

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING
September 14, 2020

Webinar

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

Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:03 PM by Mr. John Henry, Chair. Participating were Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Alyson Muzila, Ms. Anita Raman, and Mrs. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; Onika Jenkins, METCO Representative; 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 was Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries.

Mr. Henry reviewed the agenda for the meeting. He also welcomed new school committee member, Ms. Alyson Muzila, and stated that the school budget did pass at the Town Meeting. He also thanked Mrs. Danielle Black for her nine years of service on school committee.

Chair Report

Mr. Henry noted the first item on the item is the school committee reorganization where school committee votes on new chair and vice chair every year.

Approval of School Committee Reorganization

The committee nominated and voted who will be school committee chair and vice chair.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Ms. Raman and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Henry as Chair for one year. with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to Ms. Anita Raman as Vice Chair for one year, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Mr. Henry discussed the budget subcommittee. He explained the budget subcommittee consists on Mr. Cobb and himself. Mr. Henry stated that the committee is working through the current school budget and wishes to keep the committee with the two of them. However, later in the year when the subcommittee begins to discuss the next year's school budget, he suggested to open the subcommittee up to new members.

Mr. Henry discussed the assignments of each school committee member. The committee discussed the following subcommittee staffing: budget subcommittee will be Mr. Henry and Mr. Cobb, WEA negotiations will be handled by Ms. Raman and Mr. Henry, WEEFC will be handled by Ms. Muzila, PTO liaison will be Mrs. Stewart, Medical Advisory Representative will be Ms. Raman, Field Steering and Permanent Building Committee is Mr. Cobb, Sustainability will be handled by Ms. Muzila, SEPAC will be handled by Mrs. Stewart, Dr. Connolly will handle EDCO, and the town report will drafted by Mr. Henry and Ms. Muzila.

Approval of School Committee Members Assignments

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the School Committee Members' Assignments with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Mr. Henry noted two different issues that school committee will be working on in the future. The first issue is the secondary schedule for middle and high school. He asked school committee members to think about who should be working on this schedule. The second issue was creating a community-based effort for anti-racism. Dr. Connolly will be meeting with Ms. Muzila and Ms. Amy Kelly to start the conversation about this issue later in the week. Both issues will be discussed in detail later.

Mrs. Stewart mentioned her concern regarding beginning the process of a three-year strategic plan, noting that the plan must contemplate the impact of the pandemic. Mr. Henry stated school committee will be looking to Dr. Connolly for guidance and proposals regarding the process of strategic planning. Dr. Connolly discussed process, input from different stakeholders, building off of the work done on the current strategic plan. Ms. Muzila encouraged contemplating a plan with a longer term than three years. Mrs. Stewart suggested a shorter plan, perhaps one to two-year plan, solely focused on the pandemic and the ever-changing needs such as technology or school structure. Dr. Connolly stated these measures can be considered through action steps and Mr. Cobb expressed that if items are missing from the full strategic plan, solutions could be created and implemented for the gaps rather than a developing an entirely new or different plan. He stated that he felt the focus for the next several months should be opening in the hybrid model and moving to all-in for elementary students, and noted other coming burdens on the administration, including union negotiations and revisiting the high school schedule. Ms. Stewart stated that she was concerned ensuring that the schools have adequate technology to handle teaching in a pandemic. Ms. Raman stated that she agreed that with Mr. Cobb's statements. Mr. Henry suggested that the district focus on flexibility and robustness to handle whatever changes the pandemic forces. Dr. Connolly suggested delaying the start of the strategic planning process to January in part because of the tremendous burden that has been placed on the administration. Mr. Cobb and Mr. Henry thanked the administrative team for their efforts.

Mr. Henry asked families to be patient with tomorrow's school reopening noting that issues will arise; however, school committee and administration are dedicated to constant analysis and improvement.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly presented a rundown of various issues that administration is currently working through. She noted how excited the faculty, administration, and even the kids are for school reopening. However, she stated that safety is the top priority, and everyone needs to look out for each other to prevent closure of schools as has been seen in nearby towns. She reported that administration is continuing to gather data and hopes to have all elementary student attend in-person by October 15th. She also reported that all-in instruction will not be available to secondary due to space restrictions. Dr. Connolly also apologized for the sheer amount of information that was sent to parents. She is aware that it is overwhelming, and a possible solution would be creating school-based to post all the information. The last item she addressed was COVID testing. Dr. Connolly mentioned that the medical advisory board and parents have been helping administration look for affordable testing options and that all parties hope this will be an option in the future for Weston.

Dr. Carter acknowledged the hard work the faculty has been putting in over the past 10 days of professional development. He stated the first week of school will be focused on community building and learning safety protocols rather than the curriculum. For elementary school, the remote days will tend to go slower at first. The elementary school will also have an in-person orientation as well as an online one. For secondary schools, they will be starting their schedules right away. The middle school has a lot of community building in their schedules and the high school will begin with the normal curriculum, but will still work to foster community. In response to a question from Mr. Henry, Dr. Carter discussed the use of video at the high school. Dr. Carter reported that the high school schedule is a full day, including live in-person, live remote and asynchronous instruction. Dr. Carter stated that the schools will find where strengths and weaknesses are, and adjustments and changes will be made where needed.

Ms. Raman asked what the first week will look like for RLA students. Dr. Carter said all students will be learning right away. There will still be community building activities for these students as well. They will have orientation and full schedule will come out by the end of the week.

Ms. Muzila asked the percentage of teachers who will live stream, and Dr. Carter stated that while he doesn't have a percentage, he hoped that eventually all teachers would use live streaming. Ms. Muzila then asked Dr. Carter to describe assessment tools for students.

Dr. Carter discussed the use of tool named Star for math and literacy assessments, as well as a tool for social/emotional assessments, both at the elementary level. Dr. Carter then stated that the middle and high schools will have baseline assessments based on material learned last year, and that new assessments will be created as well.

Ms. Muzila then asked what systems the district had in place for feedback from families. Dr. Carter replied that for classroom problems, the best place to start is with the teacher. For issues that go beyond one single classroom, parents can approach a counselor or the building principal. For technology, parents should contact Dr. McCanne and for school lunches and busing, parents should contact Ms. Sheri Matthews. Dr. Carter stated that issues around teaching and learning should go to him, and that if parents don't know where to direct a question, they could contact any administrator.

Mr. Henry also asked questions about technology in reply to which Dr. McCanne discussed help desk tickets for students and families. Mr. Henry read several questions regarding teaching and learning in reply to which Dr. Carter discussed the high school schedule, assigned study halls for high school students, and opportunities for in-person extra help for students during study halls.

Dr. McCanne reported that zoom, SeeSaw and Google classroom access codes would be sent by teachers.

Ms. Matthews reviewed drop off locations and times at the elementary schools. Mr. Henry noted that the secondary schools sent out maps and videos to guide drop-offs.

Mr. Henry thanked attendees and again thanked all administration, faculty and staff for their efforts in opening the schools.

Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:08 pm, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media