

## MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING

1/25/2021 at 7 P.M.

**Zoom Link:** [Westonorg.zoom.us/j/94015330088](https://westonorg.zoom.us/j/94015330088)

**Full Recording:** [Weston.vod.castus.tv/vod/](https://weston.vod.castus.tv/vod/) (Find timestamps for each section in parentheses)

Documents Used At Meeting:

- [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\) with Weston Educators Association](#)

### Call to order & Opening Business (00:07)

A meeting of the Weston School Committee is called to order by Mr. John Henry, Chair. Participating were Ms. Anita Raman, Vice-chair, Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Alyson Muzila, and Ms. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; as well as Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; and Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; and Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries; and High School Principal Paul Peri; and Middle School Principal John Gibbons; and Facilities Director Gary Jarobski; and Members of the Budget Sub-Committee Lisa Reitano, Bharath Venkataraman, and Lisa Schwallie.

Mr. Henry, presiding over the meeting, reviews the agenda. The public comment period will be moved to the end of the meeting, and this meeting will focus exclusively on budget discussions.

### Superintendent's Report (02:56)

Dr. Connolly shares updates from around the district. She begins by thanking school nurses, led by Jamy Gaynor, for their outstanding success in taking on new roles in addition to their normal responsibilities. The team also includes Michelle Rizza, Jennifer Riggs, Karen Ruggerio, Denise Schwerzler, Joanna Sudmyer and Janet Weinstein. She encourages WPS community members to take advantage of the free COVID-19 tests available Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-5 P.M.

Dr. Connolly also highlights Winter Sports successes, and congratulates WHS Golf Coach Mary O'Brien for being awarded National Boys Golf Coach of the Year for the Northeast, and also for being awarded as MIAA Boys Golf Coach of the Year. She adds that Football, Girls Volleyball, and Indoor Track are set to start February 22.

Dr. Connolly also congratulates students and the WHS History Dept for completing their first "Action Civics" class, and 8th grader Rosa Whitmote for being selected to represent WMS as Ambassador to Project 351, which brings together eighth graders from each of the 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a year of public service and leadership. She adds that WHS English teacher Dr. Matthew Henry has recently published his second chapbook of poetry - *Dust and Ashes*. He also had a poem, "12 minutes a slave," published in the poetry journal *Ploughshares* this month. Dr. Connolly also highlights "sample language week" at Field School, and resumption of music programs.

Dr. Connolly adds that the National Association of Music Education has selected two Weston Students, Seniors Benjamin Chen and Maximilian Wohlfeld into All-Eastern Honors Ensembles. She congratulates them, emphasizing how impressive this is, coming from such a small school.

Discussion of New Schedule, Memorandum of Agreement with Weston Educators Association  
(07:22)

Mr. Henry introduces the new agreement memo agreed with the Weston Educators Association.

Motion: Mr. Henry makes a motion to approve the agreement. Ms. Muzila seconds the motion and it passes unanimously as Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Henry, Mr. Cobb and Ms. Raman all vote aye in favor.

FY 2021-22 Budget Discussion: (08:45)

Mr. Henry invites HS Principal Paul Peri to present on the proposed HS budget for next year. He thanks those who contributed to the proposal. He discusses proposed reductions. Dr. Connolly and Ms. Matthews share additional thoughts, and Mr. Peri invites questions from the committee.

Mr. Henry hears no questions regarding the High School budget. He shares some thoughts on the process of cutting the budget. Ms. Lisa Reitano of Finance Committee asks questions about various topics, to which Mr. Henry responds. Mr. Peri addresses points raised by Ms. Reitano.

Mr. Henry invites MS Principal John Gibbons to discuss the proposed MS budget, highlighting reductions and responding to questions. Mr. Henry suggests that the Central Office look into data or numbers regarding building-based substitutes. Mr. Cobb asks about World Language program enrollment; he suggests using it as a point of contact to get additional information from families. Principal Gibbons suggests additional information he will share with Mr. Cobb about enrollment, in coordination with Ms. Matthews.

Ms. Reitano asks about how language course selections impact on student schedules, and if it is possible to avoid needing extra sections of each language without student schedule conflicts. Mr. Gibbons recognizes the concerns she raises. Ms. Muzila emphasizes that World Language skills are crucial and suggests finding creative ways to preserve foreign language availability. Ms. Raman recalls specific strategies that had worked in the past or could work in the future. Mr. Henry suggests taking it on a year-by-year basis, and encourages looking at creative solutions.

Mr. Henry asks about updates to MS Science Labs, which Principal Gibbons responds to. He invites Facilities Director Jarowski, who confirms the labs have been completed. Mr. Jarowski goes on to discuss minor changes to the facilities budget, and highlights two proposed capital projects repairing/replacing school roofs. He discusses other long term maintenance matters, and then builds off of additional comments from Mr. Cobb. Ms. Muzila asks about energy conservation considerations and Mr. Jarowski responds. Ms. Reitano then asks about costs for cleaning supplies. Mr. Jarowski, Dr. Connolly and Ms. Matthews respond, providing clarification.

Ms. Matthews highlights Transportation budget considerations, reviewing proposed changes. Mr. Henry asks about turnover and replacements in the bus fleet and Ms. Matthews responds. Ms. Muzila asks about hybrid and electric buses, and Ms. Matthews speaks to the cost comparisons. Mr. Henry discusses a lease that another town has used.

Ms. Stewart asks about replacements for staff who are planning to retire. She also asks about transportation to Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical and reimbursement from another district who shares our vehicle, and Ms. Matthews responds to both points Ms. Stewart raised.

Ms. Reitano asks about cleaning costs on buses, and additional costs from additional bus trips, both based around expected future herd immunity against COVID-19. She also asks about the costs for buses after school. Ms. Matthews responds, and Ms. Reitano asks follow up questions. Ms. Matthews will check with the transportation dept to get the exact data regarding staff hours. Ms. Reitano shares some additional thoughts with Mr Henry, Ms. Matthews, and the committee.

Dr. Connolly discusses the budget for the office of Student Services including special education. She reviews several initiatives and budget priorities, including for wellness and mental health. She explains that increases in the budget are based on staff requirements to fulfil student IEPs and other needs. The department will work with principals to finalize the exact staffing needs.

Ms. Stewart asks about monitoring out-of-district students, and how it has been working. Dr. Connolly explains that it has been going well. Each school has a chair for special education, and the district student services team also monitors this. Ms. Stewart emphasizes her support for a robust student services program and cautions against future budget cuts to student services. Mr. Henry clarifies background on past changes to the student services budget, to which Dr. Connolly builds on. Ms. Stewart responds and clarifies her main priorities regarding this topic.

Ms. Muzila asks about the district-wide accommodations plan, wondering if regular-education students ever have access to special-education service professionals on a case by case basis. Dr. Connolly explains that student services staffing is determined by IEPs, but there are other avenues for any student to get additional attention, support, or accommodations as they need. Ms. Muzila also asks about autism specialists and Dr. Connolly explains staff coverage of each building. Ms. Muzila also asks about the staff training provided by *Cognitive Connections*, and encourages continuing to work with them on professional development. Dr. Connolly responds.

#### Community Discussion (1:06:15)

Mr. Henry invites members of the public to share their perspectives and ask budget questions. John Sallay commends school committee members and administrators for all of their impressive work. He observes that most of the budget increase is employee related, with a 2% increase in pay for many staff members, and additional costs from additional employees despite declining enrollment; he asks for responses to his observation. Mr. Henry explains that additional staffing costs mostly come from requirements for special education students, and their particular needs; it is less about the overall enrollment than the specific changes in special education obligations. Mr. Henry also explains why there are additional transportation hours, contextualizing changes.

#### Approval of Warrant (1:13:00)

Assistant Superintendent Sheri Matthews introduces a regular warrant for \$2,354,267.66.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve. Ms. Raman seconds and the committee approves with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Henry, Mr. Cobb and Ms. Raman all voting aye.

#### Adjournment (1:13:50)

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to adjourn. Ms. Raman seconds the motion, and the committee votes unanimously to adjourn with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Henry Mr. Cobb and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor of adjournment.