

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING

June 15, 2020

Webinar ID:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83195456999?pwd=bm5QeHBtaDNWRjZpSmRheXVaT21YUT09>

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 present were Ms. Jennifer Truslow, Director of Student Services; Ms. Anne Zernicke, Assistant Director of Student Services; Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries; and Ms. Laurie Melchionda, Director of Health Services.

Mr. Henry thanked people for their participation in the meeting and acknowledged those participating. He reviewed the agenda, referenced the remote meeting statement posted in the agenda, noted the meeting was being recorded, and indicated members of the public could email questions or comments to be addressed during the meeting to Mrs. Black at blackd@weston.org or Ms. Raman at ramanr@weston.org.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mr. Henry reported that the FY21 school budget which the School Committee approved in March has not yet been approved by the Town because of postponed Town Meeting. He said they would be operating on a 1/12 budget for each month until the Town approves the budget. He noted the Town is mindful of unfunded State mandates for personal protection equipment (PPE), separation requirements, and transportation with reduced capacity as well as a possible significant reduction in State funding. Ms. Matthews indicated she is working with the administrative team to identify items necessary for purchase but will not know the funding scenario until later. Mr. Henry indicated he had sent Committee members materials for the Superintendent review, noting it is a form provided by DESE and not all areas are applicable. He requested Committee members return the forms to him for compilation.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly highlighted some recent events in the district, noting it is hard to believe the academic year is coming to a close this week. She mentioned the various clapouts and celebrations taking place this week and expressed appreciation to the Weston Police Department for their assistance. She commended Middle School drama students for their presentation of the virtual play, "10 Ways to Survive Life in a Quarantine," and noted the online, Virtual Art Show posted on the website that Chris Fehl and his staff created to display K-12 student work from the year. Dr. Connolly reported that Dr. Susan Erickson, K-5 Science and Social Studies Specialist, has created a wonderful website that features some of the work done in science over the past few months and will serve as a resource for families over the summer.

Dr. Connolly thanked the faculty and staff for their work this year and acknowledged the support of the School Committee.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports –

PTO - Ms. Raman reported that a virtual cocktail party was held in place of the annual Transition Dinner to transition to new leadership.

Sustainability Committee – Mrs. Stewart indicated the Sustainability Committee had received a grant from the state and would be holding a focus group with 13 students on Tuesday. They are working to develop sustainable ways during COVID for safe practices in a green capacity.

II.A. School from Home Update

Dr. Connolly said they have begun planning for reopening the schools in the fall but were awaiting guidelines from the Commissioner expected later in the week. She reported that five teams led by administrators and including faculty will be formed to work independently and collaboratively. These teams include a Safety Team, Teaching and Learning Team, SEL/Trauma Team, Student Services group, and a Finance and Operations group. Dr. Carter said a survey would be conducted for families and students in upper grades. It was noted that parents would not be part of the teams but would definitely be included in the process. No action taken.

II.B. Weston Education Enrichment Fund Committee (End of Year Report, Proposals)

Outgoing WEEFC Chair Allison Abrams reported a total of \$131K raised this year and reaffirmed WEEFC's commitment to meeting needs of faculty and schools. She said the year finished strong with a successful online fundraiser, the Wireless Wingding that raised \$60K. She acknowledged the work of Greg Augustine in creating the platform for the online STAR campaign this spring that has raised \$17K and issued 350 certificates. Ms. Abrams reviewed the grants for the year, noting many new ones which highlight a commitment to innovative teaching. She noted she was leaving the Board and Kate Dickie would be Chair, and thanked Mr. Henry his role of liaison; Dr. Carter for his support; Dr. Connolly; Administrative Assistants Janet Bohlin, Patty Ferguson, and Anne Keyes; and the WEEFC Board. Mr. Henry and Committee members thanked Ms. Abrams for her service.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept the WEEFC report, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

A caller asked the percentage of Weston families who contribute to WEEFC. Ms. Abrams said she did not know but would include the information in the report that will be posted.

Dr. Carter, noting it has been a challenging year for WEEFC, presented three WEEFC proposals for Committee approval: \$3,000 for Jack Gantos for Grade 6 Writing, \$10,000 for professional development funds for all teachers, and \$3,500 in discretionary funds for the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning to use. He indicated that WEEFC support makes a huge difference in the educational lives of students.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC proposals as presented in memo of June 9, 2020, in amount of \$16,500, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

II.C. Student Services Annual Report (ELL, Nursing, Special Education)

Ms. Truslow reviewed and updated Student Services goals the past year Systems Communication and Collaboration. She discussed working in collaboration with the Office of Teaching and Learning to support faculty work in DCAP, Tiered Support, IST, and other systems of support. She reported on increased communication with an increase in regularly scheduled meetings between Student Services and other departments and within Student Services. Ms. Truslow reported 350 students were on IEPs this year, 107 students on 504s, 31 out of district placements, and 56 ELE students. She discussed several program updates including the renaming of Transition to Compass at both Middle and High Schools, a new full time counselor for the high school Compass Program, the transition from out of district coordinator to case management model, the work of Health Services and the Nurses' grant, the planned guidance external review (which she noted was a victim of school closure), and the support provided to the Weston Board of Health by school nurses during the past several months. Ms. Truslow reported that the comprehensive school health grant provided funding for our school nurses to collaborate with schools and principals to address chronic absenteeism.

Ms. Truslow discussed tentative plans for an extended school year program this summer that will begin remotely and follow DESE guidelines. She indicated goals for 2020-21 include planning for school reentry, professional development along with the three goals of Systems, Communication and Collaboration. Some Committee discussion of the report took place. In

response to a question from Mr. Cobb, Laurie Melchionda, Director of Health Services, shared data demonstrating the success of the first-year efforts to reduce absenteeism. Ms. Melchionda noted that the school health grant allowed nurses to dedicate two hours per week to addressing absenteeism. Ms. Melchionda reported that the significant decrease in chronic absenteeism was achieved through communicating directly with parents, addressing barriers to attendance, and connecting families with resources. Ms. Melchionda also stated the importance of the successful collaboration among school counselors, the school psychologist, and principals. Mrs. Stewart then asked if there was a system in place to evaluate the new out-of-district case management protocol and that next year's report include parental feedback related to the elimination of the out of district coordinator position. Ms. Truslow reported that team chairs meet weekly and would be attending professional development on case management over the summer. Ms. Truslow also noted that she would be meeting with each principal to discuss the particular concerns and needs of each team chair to better manage workload. Mrs. Stewart also asked if there are plans to update the Student Services manual. Ms. Truslow indicated that they are in compliance with the procedures and said the manual is not a legal requirement but they do plan to update. She noted it was being reviewed for updates prior to school being closed and that it could be a multi-year process to revise completely.

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

II.D. MS/HS Sectioning/Class Discussion and Approval of Classes Under 15 Students

Mr. Henry indicated he had forwarded to Committee members the classes with enrollments of fewer than 15 students but will not hold a vote until June 29. Dr. Connolly expressed appreciation to the high school administration for their work to bring the number of low enrolled classes down and reported no classes with fewer than 15 at the middle school. Mrs. Black requested that French 3 and 4 be listed separately for the next meeting. No action taken.

II.E. Discussion of MS/HS Fields/Track/Courts Reopening

The Committee discussed the reopening/availability of school facilities and how to best be in compliance with School Committee policies. Dr. Connolly indicated there would be signage on the fields that state masks are recommended and reported that Ms. Melchionda was putting together a safety plan for the facilities, which would include no greater than 12 students, no contact, and recommended wearing of masks. It was determined that only Weston groups should be allowed to use fields at this time, buildings will remain closed for now, no use of bubblers, no locker rooms, and all teams should submit a plan to the Emergency Management team and the Board of Health for approval. Individual teams will need to put together plans for the process of educating athletes. Ms. Melchionda said she would inform Athletic Director Mike McGrath about the recommendations teams and captains need to follow. Mr. Cobb noted he would meet with the Fields Steering Committee and representatives from youth sports groups. No action taken.

II.F. EDCO Update and Discussion

Mr. Henry reviewed the financial problems EDCO has had of late that included misappropriation of funds and mismanagement. He reported the collaborative has put together a plan and that many other

districts are remaining members for now. He noted that a notice to withdraw is given a year ahead, by July 1, and is exploring with legal counsel whether Weston could withdraw and later rescind the withdrawal if they so desired. Dr. Connolly spoke about the services EDCO provides, including Special Education programs, evaluation services, professional development, a leadership course, and job alike roundtables. Mr. Henry said he is continuing to gather information and will request the Committee vote at the next meeting,

II.G. Discussion of Changes to 2020-2021 School Calendar

Dr. Connolly presented a revised school calendar to move the January and March Professional Development Days to the week of August 31, having four faculty days prior to the start of school. She noted the Commissioner of Education may require PD days during the year which might necessitate a calendar change. Dr. Connolly said she would communicate with families about the revised calendar, noting the first day of school for students will now be after Labor Day.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve revisions to the 2020-2021 school calendar, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

II.H. School Committee Calendar

Mr. Henry shared proposed dates for School Committee meetings next year. He noted there would be no retreat this year and indicated the Committee will meet this summer on July 20 and August 31 and would schedule other meetings as needed.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the proposed School Committee meeting dates for 2020-2021, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Mr. Henry voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, and Mr. Cobb voting aye.

II.I. Facility Projects Update

Case House – Mrs. Black said PBC was meeting this week, last of the furniture is being ordered, and they are nearly closed out on the project.

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 May 28, 2020 and June 1, 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 Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$850,208.70 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, with Mr. Henry voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Mr. Cobb voting aye.

Approval of Nonaligned Salaries

Ms. Matthews said there are new contracts for the Assistant Superintendents and Director of Student Services that include a 3% increase for each individual, an adjustment for this one year to better align with other districts. Dr. Connolly indicated this is a one-year bump. Ms. Matthews requested the Committee approve non-aligned salaries, noting a 2.17% average across other non-aligned individuals.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve nonaligned salaries for 2020-2021, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:07 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:

[WEEFC Annual Report 2019-2020](#)

[Student Services Annual Report](#)

[Revised School Calendar](#)

Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media: