

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

March 11, 2019

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:00 PM at Weston Middle School by Mr. John Henry, Chair. In attendance were Mr. Alex Cobb, Mrs. Danielle Black and Dr. Ed Heller of the School Committee; Ms. Onika Jenkins, METCO Representative to the School Committee; Jeff Beaudoin, Student Representative to the School Committee; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations; and Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. Not present: Dr. Sanjay Saini of the School Committee.

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.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly shared recent student achievements, reporting that eight Weston students -- Seniors senior Yinshi Liu and Sasha Shashkov; Juniors Andrew Yao, Ezra Gordon, and Andrew Gumbert; Sophomores Ben Chen, Daanish Qureshi, and Neil Malur; and Freshman William Houston -- qualified for the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME) to be held on March 13. She congratulated members of DECA who competed in the Massachusetts 60th annual Career Development Conference, reporting that Neil Malur qualified to compete in the International Competition in April, the sixth time Weston students qualified for the International Competition in the eight years that Weston has participated in DECA.

Dr. Connolly reported that the winter sports season came to an end on Saturday with the boys basketball team losing in the final seconds to Dracut 43-42. She said this was the furthest Weston boys basketball team had gone in the State Tournament in 21 years. Dr. Connolly said Weston sent four Nordic skiers to the State competition and last Wednesday seven skiers competed in the Alpine meet, finishing 3rd overall. Senior Stella Alphas won the individual slalom and finished her career having won the league and qualifying number 1 for all four years.

Dr. Connolly shared details of the March 8 Professional Development Day, noting that Elementary faculty members spent the morning working in grade level teams on Data Wise and in a choice of two, hour-long professional development sessions run by curriculum specialists, coaches, and administrators. Sessions included Rich Maths, Using Data as a Springboard to Conduct Science Investigations, Developing a Tool for Providing Targeted Writing Feedback, Using Responsive Practices to Create Trauma Sensitive Classrooms and Spaces, and Bullyproofing She noted that elementary teachers who are part of a department (World Language, Health/PE, Art, Music, Guidance) attended department meetings. Dr. Connolly reported that in the afternoon all elementary teachers had ALICE safety training together at Country School in collaboration with Weston Police and Fire Departments. Secondary faculty members also had three parts to their day. Middle School staff were introduced to Data Wise in the early morning, met in departments in the late morning, and had the afternoon to focus on project-based learning and J-term. High school staff worked on project-based learning and June Academy in the early morning, met in departments in the late morning, and participated in Facing History and Ourselves after lunch. Dr. Connolly reported it was a very successful full day for all.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – None presented.

I.E. Open Forum – Resident Dr. John McKenzie asked for Committee comment about the statement, “flood our schools” in a circular mailed to Weston residents regarding a proposed development at 751-761 Boston Post Road. Mr. Cobb termed the unsigned circular “offensive” and indicated he didn't think the School Committee should dignify it with a response. Mr. Henry said the School Committee does not yet know the scope or effect the proposed development could have on the schools.

II.A. Public Hearing on Participation in School Choice

Dr. Connolly recommended that the district not participate in School Choice. She cited reasons similar to those of previous years, noting that under School Choice, there is no control over who is accepted into the program or provision for removal of a student. Dr. Connolly said the program could be unfair to districts with limited resources, has no provision for pre-existing special requirements, and provides a maximum of \$5,000 per student, far less than per pupil expenditure.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously that Weston Public Schools not participate in the 2019-2020 Massachusetts School Choice Program.

II.B. Discussion of Proposed FY20 School Budget (& Possible Vote)

The Committee continued its review of the FY20 proposed school budget. Mr. Henry noted a productive and positive meeting held with the Finance Committee last week. Ms. Matthews shared an updated budget with the Committee that includes a reduction of one section at Field School totaling \$80,000 that includes salary and classroom materials. She said the proposed FY20 budget is now at \$41,518,687, a 3.54% increase over FY19. Dr. Connolly indicated they are still watching elementary enrollments closely and await the scheduling at high school.

Committee members discussed the Guidance counselor's role in the scheduling process and the restrictions they place and/or recommendations they make. Mr. Cobb said that Guidance counselors on occasion have told juniors not to bother signing up for AP Psychology, which he noted does not require any prerequisites and would seem to be an ideal AP course for students to take during junior year. He noted this could help reduce stress of senior year with other AP courses. Mrs. Black mentioned it seems as though the high school may be determining the number of sections they want to run before students sign up. Jeff Beaudoin mentioned that students do not receive much direction from Guidance about mapping their electives and courses. It was suggested that Guidance be more pro-active in mapping out a course of study, a four-year perspective, for students. Mr. Cobb indicated the need to proactively communicate with students and parents as the Committee deals with declining enrollment at the high school and starts to constrain choices at the margins.

Mr. Henry said the Committee would wait to vote on the budget until March 25. No action taken.

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

Case House – Mrs. Black said the project is moving along and that she would attend the weekly construction meeting on Tuesday.

Mrs. Black reported she met with Jonathan Buchman of Banner Construction and his development team regarding a proposed 40B project at 510, 518 and 540 South Ave. and had a productive discussion regarding topics of relevance to the schools. She said they discussed the School Committee's strong desire and specific request for a bus stop within the property and requested they be mindful of timelines for budgeting and faculty hiring. Mrs. Black said they talked about current excess capacity in the schools and she explained that our buildings are constrained by wetlands, engineered for single story construction only, and are at maximum septic capacity. She said they also discussed the potential projected school enrollment from the project and what would be a 'like-district' and the School Department's desire to have a contact within the property management team to facilitate communication with the schools. Mrs. Black noted the development team is willing to make a full presentation to School Committee, if we are interested. The Committee briefly discussed, with Mrs. Black noted presentations would be made to Selectmen and Planning Board.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of February 25, 2019.

III.B. Business Actions

Certificate of Warrant

Ms. Matthews presented a Certificate of the Secretary, approval of warrants for payment.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$1,601,089.94 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, at 7:36 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session for purposes of discussion of Collective Bargaining, not to return to regular session, with Dr. Heller voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

During Executive Session, the Committee discussed negotiation strategies for AFSCME, WEAAA, WAPA, and WEA Collective Bargaining Units. No action taken during Executive Session.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mrs. Black, at 8:20 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn from Executive Session, with Dr. Heller voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.