

## MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING

April 28, 2020

**Zoom webinar** <https://zoom.us/j/92319264533>

Webinar ID: 923 1926 4533

### 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 Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries; Mr. John Gibbons, Weston Middle School Principal; Ms. La Toya Rivers, Director of Weston METCO, Ms. Kelly Flynn, High School Assistant Principal, and Ms. Marla Schaye, Grade 6-12 Guidance Department Head.

Mr. Henry thanked people for their participation in the meeting and acknowledged those participating. He thanked Dr. McCanne and members of the Technology Department staff for their help and read the following statement required by the Town of Weston for remote meetings:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings in the Town of Weston will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. We will strive to provide access to such meetings via a link to call in, or other similar option. In the event we are unable to accommodate the same, despite best efforts, we will post recorded sessions of the meeting as soon as possible following the same. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings.

Mr. Henry asked members of the public to email Mrs. Black at [blackd@weston.org](mailto:blackd@weston.org) or Ms. Raman at [ramanr@weston.org](mailto:ramanr@weston.org) with comments.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mr. Henry reviewed the meeting agenda. He reported he would contact high school student government leaders regarding scheduling a virtual meeting or two in place of the cancelled School Committee/Student Advisory Council meetings. Mr. Henry also noted that School Improvement Plans are usually presented to School Committee at five meetings but that they would likely be combined and have one meeting for the three elementary school SIP presentations and one meeting for middle and high school, to be scheduled in late May.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly thanked the administrative team, teachers, students and parents for all their efforts and progress during this unprecedented time and highlighted recent happening in the district. She reported that Weston has again received a Best Communities for Music Education Award from the NAMM Foundation which recognized 16 school districts in Massachusetts for their outstanding effort and commitment to have music education part of a well-rounded education. Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that, despite absence from physical school, chemistry education and competition continued, reporting that the team of Robert Mosher, Carter Sullivan, Albert Wu, Ezra Gordon, and Andrew Yao qualified, prepared, and took the Chemistry Olympiad exam from home. Andrew Yao and Ezra Gordon scored among the top thousand students in the country and will compete in part 1 of the "USNCO" (United States National Chemistry Olympiad).

Dr. Connolly reported that Weston Middle and High School students also did very well on the recent National Latin Exam. She noted the exam was scheduled for March 12, the first day

Weston students were out of school, so students took the exam at their homes at the end of March with parents proctoring. Finley Campbell, Nadia Wilkins, Siena Flanigon, Sofie Watkins, Shrihan Yadav, Eunice Lee, Connie Tian, Jessy Wang, Bryant Zeng, Neil Mahur, and Joshua Iyengar received gold medals/summa cum laude, and Eighth grader Finley Campbell had a perfect score. Twelve students received silver medals for maxima cum laude; ten students received magna cum laude, and five students received cum laude. Dr. Connolly reported that Director of World Languages Kathy Baker has informed her that all four languages have sufficient signups for next year's Grade 6 classes and all languages are scheduled to run.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – none presented.

II.A. Weston Schools from Home Update

Dr. Carter provided an update on Weston's School from Home. He reported, after the announcement that all schools would be closed through the academic year, that DESE has published new state guidelines which will strengthen remote learning and create a balance between asynchronous learning (students working independently) and synchronous learning, working together, with videoconferencing and other platforms. He described ways in which SfH will adapt. Dr. Carter said new schedules with a balance will be created and implemented. He indicated that DESE has provided prerequisites, or content standards, for students to move on to the next grade and reported that Weston's SfH curriculum will focus on that as well as provide opportunity for enrichment. Dr. Carter also said they will try to streamline communication to help students and families organize their days.

Committee member asked some questions and expressed some parent concerns they have received. Mr. Henry spoke about high school students not having much opportunity on zoom hangouts. Dr. Carter indicated that with more synchronous learning taking place, students should have ample opportunity to interact with teachers and other students. Dr. Carter talked about outreach efforts being made to students who have not been engaged, noting the expectation is for students to participate as best they can. He also noted the collaborative efforts undertaken by teachers at all levels who are working in teams. Dr. Connolly, in response to question by parent and teacher Leah Gordon regarding plans for summer or fall, indicated conversations are ongoing in district and with other superintendents, and people will be kept informed. She also noted that each school will have held at least one virtual coffee by the end of the week. Mr. Cobb requested the audio and/or videos of the coffees, when possible, be made available to parents and the information regarding the posting be shared, possible with PTO. No action taken.

II.B. School District Payment to Hourly Employees

The Committee discussed the continued payment of hourly employees through the end of the school year.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted to continue to pay Weston hourly workers regular pay through the end of the school year, noting this is not a practice or precedence but a response to an unusual situation, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

II.C. Discussion of Student Trips

Dr. Connolly said the only trip remaining was the Grade 8 Washington DC trip scheduled for June, but with all schools in the Commonwealth closed, the trip has been cancelled. She thanked Principal John Gibbons and House Leader Mike Brown for their work and acknowledged it is a disappointment and loss for the students. She reported there are no plans to reschedule at this time with the uncertainty in Washington and elsewhere. No action taken.

II.D. 2019-20 Report on Weston METCO Program

Ms. Rivers reported on the 2019-2020 Weston METCO Program. She shared the college acceptances for this year's seniors and congratulated the 13 METCO seniors. She reported on the three grants she applied for and received, a cultural performance grant, a grant from St. Peter's that

funded three students attendance on a Civil Rights Tour in Alabama, and a WEEFC grant in conjunction with the Health /department that offered students the experience of attending a Black History Performance in Boston. Ms. Rivers updated the Committee on the program goals for this year, acknowledging the work of the Community Coordinator, the Student Transitions Programs, including a summer welcome program, and a review of METCO staff services. She highlighted some of the work of the academic liaisons, including Math Academy for Grades K-3, Mentor Program for students in Grades 4-5, METCO Thursday X Block at Grades 6-8, and the Weston METCO Scholars Program for students in Grades 9-12. Ms. Rivers shared some achievement data, highlighting an increase in enrollment in AP History classes, AP classes in every department, and Honors World Language classes. She assured the Committee that METCO staff me is continuing to support METCO students during School from Home.

Ms. Rivers shared Next Steps, including summer planning and a reset for 2020-21. She said they will launch their parent series with a virtual meeting in June, will continue work with parents and students in course selection and opportunity, and will build upon the summer welcome and transitions programs. Ms. Rivers thanked BWMPO for their support; the Scholarship Committee; Friends of Weston METCO; the School Committee and Administration; and St. Peter's Episcopal Church, METCO Headquarters, and WEEFC. She also acknowledged the Weston PTO for the gift card drive for families in need. Ms. Rivers thanked the METCO staff for their work. She noted the full Annual Report would be posted on the district website. Brief discussion ensued.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted to receive the METCO Annual Report, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

II.E. BWMPO Annual Update

Ms. Keitric Johnson, Chair of the Boston Weston METCO Parent Organization (BWMPO), provided an annual update. She said the organization serves as a bridge for Boston resident families and Weston families and residents. She noted the high level of engagement by Boston families and the collaboration with Weston administration and families. Ms. Johnson said they are trying to find ways to sustain equity and inclusion and ways to improve the educational experience for students. She talked about ongoing fundraising for scholarships, indicated they are looking for ways to celebrate the students' milestone accomplishments this year. No action taken.

II.F. Report on METCO Budget and Funding

Ms. Matthews discussed the current status of the METCO budget, noting that the full \$1,090,502 would be used in FY20. She indicated that she anticipates a reduction of 21.90% for FY21, which would be approximately \$2K, or a total of \$1,088,500. She requested the School Committee authorize the administration to submit the annual METCO grant application.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted to authorize the school administration to submit the annual METCO grant application with Mrs. Black voting aye, Mr. Henry voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Mr. Cobb voting aye.

II.F. High School/Middle School Sectioning Discussion

The Committee reviewed preliminary course sectioning and average class size for the Middle and High Schools. Mr. Gibbons reported that all Middle School sections are within the range discussed during budget season. He reaffirmed that sign-ups in Grade 6 languages have sufficient enrollment reporting one section each of 17 students in Mandarin, 24 students in French, 24 students in Latin, and four Spanish section with 20 students each. He expressed confidence that the numbers are stable but will continue to monitor. He indicated he should know in early June the status of electives. Ms. Schaye discussed sectioning at the High School. She noted that the Committee's request for an earlier process this year proved especially beneficial as Weston had completed its enrollment process before any other schools prior to the closure. She indicated that Guidance Seminars are taking place for juniors and reported on the adjustments colleges are making regarding testing. Mrs. Stewart asked about the need for more electives so that students do

not have an abundance of fees. The Committee discussed some of the electives that may have low enrollments. Mr. Henry said they might consider offering some electives, especially in Art, every other year, noting the need to find creative ways for students to have the classes they want. Dr. Connolly said students would need advance knowledge of classes running every other year. Mr. Cobb expressed some concern about the practicality of running some of the courses during COVID. Mr. Henry noted they will have to look at this during the summer.

Ms. Flynn spoke about the new senior experience, which will replace the senior internships, and said she will meet with senior parents, faculty leaders and some students to plan events for seniors this year. She noted they have many suggestions to consider. Dr. Connolly thanked Ms. Kelly for her leadership the past several weeks and indicated that Mr. Parker would return on Monday, May 4 from a personal leave. No action taken.

II.F. Discussion and Approval of Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Dr. Carter presented the revised Bullying and Prevention Plan, noting it incorporates the feedback he received from Committee members. He noted the biggest change is to create a task force comprised of administrators, teachers, parents and community members to review what is being done and create an improvement plan. Mrs. Black expressed concern about the definition of aggressor and suggested including adults as well. She also questioned why other principals need to be contacted by telephone, per page 10. Dr. Carter agreed to make the suggested changes.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted to approve the updated District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, subject to additional revisions discussed, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

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

No updates

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 April 6, 2020, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve and release Executive Session minutes of March 17 and March 23, 2020, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

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. Henry and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$3,135,299.46 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Ms. Matthews informed the Committee she should be able to provide an accurate FY20 budget update, including savings impact of April bills, at the next School Committee meeting on May 18.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:06 PM, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Raman

voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Documents used by Committee:

- [2019-2020 METCO Annual Report](#)
- [Revised Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#)

Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media: