

## MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING

August 7, 2020

### Webinar

<https://westonorg.zoom.us/j/85968484344?pwd=U1NLeXZlSEpDaUtTMUVZWSsvVVI>

### Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order by Mr. Henry at 1:30 p.m. 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 was Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries and Mr. Tim Heavey, Director of Human Resources.

Mr. Henry presented a motion for adjournment to executive session for the purpose of discussion of collective bargaining matters with the intent to return to open session.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee at 1:31 p.m. voted unanimously to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of discussion of collective bargaining matters with the intent 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.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee at 2:38 p.m. voted unanimously to adjourn from executive session 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.

The meeting was reconvened in open session at 2:39 PM by Mr. John Henry, Chair.

Mr. Henry thanked reviewed the agenda, reference updates on the reopening plan, mentioned that Dr. Connolly and Dr. Carter would be explaining the new hybrid model to be followed by a brief Q&A. He provided instructions for participation in the Q&A portion of the meeting.

### Chair Report

Mr. Henry addressed the safety concerns teachers have with the hybrid model. He stated administration has proposed changes to eliminate as many safety concerns as possible while keeping in person instruction. Mr. Henry noted that the school committee has heard from the families in town that they preferred in-person instruction. Mr. Henry stated that a majority of teachers were not in favor starting in any mode other than remote and that there may not be enough teachers to meet the needs of the students in a hybrid model. He reported that the administration is working to meet all the safety concerns of the WEA but that he is fearful that the district may not have enough teachers to open in a hybrid model.

## Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly stated that the administration is finishing up the reopening plan and noted that families will see the plan on Sunday night. Dr. Connolly stated that the district was thankful for the safety concerns raised by teachers which were considered when drafting the revised reopening plan. Dr. Connolly also reported that implementation teams at each building were meeting and developing procedures and protocols for the reopening of schools.

Dr. Carter began detailing the changes made to the previous plan, noting that safety is the primary concern. Dr. Carter first reported that the school day will be shortened to 4 hours. Students will focus on core instruction, though the high school will run a 4-block day. Dr. Carter stated that the elementary school day will be from approximately 8 AM until 12 PM, while the secondary schools will be in session from 8:45 AM until 12:45 PM. The high school schedule will split up the 8-block schedule over the course of the week. Lunch will be offered; however, it will be grab and go style. Some students at the elementary and middle school level will stay for lunch and extra support. After dismissal, the students will have remote sessions either for an hour or an hour and a half.

Dr. Carter reported that the school week will be 4 days long with one group attending in person Monday and Thursday and the other group attending Tuesday and Friday. Wednesday will be an all remote day for both groups. The groups will be created by administration and teachers rather than separating by alphabetical order. Cohorts from Kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade will be kept in the same classroom, while specials will be all remote to eliminate concerns regarding shared materials. Students will be required to keep masks on all the time except during masks breaks which will occur outside or in separate spaces.

Dr. Carter reported that the district is focused on making the remote days as robust as possible. He stated that elementary students will have 3 live session per day and secondary students will have approximately 4 live sessions per remote day. The live session may include direct instruction, working in small groups, class discussion, or independent work. Dr. Carter stated that elementary school students will receive 5 hours of learning each day and secondary will receive 5 and one-half hours of learning each day.

Dr. Carter discussed the planning process going forward, noting that the revised reopening plan will be distributed over the weekend, and that the school committee will vote on a recommended model Monday night. He noted that the reopening plan is due to the Department of Education on the following Friday. He then stated that the administration would distribute enrollment forms for parents with a deadline the following week. Dr. Connolly noted that the plan is subject to change. Mr. Henry noted that any plan is subject to having enough teachers to staff the district and/or changes in the path of the pandemic, and stated that flexibility will be required.

Mr. Dave Poras, WEA President, addressed the meeting. Mr. Poras stated that teachers want to be in the classroom with students. Mr. Poras stated that the change to a shortened day was not at the request of teachers. Mr. Poras stated that the WEA would produce a document over the weekend and would host a zoom meeting Monday at 5 p.m., and that zoom information would be posted on Facebook. Mr. Poras stated that he was upset that there was an us versus them narrative regarding negotiations. Mr. Poras stated that he believes WEA and the administration will be able to come to an agreement. Mr. Henry thanked Mr. Poras and stated that the school committee was focused on safety. Mrs. Black stated that the school committee will not vote for a plan that is not safe, but that it is imperative that the start of the school year include in-person instruction.

Mr. Cobb asked whether Mr. Poras had data from a survey of faculty on the previous hybrid model. Ms. Raman noted that it would be helpful to see what the teachers actually voted for with respect to an

opening model. Dr. Connolly discussed some of the considerations that influenced changes to the proposed reopening model. Mr. Henry then opened the Q&A portion of the meeting.

Dr. Connolly and Dr. Carter answered questions about plans for pre-school, criteria for cohorts, siblings on the same attendance day, nonbinding survey selections, enrollment selections, a plan if COVID infection numbers stay low, transportation to school, students taking a gap year, who is teaching RLA, and students opportunity to see classrooms prior to school reopening.

Dr. Carter answered questions regarding flexibility between models, details of the RLA plan, teaching live sessions, when classroom schedules come out, length of the school day, noting that parents could not choose cohorts except for certain specific conflicts. He continued addressing questions such as length of the three remote sessions, snack time, live streaming, student materials for home, and remote sessions after the in-person day. Dr. Carter then discussed core curriculum for high school students, grouping of cohorts, RLA and in-person integration, student services support, and additional student support.

Mr. Henry discussed hiring teacher substitute teams at each building to support expected absences. Dr. Connolly discussed qualifications of substitute teachers and learning assistants. Mr. Henry discussed flexibility for WPS teachers, and faculty survey results. Dr. Carter discussed X-blocks and student support opportunities. Dr. Connolly stated that the union is not opposed to live streaming, but that details need to be worked out. Mr. Henry noted that teachers may vote on the reopening plan, but that he expected to receive feedback from the WEA on the plan.

Mr. Henry stated the rest of questions in the chat will be printed out and answered later. He stated that the answers to many questions will be provided in the revised reopening plan document. He thanked parents for coming to this meeting and administration for their time and effort.

### Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:46 PM, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media