

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING - March 8, 2021 - 7:00pm

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

Documents Used At Meeting

- [Superintendent's Reopening Update](#)
- [Public Health Presentation](#)
- [Proposed Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Student Policy](#) (For Discussion)
 - [Student Presentation](#)
- [Revised District Goals and Objectives Policy to be Gender Neutral](#) (For Discussion)
- [Three \(3\) New Student Organizations](#) (For Discussion and Approval)
- FY 2021-22 Budget (For Discussion and Approval)
- [School Choice Memo](#) (For Discussion and Approval)
- [Meeting Minutes](#) (2/8), [Master Plan Warrant](#), and Warrant (For Discussion and Approval)

Call to order & Opening Business

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; METCO Representative Keitrice Johnson; Director of Health Services Dr. Jamy Gaynor and Weston COVID-19 Response Manager Michelle Fronk Schuckel.

Mr. Henry reviews the agenda, explaining elements specific to this meeting, which will include discussion of pandemic response and pooled testing, public comment, and policy discussions, approval of new student organizations, budget discussions, and more. Mr. Henry also discusses meeting minutes from executive sessions, which are published after ongoing negotiations end. Ms. Raman also shares her perspective on the nature of how school committee meetings work, recognizing that both respectful tones, and vibrant discussion including disagreements, are vital.

Superintendent's Report (05:20)

Dr. Connolly congratulates WHS student success in the World Quest Competition. WHS placed as one of the top three schools in competition and raised money for the WHS John Hudson Memorial Scholarship. She also promotes the Science Dept's upcoming [COVID19 symposium](#).

Subcommittee Reports (06:45)

Ms. Johnson discusses the upcoming second showing of the BWMPO virtual fundraiser on 3/16 and how it will inform the joint PTO/BWMPO meeting on 3/18. Dr. Connolly discusses it further. Ms. Muzila discusses the power of the students sharing their experiences in the presentation.

Discussion of Hybrid Learning, Expansion of In-Person Learning, Pandemic Response (10:30)

Dr. Connolly reviews the reopening timeline, including recent changes to the HS schedule and the addition of in-person time on Wednesdays. She also discusses upcoming broader changes to WMS and WHS, including that hybrid students will be “all-in” 8:30-1 for 4/5 days each week. She also explains why the timeline for that change has shifted one week to start Monday, 3/22.

Next, Dr. Connolly introduces Jamy Gaynor and Michelle F. Schuckel to present on the past year of COVID response in WPS. They provide a high-level overview of various pieces of the WPS COVID response including but not limited to testing, tracing, confidentiality and more. They also discuss how the covid response team collaboratively reviews and responds to various types of data and public health guidance. Next, they go into detail on various testing practices, distinguishing between types of tests and explaining WPS’s surveillance testing work and data.

That leads into discussion of upcoming changes to Weston’s testing program, which will be transitioning from PCR testing to a pooled testing program. As part of this discussion, they provide details about pooled testing, rapid antigen testing, case investigation and contact tracing, quarantines, and how they all tie together. They go on to discuss vaccine eligibility timelines. They finish their presentation with additional resources and then invite questions.

Ms. Muzila asks about how families will re-register for each student. Re-register with a new account thru project beacon. [Families can find all the key information about registration here.](#)

Mr. Henry asks clarifying questions about the process of being notified of contacts through the tracing efforts. Jamy Gaynor explains the guidelines for different contingencies and timelines. Ms. Raman also asks about contact tracing, clarifying the definition of a close contact. They also clarify the requirement for athletes and musicians to participate in the pooled testing program. Ms. Stewart goes on to ask about details of the swabbing and Jamy Gaynor provides specifics.

Mr Henry asks Dr. Connolly gives additional information about the current efforts to re-open, and contextualizes the successful ongoing negotiations with the WEA. Ms. Raman asks Dr. Connolly to clarify live-streaming policies. She explains that while students who are out for public health reasons will be accomodated, it’s not the case that all classes are automatically live streamed.

Public Comment (54:00)

Committee members and district staff respond to various questions regarding COVID-19 testing, which were posted in the zoom chat by attendees. They also respond to questions about hiring additional staff, including learning assistants, to implement the expansion of in-person learning. After responding to questions raised in the chat, seeing nobody signed up for public comment the committee brings the public comment period to a close, and transitions to policy discussion.

Discussion of Policy Proposal (1:03:30)

WHS student Laurel Davidoff presents on a proposed policy developed by the WHS GSA student group. Laurel provides an overview of their presentation and discusses its importance. They go on to give an overview of the policy, and discuss several relevant considerations, including details of the policy-development and review processes that have already taken place.

Committee members thank the student(s) for all of their hard work on this. Dr. Connolly expresses how proud she is of Laurel and the impact that students' advocacy can lead to. Mr. Henry explains that the policy will be considered, and approval voted on at their next meeting.

Mr. Henry also introduces another brief update to the committee's Goals and Objectives policy to replace gendered language with gender neutral language ("Man" becomes "Humanity," etc.). This policy will also be considered and approved at the subsequent school committee meeting.

Discussion and Approval of New Student Organizations (1:28:15)

Ms. Cynthia Brisky presents three new clubs for school committee approval, which include:

- Middle Eastern Student Association
- Save the Children (school chapter of nonprofit UK-based philanthropic organization)
- Active Minds (school chapter of non-profit mental health advocacy organization)

Committee members discuss how these may be factored into additional pay for faculty advisors after a period of three years. There are more clubs than stipends available. Ms. Matthews explains that *Schedule C* in the contract book lays out the policy specifics. Mr. Henry provides additional clarity on the issue. Mr. Cobb asks about fundraising during the school day and during activity blocks, in order to be sure that everything is consistent with existing district policies on it.

MOTION: Mr. Henry moves to approve the organizations, with the caveat that they are subject to compliance with fundraising policies. Ms. Muzila seconds and the committee votes unanimously in favor of Approval with Ms. Raman, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb and Mr. Henry all voting aye in favor of approving them with a caveat.

Budget Discussion and Approval (1:34:55)

Mr. Henry discusses their recent meeting with the town finance committee. There are no new changes to the budget, which is increasing 2.12%. Mr. Henry also gives context on the warrant article and invites Mr. Cobb to give more context on the Recreation Master Plan and field house, and Mr. Cobb shares details. Ms. Reitano explains the warrant is open until 3/23/21. Ms. Muzila asks clarifying questions about what will be included in the final version and Mr. Cobb explains.

Mr. Henry invites public comment on the budget. Ms. Muzila shares a question she received from a parent in advance regarding a grant. Ms. Matthews responds, providing clarification.

MOTION: Mr. Henry moves to approve the FY22 Budget as presented, at a 2.12% increase, and Mr. Cobb seconds the motion. Committee members unanimously approve the budget with Ms. Raman, Ms.

Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb and Mr Henry voting aye in favor.

Mr. Henry thanks Assistant Superintendent Matthews, and then transitions to discussing the warrant for the recreation master plan.

MOTION: Mr. Henry moves to approve the warrant article for the recreation master plan, with the caveat excludes the field house proposal. Committee members unanimously approve the budget with Ms. Raman, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb and Mr Henry voting aye in favor.

Public Hearing on School Choice (1:44:30)

Dr. Connolly contextualizes the district's decision to not participate in the School Choice program. Her reasoning is similar to the reasoning presented at previous choice hearings. After detailing those reasons, she reiterates her recommendation that WPS not participate. Ms. Muzila asks about other districts' participation, and Ms. Matthews will follow up with numbers.

MOTION: Mr. Henry moves that WPS not participate in the school choice program and Mr. Cobb seconds the motion. Committee members unanimously approve the *motion* with Ms. Raman, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb, and Mr Henry voting aye to decline to participate in the school choice program.

Approval of Minutes (1:48:00)

MOTION: Ms. Raman moves to approve the meeting minutes for February 8 and February 10. Mr. Cobb seconds the motion and committee members vote unanimously in favor of approval with Ms. Raman, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb, and Mr Henry voting aye in favor.

Warrant Approval (1:48:30)

Ms. Matthews introduces a regular warrant for \$2,003,445.93.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve the warrant and Ms. Raman seconds the motion. Committee members vote unanimously in favor of approval with Ms. Raman, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb, and Mr Henry voting aye in favor.

Executive Session and Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Henry moves to move to executive session without intention to return to open Session, for the purpose of discussion of collective bargaining. It is approved with Ms. Muzila, Mr. Henry, Mr. Cobb, Ms. Stewart and Ms. Raman all voting aye.

*These minutes were amended to change the erroneous word "budget" to the word *motion* (in the middle of page). This change was approved unanimously by school committee vote on 5/10/2021.*