

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING  
July 27, 2020

Webinar

<https://westonorg.zoom.us/j/94015330088>

Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:05 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. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; and Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Also present was Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries and Ms. Susan Bairstow, Weston Education Association.

Mr. Henry noted that Superintendent Dr. Midge Connolly would not be joining the meeting as she recovers from COVID-19. Mr. Henry noted that Dr. Connolly was doing well and continuing to coordinate her team. Mr. Henry then thanked Ms. Janet Bohlin for her many years of stellar service and congratulated her on her upcoming retirement.

Mr. Henry 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](mailto:blackd@weston.org) or Ms. Raman at [ramana@weston.org](mailto:ramana@weston.org). Mr. Henry reported the School Committee is planning to hold weekly meetings at 7:00 PM every Monday night through August to discuss fall school reopening plans.

Chair Report

Mr. Henry stated that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requires districts to submit draft reopening plans by July 31 covering remote, hybrid and all-in models for reopening schools. Mr. Henry noted that the committee would be voting on approval of the draft plans for submission but emphasized that the plans were in fact drafts. He noted that the final plans were due to DESE on August 10.

Mr. Henry then discussed need to negotiate with the Weston Education Association and reported that WEA had delivered a list of issues of concern for negotiation and that Ms. Bairstow would address the meeting shortly. Mr. Henry then thanked Mr. Cobb, the Select Board and Finance Committee for their work on the town and school budget which will be presented for approval at the town meeting in September. Mr. Henry then discussed the tremendous volume of parent feedback, thanked parents and asked that parents continue to present feedback. Mr. Henry addressed concerns regarding transparency, the schedule of weekly school committee meetings, the benefits and burdens of Zoom format meetings, and question and answer procedures. Mr. Henry announced the intent to schedule a number of parent forums regarding reopening plans and building safety. Mr. Henry discussed assistance from community members and asked for assistance with information regarding COVID-19 testing.

Ms. Black, Mr. Cobb, Ms. Raman, and Ms. Stewart then discussed the categories of questions and comments from parents regarding reopening, including a desire for more challenge in the remote learning academy, a desire to see K-3 students all-in as soon as possible, safety, negotiations with WEA, concerns regarding leveling of math at the Middle School and honors/AP courses at the High School, video and live-streaming concerns, visibility regarding the hybrid model schedule, testing, individual challenges for families, requests for outdoor learning, how to engage remote learners with those in class, and ventilation in buildings. The committee again thanked parents and asked for patience as the committee and administration work through solutions and answers to the many facets of reopening.

Mr. Henry discussed the strong relationship between the school committee and WEA. Ms. Bairstow then made a statement on behalf of the WEA. Ms. Bairstow wished Dr. Connolly well and discussed on-going work with administration on reopening and the willingness of WEA to collaborate. Ms. Bairstow discussed WEA concerns regarding 6-foot distancing, HVAC systems, metrics, testing, masking, and other issues.

Dr. McCanne and Dr. Carter then presented data results from a survey of parents regarding school reopening. Dr. McCanne reported that the survey results would be posted on the WPS website ([here](#)) and that the district received 1,617 responses, or roughly 80% of students. Dr. McCanne reported that 48.6% of families preferred the all-in model, 12.9% preferred the all remote model, and 38.3% preferred the hybrid model. Dr. McCanne then reported those numbers broken down by school in various formats. Dr. McCanne then reported that 84.1% of respondents preferred to attend school, 14.5% preferred to attend the Remote Learning Academy (RLA), and 1.4% preferred to unenroll for private school or home school. Dr. Carter noted that the 14.5% enrollment in RLA would involve approximately 1 section per grade. Dr. McCanne then discussed results regarding transportation needs. Dr. Carter noted that it appears the district has enough buses, but that planning would be necessary to provide for successful drop-off and pick-up models.

Dr. Carter then discussed the latest developments regarding reopening plans, including the administrations recommendation of a hybrid model with the plan to move K-3 students to an all-in model by November 1. Dr. Carter discussed the importance of negotiations with the WEA and having the teacher voice in planning. Dr. Carter discussed plans for the Remote Learning Academy, including a commitment to embedded honors courses and options for AP classes at the High School and how those courses could look, including the possible use of online platforms. Dr. Carter then discussed how RLA would look at the lower grades and the need to work with teachers ultimately chosen to teach RLA. Dr. Carter discussed structure, project-based learning, community building, and a full-day schedule balancing synchronous and asynchronous learning. Dr. Carter then answered questions regarding partnering with on-line schools and additional data collection from parents. Dr. Carter also confirmed that RLA would offer leveled math at the Middle School.

Dr. Carter then discussed the impact of the hybrid model on childcare for parents and his support of the district attempting to address parent requests that cohorts are in school on the same days. efforts to cooperate in creating cohorts of students. Dr. Carter next discussed safety concerns and noted the commonality of concerns from WEA and parents. Dr. Carter discussed outdoor learning, tents, and designated outdoor spaces for each room. Dr. Carter also discussed video recording of instruction and noted that issues need to be resolved with the WEA and from a technical perspective. Dr. Carter also discussed consent of parents and students. Dr. Carter discussed the importance of meeting individual needs – to “reach them and teach them.” Finally, Dr. Carter addressed the need to build community and galvanize the learning community in the pandemic.

#### Approval of Three Frameworks for Reopening Schools to be Submitted to DESE

The committee then discussed the proposed frameworks that require approval before submission to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The committee discussed the non-binding nature of the submission and the content of the form required by DESE.

**MOTION:** Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Draft Reopening Plan for submission to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the format previously distributed, with Mr. Henry voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mrs. Stewart voting aye.

The committee then read and responded to questions from the community. Dr. Carter responded to questions on subjects including support for learning pods, alignment of curriculum across models and grades, cohort requests, structure of remote portions of the day, flexibility of the various models, and

concerns of student services parents. Dr. Carter also discussed timing of surveys. Mr. Henry noted that survey data from the WEA could only be distributed with the consent of WEA. After suggestions from Ms. Stewart, the committee then discussed possible further revisions to survey questions to collect more detailed data, as well as timing of surveys. Dr. Carter also discussed possible times during the year when students could switch between models.

Ms. Raman then read a number of questions, pursuant to which Dr. Carter discussed protocols for decisions on moving from hybrid to all-in or remote models, the risk of mixing students in the hybrid model; guidelines for students or staff showing flu-like symptoms; the use of the outdoors for classes such as physical education, music and other subjects; a community health agreement; flexibility in commitments to a model based on changes in the community COVID spread; crossover between cohorts arising from individual instruction, sports, and bus rides; testing; daily health screening; and access to instruction for students home from school due to illness.

Mr. Henry then reported that the WEA had provided some data from its faculty survey for release. Mr. Henry reported that 184 faculty members completed the survey for a 70.5 % response rate. Of those, 6.5% preferred an all-in model, 27% preferred the hybrid model, 31% preferred the all remote model but would consider the hybrid model with acceptable safety protocols, and 35% preferred the full remote model.

Dr. Carter then continued addressing questions, discussing daily temperature checks and the investigation of temperature kiosks; protocols for recess including staggering cohorts and establishing structured activities; procedures for Weston Windows and preserving waitlist spots; mask mandates for kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, as well as efforts to purchase face shields for students; strategies for combining remote and in-class learners in the hybrid model and the difficulties of doing so at the elementary level; a new director of nursing; technology upgrades; lab options for remote learners; structure of hybrid and remote learning academy days; quarantining due to symptoms; differing treatment of grades 4-5 with respect to moving to all-in; rigor and quality expectations for the hybrid and remote models; and the decision to start hybrid rather than all-in.

Mr. Henry and Mr. Cobb then discussed the negotiation process with WEA and information provided by WEA. The committee also discussed current news from area districts with respect to reopening plans, school committee emails and the possible later establishment of a communications committee. The committee also discussed the possible movement of the start of school due to recent guidance from DESE.

#### Approval of Minutes of July 20, 2020

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of July 20, with Mr. Henry voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mrs. Stewart voting aye.

#### Certificate of Warrant

Ms. Matthews presented a Certificate of the Secretary, approval of warrants for payment and requested School Committee permission to sign in Dr. Connolly's absence.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$400,179.31 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, to be signed by Ms. Matthews, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:36 PM, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Documents used by Committee:

[Presentation - Initial Survey Data](#)

Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media: