

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING
August 17, 2020

Webinar

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

Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order by Mr. Henry at 7:15 p.m. Participating were Ms. Danielle Black, Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Anita Raman, and Ms. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; and METCO liaison Onika Jenkins.

Also present was Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries and Mr. Tim Heavey, Director of Human Resources.

Mr. Henry apologized for a technical problem that generated a requirement for a password for the meeting, noting that the password was distributed after the start of the meeting via Facebook and that the meeting would be posted on Weston Media.

Chair Report

Mr. Henry reported that the School Committee bargaining team had met twice with the Weston Education Association (WEA) and had held other conversations with the presidents of the WEA. Mr. Henry reported that progress was on-going and that he was hopeful agreement could be reached. He stated that Dr. Connolly and Dr. Carter would report later on the progress being made by the implementation teams at each school. Mr. Henry stated that a number of issues remain outstanding and that the committee would need to spend significant time in executive session at the conclusion of the open session. Mr. Henry stated that the Committee would reserve approximately 30 minutes for questions and provided instructions for asking questions.

Update on Re-Opening Plan

Dr. Connolly thanked the school committee, family, and teachers for their on-going work toward reopening. Dr. Connolly reminded families that their experience in the spring was the result of an emergency situation and that the fall experience will be far different and more robust. She noted that the administration would be working up to the start of school in mid-September.

Dr. Connolly reiterated that safety is non-negotiable, and that the schools were implementing six foot distancing. Dr. Connolly reminded families of the importance of precautions and asked that families have children to begin practicing mask wearing. Dr. Connolly asked that the community continue to take care of themselves and each other. Dr. Connolly stated that planning is an iterative process, as is teaching, and that changes will continue to be made. Dr. Connolly discussed the response to enrollment as well as the status of hiring.

Dr. Carter then discussed assigning students to cohorts and assigning staff to the remote and hybrid models, noting that student placement will be communicated to families once assignments are complete. Dr. Connolly noted that the administration will not be able to accommodate requests for cohort placement changes until after assignments are completed. Dr. Carter discussed the work of the implementation team,

including safety protocols, arrival and dismissal, recess, snack and mask breaks, classroom materials, and handling sick staff or students. Dr. Carter also discussed efforts regarding remote instructions, delivery of student services, staff duties and roles, and how to transition students to the new model of schooling. Dr. Carter discussed work on the Remote Learning Academy (RLA), including staffing, professional development, and the need to offer a broad program of studies to high school students.

Dr. Carter then discussed professional development, including curriculum workshops, accounting for learning gaps from the spring, extension of responsive classroom, culturally responsive teaching practices, and learning how to teach well remotely.

Dr. Connolly then discussed the district's volunteer medical advisory group, noting that biographies would be distributed to the community. Topics considered by the committee including safety protocols and testing. Dr. Connolly reported that Jamy Gaynor, the new Director of Health Services, will join the advisory group as well.

Ms. Matthews discussed cleaning, maintenance and HVAC work, as well as training for custodial staff and facilities personnel regarding cleaning chemicals. Ms. Matthews noted that the district had acquired 70 air purifiers with intent to purchase another 100 units. Dr. Connolly noted that a community member helped the district acquire 1,000 KN95 masks. Ms. Matthews then discussed a tracking system for maintenance issues, the status of tents at school buildings, and PPE, including desk partitions and the shortage of disinfectant wipes. Ms. Matthews then discussed transportation, including seating protocols, cleaning protocols, design of routes, and training for drivers. Ms. Matthews clarified that parents who may need occasional use of the bus should state that their student will be riding the bus.

Dr. McCanne then discussed technology, including capacity for recording and live streaming. He also discussed the status of devices for students and faculty, as well as software and related tools for assessments and teaching. Dr. McCanne also discussed professional development for faculty relating to technology.

Dr. Connolly discussed scheduling and sectioning, as well as research regarding federal or state grants and testing. She also discussed shifts in budgetary and staffing priorities. She then discussed moving all-in learning for Pre-K through 5 to a mid-October start. Dr. Connolly then discussed on-going communication to families and expressed appreciation for the respectful feedback coming from families.

Ms. Stewart asked whether parents will be able to double-check enrollment and busing decisions, and Dr. McCanne stated that a confirmation message will be sent. Dr. Connolly confirmed a mid-October goal for all-in learning at the elementary level and that all-in would not be feasible at the middle or high schools. Mr. Henry stated that the school calendar would be considered again at the next meeting, but that the expected start date was September 15. Mr. Cobb asked about providing RLA assignments as soon as possible, particularly K-8, and asked about access behind Woodland for pickup and drop-off. Dr. Connolly noted that there is hesitation about using Linwood Road Extension for school traffic.

Dr. Connolly also discussed looking at testing options. Ms. Black asked whether secondary students could move to two full days, and Dr. Connolly stated that the administration would move to increased in-person learning as soon as possible at the secondary. Dr. Connolly also discussed protocols with regard to students or faculty showing symptoms. Dr. Connolly discussed planning for impacts on Boston students, noting that the administration was working with La Toya Rivers and the principals to address the needs of Boston students. Ms. Matthews stated that the transportation team was working on the number of buses needed for the Boston runs.

Mr. Henry then opened up the meeting for questions and described the process for asking questions. Dr. Carter discussed the possibility of orientation for RLA and the planning for safe student gatherings. Dr. Carter then discussed looping teachers, efforts to keep elementary cohorts together year over year, and sharing of classroom lists. Dr. Connolly discussed parking at the high school.

Dr. Carter then discussed the RLA schedule and possible adjustments, as well as blending classes between RLA and hybrid at the high school. Dr. Carter discussed parent workshops and back-to-school nights to support parents, as well as access to live classes from home for sick students. Dr. Connolly stated that she believed the district would be ready to start on September 15. Dr. Carter reported that on 4-day weeks, there will be no all-remote Wednesday so that each cohort will have two days in school.

Dr. Carter stated that cohorts at the elementary level will not be grouped alphabetically, but that siblings will be given the same cohort days. He stated that the principals would work to create the best cohorts for students. Dr. Connolly then discussed the composition of the medical advisory group, including Board of Health members, doctors, nurses, administration and faculty members.

Dr. Carter discussed the composition of RLA classes at the lower elementary levels, noting that Woodland and Country students may be mixed. Dr. Carter reported that about 17-20% of students chose RLA. Dr. Connolly reported that the goal is to have one air purifier per classroom and noted that Weston Windows would follow the same model as the elementary schools. Dr. Carter discussed the decision to have a Monday/Thursday and Tuesday/Friday model for hybrid, noting that students would have fewer consecutive days out of school and that we have the custodial staff to complete required cleaning. Dr. Connolly discussed staffing, flu shot requirements, and sharing of class lists. Dr. Carter discussed families shifting between models, consideration of the alternating-week hybrid model, and the high school block schedule. Dr. Connolly discussed continued requirement to follow state law regarding IEPs and 504s. Dr. Carter discussed staggered class changes to minimize hallway traffic, having teachers move to students at the middle school, and consistency of grading between RLA and hybrid.

Dr. Connolly noted that tuition is unchanged for Weston Windows. Mr Henry and Mr. Cobb noted that the revised Reopening Plan would answer many questions and that the administration and School Committee will work to answer questions. Dr. Connolly noted that parents will not be able to drop students off early for hybrid days. Dr. Carter discussed composition of the remote day in hybrid and course offerings at the high school for RLA students. Dr. Connolly reported that space is not an issue on Case Campus, that pickup and drop-off plans were in progress, and that SAT/ACT will be provided at the high school for accommodations if possible. Dr. Carter then discussed possible use of online platforms for AP classes.

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 Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$268,250.06 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, to be signed by Ms. Matthews, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Mr. Henry presented a motion for adjournment to executive session for the purpose of discussion of collective bargaining matters with the intent not to return to open session.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee at 8:43 p.m. voted unanimously to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of discussion of collective bargaining matters with the intent not to return to open session with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

During the executive session, no action was taken.

Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media