

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

October 7, 2019

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:04 PM at Weston Middle School by Ms. Danielle Black, Vice Chair. In attendance were Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Anita Raman, and Mrs. Rachel Stewart 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. Not present: Mr. John Henry, Chair.

Also in attendance were Ms. Jennifer Truslow, Director of Student Services; Ms. Anne Zernicke, Assistant Director of Student Services; Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries; Mr. Anthony Parker, High School Principal; Mr. John Gibbons, Middle School Principal; Dr. Daniel Green, Field School Principal; Ms. Jen Faber, Woodland School Principal; Ms. Erin Maguire, Country School Principal; Dr. Susan Erickson, Elementary Science and Social Studies Specialist; Ms. Tracy Manousaridis, Elementary Math Specialist, Ms. Kath Odell, Elementary Literacy Specialist; Ms. Kate Lemons, Grade 6-12 English Department Head; Mr. James McLaughlin, Grade 6-12 Math Department Head; and Dr. Stephen Ribisi, Grade 6-12 Science Department Head.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mrs. Black, noting that Chair Mr. John Henry was out of town on business, welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the agenda's Major Business items.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly reported that all Back to School Nights had taken place and by all accounts were very successful. She indicated that these nights, which she had been able to attend all but one this year, are a favorite event where attendees are generally excited and pleased to be there. Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that the first Professional Development Day of the year on Wednesday was very successful and covered many areas. Lower elementary worked on the new reading program, Grades two and three worked on science notebooks, and Field School faculty focused on math problems that challenge students' conceptual knowledge. Student Services concentrated on coaching for student success and inclusion, and department meetings were held at the secondary level. Dr. Connolly reported that a team of administrators attended a two-day Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Workshop run by DESE in late September.

Dr. Connolly reported that the revised High School handbook, after having undergone many changes, has been reviewed by School Council, is ready for publication, and will be posted by the end of the week. She noted the handbook does not require School Committee approval but could be shared with the Committee for review if they wanted. Dr. Connolly extended appreciation to Assistant Principal Kelly Flynn who worked with department heads and legal counsel on the handbook to bring it up to date.

Dr. Connolly said that the Town is still at the moderate level for EEE and, therefore, there cannot be before school recess or outside activities after 6:00 PM until the Board of Health determines it has been cold enough to reduce the threat.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports –

Sustainability Committee – Mrs. Stewart reported that the PBC and Sustainability Committee support the proposal to have solar panels on Field School and would like to act soon in order to qualify for the financial benefits of more than \$600,000. She indicated the Town has already missed out on one level of benefit but could still gain substantially if action takes place soon. Mrs. Stewart cited an enrollment risk analysis that determines that enrollment, even with potential 40B developments, should not significantly impact the schools enough to necessitate additions to the existing buildings, at least within 10 years. She recommended the School Committee vote to authorize the PBC to move forward with solar panels on Field School. Mrs. Stewart said that it is her understanding that Town Counsel has no issues with the contract.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to inform the Permanent Building Committee that the School Committee, which is in understanding of the potential enrollment risk of 40B development, is in support of moving forward with solar panels on Field School.

I.E. Open Forum – Resident Kathy Davidoff asked if there would be opportunity for public and community input before a vote takes place on the proposed Superintendent’s Goals. Mrs. Black indicated there would be opportunity for discussion but that the goals were scheduled for a vote at this meeting.

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

Dr. Carter presented WEEFC grant proposals for Committee approval. He highlighted the 15 proposals, which included grants for the preschool, Creative Arts author visits, art panels to promote student art projects, field trip support for Anatomy class, support for high school theater production, and one proposal from a Grade 12 student for a 3D manufacturing device,

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC proposals as presented, per memo of September 24, 2019, totaling \$27,071.

Mrs. Black expressed appreciation to the parent volunteers on WEEFC and PTO and acknowledged the donors for their support.

II.B Student Performance and Achievement Report

Dr. Carter presented the annual report of the MCAS results and indicated that individual student results would be mailed home by the end of the week. He said that almost all students now take the “Next Generation MCAS,” with only high school science using the older version, noting that computers are used for all exams. He noted they have accessible features and the possibility of more accommodations and are untimed. Dr. Carter recognized the work of High School Department Heads, Elementary Grade Leaders and Principals for their help analyzing the data. He also acknowledged the work of David Poras, WEA President and Grade 7 Math teacher, for his work on rankings of schools. Dr. Carter reported that overall, Weston students achieved at higher levels than students across the state with significant improvement in Math over 2018. Dr. Carter reported that the achievement gap, a problem across the state, is narrowing slightly but said more work is needed to continue to address the gaps among the economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and race and ethnicity. He noted a more pronounced gap in Math. Dr. Carter that, compared to top districts in the state, Weston is among the top and is more consistently in the top ranked. Mr. McLaughlin noted that Weston’s curriculum is not aligned with the test, which may account for lower scores in Grade 10 Math. Mrs. Black reminded Committee members to send questions for the upcoming Math Program Review to Mr. Henry. The Committee discussed the report. There was much discussion about ways the schools are addressing the achievement gap. Dr. Carter noted, in response to questions, that narrowing the achievement gap means raising lower scores.

Dr. Carter reviewed the state’s accountability system, noting the state’s goal is to raise the scores of the lowest performing students. He noted that Weston is in the 96th percentile and does not need assistance, but he said there are growth targets for improvement, including chronic absenteeism, especially for low performing students. Mrs. Black thanked Dr. Carter for the excellent report.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to receive the report.

II.C. Approval of Superintendent’s Goals 2019-2020

Dr. Connolly presented proposed district goals for the current school year, noting she had incorporated feedback from the Committee into the revised document. She noted the goals are tied to the district’s strategic plan. Dr. Connolly reviewed the proposed goals in three areas: Management and Guidance, Professional Development, and Student Learning. She also noted that declining student enrollment will also be focused on this year. Dr. Connolly noted that this year

communication remains a goal as well as hiring a new high school principal by March. Dr. Connolly said she will supervise the review of all buildings to address safety protocols. The Committee discussed the revised proposed Superintendent's Goals for 2019-20. Mr. Cobb asked that, although he found the goals acceptable, he asked that the administration keep in mind "Why Weston" as discussed at the retreat, the impact of 40B developments, and employee healthcare when the contract with the GIC ends in the next few years. Parents in audience spoke about mechanism for parent feedback and asked about how goals are measured. It was noted that these proposed goals are for the district and the superintendent but that all administrators also have goals which support faculty and students.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Superintendent's Goals for 2019-20 as presented.

Mrs. Black expressed appreciation to the Facilities Department and the Town of Weston Permanent Building Committee for their support regarding building safety.

II.D. Initial Discussion of 2020-2021 School Calendar

Mrs. Black thanked Mrs. Matthews for providing the calendar in a new format. The Committee reviewed next year's proposed school calendar dates, including a start for school on the Wednesday prior to Labor Day. There was brief discussion about having school closed the Friday before Labor Day, but Dr. Connolly noted the current proposed 180th day is a Friday, so that adding one day would extend the year into the following week. A few minor modifications were suggested. Dr. Connolly indicated the proposed calendar would be shared with the community for feedback. The Committee will discuss again at the next meeting with a vote scheduled for November 4.

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

Case House -- Mrs. Black updated the Committee on Case House renovations, reporting the project is moving along well and on schedule. She noted they would be concentrating on the interior from here on, and it is anticipated that administration may be able to occupy the building as early as February. No action taken.

Proctor Field – Mr. Cobb provided the Committee with an update on Proctor Field. He said the project is nearly finished, noting they are still addressing bathroom door issues. He reported that irrigation is in, walkway between Field 1 and Proctor Field are done, planting is completed, and handicapped parking spaces are completed. No action taken.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of September 23 and revised minutes of April 23, 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. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$196,608.20 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, at 9:25 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

Documents used by Committee:

- [Superintendent's Goals 2019-20](#)
- Initial draft of 2020-2021 School Calendar
- [MCAS Report](#)
- WEEFC Grant Proposals, Description