

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
February 25, 2020

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:03 PM at Weston Middle School by Mr. John Henry, Chair. In attendance were Mrs. Danielle Black, Ms. Anita Raman, and Mrs. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; Ms. Onika Jenkins, METCO Representative to the School Committee; Ms. Ally Kirk, Student Representative to the School Committee; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; and Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. Mr. Alex Cobb joined the meeting at 7:25 PM.

Also in attendance were Dr. Dan Green, Field School Principal; Ms. Laurie Melchionda, Director of Health Services; and Ms. Lisa Reitano and Mr. John Sallay of the Town of Weston Finance Committee. Many members of the Field School faculty were also present.

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.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly highlighted recent events in the district, reporting that the Boys' Indoor Track Team won their second consecutive Division 4 State Championship in a close meet where the athletes overcame many obstacles. Coach Monz reported that, "All ten athletes who competed medaled (top eight) in at least one event and all scored points toward the team total. It was a gutsy effort by a group of athletes who now have 2 consecutive state titles to their credit. It's been an honor and a pleasure to coach them." Dr. Connolly reported that Weston High School student Miki Chaing was accepted into the National Ceramic exhibition and indicated her work will be displayed in Richmond VA March 25-27.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – Mr. Henry noted the recent SAC meeting. Mrs. Stewart reported that the solar panels are almost fully installed on Field School. Mr. Henry requested that the savings be included in the counter on the Town website.

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.

II.A. June Academy Trips

Dr. Connolly spoke about the April Middle School trip to France and the three June Academy trips to Jordan, Dominican Republic and South Africa and potential concerns about traveling. She said she is in close communication with Ms. Melchionda and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Connolly indicated that there are currently no restrictions on travel except to China and some lower level restrictions for Italy but indicated there is a possibility the France trip would be canceled, and they will stay informed and vigilant about other scheduled student trips. Ms. Melchionda noted it the difficulty of predicting what will happen. Mr. Henry suggested the administration check into financial obligations and timing ramifications of canceling trips. Dr. Connolly and Ms. Melchionda said they will continue to monitor information from the CDC. No action taken.

II.B. Discussion of FY'21 School Budget

Mr. Henry indicated the School Committee would hold a discussion on the proposed budget, noting there were no changes since the last meeting. Ms. Lisa Green, parent, asked if any steps or actions had been taken and mentioned the question asked at the previous meeting about outcomes. Mr. Henry replied that the Committee is always interested in outcomes but that comparisons to other districts would be difficult. Dr. Connolly noted that many outcomes are reported in the High School Performance and Participation Report presented annually in November. Ms. Michelle Scott, Grade 5 teacher and Weston resident, asked about the proposed one third reduction in Field School physical education and the process that went into the decision making. Dr. Connolly

indicated that they researched other communities around Weston and in a six-and-a-half-hour day, this will provide a better balance between specials and curriculum. She said the additional 30 minutes gained would be used for curriculum. She indicated they would have two 30-minute sessions of physical education per week rather than one 60-minute session. Dr. Connolly also noted the importance of physical education, but with 330 minutes of specials time, this reduction will provide more teacher-student contact time. Dr. Carter noted it is an impactful reduction but supports finding a balance between classroom and specials. He said they are looking at ways to have “body breaks” during the day which will present opportunity for movement.

Several Field School faculty members expressed concern regarding the reduction in physical education time. Some teachers expressed the opinion that reducing physical education seems counterproductive when the Responsive Classroom and Social/Emotional Learning is an initiative. Ms. Maria Morong, ELL teacher, said physical education is one of the places her students learn English, noting it is an important part of their day. Ms. Melchionda advocated for health and wellbeing of students and spoke of the importance of physical activity for students. She noted that one of the goals of the comprehensive health grant Weston receives is a need to be mindful of physical activity and the goal to incorporate health education into the elementary grades. Mr. Ron Schlegel, Field School and Middle School physical education teacher, noted that research indicates that students perform better on test scores when they have regular physical activity. Parents in the audience expressed concern as well. One parent, Christy O’Brien, requested the Committee reconsider this reduction, noting physical education, where students have movement and play games, might be the only place some children shine. Mr. Henry thanked all for their perspective and sharing of thoughts. He noted he is a personal believer in the benefits of physical activity but said the schools face challenges in the foreseeable future to maintain the breadth of offerings during declining enrollment and need to adjust to being a different district while preserving choice and opportunities. Ms. Allyson Muzilla, audience member, asked about opportunity for parents to provide feedback early in the budget process. Mrs. Black said the School Council meetings are public meetings and mentioned the School Improvement Plans (SIP) presented each spring at public meetings have goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Dr. Carter noted that the administration is paid to create a budget and spoke to the importance of everyone learning the budget at the same time. Dr. Connolly concurred that it is an administrative responsibility. Mrs. Stewart said the SIP presentations are fantastic and expressed the need to get the word out more when they are happening. Mr. Cobb indicated that Weston Media also records the presentations. Mr. Henry indicated the Committee would discuss the budget further and likely vote on March 9. No action taken.

II.C. Discussion of Town Report

Mrs. Black noted she had shared the draft report with the Committee earlier in the evening and indicated she has requests out for photographs and updated charts. She requested feedback on curriculum changes and practices. Dr. Carter suggested some items to include. Mrs. Black said she would review with Dr. Carter and would share the revised document with the Committee for approval on March 9.

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

Case House - Mrs. Black reported that there are punch list items remaining, furniture ordered, and the project has come in under budget. She said the Facilities Department is moving March 4, with most of the second floor staff moving soon thereafter. She said there would be an Open house on Saturday, March 28, from 10-2, and historian Pam Fox would make presentations. An invitation will go out.

Town of Weston Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee – Mr. Cobb said a 10-year plan had been approved by the committee and will be published on the Town website. He shared some of the highlights of the plan, including maintenance of fields, Memorial Pool, Middle School pool and diving well, need for gym space, water treatment plant, and a feasibility study to develop a master plan for the Middle School/High School campus. Some discussion took place. Mr. Sallay asked about budget implications and trade-offs. Mr. Cobb noted that town approval would be required for most of the projects.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of February 10 and February 13, 2020, revised to include statement under II.A. attributed to Mrs. Stewart: “She does not want to set a precedent of balancing school budgets by charging parents fees.”

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the amended minutes of Executive Sessions of October 16, 2017; February 2016, April 9, April 24, November 19, and December 11, 2018; and May 7, 2019. (*These minutes were previously declassified.*)

III.B. Business Actions –
Certificate of Warrant

Dr. Connolly 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 \$1,942,605.74 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:37 PM.

Documents used by Committee:

- Town Report Draft