has begun to gather information from administrators, noting that a full committee has not yet been formed. She noted that the community will be made aware when the committee is being formed. Mrs. Black said “Start Time” will not be the committee’s title as other considerations will be part of its work. Dr. Heller explained that start time is one topic for discussion when considering reducing student stress, maintaining student choice, and accelerating students who may need challenges. He said that initial meeting with small groups to start probing are taking place and that ultimately this will result in a strategic planning opportunity.

Mr. Henry explained that start time is a hot issue, but it cannot be addressed in a vacuum. Remaining open-minded and asking questions such as, “What are we doing well?” and, “What can we do better?” are important. Dr. Heller shared that through this process; he anticipates a broader focus will result in changes more effectively and efficiently. Audience member, Dr. Yvette Guzovsky, contributed that a later start time can reduce car accidents.

Discussion continued concerning potential obstacles other communities have encountered in researching start time. It was determined that the committee, when formed, should maintain the word “time” in its title in order that community members understand that start time is part of the larger considerations. Mr. Henry said a website would be established for sharing resources. Audience member Dr. Chun Lim said that unlike other considerations, start time is a medical necessity. No action taken.

II.G. Update - Student Trips for 2016-2017

Mrs. Bator informed the Committee of anticipated student trips scheduled to take place during the 2016-17 school year. In response to a School Committee request that parents be made aware of all student travel opportunities at the start of the year for planning and budgeting purposes, a spreadsheet and website were created describing all student travel. Mrs. Bator noted that no other trips for the current school year will be proposed during the year but indicated travel opportunities for future years may be presented for Committee approval. The committee discussed the rising costs of the Washington, D. C. trip for all Grade 8 students. Alix Campbell, PTO Chair, remarked on the rapidly increasing cost of this trip (currently \$1,195/student). A discussion on fundraising resulted in Mrs. Mahr explaining that auditors have made it clear that we must identify scholarship needs and then seek funds. Mrs. Bator explained she would follow up on this particular trip. Dr. Mackenzie, resident, asked that the website tabs be alphabetized and sorted by school and trip. No action taken.

II.H. Superintendent’s Goals 2016-2017

Dr. Tremblay presented his further developed goals, originally presented as part of the Superintendent’s Entry Plan presented in July at the Committee’s annual workshop. Dr. Tremblay asked that these be considered as a first read. Individual goals were discussed briefly with the Committee. Dr. Tremblay also explained he will have all schools use a similar template for School Improvement Plans. Dr. Mackenzie commented that the expectations are clear to all administrators. The Committee agreed to vote on the goals at the next meeting. Mrs. Black asked that any iteration be forwarded to School Committee. No action taken.

II.I. Policy Review/Discussion

Mr. Henry presented proposed policy changes for Committee review. Mrs. Black noted the policies had been posted on the website for public review and feedback. Mr. Henry indicated that Mr. Mitch Finnegan, Director of Health and Physical Education, and Mrs. Patricia Wright, Nurse Leader, had reviewed the proposed policies, suggested minor word revisions (“other drugs” and “drug use”) and recommended the Committee approve the revised Policy GBEC,

Drug Free Workplace; Policy IHAMA, Teaching about Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs; Policy JICH, Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use by Students Prohibited; Policy JICHA, School Policies on Drug Use; and Policy JLCD, Administering Medicines.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve Policies GBEC, IHAMA, JICH, JICHA and JLCD as proposed.

II.J. Budget Guidelines

The Committee began the process of establishing next year's Budget Guidelines by reviewing the FY17 guidelines, which serve as the basis for the administration in its development of recommendations for the FY18 budget. Mr. Cobb suggested that this he shared with the Finance Committee. No action taken.

II.K. Facility Project Updates (Case House, Proctor Field)

Mrs. Black reported on the Case House renovation project, explaining that at the next PBC meeting, RFPs rankings and scoring will be reviewed. She also shared that the Historical Commission is aware that the renovation project will be historically sensitive and that ongoing conversations with the commission will continue.

Mr. Cobb presented an update on the Proctor Field/High School Track project and noted the importance of Ben Polimer as an expert in this work. No action taken.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of August 29, 2016.

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 \$1,704,386.03 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Mrs. Black indicated that no Executive Session would be held.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, at 10:16 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.