

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

March 23, 2020

Pursuant to Gov. Baker's Executive Order dated March 12, 2020 modifying the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, the School Committee, to ensure the safety of all participants, held its meeting remotely via Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/235036399>, Meeting ID: 235 036 399.

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mr. John Henry, Chair. Participating were Mrs. Danielle Black, 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.

Also participating were Ms. Laurie Melchionda, Director of Health Services, Ms. Jennifer Truslow, Director of Student Services, and Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries.

Mr. Henry thanked people for their participation in the meeting and reviewed agenda items. He asked the public to submit their questions through the chat function.

I.B. Executive Session –

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 7:01 PM in compliance with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements, specifically open meeting law, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Mr. Cobb informed the public that the committee would return to Open Session.
No action taken during Executive Session.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn from Executive Session at 7:15 PM, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

The Committee returned to Open /session at 7:16 PM.

I.C. Chairman's Report – none.

I.D. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly reported that Ms. Kim Young, Weston High School history teacher, wrote in the National Geographic educational blog:

I distilled it down to my three main goals, which are all "C" words: provide connection, build community, and foster curiosity. When I use these goals as a guide, it shifts my way of thinking. To me, the "three C's" are not only uplifting, but they inspire innovation and creativity. I think: "I not only know how to do that, I can do it in a different and innovative way than I would in a face-to-face classroom."

Dr. Connolly said that Ms. Young's work is indicative of the work that is happening across the district at every level.

I.E. Subcommittee Reports

PTO – Ms. Raman spoke about the continued efforts by the PTO to gather gift cards to grocery stores for families in need. She reported that \$51,000 had been collected in the first few days. Dr. Connolly noted that families are much appreciative and overwhelmed by the generosity, and Mr. Henry encouraged people to continue to give as the time of need is extended.

II.A. Coronavirus Update (Weston Schools from Home, Closure of Fields)

Dr. Connolly informed the Committee of an update from Commissioner of Education Jeff Riley in which he asked schools to plan for a longer term process and noted that nothing can replace what would happen in classrooms. She reported that Weston is doing phenomenal work during the closure, different and not the same level of quality as when students were in school, but said things will continue to improve. She said that teachers are not able to recreate the school day but want to be sure students are engaged in learning and connectedness opportunities. Dr. Connolly said she has seen elementary morning announcements watched some Middle School science experiments, and heard high school teachers working hard to make the work for students engaging and meaningful. She said they will remain flexible, noting this is new to everyone, with some challenges being addressed as they arise. Dr. Connolly indicated that Weston is ahead of many districts and thanked the administrative team, teachers, support staff, students and families for all that they have done.

Dr. Connolly reported that ELA MCAS for grades 3-8 and Grade 10 will be postponed, and the Commissioner is working with the U.S. Department of Education in looking at the federal mandate for annual testing. She said that High School 2020 AP Exams will be administered May 4 through 8 and May 11 through 15, designed to be taken from home, and will consist of 45 questions. The Board will do their best given the results to assign a number. Teacher will inform students. It was noted that the AP tests would be on material presented through March.

Ms. Truslow reported that special education staff is being creative and waiting for clarification on special education guidelines. She said IEP meetings are being conducted online but levels of confidentiality need to be addressed. She talked about how special education teachers are providing support, counselors providing resources, needs of out of district students being addressed, and noted she is in contact with SEPAC as well.

Dr. Connolly reported that online learning has a goal to provide students at the elementary level with enrichment opportunity and engagement, while at the middle and high school levels more learning may take place, though a high level of learning can't be replicated. The idea of a FAQ post for website was discussed, and Dr. Connolly said parents could forward her questions. Much discussion occurred regarding online learning. Dr. Connolly and Dr. Carter both said that improvements would be made gradually and they will likely be moving forward with more content over time.

Dr. Connolly reported that all school nurses were trained and working daily with the /town. She also indicated that all fields and playgrounds are closed and signage and saw horses have been put in place to prevent people from gathering there. She requested that parents not allow their children to go to the schools, courts, playgrounds, or fields for any play or athletic activities and stressed the need to maintain social distancing.

Mr. Henry expressed appreciation to the administration and faculty for their creativity, to Dr. McCanne and his staff for the technology support, and to the Student Services Department and nurses for providing support during this time of stress and anxiety.

Ms. Melchionda provided an update on Weston's Coronavirus statistics, reporting are 15 confirmed cases and several pending. She noted that there are more tests being conducted but that results are still delayed so it is difficult to know and identify people with the virus. Ms. Melchionda said they are checking on 95 people who have been exposed or traveled and urged people to stay away from others. Ms. Melchionda reported that the high school Science Department has donated a supply of gloves, masks and alcohol to the Weston Police and Fire Departments. No action taken.

II.B. Discussion of Warrant Article for Special Town Meeting

(Town of Weston Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee –

Approval of warrant article regarding HS/MS Feasibility Study)

Mr. Cobb said the Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee, comprised of representation across town, recently approved its 10-year plan. Mr. Cobb reviewed proposed wording for a warrant article for Special Town Meeting:

to appropriate a sum of money to pay costs for a series of feasibility studies at the High School and Middle School Campuses, as well as all incidental costs related thereto, to be spent under the direction of the Town Manager, the money so appropriated to be transferred from available funds (free cash); or take any other action relative thereto.

Article xx Explanation: This article proposes funding for feasibility studies for properties under the control of the Weston School Department as a result of: the recently released Recreation Master Plan, the need to plan for long-term renovations of the High School and the Middle School, and unsafe traffic and parking conditions at both schools. These feasibility studies will be integrated into the overall long-term maintenance and renovation plans for the HS and MS buildings. Projects included in this article include, but are not limited to: feasibility of locating a new, larger pool with a separate diving well, feasibility of creating a driveway loop with handicap parking and access behind the MS to improve access and increase utilization of fields, feasibility of adjusting traffic patterns and expanding parking at the HS and MS to increase capacity for schools and for town usage, feasibility of locating a new multi-purpose "field house" building on the campus which would include indoor courts (basketball, tennis, pickleball) that could be used for baseball, lacrosse, soccer and indoor track, feasibility of the renovation of the HS gym, auditorium, offices and cafeteria, feasibility of the renovation of the current MS pool and locker rooms, feasibility of utilizing the existing wastewater treatment plant in conjunction with these changes and potential improvements.

This article has been recommended by the School Committee and the amount to be requested under this article is \$100,000.

Mr. Henry noted that it makes sense to look at the whole Middle/High /school campus.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Ms. Raman and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve proposed wording of warrant article as proposed.

II.B. Approval of Updated Bullying and Prevention Plan

Dr. Carter shared revisions made to the district Bullying and Prevention Plan. He indicated the revised plan reflects hard work being done and makes sure the process is tight when an alleged bullying event occurs. He noted that principals are responsible for implementation of the plan. Dr. Carter indicated that there was focused professional development to identify bullying and who to talk to. He noted the importance of taking care of the bullying target in the process too. Dr. Carter said the plan includes how we educate and discussed the way to approach education to prevent bullying in the first place by helping students develop social emotional competencies, use of the Responsive Classroom K-8m, and a September launch of Teaching for equity and inclusivity at high school. He requested the Committee approve the revised plan, which must be approved every two years.

Mrs. Stewart, noting she was not ready to approve the plan, requested there be more detail with regard to how to enact the plan, how to keep current, and how to monitor success. She asked that another bullying subcommittee be formed to review the plan, first created in 2010, and suggested an annual report be provided to the School Committee. There was some discussion.

Dr. Carter said he would form a team or committee to develop an action plan but noted it may have to wait until after COVID-19 is resolved. He expressed his commitment to the process, including a plan that includes goals, and asked that Mrs. Stewart send him her comments, that he would further revise the plan for now for committee approval. No action taken.

II.C. Discussion of Student Trips Abroad

Dr. Connolly reviewed student trips to Jordan in June, South Africa in June, and Italy and Switzerland in July and recommended the Committee consider cancelling the scheduled trips. She noted that all

three trips are through EF Tours. Dr. Connolly said that Ms. Kathy Baker, Director of World Languages, was working with EF to determine financial ramifications and indicated there are some challenges regarding whether they will provide transferable vouchers.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to cancel scheduled June student trips to Jordan and South Africa and July student trip to Italy and Switzerland.

Dr. Connolly requested the Committee wait until the next meeting to discuss plans for Grade 8 Washington DC trip scheduled for June.

II.E. Facility Projects Update (Case House, Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee)

Case House – Mrs. Black said the furniture delivery is being finalized, but otherwise coming along fine. Dr. Connolly said it is incredible to be back in the renovated Case House, though limited staff is working onsite currently.

II.F. Discussion of OML Complaint

Mr. Henry reported that he had received two Open Meeting Law complaints, one regarding the approved minutes of January 29, 2020 as lacking sufficient detail and one pertaining to an email sent that included two other School Committee members. Mr. Henry provided background information, noting he had received an email from a resident while he was on vacation out of state regarding the January 29 minutes. He indicated that he amended the minutes in response to the email to include more detail. The revised minutes were approved by the Committee on March 9, 2020. Mr. Henry reported that the resident filed the OML complaint on March 6 anyway because he had not provided her with a draft of the amended minutes. He noted the minutes, before revision, accurately captured events of the meeting but that he was willing to amend to appease the resident. Mr. Henry said the email cited in the second complaint was not a deliberation and was strictly procedural. He indicated he would respond to the Attorney General's office regarding both OML complaints but expressed frustration that the Committee is receiving these complaints. He noted the School Committee is comprised of hard-working volunteers. Mr. Cobb noted the meetings are also videotaped by Weston Media for all to see and called the complaints mean spirited, extremely frustrating and harassing and cost the taxpayers money each time. No action taken.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of March 9 and March 12, 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. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$1,929,172.86 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 8:31 PM.

Documents used by Committee:

- [Draft of Updated Bullying & Prevention Plan](#)

[Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media:](#)