

WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES (Zoom Livestream Meeting)
Monday, 2/13/2023 at 6:30 PM

This meeting was streamed in real time via Zoom. Recording may be found here:
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Questions or comments? Contact: SchoolCommittee@weston.org -
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DOCUMENTS USED AT MEETING

- [FY'24 Budget Hearing 02.13](#)

ATTENDING PANELISTS

School Committee: Mr. Kenneth Newberg (Chair), Ms. Alyson Muzila (Vice Chair), Ms. Attia Linnard, Ms. Maija Cirulis-Gooch, and Mr. Jeffrey Lucas

Also attending: Dr. Midge Connolly (Superintendent); Dr. Kimo Carter (Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning); Ms. Sheri Matthews (Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations); Dr. Lee McCanne (Director of Technology and Libraries); Ms. Keitrice Johnson (METCO Representative to the School Committee); Ms. Cortney Leung (Student Representative to the School Committee); Mr. Matt Seltzer, Ms. Lisa Reitano, and Mr. Bharath Venkataraman (members of the joint Budget Advisory Committee to the Superintendent)

OPENING BUSINESS

Mr. Newberg calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm with a quorum of the school committee present. Mr. Newberg provides a summary of the budget process thus far and highlights that this meeting allows for public input. Mr. Newberg continues to say that Dr. Connolly will propose amendments to the proposed budget, followed by a summary of the remaining steps in the budget process. He also outlines the agenda for the meeting.

Chairman's Report

Mr. Newberg opens with an update regarding collective bargaining with the WEA. Following the concluded investigation by the Department of Labor Relations, the School Committee has requested the assistance of a mediator as, per the Department of Labor Relations, the parties

have reached a negotiating impasse. Mr. Newberg acknowledged the anxiety created by the situation and assured that the committee wants to reach an agreement as soon as possible; however, per the Department of Labor Relations, meeting while in impasse would be unproductive. Mr. Newberg further explains that the delay in meeting is due to the high volume of mediation requests.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly discusses recent events within the district, including, but not limited to, Field School's recent International Night, Woodland School's STEM Evening, and Weston Middle School's production of *Newsies*, and the high school's Chinese New Year celebration.

Subcommittee Reports

Ms. Leung begins with more recent events within the district, focusing on athletics, robotics, and other extracurriculars. She then provides information on the many fundraisers being run by different class years within the high school. Ms. Muzila highlights student participation in a rally at the state capital to advocate for climate resilience and education. Ms. Johnson advises attendance at the recent John Hudson memorial scholarship fundraiser was lower than anticipated but still resulted in positive outcomes.

Public Comment

Mr. Newberg clarifies the difference between public comment and public hearing due to agenda. Ms. Gita Foster, physics educator at Weston High School, discusses fair compensation for teachers. Ms. Lucy Proulx, a special education teacher within the district, discusses the importance of adding protected planning time for all teachers to the contract under negotiation. Ms. Amy Parish, a Weston parent, voices her support for teachers. Ms. Daina Selvig, a Weston parent, encourages the committee to continue collective bargaining before the scheduled sessions, citing the WEA's willingness to speak. Ms. Steffany Doolittle, a Weston parent, echoes earlier speakers, emphasizing how disheartening it is to her that negotiating cannot continue sooner. Mr. Newberg concludes by emphasizing the committee's support of teachers; however, the impasse designation is a legal conclusion from the state, not the common notion, thus requiring mediation to continue.

MAJOR BUSINESS (24:25)

WEEFC Grant

Dr. Carter provides information regarding the WEEFC-approved grant for a Middle School Engineering / Robotics Lab, including the room proposed for the maker space. Dr. Carter explains the grant will cover the price of most equipment and robotics renovation; it will not pay for plumbing and electrical, for which the district is still obtaining a quote. Mr. Lucas, in his capacity as a WEEFC member, provides more logistical information and highlights the benefits

of approving the grant. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to approve the full amount of the grant. Ms. Muzila seconds the motion. The Weston School Committee voted by roll call vote to issue this grant with all members voting aye.

Weston Finance Committee Town Guidance on Collective Bargaining with the WEA (Info)

Ms. Reitano, acting in her capacity as Chair of the Weston Finance Committee, opens by reading a statement adopted by the Finance Committee on January 26; this statement is concerning the Finance Committee's role in providing guidance on financial decisions that concern the community at large. Ms. Reitano states that the Finance Committee supports the wage increase proposed by the school committee and will not support the increase proposed by WEA. She continues to state that the Finance Committee would encourage both parties to work collaboratively in good faith to resolve the impasse. Ms. Reitano lists the factors that impacted their decision.

FY24 Budget Process: Public Hearing on Superintendent's FY24 Recommended Budget (Info)

Dr. Connolly opens with a summary of the budget process and where the district currently stands on collective bargaining obligations. Dr. Connolly acknowledges previous speakers when noting the only contract not finalized for FY24 is the WEA. Dr. Connolly walks the committee through the updates to the budget proposal, highlighting the drop in FY23 to FY24 costs from 3.10% to 2.49%, and explaining the sources of the 2.49% increase. She then concludes the presentation by drawing the committee's attention to the greatest factors driving the budget increase: utilities and out-of-district costs. Dr. Connolly and Ms. Matthews clarify that the monies obtained from the ESSER III grant must be used by September 2025 (rather than by the end of the fiscal year) and mention potential uses for these funds.

Mr. Newberg motions to open the FY24 Budget public hearing; the motion did not require a second. Via roll call vote, all school committee members vote aye. Ms. Celeste Loia, a third-year French teacher at Weston Middle and High Schools, voices her displeasure and confusion regarding the reduced hours to/cutting of the Instructional Coach position, citing her personal experiences with an Instructional Coach within the district and the key role she played in Ms. Loia's professional development. Mr. Ed McLoughlin, President of the WEA, questions the possibilities of incorporating the WEA's proposed salary increases into the FY24 budget. Ms. Georgeann Bossers, Grade 6 Director at Weston Middle School, speaks highly of the community members serving in the Instructional Coach role and asks the committee to reconsider making the changes to the Instructional Coach position. Ms. Julie Wyman, an 8th grade English teacher in the district, speaks to the value of having Instructional Coaches in the middle school. Ms. Peggy Payne, a 6th grade language-based special education teacher in the district, also speaks to the value of having Instructional Coaches, albeit at a district and community level. Ms. Charlotte Weeple, affiliation not stated, questions the effectiveness of comparing WPS to other districts in terms of spending, given the uniqueness of the district in many other areas. Mr. Newberg motions to close the FY24 Budget public hearing; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion. Via roll call vote, all school committee members vote aye.

OTHER BUSINESS (01:06:10)

School Committee Policy Manual Revision Project: Second Read of Section K

Following a second read, Mr. Lucas motions to suspend the current Section K policies and replace them with the versions that have been shared; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds the motion. Via roll call vote, all school committee members vote aye.

Expansion of High School Sports PE Class Substitution Pilot to Juniors

Following a history of the proposed changes, feedback, and surrounding conversations, Mr. Newberg motions to replace policy IKF with the revisions as submitted in January 9, January 17, and February 13 meeting packets; Ms. Linnard seconds the motion. Mr. Newberg opens the floor to committee discussion. Ms. Muzila speaks to the reasons she will not be supporting the expansion to include HS Juniors in the opt-out program, focusing on the effects it will have on school scheduling and wellness. Mr. Newberg voices his support of students being able to choose how they spend their time. Ms. Linnard echoes his sentiments, focusing on “student choice, student voice.” Mr. Lucas provides data addressing all previous comments; the data indicates strong student support of the expansion. He also clarifies that the district offers wellness courses separate from P.E. and the expansion would not affect those requirements. In response to a question posed by Mr. Lucas, Ms. Linnard explains the likely effects this change will have on course availability, frequency, and inclusions. Ms. Muzila and Dr. Carter highlight the distinctions between P.E. and athletics programs. The committee takes a roll call vote on the matter: Ms. Muzila votes nay, Ms. Linnard votes aye, Ms. Cirulis-Gooch votes aye, Mr. Lucas votes aye, and Mr. Newberg votes aye. With a majority vote, the motion passes.

Annual Town Report

In light of the upcoming deadline, the school committee discusses the possibility of approving the content of the annual town report, while the document itself can be edited for clarity, consistency, and grammatical accuracy. Ms. Muzila puts forth the motion; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds the motion. Via roll call vote, all school committee members vote aye.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Newberg and Ms. Cirulis-Gooch explains that the committee will not be approving previous meeting minutes as noted on the agenda, as quality standards have not yet been met. Mr. Newberg provides the additional context that there is no acting committee secretary, an additional source of the delay. Mr. Lucas puts forward three WEEFC grants for committee approval: the first for a speaker to present at the MS, the second for equipment for the HS Quiz Bowl team, and the third to bring back a speaker for all three elementary schools to discuss origami. Mr. Newberg moves the consent agenda; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion. Via roll call vote, all school committee members vote aye to approve the grants.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING's AGENDA TOPICS — February 27, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

- Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force Update
- June Academy and Foreign Language Trips
- Governance Changes Update
 - Self-Assessment Tool and Shared Norms and Beliefs Document

ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION (01:45:28)

Following the motion made by Mr. Newberg and seconded by Mr. Lucas, the Weston School Committee voted by roll call vote at 8:16pm to adjourn to executive session and not return to open session for the purpose of discussing WEA Collective Bargaining strategy as doing so in open session would have a detrimental effect on bargaining position. Ms. Muzila voted aye, Ms. Linnard voted aye, Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voted aye, Mr. Lucas voted aye, and Mr. Newberg voted aye.