

WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES (Zoom Livestream Meeting)
Monday, 2/27/2023 at 6:30 PM

This meeting was streamed in real time via Zoom. Recording may be found here:
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/weston/video/63fe8e562c83770008792b25?page=HOME>

Questions or comments? Contact: SchoolCommittee@weston.org -
www.westonschools.org

ATTENDING PANELISTS

School Committee: Mr. Kenneth Newberg (Chair), Ms. Alyson Muzila (Vice Chair), Ms. Keitric Johnson (METCO Member), Ms. Attia Linnard, Ms. Maija Cirulis-Gooch, Mr. Jeffrey Lucas, Ms. Cortney Leung (Student Member).

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); Mr. Dan Green (Field School Principal); Ms. Kathleen Baker (WHS Director of World Languages); and Mr. Derrek Joyce (Secretary to the School Committee and Administrative Coordinator, Office of the Superintendent)

OPENING BUSINESS

Mr. Newberg calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm, welcoming attendees back from school break and sharing his wishes for a speedy recovery for an injured secondary student. At the request of the WEA's president, Mr. Newberg clarifies that the School Committee has chosen to follow the collective bargaining procedures set forth in statute which mandates the parties attend mediation after they reach impasse, and that while it is not "illegal" for the parties to continue to negotiate prior to meeting with the mediator, the process simply does not contemplate this. Mr. Newberg mentioned that he spoke to the WEA's president over winter break and had a productive conversation relating to negotiations and next steps in the process.

Chair's Report

Mr. Newberg thanks Dr. Connolly for her leadership in light of her stepping down as Superintendent and lists some of her accomplishments. Mr. Newberg announces that he and Ms. Cirulis-Gooch will meet with Weston's Select Board in the coming days to provide assistance as they begin the process of negotiating the town-wide health benefits. He then advises that he and Mr. Lucas have finished the School Committee's Annual Report and submitted it to the town by the designated deadline. Mr. Newberg concludes his report by

outlining the agenda for tonight's meeting and expected agenda items for the next several School Committee meetings (regular meeting or otherwise).

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly thanks Mr. Newberg for his kind words. She reassures the community that she is monitoring the expected snowstorm and will make an evaluation early in the morning regarding school closures/delays. Dr. Connolly announces that Field School has made a mutually beneficial, global education connection with an elementary school in Quito, Ecuador. Additionally, Field School has begun their composting program. Dr. Connolly concludes by welcoming Mr. Joyce as her new Administrative Coordinator and the Secretary to the School Committee.

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. Lucas reminds attendees that the WEEFC's fundraiser drive to support the WMS robotics lab concludes February 28 and that WEEFC is offering a donation match until that deadline. Ms. Leung provides updates regarding recent events within the district, focusing on athletics, music, and theater.

Public Comment

Ms. Megan Dominici, an Adjustment Counselor at WMS, speaks to the increase in required mental health counseling for students with IEPs, and the effects it has on staff. Related to this, she requests that the School Committee work with the WEA to settle the contract. Mr. Ed McLoughlin, President of the WEA, acknowledges the time it is taking to finish negotiations and advises the WEA is willing to return to the table before the scheduled meeting with the mediator.

MAJOR BUSINESS

June Academy and Foreign Language Field Trips

Ms. Kathleen Baker, WHS Director of World Languages, provides updates on upcoming trips in April. Ms. Baker reminds attendees that the originally scheduled trip to Peru was changed to Ecuador in light of the civil unrest and the trip to France remains unchanged since its initial proposal. Ms. Baker did not have updates to provide on June Academy. Ms. Baker confirms that there is no designated fund to provide financial assistance to students who need support to take these field trips. The School Committee voices support to ensure that all students have access to educational opportunities and will work toward making this a reality. Ms. Baker confirms no further action is required from the School Committee and that trip offerings differ year-to-year.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Task Force Update

Dr. Green provides a history of the four task force meetings: the first was primarily brainstorming, the second was spent researching, the third was a consultation with a subject

matter expert who discussed current trends, and the fourth was spent developing an initial prevention plan. Dr. Carter discusses statistics regarding the rates at which demographics report bullying and are bullied. Dr. Carter reminds attendees of the current avenues in which community members can report bullying, including the SWISS tool. He confirms this tool is live at all schools within WPS. Mr. Lucas advises that the task force is looking to incorporate newly enacted laws into the prevention plan. Dr. Green advises that data on faculty/staff/parents is currently lacking but the task force is working to obtain metrics. Dr. Carter advises cyberbullying is the leading variety and explains the district's jurisdiction when investigating the bullying of students. Dr. Green speaks to the lack of coherent education on bullying through WPS education. In response to Ms. Johnson's question, Dr. Carter explains current avenues for reporting bullying and that the district hopes to provide more. Dr. Carter confirms students may report adults as well via SWISS; Mr. Green expands on this by stating the tool is primarily used by/for students. Dr. Connolly advises further information to come in May as well as proposed updates to the policy.

Interim Superintendent Search

Mr. Newberg advises he and Ms. Cirulis-Gooch virtually met with Ms. Dorothy Presser, the School Committee's consultant from MASC, to receive background on the process of hiring a Superintendent; the result of this conversation was that there is no set process and would be at the discretion of the School Committee. Given the time constraints, it would be prudent to search for an interim at this time rather than a permanent hire. Ms. Linnard provides background, the process used, and her experience with the last superintendent hires that involved two school committee members picking the interim and permanent superintendent. She ends by recommending an interim and taking the time to reflect on the desired qualities of a permanent superintendent.

Mr. Newberg informs the committee that an interim superintendent job posting went live on Friday, February 17, 2023 after Dr. Connolly's announcement and the district will collect applications until March 3, 2023. During winter break, Mr. Newberg requested written feedback directly from the WEA (teachers), PTO (parents), and the SAC (high school students) which is due by March 10, 2023.

Mr. Newberg outlines a proposal to receive robust, broad and quantifiable public input from all stakeholders related to the superintendent search. He proposes a series of open forums to obtain feedback, as well as sending a survey to collect quantifiable data to parents, community members, administrators, teachers, staff and all others who are affected by this very important decision.

Mr. Newberg informs the committee that as an initial matter, it must decide whether to conduct the interim superintendent search as a "committee-of-the-whole" or create and delegate to a screening committee the responsibility of presenting finalists for consideration. The central difference is that a screening committee is permitted to screen initial applicants in executive sessions, thereby providing privacy for the non-finalist candidates with an aim toward attracting the broadest range of potential candidates. Mr. Newberg explains that the applications are kept

confidential until a potential candidate accepts “finalist” status, which at that point, the finalists’ identities would become public for the remainder of the search process. Mr. Newberg submitted a proposed charge and list of duties for the Interim Superintendent Screening Subcommittee in the committee’s packet which will be affixed to the minutes.

The drawback of the screening process is that only two school committee members may serve when there is a board of five elected members (one cannot have a committee of one, and a committee of three constitutes a majority of the School Committee thus not being eligible to enter into executive session for this purpose). Either way, once finalists are chosen, the School Committee must conduct its interviews and all formal interactions with the candidates in public during open session - including the final appointment.

After discussing the matter at length, **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch moves to create the subcommittee of the School Committee consisting of two members with the purpose of privately screening candidates for the role of interim Superintendent’.** Mr. Lucas seconds the motion. The School Committee unanimously votes via roll call vote to create the subcommittee.

The conversation shifts to strategizing means to collect input from and listen to all stakeholders in the interim Superintendent search. During this conversation, Ms. Linnard emphasizes “hiring for the moment,” and the importance of uncovering what WPS needs now.

The School Committee develops a schedule for obtaining feedback, presenting candidates, having finalists attend a School Committee meeting, and offering a contract. The public input collection process would start immediately and last through the next school committee meeting on March 13, 2023 where the input would be presented to the public. The School Committee would then opine on its priorities and preferences for the screening subcommittee to use in screening candidates. After March 13, 2023, the screening subcommittee would commence its work, interview candidates, make finalist offers, and present the names of the finalists at the March 27, 2023 meeting. At that meeting, the screening subcommittee would dissolve pursuant to its charge, and the full School Committee would create a public engagement process, including setting down individual public candidate interview dates with an aim to voting on an interim superintendent by the April 10, 2023 School Committee meeting. The Chair and nominee would negotiate a proposed contract in the hopes of having it ratified by the full committee on April 24, 2023 with a start date of July 1, 2023.

Mr. Newberg asks the committee for its input on which two members should be entrusted with serving on the Screening Subcommittee. Ms. Muzila nominates Mr. Newberg to serve on the screening subcommittee; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch, with Mr. Lucas voicing his support, nominates Ms. Linnard. Both Mr. Newberg and Ms. Linnard accepted the nominations.

Mr. Newberg motions to confirm the appointment of himself and Ms. Linnard as the screening subcommittee; Mr. Lucas seconds this motion. Via roll call vote, all school committee members vote aye. As a review, Mr. Newberg summarizes the next steps. The School Committee further discusses logistics.

Prior to proceeding with the consent agenda, and related to the discussion, Mr. Newberg announces that Mr. Joyce should be formally appointed Secretary of the School Committee and suggests doing so at the next meeting as it did not make the current meeting's agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Ms. Cirulis-Gooch advises on her review of the submitted warrant for payment noting a \$1,500 payment for diplomas. She notes that the School Committee has spent 60% of the School Committee's budget to date.
- Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to approve the consent agenda including the included meeting minutes from **December 12, 2022 and January 9, 2023** with a correction to the spelling of Ms. Leung's name; Mr. Newberg seconds the motion and adds approval to the previously discussed payment. Via roll call vote, all school committee members vote in favor of both items, unanimously voting aye to approve the minutes and authorize the warrant for payment.

OTHER BUSINESS

Memorial Scholarship Account

Ms. Matthews seeks School Committee approval to create an annual memorial scholarship in honor of a Weston graduate who passed. She explains the scholarship would award \$1000 annually towards direct payment to the recipient's college. Ms. Matthews advises the graduate's family has already allotted a substantial amount of money to establish the scholarship and will provide an additional \$1,000 each year to maintain it.

Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to approve the creation of the account; Ms. Linnard seconds the motion. Via roll call vote, all school committee members vote in favor of the motion, unanimously voting aye.

Upcoming Budget Meeting with the Financial Committee

The School Committee and Dr. Connolly discuss the upcoming final FY24 Budget public input meeting with the Weston Finance Committee. Mr. Newberg acknowledges that the purpose is to receive the advice and input from the Town's volunteer financial experts on the Superintendent's Recommended FY24 Budget and that having the entire School Committee present is a tradition that may be ripe for review given that the School Committee had not yet recommended a final budget.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING's AGENDA TOPICS — March 13, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

- Interim Superintendent Search Process Update
- FY24 Budget Request Approval
- School Choice Public Hearing
- Appointment of Derrek Joyce as School Committee Secretary

ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Newberg made a motion to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining strategy related to the WEA without an intent to return to open session, and declaring that having such a discussion in open session would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's bargaining position. The motion was seconded by Ms. Muzila.

The Weston School Committee voted by roll call vote at 8:57pm 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.