

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
December 11, 2017

I. A. Call to Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:02 PM at Case House by Mrs. Danielle Black, Chair. In attendance were Mr. Alex Cobb 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 District Advancement; Dr. Abbie Lareau, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; and Mrs. Cynthia Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations. Dr. Sanjay Saini joined the meeting at 7:06 PM. Not present: Dr. Ed Heller.

Also in attendance were Ms. Elizabeth Nagarajah, Alternating METCO Representative to the School Committee; Mr. Anthony Parker, Weston High School Principal; Ms. Marla Schay, Grade 6-12 Guidance Department Head; Dr. Kerry Dunne, Grade 6-12 History Department Head and several History Department faculty members; and Ms. Lisa Reitano of the Finance Committee.

Mrs. Black welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the evening's agenda. She noted that Dr. Heller was out of town.

I.B. Chairman's Report – None presented.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly, noting some comments at the previous meeting seemed to indicate that Weston students were not performing as well as in the past, highlighted several Math Department student achievements during the past year. Weston High School had a freshman (Andrew Yao) declared a National winner on the USAJMO. This means he was in the top 12 out of the more than 100,000 top math students in the country that took the exam and is the most prestigious math competition award that can be won by a high school student. Weston had five students (Kenz Kallal, Sasha Shashkov, Zachary Zhu, Ezra Gordon, and Andrew Yao) in the top 100 on the math Olympiad and one declared the winner (Andrew Yao), greater numbers than any other year that the school has records for. At the Harvard MIT Math Tournament, an incredibly competitive and prestigious tournament, Weston students had a team score 39th out of 150 international teams and an individual (Andrew Yao) score 4th out of 800 competitors (top scorer from the US). One Weston student (Kenz Kallal) was recognized for his mathematical research as a Siemens Competition Semifinalist, and the WHS math team is stronger than it has ever been, in terms of both performance and enthusiasm. Department Head Jim McLaughlin reports that 10 years ago, they had to struggle to get 10 competitors at all of our meets, but this year, they are running out of seats for students. The alternates (the second 10) are averaging 100 points per contest, which would put them at 600 for the year. This is higher than our regulars scored 12 years ago, and the team is on pace to score 849 points this year.

Dr. Connolly congratulated Golf Team member Nick Cummings, who was named a Boston Globe and Boston Herald All-Scholastic again this year, the third time he has been so honored. Dr. Connolly reported that the search for a new Field School Principal had officially opened, with applications due in by January 5. She indicated a letter to Field School and Grade 3 parents had gone out, and an interview committee comprised of administrators, faculty and parents would soon be formed. Mr. Cobb requested that parents be informed of the forum dates as soon as possible.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – None presented.

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, including Urban Improv coming to the Middle School for a bullying/cyberbullying program.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC grant proposals as presented in memo of December 5, 2017, totaling \$5,430.

II.B 2018-2019 Grade 6-12 Program of Studies

Mrs. Black noted the Committee would continue its discussion of the proposed Program of Studies. She acknowledged the attendance of Mr. Parker, Dr. Dunne and members of the History Department faculty present. Mrs. Black reviewed the proposed revisions and noted the idea that had been raised by Committee members to add additional levels. Parent Christen Lacey, noting that parents have raised this issue since 2010, spoke about the disparity between CP and Honors levels, which she said indicates the need to have a third, middle level. She mentioned that students who switch class levels from Honors level where they receive grades of 60-70, to CP, receive A's in the College Prep level. She said the high school budget should be able to meet the needs of all levels of students and encouraged the Committee to consider alternatives. Mr. Parker indicated that the addition this past year of semester-long History courses and an additional AP section, was successfully addressing this. He also said neither parents or students have come to him requesting this change. Parent Lisa Green indicated she has brought up the request for additional levels in the Math Department in the past and expressed concern for students in the middle who have good math skills and require an intermediate level. Mr. Henry noted it is unfortunate for the Committee to focus on only History levels as he has heard from many parents regarding other core subjects that there is too large a gap between levels. Other parents present also spoke in support of additional levels and the need for such if new History standards are approved. Dr. Dunne agreed there might be need for conversation at that time.

Ms. Schay reported that, outside of freshman, Math has three levels. She expressed concern that three levels would in effect be tracking students, due to the small number of sections. Dr. Connolly suggested running a trial simulation model to see what would happen. Mrs. Black suggested the Committee focus on History at this time, deeming it not necessary to add a level across the board, while noting that parents have expressed interest in a third level in Science as well. Mr. Cobb agreed that the focus right now should be History and, while acknowledging the work the department has done this year, said he would only support the Program of Studies if it included an additional level in History. He requested data on what students and parents want when selecting classes. Student Laurel Davidoff spoke about her experiences and spoke in support of additional levels, noting students are bored doing worksheets and not challenged. Much discussion ensued, including discussion about a weighted GPA and its effect on class selection, the self-taught method used in some classes, and use of outside tutors to support students in higher levels. Mr. Henry recognized the tremendous work done by the History Department and said he does not want the Committee to be in the same situation next year with other areas, that he wants resolution. Mrs. Black requested the Committee vote on the Program of Studies.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted 2-1-1, with Dr. Saini and Mrs. Black voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting against, and Mr. Henry abstaining, to approve the proposed 2018-2019 Grade 6-12 Program of Studies, with a request for the administration to find opportunity to offer rigor or challenge in core courses Motion failed.

Mr. Cobb noted the Committee had not yet received the data on course selection to review, as requested. Mrs. Black indicated the Committee would have to discuss and vote on the Program of Studies on January 8.

II.C. Start Time/Schedule Discussion

Mr. Henry updated the Committee on the work of the School Start Time/Scheduling Innovation Steering Committee. He noted that under discussion now is a proposal for Middle and High Schools to begin at 8:30am and go until 3:15pm, with Elementary 8:00am to 2:20pm. He noted the major areas to address are impacts on transportation, parent/family schedules, and Athletics.

Mr. Henry reported they are running simulated routes to address transportation concerns and held parent forums where they received excellent feedback regarding solutions to the scheduling concerns and need for before school supervision. He indicated that Athletics is one of the top areas of discussion, due to the complexity in schedules and venues and noted there is tremendous amount of resistance from coaches in all towns to lengthen the day. Mr. Henry said they are working with other towns and may tweak the schedule. He noted he will hopefully be ready with final proposal by late February for budgeting purposes. Mr. Henry noted they may have to ask for funds in reserve. Laurel Davidoff spoke to the controversy on the topic, noting the impact of a later dismissal for Crew, music, and buses arriving very late for regular pick up. Mr. Henry said a survey would be sent in January to try to gain more feedback. He noted they are addressing the impact on Crew and indicated concerts and plays may have to start a half hour later. No action taken.

II.D. Discussion of Class Size Policy for Middle & High School

The Committee continued its discussion of the Middle and High School class size policy and whether to increase the minimum enrollment of students without requiring School Committee exception/approval from 12 students to 15 students. Mr. Parker asked if the Committee might consider raising the minimum for core courses to 15 but allowing electives to remain at 12. Mr. Cobb indicated he would prefer the opposite. It was noted there would continue to be conversation regarding enrollments, that capstone classes and end of sequence classes would continue to have Committee support, and that the Committee could vote an exception to approve low enrolled courses.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Henry and seconded by Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve a revision of the Middle and High School class size policy to increase the minimum enrollment of students without requiring School Committee approval from 12 students to 15 students.

Mr. Parker noted the high school schedule needs to be reviewed. Dr. Connolly noted the schedule would be addressed after the start time discussion. It was noted that addressing the schedule was part of the original plan of the Start Time Committee. Mrs. Black said they will review graduation requirements and numbers of credits, noting there are lots of components to be addressed.

II.E. Policy Review/Discussion

Mr. Henry requested the Committee approve the Section J policies presented for review at a prior meeting that had undergone no additional revisions: Policies JM Student Awards and Scholarships, JN Student Volunteers for School and Public Service, JP Student Gifts and Solicitations, JRA Student Records, and JRD Student Photographs as well as revised Policy JF Student Activity Accounts that has been reviewed by Mrs. Mahr. He noted this will complete review of Section J and, at Mrs. Bator's request, the next section to review will be Section I.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Saini, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve revised Policies JM, JN, JP, JRA, JRD, and JF.

II.F. Facility Projects Update (Proctor Field, Case House, Case Complex) – None presented.

III.A. Approval of Minutes – none presented.

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. Saini, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$224,925.04 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Memorandum of Agreement for Winter Coach Stipends

Mrs. Mahr presented a Memorandum of Agreement with the Weston Education Association (WEA) for a revision to stipends for winter coaches. She noted the WEA had reviewed and

approved the MOA that would allow stipends for two wrestling coaches be reallocated toward basketball coaches. She noted there would be no increase in budgeted stipends.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Saini, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the proposed Memorandum of Agreement.

IV. Executive Session – none needed.

V. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Dr. Saini, at 9:00 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.