

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
January 8, 2018

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; Mrs. Elizabeth Nagarajah, 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. Saini joined the meeting at 7:08 PM.

Also in attendance were Ms. Jen Truslow, Director of Student Services; Mr. Anthony Parker, Weston High School Principal; Ms. Jen Faber, Woodland School Principal; Ms. Erin Maguire, Country School Principal; Dr. Kerry Dunne, Grade 6-12 History Department Head; Ms. Kathy Baker, Director of World Languages; and Ms. Lisa Reitano and Mr. John Sallay of the Finance Committee. Mr. James Polando of the Town of Weston Permanent Building Committee joined the meeting at approximately 8:00 PM.

Mrs. Black welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the evening's agenda. She noted that student member Jack Mullany was ill and unable to attend the meeting. Mrs. Black informed the Committee that she would be out of town the remainder of the week.

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

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly updated the Committee on the Field School Principal search. She reported that the posting for the position had closed on January 5, and there were more than 30 applicants. After the resumes are reviewed, she indicated that an interview committee, comprised of administrators, faculty and parents, would conduct initial interviews of several applicants. Following the interview process, finalists selected will spend a day in Weston, including meeting with parents and faculty, and there would be administrative site visits to the candidates' districts. Dr. Connolly noted that several other districts are also conducting principal searches, so she has moved the process up a bit and anticipates announcement of new principal prior to February vacation. Mr. Cobb requested the dates and time of the parent forums and the interview membership be announced as soon as possible. Mrs. Black requested that communication about the principal search be sent to all parents in the district.

Dr. Connolly highlighted recent student achievements in the district, noting that two teams from Weston competed in a variety of events at the December 7 Women in Science Competition. The competition tested the students' science knowledge in all disciplines, their engineering skills, and their problem solving. Competing from Weston were Seniors Julie Jesurum, Charlene Kwan, and Jackie Liu, and Juniors Lydia O'Connor, Julia Tang, and Qiwen (Christine) Wu. Special congratulations go to the senior team who placed 5th out of 43 schools. Dr. Connolly reported that the high school science team hosted and competed against 19 other schools in late December in the West Suburban Science League Science Olympiad, Microbe Mission, Rocks & Minerals, and Towers, noting that Weston teams placed 5th in Circuit Lab, 8th in Towers, 12th in Microbe Mission, and 17th in Rocks & Minerals.

Dr. Connolly highlighted achievements of the 2017 Middle School Robotics Team, informing the Committee that Lorraine Sousa, Robotics team advisor, reports that the team, led by Captains Anna Lian, Kara Nip and Faizaan Qureshi consisted of thirty-eight team members formed into four teams. She noted the Robotics Club was fortunate to have two WEEFC grants that provided funds which allowed each team to start with two kits as they built their robots. This year's challenge was Hydro Dynamics. All teams participated in the First Lego League Shrewsbury Tournament on December 2. Butterfly Effects won the Inspiration Award and a Ticket to the WPI State FLL competition on December 16, Clementines won the Teamwork Award, and Weston Is Our City also

received a Ticket to the WPI State First Lego League completion. Two weeks later at the WPI FLL Tournament, Weston Is Our City brought home second place for the Gracious Professionalism Award. Dr. Connolly reported that 8th grader William Houston and 7th grader Faizaan Qureshi scored an impressive 20 out of 25 points on the AMC 8 math contest, scores that earned them an Honor Roll of Distinction for being in the top 1% nationally of all student that took the test. She noted that eighth graders Benjamin Carpenter, Anna Lian, Jessie Yuan, Jessy Wang, and Paul Shen, and seventh graders Merrill Chiang, Ian Chang, Clara Odio, and Ella Kim made the Honor Roll for being in the top 5% nationally.

Dr. Connolly reported that Weston students tied the high school's record of five students scoring in the top 100 at the Massachusetts Math Olympiad, and 10 in the top 200. Top 100 scorers included Ezra Gordon, Josh Li, Sasha Shashkov, Andrew Yao and Zachary Zhu. Four of these top 100 finishers will go on to compete at the second level exam on February 27. Dr. Connolly extended congratulations to Andrew Yao, whose score of 146 out of a possible 150 points put him first in all of Massachusetts. She reported that halfway through the season, the WHS Math Team is in first place in the medium-sized schools division of the Massachusetts Math League, noting they achieved unusually strong results at a recent meet, including a dramatic win over Canton. She reported that freshman Neil Malur missed only one problem, and sophomores Ezra Gordon and Andrew Yao each achieved a perfect score.

Dr. Connolly reported on the DECA competition held in late December where more than 600 students from 10 different schools competed. She informed the Committee that Weston's team of Ben Goldstone and Patrick Rhatigan came in first place in the Management Team Event; Neil Maiur took first place in Principles of Business Management, Ella Davis took second place for a Start Up Business Plan, and Nikki Liu and Vavara Plotnichenko took third place for their Financial Team Event. These students have qualified for the State DECA competition in March. Dr. Connolly extended congratulations to Mr. Corey Guerra and all the students.

Dr. Connolly mentioned the upcoming High School Art Exhibition opening on January 16, from 5-7 PM featuring student work from the first semester art courses. She noted that show openings offer the viewers and artists a special time to view the artwork away from the noise and challenges of the school day and interact with each other in a more intimate setting. She said the exhibition will be on display through January 26.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – None presented.

I.E. Open Forum – Ms. Christen Lacey, parent and WestonPAC Chair, requested a report on efforts being made to close the achievement gap, expressing her opinion that it is important to have an update prior to the next round of MCAS. Mrs. Black said she would talk to Dr. Connolly and Mrs. Truslow about rescheduling the Special Education report to an earlier meeting.

II.A. Weston Education Enrichment Fund Committee Proposals Mid-Year Report

Ms. Alison Abrams, WEEFC Chair, provided the Committee with a WEEFC Update. She said they are rethinking the continuation of the Fall campaign and are redesigning the WEEFC logo. Ms. Abrams reported WEEFC has \$9,000 set aside in donations made in memory of board member Margie Ross, who passed away earlier this year and indicated the board is working out how a memorial grant will be defined. She indicated that overall, 38 grants have been submitted this year, with 25 approved for funding, representing all schools, professional development, and principals' discretionary funds. She expressed appreciation to Dr. Lareau, Mrs. Bator and members of the WEEFC Board for their work. Dr. Connolly thanked WEEFC for their work.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept the WEEFC Mid-Year Report.

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

Mrs. Black noted the Committee has had ongoing dialogue the past few meetings in discussion of the proposed Program of Studies and whether the offerings are meeting the needs of all students.

Dr. Dunne and Mr. Parker presented a new proposal to restructure 10th Grade World History to add an embedded Honors level to the College Prep course. Dr. Dunne described how the course would work. She noted that the proposal maintains added rigor to the College Prep level and that an embedded option would allow flexibility for students and not be a stand alone course. She also emphasized that because of the new DESE frameworks to be approved later this year, this proposal and what is offered at grade 10 will not be what the department will be offering in two years. The Committee discussed. Some members questioned whether the extra Honors work would be done only outside of school time and not teacher directed. Mr. Cobb expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by the history department but indicated he would not support the embedded Honors option as he still sees need for a separate, additional level, as do many parents who have contacted him. Dr. Dunne indicated she would research how other schools make the embedded option work. Mr. Parker indicated that they are having conversations now on the issue of levels school-wide, not just history. Much discussion ensued, with Committee members expressing appreciation to Mr. Parker and Dr. Dunne for their work.

MOTION: Upon motion by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted 4-1, with Mr. Cobb voting against, to approve the proposed 2018-2019 Grade 6-12 Program of Studies.

II.C. Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed FY19 School Budget

Dr. Connolly presented an overview of the proposed school budget for FY 2019. She noted the budget was developed with the input of staff and administrators and thanked them, especially Mrs. Mahr, for their assistance. She indicated the proposed budget, with an increase of 3.08% over FY18, meets the guidelines approved by the School Committee. She noted the budget included anticipated contract obligations and noted that, although the enrollment is declining, it is not at one grade level but across the grades. The budget proposed includes a restructuring of leadership positions K-8, which reduces some leadership position stipends and adds the new position of instructional coach at each building and a reduction in Technology staffing. Dr. Connolly highlighted planned building projects in priority order, including the Country School playground, Woodland School erosion control, Field School playground walkway, Middle School Science lab renovation, Middle School roof replacement, High School electrical work, and High School library carpet and windows. She indicated the Case House Renovation Project, currently estimated at \$6.4 million, would use capital funds. Ms. Reitano asked about the cost of the estimates, which Mrs. Black indicated are high due to becoming ADA compliant without enlarging building footprint. and partly due to maintaining the historical qualities of the building. Minimal discussion occurred. Dr. Connolly reviewed the schedule of budget hearings, noting the Committee would meet on January 22 at 4:00 and January 25 at 3:00 to begin its review. Mr. Polando noted that even if the school administration was relocated, much of the renovation costs would have to spent anyway just to bring Case House up to code and accessible. He indicated that the historical component is only 10-15%. No action taken.

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

Mr. Cobb expressed appreciation to Mr. Polando for all his help on the Proctor Field project. He noted also the work of Mr. Gary Jarobski, Director of Facilities. Mr. Cobb indicated there are a few outstanding items, including walkway lighting and the need to revisit the lighting use policy. Mrs. Black said she would follow up with the Board of Health, who wants to train volunteers who will use the building. She also asked Mr. Cobb to spearhead a spring opening celebration.

II.E. Appointment to Town of Weston Permanent Building Committee

Mrs. Black reported that she attended the Board of Selectmen meeting on December 19 where they interviewed Walter Chaffee for appointment to the PBC. The Selectmen voted to appoint Mr. Chaffee to the PBC, subject to the School Committee's vote. Mrs. Black indicated her support for Mr. Chaffee's appointment. Mr. Polando reviewed Mr. Chaffee's credentials, noting he was a civil engineer.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to appoint Walter Chaffee to the Town of Weston Permanent Building Committee.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of December 5 and December 11, 2017. Dr. Sanjay requested that the Superintendent Report of December 11 be edited to include the names of students.

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 \$3,598,557.75 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

IV. Executive Session

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller at 9:20 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session for purposes of discussion of Collective Bargaining, with the intent to not return to Open Session, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Dr. Heller voting aye; Mr. Henry voting aye, Dr. Saini voting aye, and Mrs. Black voting aye.

No action taken during Executive Session. The Committee held a discussion of Collective Bargaining vis a vis proposals of change to schedule and start time. The Committee scheduled an Executive Session meeting on February 12 at 4:30 PM for purposes of discussion of Collective Bargaining/contract discussion.

V. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Saini, at 8:57 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn from Executive Session with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Dr. Heller voting aye; Mr. Henry voting aye, Dr. Saini voting aye; and Mrs. Black voting aye.