

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
March 26, 2018

I. A. Call to Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:02 PM at Case House by Mr. John Henry, Vice Chair. In attendance were Mr. Alex Cobb and Dr. Ed Heller, 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. Not present: Mrs. Danielle Black, Dr. Sanjay Saini of the School Committee.

Also in attendance was Ms. Kathy Baker, Director of World Languages.

Mr. Henry welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the evening's agenda. He noted that Mrs. Black was unable to attend this evening's meeting.

I.B. Chairman's Report – None.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly highlighted the parent presentation by Sarah Ward, M.S., CCC/SLP, who shared research-based practical executive functioning interventions that families can use with their children to assist with completion of tasks and organizational strategies. Dr. Connolly noted the well-received presentation was attended by more than 75 parents

Dr. Connolly reported on the celebration of 50 years of METCO on March 23, noting it was a huge success that included a film documenting the history of METCO in Weston, and by a potluck dinner. She said it was a very nice tribute, with palpable energy and positive feelings during the event that included attendance by a number of past students, families and faculty. Mrs. Nagarajah highlighted events at the 50th anniversary celebration as well and acknowledged the positive experiences she and her children have enjoyed in the Weston Public Schools as part of the METCO Program. She said Weston is a "great community."

Dr. Connolly reported on the recent participation of Weston METCO students in "The Tenacity Challenge," the Bedford Annual Academic Bowl for African American and Latino Scholars. Weston's team of Melissa Barbosa, Alanah Bullock, Taniya Williams, Helen Befekadu, Jaycee Bullock, Hannah Jordan, Ashanti Malcom-Bates, Dellena Bereket, and Nasarith Berhe, coached by LaToya Rivers, Erin Patterson and Andi Gettys, placed 4th overall and received 3rd place for their history argument. This year's prompt was "Is hate speech free speech?" Dr. Connolly noted that while the meet was taking place, the student demonstration "March For Our Lives" was held on the Boston Common and included several students from Weston. Weston METCO's own Michael Martinez has been working as an organizer of this and other state-wide events and gave a speech at the event.

Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that the METG High School Drama Festival finals were dedicated this year to two retiring Theater Directors, John Minigan of Weston and Sandy Dennis of Sharon. She noted that Mr. Minigan received the honor even though Weston no longer participates in the competitive festival, because, according to METG, "As teachers, Sandy and John dedicated their time and energy far beyond their own students to make an educational impact on all students across the Commonwealth."

Dr. Connolly updated the Committee on the process for determining snow days and how the decision is made to cancel school. She said she is in conversation with DPW, Weston Police and Fire Departments, and Jim Parisi, Head Groundsman for the schools, as well as in a group text with neighboring superintendents. She noted it is not an easy decision to make, that the decision is made as early as possible, and that safety of the students is critically important. Mr. Cobb expressed appreciation for the timeliness of the recent notifications.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – None presented.

I.E. Open Forum – Mrs. Kristen Barbieri, parent of two fifth graders, informed the Committee that the fifth grade would like to make a class gift of a tree to provide shade at Field School. She indicated they would like to have it planted on Arbor Day. Dr. Heller said he would review the Case Campus plans and speak with Fields Coordinator Ben Polimer, but did not see why it would not be acceptable.

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

Dr. Lareau presented WEEFC grant proposals for Committee approval. She highlighted the proposals for origami at Field School, musician Richard Conte for “People Who Make A Difference,” and Zarin Machanda, a primate anthropologist.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC grants in amount of \$4,584 as proposed in memo of March 20, 2018.

II.B World Language Update

Mr. Henry noted that an update on World Languages is an open item relative to the World Language Review. He reported this would be rescheduled on a future agenda after the administration and Ms. Baker have had opportunity to analyze data collected from recent survey. No action taken.

II.C Middle School Student Trip Approval

Ms. Baker requested that the Committee approve a student trip to Ecuador in April 2019. Although most student travel will be presented for approval in May, this approval is being requested earlier so the trip may be advertised early to procure lower rates and provide parents with cost information. She noted this is not a new trip. Mr. Cobb requested that, if possible, faculty members who accompany the students be able to speak Spanish. Ms. Baker noted they might have to look at faculty outside of Middle School to accomplish this.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve Middle School student trip to Ecuador in 2019.

II.D Superintendent Mid-Year Report

Dr. Connolly presented draft of the Overview of the District Strategic Plan 2018-2021 for Committee review and approval. She indicated that this is a working document that will continue to evolve as we move forward. Dr. Connolly discussed the DESE sanctioned process in which the document was developed, noting that consultant Lori Likis of Planning for Success worked with teams of administrators and faculty throughout the year to create the plan. She noted that “visioning” groups were met with as well, including PTO Board, School Council, students, and school faculty. Three strategic objectives and outcomes were presented along with a vision statement that reads, “Weston Public Schools and the wider community are committed to excellence in learning for all students. Students will imagine, reflect, and innovate within a safe learning environment that develops their academic, social, and emotional growth and well-being. We will build the critical thinking and collaboration skills necessary to participate positively in a complex and constantly changing, culturally diverse world.”

Dr. Connolly discussed next steps, informing the Committee that she and Mrs. Bator would begin Action Planning Training with DESE in May and that each School Improvement Plan will follow the same format. She expressed appreciation to all who participated in the development of the District Strategic Plan.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Weston Public Schools District Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

II.E FY'18 Budget – Third Quarter Review

Mrs. Mahr updated the Committee on the FY'18 budget to date and explained some of the variances. She noted that some consultant money is being used for special education positions for which they were unable to hire people.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller the School Committee voted unanimously to receive the report.

II.F. Policy Review –

School Choice – Mr. Henry reopened the discussion on School Choice, noting that in the Committee's haste at the last meeting, Dr. Connolly did not have opportunity to present reasons for nonparticipation. Dr. Connolly recommended that Weston not participate in School Choice for the 2018-19 school year because under School Choice, there is no local control over who is accepted, no provision to remove students, and provides for reimbursement of 75% of the per pupil expenditure up to \$5,000.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller the School Committee voted unanimously to not participate in School Choice for the 2018-19 school year.

Proctor Field Tower Lighting Policy

The Committee reviewed the updated draft of the Proctor Field Lighting Policy.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Henry and seconded by Dr. Heller the School Committee voted unanimously to approve revised Policy KHA Operation of Tower Lights.

Section I Policies - Second Reading

Mr. Henry presented revised policies from Section I for Committee approval: IA Instructional Goals, IB Academic Freedom, IC-ICA School Year/School Calendar, IGA Curriculum Development, IGD Curriculum Adoption, IHA Basic Instructional Program, and IHAM Health Education.

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller the School Committee voted unanimously to approve Policies IA, IB, IC-ICA, IGA, IGD, IHA, and IHAM as proposed.

Section I Policies - First Reading

Mr. Henry Presented additional Section I policies for initial review: IHAM-R Health Education (Exemption Procedure), IHAMA Parental Notification, IHAMB Teaching About Alcohol Tobacco and Drugs, IHB Special Instructional Programs and Accommodations. IHBA Programs for Students with Disabilities. IHBEA English Language Learners. IHBF Homebound Instruction, and IHBG Home Schooling. He indicated that these would be presented for a second reading at the next meeting. Mr. Henry noted that Mitch Finnegan, Director of Wellness, reviewed Policy IHAMB and made the suggested revisions. The Committee discussed. Dr. Lareau questioned the proposed statement regarding awarding of a diploma for home schooled students. Mr. Henry said he will review the policies further before presenting for approval.

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

Mr. Cobb reported that as soon as the snow is gone, the field would be used.

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 March 12, 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 \$1,939,026.67 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Memorandum of Understanding - Coaching Stipends

Mrs. Mahr presented a Memorandum of Understanding with the WEA for Committee approval to restructure coaching stipends for Softball and Boys Lacrosse. The varsity and junior varsity softball stipends will be divided among three coaches: one varsity and two junior varsity coaches. The junior varsity and freshman boys lacrosse stipends will be divided equally between the two positions. She noted the total expenditure would not be affected.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the modification of the coaching stipends for the 2017-2018 school year for Softball and Boys Lacrosse as proposed.

IV. Executive Session – None needed. Mr. Henry noted the WEA had approved the Memorandum of Understanding for Start Time changes.

V. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, at 8:15 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.