

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

February 26, 2018

I. A. Call to Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:05 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. 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 of the School Committee.

Also in attendance were Mr. Anthony Parker, Weston High School Principal; Mr. Mitch Finnegan, Director of Wellness & Physical Education; Dr. Kerry Dunne, Grade 6-12 History Department Head; Ms. Marla Schay, Grade 6-12 Guidance Department Head; and Finance Committee members Ms. Lisa Reitano and Mr. Keith Johnson.

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. Saini was out of town and that neither Mrs. Nagarajah or Mrs. Cheryl Antoine, Alternating METCO Representatives, or Jack Mullany, Student Representative to the School Committee, would be present this evening.

I.B. Chairman's Report –

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly highlighted some recent events in the district. She reported that the entire Woodland community came together in a Whole School Challenge on January 31 to celebrate how each individual class repurposed plastic bags into something useful for themselves or their school. She said the two-week design and engineering challenge provided the students with a shared experience to address a real-world problem while promoting empathy. During the school experience, individual classes brainstormed ideas, selected a design, created a prototype, wrote a description, and created a promotional video. One design per class was submitted, and all students and faculty were able to view all prototypes and videos and vote for their favorite design!

Dr. Connolly reported that the World Language Department held a successful Chinese New Year celebration on Sunday, February 11 at the Middle School with student presentations from all Mandarin classes, hands-on activities and food. She said the event was very well attended by students and members from the community, including Dr. Connolly.

Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that two Weston Middle School teachers have been recently recognized, History teacher Ed McLoughlin and Math teacher David Poras. She reported that Mr. McLoughlin was nominated and selected by the Society of Cincinnati, a group that celebrates early American history, for his work teaching the American Revolution and in developing a meaningful collaboration with the Museum of the Golden Ball Tavern in Weston, helping students to use artifacts and documents to research the history of Weston's most prominent Loyalist, Isaac Jones. Dr. Connolly reported that Mr. Poras received the "Rosenthal Prize for Innovation in Math Teaching" at a ceremony in at the National Museum of Mathematics in New York City on February 7. This award was established in 2012 to recognize and promote distinguished hands-on math teaching. In Mr. Poras' lesson, Growing Alligators: How Big Will It Grow?, students use surface area, volume and proportional reasoning to determine whether a sponge alligator toy really grown 600% in water, as advertised.

Dr. Connolly announced that WHS sophomore Andrew Yao has clinched the title of highest-scoring mathlete in the Massachusetts Math League. She noted that Andrew has achieved a perfect score in every meet so far this year, and it is mathematically impossible for anyone to catch him at this point!

Dr. Connolly provided the Committee with an update of the winter athletic season. She reported that the Girls Swim/Dive team finished the regular season at 11-1 and were North Sectional Runner-ups and Division 2 State Runner-ups. Jacey Hinton was the D2 State Champion in the

100 free as was the 200 free relay team. The Boys Swim/Dive team finished the season 10-4 and 4th in D2 States, while student Dale Nickerson is the D2 State Champion in Diving. Dr. Connolly reported that the Boys Varsity Basketball team has qualified for the MIAA Tournament and will travel on Tuesday to Whittier Tech for first round action. She noted that the Girls Basketball team just missed out on qualifying for the tournament, losing in their last game of the season. A season highlight was that Junior Christina Costa surpassed the 1,000 point mark.

Dr. Connolly reported that Boys and Girls Alpine Skiing qualified six skiers for States including Stella Alphas, who was Mass Bay West individual champion. Stella finished 1st in six of the seven races during the season. Dr. Connolly also reported that Boys & Girls Indoor Track had very good seasons, with the boys team repeated as DCL Small Champions and the girls team finished one win behind champion Concord. She reported that Peter Diebold (600M), Bharathi Subbiah (Long Jump), and Hannah Brown (High Jump) are D4 Divisional Champions.

Dr. Connolly reported lots of events are upcoming in the schools, with the high school winter play scheduled for the weekend.

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 grant proposals for Committee approval. She highlighted a grant for Middle School Science Club funding, purchase of musical instruments (a tuba, string bass and cello), and a proposal to fund the Seal of Biliteracy assessment. She explained this is the opportunity to recognize students who have proficiency in more than one language and would be a pilot this year. She noted funding is to take a test to assess full proficiency. Dr. Lareau indicated that many other districts are participating this year, including Acton-Boxborough, Wellesley, and Wayland, and they are hopeful Massachusetts will join other states in recognizing biliteracy.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC grants in amount of \$16,778, as proposed in the memo of February 13, 2018.

II.B School Start Time/Scheduling Recommendation – Discussion & Anticipated Vote

Mr. Henry thanked members of the School Start Time/Scheduling Innovation Committee (SSTSIC) for their work during the last two years. He shared the recommendation of the committee to change school day times to be 8:45am-3:15pm for Middle and High Schools, providing extra sleep time for older students, and 8:00am-2:20pm for elementary schools and noted new bus schedules. Mr. Henry shared results of survey on the importance of sleep, indicating it was a good sampling as results represent more than half of students' families. He said results indicate the proposal for a later start time would impact sports. Mr. Henry also noted the later time for doors at the school to be opened and indicated this would be strictly enforced, especially at the Middle School. He also noted there would likely be some tweaking in the bus schedules once school underway. Noting the loss of time before school time for students to meet with teachers, he indicated the proposed schedule includes a W block once a week on Thursdays. He noted that Boston buses would run early on Thursdays, but Weston buses would not. Mr. Henry said they are still working on first Wednesday schedules and all Wednesdays at Middle School and noted that the elementary late bus runs would be elementary only, not combined with secondary school students as they are presently.

Mr. Henry reviewed some of the challenges of a new schedule, including adapting to change in general, early release for athletics, transportation, and impact on family schedules and child care. He noted they are still working with the Recreation Department on options. Mr. Henry shared budget impacts, noting an expected additional cost of \$36,000 for buses, He said they will have to resolve collective bargaining issues, Wednesday schedules, and “nuts and bolts” at the schools. Mr. Finnegan cited some statistics on cycle of sleep and said the most impactful single way to improve

health of teenagers is to get them more sleep. Mr. Henry again provided the SSTSIC's committee recommendation that the School Committee adopt the proposed schedule. The Committee discussed. Mrs. Black noted this would not be a pilot but would be a permanent revised schedule. She thanked members of the administration, parents, the WEA, and SSTSIC members for their creative and collaborative efforts. Several parents expressed appreciation for the work done and offered support for the recommendation. One parent questioned whether there are statistics that indicate that students will sleep more or will use extra time to be on electronic devices. Parent Kristin Barbieri suggested again that extra ten minutes at elementary schools be used for gym or lunch. It was noted that the proposed schedule shortens the long blocks from 76 to 67 minutes and does have a shorter school day for secondary students but falls within the state requirements.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to adopt the proposed new schedule, to be implemented beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.

II.C. Mid-Year Evaluation of Superintendent

Mrs. Black indicated that, as this is Dr. Connolly's first full year as Interim Superintendent, she met with approximately half of the administrators to gather feedback for a mid-year evaluation. Mrs. Black said that she expected to meet with all district administrators (the Superintendent's direct reports) prior to the final evaluation. She noted that evaluation follows a rubric and is reported to the state and publicly presented. Mrs. Black shared many comments and feedback. Committee members noted there have been challenges this year that Dr. Connolly has faced and addressed well. Dr. Connolly indicated she would act upon some of the areas which might be improved. She thanked the School Committee for their support and expressed appreciation to the district's administrative team. She expressed excitement about the work being done and progress being made. No action taken.

II.D. Response to Finance Committee's Recent Comments

Mrs. Black addressed Finance Committee members expressed concern about per pupil expenditures as compared to other towns. Ms. Reitano noted they are trying to understand the expenditures and what taxpayers are receiving for their dollars spent, as Weston's MCAS and AP scores are not highest. Mr. Johnson noted that Weston voters do support public education, but there is declining student enrollment and an aging population that need to be considered for the long term. There was much discussion. It was decided that representatives of the School Committee and Finance Committee would benefit from meeting in the summer, not at budget time, to have further conversations.

II.E. Discussion of Superintendent's Proposed FY19 School Budget

Dr. Connolly noted the FY19 proposed school budget was now a 2.68% increase over FY18. She indicated that changes are due to state figures for special education tuition expenses for out of district students for next year as well as some teacher notification of anticipated contractual lane changes. Mrs. Mahr noted there could still be some changes and indicated the current budget includes budget impact of new school schedule. Mrs. Black indicated the school budget would be on Finance Committee agenda on Thursday night. No action taken.

II.F. Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee

- Appointment of Melissa Crocker
- Vote to Stagger Terms of Current Members

Mrs. Black reported that she attended a Board of Selectmen meeting on February 13 when they interviewed Melissa Crocker and appointed her to the Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee, subject to a vote by School Committee. She indicated there was also a vote to stagger the term length of the at-large members and recommended the School Committee do the same. Mrs. Black and Mr. Cobb both expressed support for Ms. Crocker's appointment.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to appoint Melissa Crocker as an at-large member to the Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee for the term expiring June 30, 2021. And further, move to establish staggered three-year terms for the remaining at-large members with Trevor MacDonald's term to expire June 30, 2020 and Kristin Barbieri's term to expire June 30, 2019.

II.G. Facility Projects Update (Proctor Field, Case House, Case Complex

Mrs. Black reported the PBC was meeting on Wednesday night and would decide whether to present Case House renovation at May Town Meeting or wait until the fall. She said there is concern about the number of projects being undertaken by the Town. Mr. Cobb said he is in discussion with Athletic Director Mike McGrath about a potential date for an opening celebration for Proctor Field and would follow up.

II.H. Proctor Field Tower Lighting Policy

The Committee discussed proposed revisions to Policy KFA, Operation of Proctor Field Tower Lights to allow for more usage than the current policy allows. Mrs. Black indicated the Committee would vote on the policy on March 12. No action taken.

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 January 22, January 25, and February 5, 2018.

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 \$2,140,341.54 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Contract with Rivers School

Mrs. Mahr requested the Committee approve an agreement with Rivers School in amount of \$33,275 for cost of ice time. She indicated the Hockey Club would reimburse the district that amount.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Agreement with Rivers School as proposed.

Mr. Cobb suggested that the Athletic Program Review include looking at funding methods for the Golf, Hockey, and Crew teams.

IV. Executive Session

MOTION: Upon motion made by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mr. Cobb at 9:22 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session for purposes of discussion of the deployment of security personnel or devices 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.

V. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry at 9:58 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.