

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING
May 18, 2020

Zoom Webinar ID: 820 2310 0655

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.

Mr. Henry thanked people for their participation in the meeting and acknowledged those participating.

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 or Ms. Raman at ramanr@weston.org with comments.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mr. Henry reviewed the agenda, indicating that Appointment to WEEFC would be taken out of order as the first agenda item and a proposed gift acceptance would be discussed under Other Business. He also reviewed some future meeting agenda items, including discussions on June 1 of consideration of Weston's continued participation in EDCO, which has had previously acknowledged financial difficulties, and a discussion of when to proceed with the School Committee Reorganization. Mr. Henry reported he has begun the superintendent review process and will request Committee members individually to provide input, with Superintendent Evaluation scheduled for June 15. Mr. Henry also noted instead of the annual summer workshop retreat there would likely be additional Committee meetings scheduled during the summer this year.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly provided an update on plans for WHS Graduation, which includes a parade through town and school campuses on Friday, June 5, the scheduled graduation day. Speeches will be given and students will receive their diplomas, to be voted on by students as to whether they will remain in their cars or listen to speeches that are delivered remotely.

Dr. Connolly provided some highlights and achievements, reporting that Grade 10 Modern World History student Hanna Wang's essay, "Jackson Pollock: Challenging Barriers of Conventional Art Through the Embodiment of Psychoanalytic Theories," was selected for the "Best Project in the History of Art and Culture" award from the Massachusetts Historical Society and that Junior Julia Kofman was selected by the History Department to receive the 2020 Richard Glider History Prize from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Dr. Connolly reported that the artwork of ten Weston High School students was selected for inclusion in Next Up! Juried High School Art Exhibition, hosted virtually this year, by the Page Gallery in Wellesley and that Miki Chiang was awarded 1st Place in Sculpture. Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that 42 Weston High School seniors have earned the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy this year, 25% of the senior class, with eight receiving it with Distinction.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – none presented.

II.F. Appointment to WEEFC Board (taken out of order)

Alison Abrams, WEEFC Chair, shared the nomination process and presented the Board's recommended appointment of Ashley Hanser. Ms. Abrams indicated that two members were leaving this year, including Ms. Abrams, and said they are still seeking someone with Technology experience to ease next year's transition when Greg Augustine's term ends. She presented the full slate for Committee approval.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted to approve the proposed WEEFC slate for 2020-2021, including the appointment of Ashley Hanser, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

II.A. Weston Schools from Home Update

Dr. Connolly and Dr. Carter provided an update on School from Home (SfH). Dr. Connolly reported that increased "synched" learning has provided many more opportunities for student/teacher interaction. Dr. Carter said online engagement has improved, thanked families for supporting students during SfH, and encouraged parent communication with teachers. He provided an update on the grading process and Dr. Connolly acknowledged the excellent collaboration with the WEA. She noted that Guidance Department is providing zoom sessions for 8th grade parents and they will try to plan incoming freshmen visits to the high school in late summer. Mr. Henry acknowledged the work and flexibility of the administration and faculty. No action taken.

II.B. Presentation of Math Program Review Report

Dr. Katherine Marin, Chair of the K-12 Math External Program Review conducted in February, presented the review committee's report and recommendations. She commended the work of the review committee and acknowledged the faculty, students, administrators who welcomed the committee members into classrooms and community members and parents for their input at forums. She expressed appreciation to Dr. Carter, Dr. Connolly, Mr. Jim McLaughlin, Grade 6-12 Math Department Head, and Ms. Tracy Manousaridis, Elementary Math Specialist, for their coordination. Dr. Marin indicated that Math in Weston is a program to be proud of, with a strong math curriculum, experienced and skilled teaches and support staff, exceptional math leadership, and exceptional allocation of resources and job-embedded professional time.

Dr. Marin presented some suggestions for enhancement, including additional collaborative white boards for classrooms at all levels, more time in mathematics especially at Middle School, and more integration between math and STEM. She said best practice is 60-90 minutes per day on math, noting that the middle school is a little short, elementary is fine, and high school is adequate. Dr. Marin provided some responses to the School Committee's Charge and discussed the review committee's recommendations that there be more differentiation to meet the needs of all learners, more math specific coaching and institutional support, outreach opportunities for teachers, and clear and consistent communication. The Committee discussed. Dr. Connolly indicated that some recommendations would be put on hold because the focus now is preparing the district for many unknowns as well as a declining enrollment. She said the current SfH situation has necessitated increased communication. Dr. Carter noted the top priority would be differentiated, authentic learning. Mr. Henry thanked Dr. Marin, noted that the Math Department would have opportunity to present its response to the report in the Fall, and encouraged people to read the report, which will be posted on the district website.

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

II.C. PTO Annual Report

Amy Olivier, outgoing PTO Chair updated the Committee on PTO membership, shared the PTO's Mission Statement, and reviewed the work of School Chairs, PTO Communication, Creative Arts, and Parent Education. Ms. Olivier discussed the grocery gift card drive held this spring which raised \$17,000 and thanked all who participated. She also recognized student Ella Kim (and her brother) who organized an online benefit concert to raise funds for the drive as well. Ms. Olivier acknowledged the collaboration between Weston PTO and BWMPO, the Weston Food Allergy Committee, PTO Green, and WEEFC. She said next year the PTO will implement some of the plans that were put on hold this year. Mrs. Black thanked Mrs. Olivier and the PTO for their great work in support of students and noted the PTO is an excellent resource for faculty and staff. No action taken.

II.D. District Improvement Plan Discussion

Dr. Connolly and Dr. Carter provide an update on the progress of the District Strategic Plan. Dr. Connolly said they will take the lead from DESE regarding planning for school this fall. She said they have completed year two of the plan and reviewed the mission, vision, and core values. Dr. Connolly noted the strategic objectives to strengthen educational practices to provide excellence in learning for every student, foster student well-being in order to develop their emotional resiliency and intellectual curiosity, and champion a school community committed to prepare students to be citizens of the world. Dr. Carter discussed the progress made thus far in Literacy and STEAM and discussed challenges for next year. He said they will conduct a survey of SfH for students, parents and educators and use the data to develop a more robust learning platform. Dr. Connolly discussed the need to include a curriculum for next year that addresses what students may have lost this year. They talked about the Responsive Classroom and the Middle School Advisory Program as programs which address student well-being and next steps, especially if remote learning continues. Dr. Connolly said there will soon be discussion to prepare for development of the next strategic plan for 2021-2024. Some discussion took place regarding measuring success of the Lucy Caulkins program, and Dr. Carter noted that mid-year benchmark assessments showed much improvement but perhaps Reading Success could be an agenda item for a future meeting. Mrs. Stewart suggested incorporating enrollment forecasting in the next long-range plan. No action taken.

II.E. FY20 Budget Update

Ms. Matthews provided an update on the FY20 budget, noting the impact of schools being closed resulted in reductions of \$98K for cancelled sports, \$4900 for spring conferences, \$66K for daily substitutes, \$52K in Transportation, and an estimated \$50K in Utilities and \$38K in fuel costs. She indicated there were some offsets for additional Technology, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies, and said she is reviewing all purchase orders. Ms. Matthews noted the uncertainty of the FY21 budget, with an anticipated 10-14% reduction from the state, or \$401,093-\$561,030. She reported there will be significant increases in the FY21 budget due to the purchase of PPE, cleaning supplies, plexiglass barriers, hand sanitizer, and uncertainty of mandated social distancing and additional expected Transportation expenditures staggered scheduling or multiple runs are implemented. Ms. Matthews said she would deploy FY20 savings to anticipated FY21 expenditures. Discussion regarding Town Meeting not occurring until the Fall. Dr. Connolly asked that parents be patient regarding school reopening noting this is a process being planned and will be communicated as plans are made. No action taken.

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

Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee – Mr. Cobb indicated the Finance Committee had requested more detail in the explanation for the warrant article regarding the High School/Middle School study.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve revised warrant language as presented, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of April 28, 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. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$1,980,956.34 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.

Acceptance of Gift – 5th Grade Tree

Mrs. Black discussed communication she received from a member of The Tree Advisory Group indicating they would like to donate and plant a tree in honor of the class of 2027. She said the Facilities Department will find a location at the Middle School.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept the donation of a tree and plaque from the Tree Advisory Group, made in Honor of the Class of 2027, for installation on the middle school campus, planting location to be mutually agreed upon between the donor and the district's Facilities Department.

Mr. Henry said they might want to have further discussion with the Tree Advisory Group about policy going forward.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:21 PM, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Documents used by Committee:

- [Math Program Review Final Report](#)
- [District Strategic Plan Update](#)
- WEEFC Proposed Slate
- Proposed Revised Warrant Article

Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media: