

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
February 10, 2020

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:02 PM at Weston Middle School by Mr. John Henry, Chair. In attendance were Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Anita Raman, and Mrs. Rachel Stewart of 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. Mrs. Danielle Black joined the meeting at 7:25 PM.

Also in attendance were Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries; Mr. James McLaughlin, Grade 6-12 Math Department Head; Ms. Tracy Manousaridis, Elementary Math Specialist; Dr. Steven Ribisi, Grade 6-12 Science Department Head; Mr. Mitch Finnegan, Director of Physical Education and Wellness; and Mr. Christopher Fehl, Director of Art.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mr. John Henry welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the agenda's Major Business items. Mr. Henry indicated that Mrs. Black was currently at Woodland School, as required, where the Budget Hearing had been originally scheduled and would join the meeting as soon as possible.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly highlighted recent events in the district. She informed the Committee that two Weston High School students won writing awards at the annual Scholastic Writing Awards. Mackenzie Morong (9th Grade) won a Silver Key in Writing for her Personal Essay/Memoir: Bad Hair Day; Senior Ben Guzovsky received three honorable mentions, for his Poetry: Dreams Collection, Poetry: Mr. Ginsberg, and Flash Fiction: Perpetual Rain; and Honorable mentions also went to Miki Chiang poetry and Vincent Lian for a short story. Dr. Connolly congratulated the Weston High School Chemistry Olympiad Team comprised of Ezra Gordon, Evan McDonald, Robert Mosher, Carter Sullivan, and Andrew Yao, who won the first round and will compete at the regional level in April.

From the Art Department, Dr. Connolly reported that the Massachusetts Art Education Association (MAEA) sponsored a juried art exhibit for high school students in which the work of Weston students was selected for exhibit: Jackie Liu - Painting, Andrea In - Drawing, Sadie Noone - Mixed Media, Reina Wang-Drawing, Alina Hooper - Photography, Daniel Brown - Graphic Design, Ella Kim - Photography, Emma Hsiao - Graphic Design, and Miki Chiang - Ceramics. Jackie Liu, Emma Hsiao, Daniel Brown, and Reina Wang were recipients of 4 out of the 16 awards. Dr. Connolly reported that in the *2020 Boston Globe Scholastic Art Awards*, Weston students who received Gold Keys and whose work will be considered for national-level recognition are Miki Chiang, Ceramics and Glass; Emma Hsiao, Design; Jackie Liu, Painting; Reina Wang, for both Design and Drawing and Illustration; and Natalie Zhang, Editorial Cartoon. Silver Keys went to Miki Chiang, Ceramics and Glass; Jackie Liu, Painting; Helen Townsend, Ceramics and Glass; Reina Wang, Drawing and Illustration; and Natalie Zhang, Comic Art. Honorable Mentions went to Miki Chiang, Printmaking; Emily Chae, Mixed media; Jackie Liu, Painting; and Sadie Noone, Painting.

Highlights from the Music Department include the induction of sixteen Weston students -- Zachary Camp, Benjamin Chen, Katherine Cheston, Anthony Cui, Amelia Gotbetter, Michelle Kim, Wesley Kim, Caitlin LaValle, Gillon Lim, Shraddha Lulla, William Middlezong, Laura Sullivan, Madeline Tremblay, Maximilian Wohlfeld, and Lucas Zhu -- into Weston's Tri-M Honor Society chapter. Dr. Connolly reported that Weston also was very successful in January at the Massachusetts Music Educators Association Junior District Festival auditions, with 39 students accepted. She noted this is a very large number of students for a school district as small as Weston and indicated the names are posted on the website.

Dr. Connolly reported that the Weston High School Robotics Team 'Down to The Wire' placed first out of twenty teams competing in January and gained entry to the Massachusetts State Championship in March. She noted the team also won the prestigious FTC Design Award for

'innovation and efficiency of robot design'. Representing the school were John Lian, Jonathan Enfield, Jacob Bass, Afnaan Qureshi, Theo Luu, and Faizaan Qureshi. Dr. Connolly reported that Weston's High School Quiz Bowl team defeated Tantasqua in its first match, which she said was fun and fascinating. Team members are senior Alex Ding and sophomores Reid Betty, Benny Gilligan, and William Houston, with alternates senior Kimberly Nicholson and junior Michael Philipkosky. Their next episode airs on WGBH 2 on Saturday, February 22 at 6 PM.

Dr. Connolly highlighted the recent Middle School production of Legally Blonde, Jr., noting she attended a standing-room only outstanding performance on Friday. She commended all who participated including actors, singers, lighting and stage crew. She also noted that motivational speaker Travis Roy presented a powerful message at assemblies for Middle School and High School students and expressed appreciation to WEEFC for helping to fund the presentations.

Dr. Connolly reported on her selection of Mr. Paul Peri as the next Principal of Weston High School, to begin officially on July 1, 2020. She thanked all who participated in the process of selecting the new principal, including students, parents, faculty and community members and noted Mr. Peri is very excited to join the district.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – Mrs. Stewart discussed a municipal grant to develop sustainability and said members of the sustainability committee met with faculty member Janet Kresl Moffat about solar and sustainability.

I.E. Open Forum – Mr. Henry reviewed the protocols for audience participation during Open Forum and throughout the meeting. There were no comments during the open forum.

IIA. FY'21 School Budget Hearing

Mr. Henry noted the School Budget Hearing is now scheduled earlier in the budget process than prior years which will provide opportunity for community feedback and discussion prior to the School Committee's vote on the budget. He noted two changes from the previously presented budget, noting a .3 reduction in Art was removed due to changes in the high school Art Lab funding and technology fees at Middle School are now reflected as an offset. He noted that he and Mr. Cobb were members of the Budget Subcommittee and the School Committee as a whole had not made any decisions on the proposed budget. Mr. Henry presented the proposed FY21 budget, noting enrollment trends, staffing, class size and areas of increase and reductions. He indicated an overall proposed budget increase of 3.54% over FY20. Mr. Cobb noted that without increases resulting from solar credits, now credited to the Town, and out of district tuition increase of 19%, both beyond the Committee's control, the proposed budget increase would be 1.7% over FY20.

Mrs. Stewart indicated she finds the institution of technology fees at the middle school problematic and would prefer the cost be borne by the school budget and find other areas for reduction. She does not want to set a precedent of balancing school budgets by charging parents fees. Mrs. Stewart spoke about the idea of having an individual on board to take care of sustainability issues which might more than pay for itself by finding grants. Audience member Allison Muzilla suggested a dedicated person could find more efficiencies. It was noted that Town Manager Leon Gaumond will hire for this position for the Town. There was brief discussion of this and the lighting initiative anticipated to also save funds. Several members of the audience questioned the high per pupil cost in Weston, as compared with other districts, and noted that most residents in town do not have children in the schools. It was noted that Weston does not charge fees for transportation or activities, where most other districts do and that the Town's employee benefits, including health insurance, will be negotiated during the next year. A resident, Mr. Frank Caine, recommended outcomes be presented along with the budget.

Mr. Finnegan presented data on physical education and requested the Committee be thoughtful about the number of students in health classes. He was specifically discussing the proposed reduction in physical education at Field School and spoke to the benefits of physical education and activity in reducing stress, anxiety and depression.

There was some discussion of high school student course selection and its possible impact on reductions. Mr. Henry indicated that, with the hiring of a new principal at the high school, a scheduling committee would be formed in the spring. He noted further budget discussion would take place at the next School Committee meeting on Tuesday, February 25. No action taken.

II.B. Weston Education Enrichment Fund Committee Proposals

Dr. Carter presented WEEFC eleven grant proposals for Committee approval and highlighted several Creative Arts grants and two student initiatives.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC grants as proposed per memo of January 28, 2020, totaling \$15,444.00

II.C. Approval of Charge to the Math Program Review

Dr. Carter presented a draft charge for the upcoming Math Program Review. He indicated a team of educators would be spending two days, February 25 and 27, 2020, in the schools meeting with various groups. Mrs. Black made two suggestions, requesting feedback regarding assessments and meeting goals and regarding opportunities between levels and structure or support embedded in the program. Dr. Carter said he would incorporate Mrs. Black's suggestions into the Charge. He acknowledged the work of Mr. McLaughlin and Ms. Manousaridis in preparing for the review. Dr. Carter indicated there would be a parent forum on Tuesday, February 25 at 8:30 at Field School.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Charge to the Math Program Review, subject to suggested revisions to be made by Dr. Carter.

II.D. Votes of MSBA Statements of Interest (SOI)

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Alex Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Danielle Black, the Weston School Committee voted unanimously to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated February 14, 2020 for the Weston Middle School, located at 456 Wellesley Street, Weston MA, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future: #5 replacement of heating and ventilation roof top unit #3 as it is at the end of its life expectancy.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Alex Cobb and seconded by Mr. John Henry, the Weston School Committee voted unanimously to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated February 14, 2020 for the Weston High School, located at 444 Wellesley Street, Weston MA, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future: #5 replacement of F Wing Roof due to the end of its life expectancy.

II.E. Discussion of Town Report

Mrs. Black said she was working on the report and would present a draft at the next School Committee meeting on February 25. She said the report was due end of February.

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

Case House - Mrs. Black reported things are moving along, furniture being ordered, and inspections are taking place. She said an occupancy in late February is anticipated for people on the second floor. Mrs. Black commended the work of the PBC.

II.G. Executive Session Minutes

Mr. Henry indicated there were three Executive Sessions held during the past year to date and indicated he had reviewed the minutes, which he could be released upon approval.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of January 27 and January 29, 2020.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted 3-0, with Ms. Raman and Mrs. Stewart abstaining, to approve the minutes of Minutes of School Committee/Student Advisory Council (SAC) Meetings of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. (*It was noted that neither Ms. Raman nor Mrs. Stewart were members of the School Committee at the time of these meetings.*)

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of Minutes of School Committee/Student Advisory Council (SAC) Meetings of 2019-2020 to date.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of School Improvement Plan (SIP) Presentation Meetings 2018-

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of Executive Sessions of July 15, August 28, and October 21, 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 Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$418,004.35 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:05 PM.

Documents used by Committee:

- WEEFC Proposals and Description
- MSBA Statement of Interest Materials (HS roof, MS HVAC)
- Draft [Charge to the Math Review](#)