

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
September 17, 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, Chair. In attendance were Mrs. Danielle Black, Mr. Alex Cobb, Dr. Ed Heller, and Dr. Sanjay Saini of the School Committee; Ms. Onika Jenkins, METCO Representative to the School Committee; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; and Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mr. Henry welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the evening's agenda. He welcomed Ms. Jenkins as new METCO Representative.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that changes to several bus routes were made last week to help ensure all students arrive on time to school and noted that further adjustments may be made as needed as we go forward. Dr. Connolly expressed appreciation for the communications and patience through this process.

Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that a group of administrators, faculty, parents and students from Weston traveled to Stanford University to attend the annual Challenge Success Fall Conference. Attendees from Weston High School at the Thursday through Sunday conference were Dr. Connolly, Principal Anthony Parker, Math Teacher Corlene Hosmer, Special Education Teacher Michael Burd, World Language Teacher Liliana Smith, Freshman Seamus Smith, Parent Christen Lacey, and sophomore Niamh Lacey. Dr. Connolly noted that Challenge Success is a program that will train participants and districts to better support students socially and emotionally and noted that Weston would focus on high school this year to find ways to reduce stress, including implementing new homework guidelines and looking at number of courses and scheduling.

Dr. Connolly reported that ten students and three adults are scheduled to come from Luoyang, China on September 27, will stay with host families for just over two weeks, and attend classes at the High School. She noted this is part of Weston's cultural exchange with Luoyang #1, and our students will have the opportunity to study in Luoyang for two months in the winter.

Dr. Connolly provided an update on athletics, reporting an increase in high school student participation over last year, even with a slight decrease in enrollment. She informed the Committee that both soccer programs, field hockey, football and cross country are enjoying the newly renovated Proctor Field and Track and noted there have already been a few night games with an expected increase in night games as the season progresses. Dr. Connolly reported that Proctor Field is currently used from dismissal until occasionally 8pm when there may be night practices. She reported the renovated field has generated an increase in school pride and appreciation of the facilities. Dr. Connolly spoke to the effect of later dismissal times, noting not much change in dismissal times for away games as DCL games still begin at 4pm. Dr. Connolly noted she recently received league approval for Weston's home games to begin at 4:15pm to allow ample time for our student-athletes to get out to our fields/course/gym. She reported that Middle School sports started last week.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – None presented.

I.E. Open Forum – A parent, Mr. Joe Ladocsi, asked about the plan to consider elimination of a weighted GPA at the high school. Dr. Connolly noted a study of this would be a full year process and suggested Principal Anthony Parker be contacted. Dr. John McKenzie suggested attendance at School Council meetings where it is being discussed. Parent Allison Barlow indicated there would be a parent forum on October 11 that would address the matter. She suggested communication to parents that any changes would not impact current students.

II.A. Enrollment Updates

Ms. Matthews provided updated enrollments as of September 17, reported there are 36 students above projection, an increase of three students over last year. She indicated that Grade 3 is the only class above the target. Mr. Henry noted the Committee will not focus on declining enrollments but indicated that schools and planning should remain flexible. Ms. Matthews said she would share the document she presented with the Finance Committee. No action taken.

II.B. Discussion of Seat Belts/Approval of Purchase of New School Buses

Ms. Matthews reviewed the bid process for the purchase of three new school buses, including information regarding three-point shoulder seat belt option. She reported the purchase of three buses would be \$223,791; the alternate for three-point shoulder seat belts would be \$22,735, for a total bid including alternate of \$268,608. Ms. Matthews noted that the operating budget has \$237,991 budget for school bus replacement in FY19.

Mr. Henry and Ms. Matthews provided additional information and noted that most districts in Massachusetts that have seat belts have lap belts and most do not recommend those. It was noted that not many states or districts have three-point shoulder restraint requirements, but Helena, MT, which has rural roads and buses traveling at high speeds, does and they speak highly of them. Mr. Henry noted it was up to the Committee to decide whether to purchase new buses with the shoulder belts, but the Administration will have to determine how to roll out and how to enforce. Dr. Connolly noted compliance will be easiest at elementary level. Some discussion occurred regarding budget impact. Dr. Saini noted it would be difficult to justify having restraints on some but not all buses and asked about plans to implement full replacement. Mr. Henry indicated it would be a major capital expenditure to replace all buses in Weston, but over the next ten years all buses would likely be replaced. He noted that most Weston buses do not travel at high speeds in Town, making it a low risk district. Mr. Cobb noted the seat belts must meet specifications.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept the bid and alternate from Anderson Motors and award the contract for the purchase of three 71-passenger school buses with three-point shoulder seat belts, pending verification that seat belts and seat installation meets specifications.

II.C. Superintendent's Goals 2018-2019

Dr. Connolly reviewed the objectives in the District Plan and Planning for Success.2018-2021 and shared some outcomes and actions to strengthen educational practices, including curriculum alignment and instructional coaches; to foster students' well-being, including new homework guidelines and new start times; and to champion a school community committed to cultural competency, trust, and mutual respect, including new administrative team and anti-bias curriculum adopted. The Committee discussed. Mr. Henry requested Committee members review the goals and provide feedback prior to approval at the next meeting. Dr. Heller requested that Homework Guidelines be shared with the Committee as an agenda item next meeting and shared with parents. Mr. Cobb noted that parents would like more communication in general. No action taken.

II.D. Case House Renovation Project Update

Mrs. Black shared the most recent architect drawings for the Case House Renovation Project. She presented a current budget estimate of \$7,774,668 and noted that most of the cost is to bring the building into compliance. She commended the work of the Town's Permanent Building Committee, architect, and Historic Commission and indicated the request for funding would go before Fall Town Meeting. Dr. Connolly noted that there would be minimal relocation costs as most staff would be housed in elementary schools during the renovation.

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

Proctor Field – Mr. Cobb noted he attended the most recent Friday night football game, reported lights were on and bathrooms were available.

Case Complex – Dr. Heller said signage still needs replacing and he may present at a future meeting.

Proposed 40B Development – Mr. Henry noted he and Mrs. Black would attend a meeting regarding a proposed 40B development of 160-180 luxury rental units on Route 20 to discuss possible impact on the school population. Mr. Cobb noted this was a “friendly” project that the Town may be supportive of.

II.F. Budget Guidelines

The Committee began the process of establishing next year’s Budget Guidelines by reviewing the FY19 guidelines and made no changes for FY20.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Saini, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve 2019-2020 Budget Guidelines as presented.

II.G. Policy Review/Discussion

Mr. Henry presented present policy FFA Memorial and Plaques and its regulations FFA-R for first review, to be presented for approval at next meeting. He noted no changes to the policy but recommended some revisions to the procedures to include a waiting period. No action taken.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of August 27, 2018.

III.B. Business Actions – - none.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, at 8:45 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.