

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
March 9, 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 Mrs. Danielle Black, Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Anita Raman, and Mrs. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; Ms. Ally Kirk, Student 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.

Also in attendance were Ms. Laurie Melchionda, Director of Health Services; Ms. Wendy Diotalevi, Town of Weston Board of Health; and Mr. John Sallay of the Town of Weston Finance Committee.

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. She reported on the recent Field School Diversity Fair which, according to Principal Dan Green, was awesome and underscored the international and ethnic diversity of the Field School Community. Dr. Connolly reported that Ben Rosenfeld, winner of the 2020 Field School Geobee, took a qualifying exam and qualified for the now canceled State Geobee that was scheduled for later this month.

Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that Swim Coach Claude Valle was selected to receive the Jack McDonald Award, the highest recognition presented by the EMASS Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association and given in memory of one of the pioneers of Massachusetts High School Swimming. She noted that during his 37-year coaching career Claude, who is retiring this year, was previously recognized as National High School Swimming Coach of the Year, MIAA Swimming Coach of the Year and received a Meritorious Service Award from the National Interscholastic Swimming Coaches Association.

Dr. Connolly reported that thirteen Weston students qualified for the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME) due to their exceptional performance on the American Mathematics Competition (AMC). She indicated that more than 300,000 of the top mathematicians in the country participate in the prestigious AMC with the top 2.5% of scorers on the AMC10 and top 5% or scorers on the AMC12 invited to participate in the AIME. She noted that thirteen qualifiers is a record for Weston High School. Dr. Connolly said that Math Department Head Jim McLaughlin reports successful efforts to recruit more gender diversity to the math team in our next generation of mathletes, noting that the team score on the AMC 10B was entirely female. Congratulations to sophomores Reina Wang and Jessie Yuan and freshman Clara Odio for their impressive performances.

Dr. Connolly reported the March 11 Council on Aging reception for the best of the Weston High School juried art show was postponed.

Dr. Connolly congratulated Mr. Corey Guerra and the 47 members of Weston DECA who competed at another successful State conference. She reported that Jessie Yuan, Thomas Chung, Will Middlezong, Ava Olivier, Kendal Parker, and Kimya Jalinous placed in the top five and qualified to compete in the International conference in Nashville at the end of April with six other Weston students who will participate in Leadership Academies and School Based Enterprise competitions.

Dr. Connolly congratulated Weston High School Social Studies teacher Kim Young, selected one of only five teachers in the country as a 2020 National Geographic Education Fellow. Dr.

Connolly reported on the celebration of World Language in the district, noting highlights include a presentation from graduates and current students on their experiences living, studying and working abroad; a guest speaker who talked about life in Ancient Rome; a Mariachi band for lunchtime music at the lower elementary schools; and a presentation at Field on Chinese culture, language and music. She expressed appreciation to WEEFC for supporting World Language education and for making these presentations possible. Dr. Connolly reported that WHS World Language teacher Alejandro Yegros presented his workshop, “Authentic Listening Resources for Spanish Classes” at the 2020 Northeast Conference for the Teaching of Foreign Languages in New York City on February 15.

Dr. Connolly reported that Weston Boys Basketball advanced to the D3 North Sectional Finals to take on #1 seed St. Mary’s of Lynn. Unfortunately, they lost but celebrated a great run. She congratulated the team, which enjoyed tournament victories over #6 Shawsheen Tech, # 3 Newburyport, and #2 Amesbury and noted this was the second consecutive appearance in the Sectional Finals for the Wildcats.

Mr. Henry noted that Weston music students performed very well at the District All States this past weekend and noted the cancelation of the Junior Districts.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports –

EDCO – Dr. Connolly reported on the financial difficulties EDCO is facing. She reported there was mismanagement, though nothing illegal, that led EDCO to believe they had more funds than they do. She reported a new management company was on board for the next year with the hope that things can be turned around and that EDCO can remain solvent. Mr. Cobb requested documentation and materials to review.

Sustainability Committee – Mrs. Stewart reported the solar panels on Field are fully operational.

I.E. Open Forum – Mr. Henry reviewed the protocols for audience participation during Open Forum and throughout the meeting.

Resident Ms. Kathy Davidoff said she had spoken at a School Committee meeting nearly a year ago regarding bullying her child received and cited at that time that Weston was in non-compliance regarding anti-bullying. She asked if there is a committee reviewing Weston’s Anti-Bullying and Prevention Plan that is overdue for being updated and asked if there is data that could be shared with the community. Ms. Davidoff requested School Committee support in this process. Mr. Henry thanked Ms. Davidoff for her comments and said the School Committee would work with the administration to respond.

II.A. Update on Coronavirus

Ms. Melchionda, Ms. Diotalevi and Jennifer Andruzzi from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health School Unit participated in the discussion of the Coronavirus and steps being taken. Ms. Melchionda noted it has been a very good collaboration. She noted the best barrier for protection from the virus is hand washing and not touching your face. They noted that the Weston parent who was presumptive positive for Covid-19 had not been in the schools and their child was not ill the days the child was in school. She said the schools would continue to be cleaned and sanitized and indicated that nurses were monitoring all staff and students and sending home anyone ill. She said they are following CDC, MDPH and Board of Health recommendations and at this time do not recommend closing schools. She noted that buses are being cleaned in the morning and after each day. Dr. Connolly said a fogger, electric current, and approved chemicals were being used to clean. Dr. Connolly reported that all district trips for the week, WEEFC WingDing, and events with more than 50 people were postponed or canceled. She noted the district is between sport seasons but will be proactive and will communicate regarding sports. She said the district will continue to clean, continue to educate and take the lead from experts.

Dr. Connolly indicated that if it became necessary to close schools, there are platforms available for teachers and students to utilize, including Google Classroom for grades 3-12 and other platforms for lower elementary grades. She reported that the scheduled professional development day on

Friday would include a large block of time devoted to preparation for online learning. Dr. Connolly noted discussions with the Department of Education are ongoing regarding the required 180 days for students, use of snow days, etc. She also stated that no child would be penalized for being absent and that the N-rule was suspended. Much discussion occurred. School Committee members expressed a high level of concern for the health safety of the school community and expressed appreciation to the administration and health professionals for their work on behalf of the students and staff. Ms. Melchionda noted that parents have expressed concern as well. Dr. Grocela, a parent and physician who holds a Masters in Public Health (MPH) from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, shared his concerns and described circumstances where virus can be spread easily, including band rooms, cafeterias, railings. Mr. Henry asked that the administration let the School Committee know if they need any other resources and how the Committee might be of support. Ms. Melchionda indicated they must not be complacent and would remain diligent. No action taken.

II.B. Public Hearing on School Choice

Mr. Henry noted that under state law, if the School Committee does not want the school system to participate in School Choice, it is required to hold a hearing and take a vote rejecting such participation. He noted that Dr. Connolly has recommended in her memo that the district not participate in School Choice for several reasons, including loss of control for what students attend and that reimbursement to the district is far less than Weston's per pupil expenditure.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously that the Weston Public Schools not participate in the 2020-2021 Massachusetts School Choice Program and to authorize the Superintendent to so inform the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

II.C. FY'21 School Budget Discussion and Vote

Mr. Henry confirmed that there were no changes made in the proposed budget.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommended FY'21 school budget in amount of \$42,906,809, a 3.54% over FY'20.

Mr. Henry thanked the members of the School Committee, Finance Committee and staff for their feedback on the proposed budget.

II.D. Approval of Town Report (School Section)

Mrs. Black shared revisions made to the draft school portion of Town Report for Committee approval.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the School Report for submission for the 2019 Town Report.

II.E. Approval of Memorandum of Understanding with Weston Aides/Paraprofessional Association

Mr. Henry reported successful negotiations had been reached with the Weston Aides and Paraprofessionals and indicated the MOA included increase in salary of 5.75% over three years.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the Weston School Committee and Weston Aides/Paraprofessional Association (WAPA), effective September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2022.

II.F. Approval of Memorandum of Understanding with AFSCME Local 90 (Buildings & Grounds)

Mr. Henry reported successful negotiations had been reached with the custodians and indicated the MOA included increase in salary of 5.5% over three years along with some other changes.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the Weston School Committee and the AFSCME Local 90 (Buildings & Grounds) (Association), effective July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022

Mr. Henry noted that negotiations with all bargaining unites was now complete.

II.G. Facility Projects Update

Case House - Mrs. Black reported the move back in to Case House has started and indicated the contractor had 30 days to complete punch list. Dr. Connolly said they did a wonderful job, noting the restoration is impressive and the building is now ADA accessible.

Town of Weston Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee – Mr. Cobb drafted a warrant article for Committee review and received a general consensus that the Committee was in support of the wording. Mr. Henry indicated the Committee would need to approve it at a late meeting when it was on the agenda.

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 25, 2020.

Mr. Henry reported he had received a request from a citizen that the approved minutes of the January 29 meeting were not detailed enough. He said he re-watched the video of the meeting and though he believed the minutes complied with the OML law, he agreed to amend the minutes add more details, to be responsive to the community. He noted that after doing so the citizen still filed an OML complaint but Mr. Henry still requested the Committee approve the revised minutes. Mr. Henry indicated that minutes do not need to be a transcript of the meeting and noted that all meetings are recorded. Mr. Cobb stated that the citizen's behavior is rude and obnoxious, takes time, and has a financial cost to the Town, which Ms. Raman noted as well.

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

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 \$3,065,144.98 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:30 PM.

Documents used by Committee:

- [Town Report](#) Draft
- [Superintendent Recommendation on School Choice](#)
- Memorandum of Agreement with WAPA
- Memorandum of Agreement with AFSCME (Custodians)
- Budget Recommendation Document