

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

October 30, 2017

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; Cheryl Antoine, METCO Representative to the School Committee; Jack Mullany, Student Representative to the School Committee; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Mrs. Pamela Bator, Assistant Superintendent of District Advancement; Dr. Abbie Lareau, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; and Mrs. Cynthia Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations. Not present: Dr. Sanjay Saini.

Also in attendance were Mrs. Elizabeth Nagarajah, Alternating METCO Representative to the School Committee; Mr. Anthony Parker, Weston High School Principal; Mr. John Gibbons, Weston Middle School Principal; and Dr. Kerry Dunne, Grade 6-12 History Department Head; Mr. Chris Houston, Member of the Weston Board of Selectmen.

Mrs. Black welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the evening's agenda.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mrs. Black reported on a well-attended WestonPAC meeting, noting many new faces present. She reported on the Budget Summit at Town Hall earlier in the day attended by the administrative team. She noted that some administrators, including Dr. Connolly and Mrs. Bator, were unable to attend due to a power outage at Weston Middle and High Schools.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly expressed appreciation to the faculty and staff for their assistance during the morning's power outage. She updated the Committee on the occurrence, noting that at approximately 7:50 AM Eversource communicated their optimism that power would be restored within an hour. Dr. Connolly reported damage had not been significant and all were anticipating a quick restoration of power. She noted that the high school was fully accommodating to hosting Middle School students during the outage prior to early dismissal. Dr. Connolly thanked all members of the administration, faculty, staff families and students for their help and support.

Dr. Connolly highlighted events in the district, noting several concerts held the past week. She reported that she was privileged to attend the High School Theater Company's original play *Ether Day* in Boston, "where the performance was spectacular, and the audience was wowed by the talents of our students." Dr. Connolly reported on a successful "Trunk or Treat" community event shared between the three elementary schools.

Updating the Committee on Athletics, Dr. Connolly reported that Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, and Girls Volleyball Teams qualified for the state tournament; Golf will compete in the Division 3 State Championships on Tuesday, going for their fifth straight championship; Football played Saturday at Wellesley HS vs. Newburyport in the MIAA Quarterfinals and will travel to Swampscott next Saturday; Crew participated earlier in the MPSRA Championships in Lowell; and Boys and Girls Cross Country will run in the D5 State Meet on Saturday, November 11.

Mr. Cobb suggested the Middle School generator be looked at.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – No updates

I.E. Open Forum – No comments.

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

Dr. Lareau presented WEEFC proposals for Committee approval and highlighted several. Proposals included grants for Technical Director for High School Winter Play, Field School Poetry Workshops, High School science turtle program, K-5 Math & Science Night, Program with Land's Sake Farm, and Assistant Superintendent Professional Development Funds.

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 October 17, 2017, totaling \$17,137.

II.B. School Start Time/Scheduling Innovation Steering Committee Presentation

Mr. Henry, Dr. Heller and other members of the SSTSISC presented an update of the committee's work to date. Mr. Henry indicated they were focusing on start time first, not all other considerations. Dr. Chun Lim, Start Time Committee member and cognitive neurologist, spoke about the science of sleep and its effect on the brain. He reported that, "our children are chronically sleep deprived." Mr. Henry reviewed the proposed plan for next year, which recommends an 8:45am to 3:15pm day for both Middle and High School; a reduction in block times of nine minutes per block for high school and five minutes per block at middle school; one "W Block" held once weekly at both schools 7:45-8:40am; and elementary school day hours of 8:00 am to 2:20 pm. They presented challenges of the proposed schedule, including its effect on athletics scheduling, transportation, and after-school activities and its impact on family schedules and child-care arrangements. Opportunities and benefits of the proposed plan include students being able to sleep more, potential for improved academic performance, positive impact on health and safety, elimination of unstructured time at end of middle school day, and opportunity for teachers to utilize time before school for collaborative planning. Mr. Henry indicated they would reach out to the community by way of public forums on November 15, conduct a survey, and form a subgroup to address athletic scheduling challenges. The Committee discussed.

Many audience members commented positively on the proposed plan and expressed appreciation to the committee for its work and willingness to move forward with a recommendation. Mrs. Black noted the proposed plan was in the best interest of students and not a budget decision. Mrs. Antoine noted the benefits of a later start time for most Boston students. Discussion occurred regarding the idea of outsourcing transportation. Ms. Christen Lacey suggested the committee conduct data collection to begin to quantify how many people need child care and noted the value of relationships with bus drivers that have been developed with families. Mrs. Nagarajah spoke about the challenges this year of increased traffic in Boston. No action taken.

II.C. Superintendent's Entry Plan Presentation

Dr. Connolly updated the Committee on her Entry Plan as new superintendent. She shared her findings over the past several months of learning about the Weston school community, reporting that she has met with stakeholders in the community, parents, and staff in a variety of formats to help inform her. Dr. Connolly acknowledged the current challenge of continuing to provide the highest quality of educational services to the students with a declining student enrollment while being mindful of budget constraints. Dr. Connolly shared her findings from a survey conducted to the community. She noted that communication is one area of concern to both faculty and parents, which she hopes the new website will help address. She indicated there is still an achievement gap, as evidenced by recent MCAS results, for African American/Black students and students with disabilities that is being addressed through targeted interventions. Concerns regarding the social emotional well-being of all students are being reviewed by the administrative team. Dr. Connolly spoke about the strong community support for the schools, acknowledging the PTO, WEEFC, and Boosters. Dr. Connolly reported that the district is currently developing a new strategic plan and vision, a several month process that will result in an early spring presentation of a 3-5-year plan to move the district forward.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to receive the Superintendent's Entry Plan.

II.D. Planning for Success Update

Dr. Connolly and others updated the Committee, noting they are in the middle of the process and starting to see a theme develop. She indicated that the planning team would meet next week. No action taken.

- II.F. Policy Review/Discussion – postponed until next meeting.
- II.E. Facility Projects Update (Proctor Field, Case House, Case Complex) –
Proctor Field/HS Track – Mr. Cobb reported that the track is completed, Field 6 grass growing, and the snack shack building is further along with temporary doors. He reported on installation of trees, fencing, concrete and lighting and said they remain optimistic that field and track will be ready for Thanksgiving game. He said a transformer box will be installed at Field 1.
Case House – Mrs. Black reported the PBC approved the full schematic design with a budget cost of \$5.5 million. She noted that costs of making the building handicap accessible, with new stairs in compliance with building codes, new roof, and installation of fire sprinklers would have to be done no matter who occupies the building. She said there are other improvements requested by School Committee, administrators and historical requests. She said the building needs a new roof, HVAC system and handicap accessible bathrooms. Mrs. Black indicated that nothing will be brought forward to Town Meeting at this point and they will continue to use design funds for full drawings. There was discussion about construction costs for a new building, septic capacity, installation of staircase and elevator on external of building, and limiting technology needs. Mrs. Black mentioned the positive working relationship with Historic Commission.
Case Complex – Dr. Heller reported that final paving is scheduled for October 31.
- III.A. Approval of Minutes
MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of October 16, 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 \$5,350,893.71 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.
- Memorandum of Understanding – Football Coach Stipends
Mrs. Mahr presented a Memorandum of Understanding reached with the Weston Education Association for School Committee approval and signature regarding restructuring of football coaching stipends for the 2017-2018 school year. Mr. Cobb asked about there being parity in stipends for boys and girls as required by Title IX.
MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to allow amendment for one-time, no increase and no impact to any other sport.
- Appointment to Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee
MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve Michelle Callanan as the Recreation Commission's designee to the Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee.
- Mrs. Black indicated an Executive Session was not needed.
- IV. Adjournment
MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller at 9:04 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.