

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
February 11, 2019

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:02 PM at Weston Middle School by Mr. John Henry, Chair. In attendance were Mrs. Danielle Black, Mr. Alex Cobb, and Dr. Ed Heller of the School Committee; Jeff Beaudoin, Student Representative to the School Committee; Ms. Onika Jenkins, METCO Representative to the School Committee; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations; and Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. Not present: Dr. Sanjay Saini of the School Committee.

Also present was Ms. Lisa Reitano of the Town of Weston Finance Committee.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mr. Henry welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the evening's agenda.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly highlighted recent events in the district. She reported there were ten finalists on Field School's annual Geo Bee, and the winner was 4th grader Ben Rosenfeld. Dr. Connolly spoke about the Boston Weston METCO Parent Organization fundraiser "Weston Can Sing" held on January 26, reporting that more than 40 students from grades 6-12 auditioned prior to the event, with the top eight contestants performing in the finals: 7th graders Siena Ferrucci and Ava Tillman-Swartz, 8th graders Nate Gold and Sophia Li, freshman Raneem Abuhasan, sophomores Laurel Davidoff and Max Wohlfeld, and junior Kayla Silverman, who won the competition. There were special performances by Boston native and *The Voice* Finalist Brittany Butler and former METCO Director David Fuller and the Who DAT Band. Dr. Connolly noted that all money raised benefits Weston METCO students. Ms. Jenkins spoke positively about the event.

In Music Department news, Dr. Connolly reported that Weston students did extremely well at the Massachusetts Jr. District Festival auditions in early January, with 42 students accepted, the most students accepted from any school district. Eight WHS students were selected for the 2019 Massachusetts All-State Band & Orchestra and will perform at Boston Symphony Hall on Saturday, March 2 at 1:30 p.m. Students selected are seniors Michael Aisin-Gioro (Baritone Sax), Emily Kim (Violin), Zachary Zhu (Clarinet) and vocalists Gillian Reeder and Hannah Brown; juniors Sanghoo Lee (Viola) and Carter Namkung (Bassoon); and freshman Jonathan Henry (snare drum). Dr. Connolly reported that Weston High School Chamber Orchestra has been selected to perform at the 2019 Mass Music Educators Conference in Boston, noting this is an enormous honor and Director of Music Chris Memoli is very excited to have our students perform at this event. The concert will be Friday, March 1 at 1:45 pm at the Boston Seaport Hotel.

Dr. Connolly updated the Committee on the Winter Athletics season, noting that Middle School Boys and Girls Basketball will finish up this week. At the High School, Boys Indoor Track finished the regular season undefeated with a 5-0 record and their 3rd consecutive DCL Small Championship; Girls Indoor track finished with an impressive 4-1 record with many individual event champions. She indicated that both track teams will compete at the MIAA D4 State Championships. Dr. Connolly reported that Boys Basketball qualified for its 4th consecutive MIAA tournament bid, currently 9-9 and has played a highly competitive schedule. She noted that Girls Basketball will qualify for States with wins over Wayland and North Attleboro. The team participated in the Coaches vs. Cancer 3-point Challenge and finished 3rd in the Nation raising \$4,460 in Ash Baird's honor.

Dr. Connolly reported that Boys Hockey has two important games later this week vs. Watertown and Bellingham. A win in either should put them in the tournament. She said that Girls Hockey, though under .500 on the season, has opportunity to improve next year as 16 of the 21 players on their roster are in 8th or 9th grade. She reported that Wrestling boasts 12 wrestlers this year and a new coach who is dedicated to rebuilding Weston Wrestling, a team close to being eliminated the past couple of years. This past weekend six Weston wrestlers competed in Sectionals with two

placing in the top six, a great turnaround for this program.

Dr. Connolly reported that Alpine Skiing, with 32 skiers, is becoming a powerhouse. With the top female skier in the State (Stella Alphas) both the boys and girls teams have fed off her excellence. Each team will have three skiers who have qualified and will compete in States in two weeks. Nordic Skiing, Weston's newest sport, has become very popular in a short time, with a full complement of skiers on both the boys and girls teams, have been able to compete immediately. Dr. Connolly noted that all practices and races are in Weston at the Leo J Martin golf course.

Dr. Connolly reported that the Boys Swim/Dive program continues its excellence with a regular season record of 14-1 and finished sixth in the North Sectional Tournament, which combines Divisions 1 and 2. She noted that Girls Swim/Dive team finished at 11-3 and a very satisfying 4th place finish at Sectionals. Both teams will compete in States.

Dr. Connolly said that nothing was more satisfying than a recent email she received about the great sportsmanship our Middle School boys basketball team and coach displayed in a recent game in Newton. A Newton boy with special needs was put in the game with Weston down 10 points; Weston players did not try to steal the ball or play defense on him, allowed the boy to score, and made his day. The parent commended the team for their show of sportsmanship, maturity and kindness.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – None presented.

I.E. Open Forum – Resident Dr. John McKenzie suggested that School Improvement Plans presentations in the spring include brief comments on the prior year's plan. Mr. Cobb reminded administration to make sure all school council agendas are posted.

II.A. Weston Education Enrichment Fund Committee

Dr. Carter presented seven grants for Committee approval, including a High School grant for a substance abuse program and Middle School grant for Shakespeare Guys. For Country and Woodland Schools, he highlighted Woodworking in the Time of the Pilgrims for art students, a Digital Art Illustrator in Residence, Chickens Up Close and Personal for science, and an Origami Math Enrichment Program that will also be at Field School. Case Campus Food Webs proposed by Elementary Science and Social Specialist Susan Erickson will take place at Field School.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Dr. Heller and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC grants as proposed in memo of February 5, 2019 totaling \$15,984.

II.B. Update on District Initiatives

Dr. Carter presented updates on Teaching and Learning initiatives. He emphasized the success of the new K-8 instructional coaches, noting the coaches are working with teachers in areas of differentiated instruction and classroom structure and management, all key to improving teacher practices. Dr. Carter indicated feedback is overwhelmingly positive regarding the coaches. Dr. Connolly noted that coaches and some teachers will present to School Committee in the spring.

Dr. Carter reported that 16 administrators and teachers attended a week-long Data Wise course at Harvard and will use the information to provide structure and help close the achievement gap. He indicated they are in the process of adopting a new elementary reading curriculum and working on new elementary science curriculum and plan to purchase new science texts for Middle School. Dr. Carter noted Grade 8 social studies is being reviewed to match the state frameworks with an emphasis on citizenship and the Math Department is in the middle of its self-study to prepare for the external review next year. Dr. Carter said they will present their report to the Committee in late April or early May. He reported on looking at assessments in elementary reading and math, possibly offering graduate courses in current research, working on Project Based Learning initiatives and differentiated learning, and planning for next year's Professional Development needs to conform with the district's strategic plan.

Dr. Connolly reported on district initiatives, noting the hiring of Amy Kelly as Director of District Advancement. She said Ms. Kelly, who met with all teachers in small groups during the January Professional Development Day, will be the point person for Social Emotional Learning, Responsive Classroom, Challenge Success, and other areas. Dr. Connolly mentioned the recent successful Challenge Success parent night and said a student presentation would be forthcoming as well as a survey done with data being triangulated. She mentioned Facing History and Ourselves at the High School.

The Committee discussed. Mr. Cobb suggested parents be kept informed and have opportunity to provide feedback during both the internal and external math review. Mr. Henry asked about the “Can Dos” that were developed and how do we measure. Dr. Carter noted that Dr. Kathy Baker, World Language Director, was working on assessments and measurements in that department. Mrs. Black indicated questions remain as to the success of elementary Spanish and whether the time might be better spent in the classrooms. Dr. Connolly noted that assessments are showing that there is a positive impact.

II.D. Discussion of Program Reviews – Cycle, Process, Upcoming Disciplines

Dr. Connolly noted they had already discussed the Math Review. She said an Athletics review is underway and will be presented in May to the Committee. She said they will be surveying students and parents soon as part of the review. She reported an internal review of Guidance is going on now, having started later than planned, with an expected presentation to the Committee in the fall. Dr. McKenzie expressed the opinion that 10 years between review of academic subjects is a long time, noting that it has been 12 years since the last Math review in 2007. He suggested the Committee might want to catch up with more frequent reviews of some areas. He also suggested more information be provided to the public earlier regarding the actual procedures of the reviews and opportunity for involvement. Dr. Connolly and Dr. Carter indicated that changes in curriculum, teaching and learning, occur all the time, without waiting for a program review. Mr. Cobb suggested that department heads highlight updates or changes as part of the School Improvement Plans. No action taken.

II.D. Discussion of the Superintendent’s Proposed FY’20 School Budget

Dr. Connolly said they are working on sectioning at the elementary and high school and will have a better sense of the numbers at the next School Committee meeting. Mr. Henry suggested some high school courses be looked at closer for more efficiencies. Ms. Matthews indicated she would have additional data before the next meeting. The Committee briefly discussed and decided an additional meeting in February may be needed since the next meeting is right after vacation week. No action taken.

II.D. Discussion of the Town Report

Mr. Henry said Annual School Report for the Town Report is a work in progress and he will have a draft to share with the Committee prior to the next School Committee meeting on February 25.

II.F. Facility Projects Update (Proctor Field, Case House, Case Complex)

Case House – Mrs. Black reported that the contractor is very responsive, and the Owner’s Project Manager is pleased with the progress. She noted they found additional asbestos that is fairly contained that must be removed, discovered the need to structurally reinforce some areas on the third floor, and are looking at tiles to replicate the original tile in the lobby where there was asbestos in the tile.

Proctor Field – Mr. Cobb discussed installing security cameras outside the bathroom building and on a pole, will seek Committee discussion in the future. No action taken.

Solar Panels on Field School Roof

Dr. Heller referenced the presentation by **Soltec** at the January 7, 2019 School Committee meeting regarding Field School as a site for possible solar panels. He indicated his concern about the aesthetics has been addressed and visually presents no issue. He noted the PBC had invited **Soltec** to come to their next meeting on February 20. Dr. Heller recommended the School Committee approve proceeding with this project, recognizing that we will be involved in each step of the

design process for the solar panels. He said he would get renditions of the visual appearance to the Committee.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve installation of PV panels on the Field School roof subject to approval of subsequent design milestones as the project proceeds.

Granite Steps from Field School

Mr. Henry shared a proposal he received that the granite steps from the old Field School, which he noted are currently stored at the bus barn, be used as part of the new rail trail. Dr. Heller indicated that Director of Facilities Gary Jarobski and interested parties in the community expressed approval.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to allow use of the granite from steps of former Field School for appropriate Town use for the Rail Trail and/or Legacy Trail.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of January 22, January 28 and January 31, 2019, with correction to spelling of parent name in minutes of January 28.

III.B. Business Actions

Certificate of Warrant

Ms. Matthews presented a Certificate of the Secretary, approval of warrants for payment.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$612,290.73 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Acceptance of Gift

Ms. Matthews presented a gift from St. Peters Church on behalf of ICARE in amount of \$2,500 to be used to address matters of diversity in the Weston Public Schools.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept gift in amount of \$2,500 from ICARE as presented.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, at 8:08 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session for purposes of discussion of Collective Bargaining, not to return to regular session, with Dr. Heller voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

During Executive Session, participants discussed negotiations for the WEAAA and the WEA. No action taken during Executive Session.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Dr. Heller, at 9:05 PM the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn from Executive Session, with Dr. Heller voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.