

## **MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING - 7:00pm, April 12, 2021**

**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 ([Slides](#))
- Director of Health Services Update ([Slides](#))
- COVID-19 Response Manager Update ([Slides](#))
- FY 2021 3rd Quarter Budget Report ([Slides](#))
- [WEEFC Grants For Approval](#)
- Meeting Minutes For Approval
  - [3/8/2021](#)
  - [3/22/2021](#)
  - [4/2/2021](#)

### 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, and Ms. Alyson Muzila of the School Committee; as well as the METCO Representative to Committee Ms. Keitrice Johnson; 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; Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and Libraries; WHS Principal Mr. Paul Peri, Ms. Michele Shuckel, COVID-19 Response Manager; WPS Health Services Director Dr. Jamy Gaynor; as well as three WHS Student Advisory Council (SAC) Members.

Mr. Henry reviews the agenda, explaining elements specific to this meeting, which will include the SAC meeting, updates from Dr. Connolly, Dr. Gaynor, Ms. Shuckel, Ms. Matthews and more.

### Superintendent's Report (02:30)

Dr Connolly shares the following updates, celebrating achievements of community members:

- Sources of Strength hosted a nice Virtual Game Night, planned by WMS Peer Leaders.
- Congratulations to senior Neil Malur and junior Anna Lian - they have advanced to the national level of the IS Chemistry Olympiad competition
- Congratulations to sophomore Ella Kim, selected as Grand Prize Winner of the Boston Pops/Fidelity Young Artist Competition! Ella will perform as violin soloist together with the Boston Pops Orchestra in early June 2021
- MS community service club is assembling a structure made up of 1000 paper cranes
- MS community service club also worked together on improving Case Nature Classroom, making a difference for younger students who will visit the classroom in coming years.
- Spring Sports Season starts April 26, after April break, including baseball, softball, B&G Tennis, B&G Lacrosse, B&G Outdoor Track, B&G Crew and B&G Sailing; and MS Track.
- WPS has a strong final candidate for the role of Director of Student Services, which will be vacated June 30. The candidate, Martha Bakken, will meet with community members.
- More updates on reopening and pandemic response come later in the meeting.

### Subcommittee Reports (09:15)

Ms. Muzila shares from the sustainability subcommittee that town cleanup has been going well. Ms. Johnson discusses an upcoming BWMPO zoom meeting, and other BWMPO initiatives. Mr. Cobb discusses the recreation master plan process, sharing details specific upcoming warrant articles, and highlights the upcoming [warrant](#) for the [town meeting on May 15, 2021 at 2:00pm](#).

### SAC (7:01)

Two of the three students each express positive sentiments about the return to five days in person, and discuss benefits. They share that the school has been responsive to students. Another student is an RLA student and speaks to that experience, noting some challenges. Students also discuss upcoming changes to the schedule, which involved adding lunch and extending to full school days from 8:45am to 3:30pm, sharing multiple perspectives. Mr. Peri also shares what he has heard from students in recent weeks, discussing the challenges and mixed messages involved in gradual reopening.

Ms. Raman asks students about their and their peers' experiences with COVID-19 testing, and students share their experiences. Students express positive attitudes about higher participation rates. Mr. Cobb asks about potential changes to high school block schedules. Mr. Peri responds and they invite student perspectives. Students share their perspectives on the challenges with changing block schedules. Ms. Johnson asks about student experiences with disruptions due to contact tracing. Students personally report generally smooth experiences. Mr. Peri discusses some challenges and shares perspectives he has heard from quarantined students and families.

Mr. Henry asks Mr. Peri to discuss goals for graduation, and Mr. Peri shares the tentative plan is to hold an in-person graduation ceremony (with streaming components) on the Town Green in May. Students share that their peers will mostly be excited about a more normal ceremony, but also discuss the importance of masking and social distancing. Mr. Peri and students discuss final exams as well. Mr. Peri also commends Junior Jackie Liu for her advocacy and art work.

### Discussion of expansion of in-person learning (31:10)

Mr. Henry invites Dr. Connolly to give an update on reopening plans and processes. She begins by praising the SAC students for their insights, then begins her update. She discusses recent changes to elementary schedules, going into details about indoor vs. outdoor lunches and more. She goes on to discuss upcoming changes to the secondary schedule, returning to a full-day schedule (8:45am-3:15pm). She reviews details to be finalized, including schedules and more.

Dr. Connolly also promotes upcoming strategic planning "envisioning sessions" for community members to attend, and encourages registration for 1-2 of the sessions, listed on the website. She also touches briefly on pooled testing, before inviting Dr. Gaynor and Ms. Shuckel for more. They thank community member Dr. Kathleen Mortimer for helping families register for testing by creating an [explainer video with the registration directions](#).

Dr. Gaynor starts by providing updates regarding travel guidance, testing requirements and more. She goes on to discuss changes to the testing program, including pooled testing for students, and PCR testing-out-of-quarantine for quarantined individuals who have been identified as a close contact. She adds that so far, only one pooled test has come back positive so far after week 3. She also shares the current pooled testing participation rates, and reviews updates to the [COVID-19 dashboard available on the homepage of the WPS district website](#).

Ms. Schukel discusses her role in both the town and city, and shares her contact information, and begins discussing several public health topics, including new strains becoming dominant variants in the US, which are more infectious and dangerous than earlier strains. She points to vaccination as a mitigation measure, also emphasizing testing/tracing as mitigation measures.

Ms. Schukel goes on to discuss how unmasked social interactions spreads infections, causing health issues and leading to quarantines. She shares an example of one case that impacted 190+ households, connected to over 26 total positive cases. She shares additional related data, emphasizing that many of the people who quarantined did test positive, which is why we do quarantines. She expresses gratitude for families participating in testing, quarantines, and other key health measures. She also shares anonymized examples of families who declined working with health officials, and discusses the potentially dangerous consequences of going it alone, as opposed to working with one's school nurses, and the BOH. She concludes with key takeaways.

Mr. Cobb asks about sequencing DNA from specific clusters, and about specific variants. Ms. Schukel responds and shares her perspective on specific clusters, including those popularly associated with the UK and Brazil for two strains respectively. Mr. Cobb encourages families to get tested, and Ms. Muzila thanks Dr. Gaynor and Ms. Schukel for their hard work and reporting.

FY 2020-21 third quarter financial update: (1:04:00)

Ms. Matthews reviews highlights regarding personnel, contracted services, supplies, materials and more. As she presents quantitative data including expenses broken down by school and/or central office department, she explains some intricacies of the financial numbers. She adds that, due to federal grants secured by the district, WPS is in a good place to finish out the fiscal year.

Ms. Muzila asks about the "circuit breaker," and Ms. Matthews explains how that pool of state money reimburses up to 75% of the difference between the cost of out-of-district expenses and foundation budgets, and gives more details. Ms. Raman asks about pre-paying tuitions and Ms. Matthews speaks to the benefits of pre-paying certain expenses. Mr. Cobb expresses optimism about the remainder of the fiscal year. Mr. Henry agrees, and the members thank Ms. Matthews.

Public comment (1:13:00)

Mr. Henry gives directions for public comment and welcomes community members to give public comment. Hearing none, the committee moves forward.

### Meeting Minutes Approval (1:14:08)

MOTION: Mr. Cobb makes a motion to approve all three sets of meeting minutes as revised prior to the meeting. Ms. Muzila seconds the motion and the committee members vote unanimously in favor of approval with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Muzila, Ms. Raman, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

### WEEFC Grant Approval (1:15:00)

Dr. Carter presents three WEEFC grants for a total of \$3006. Ms. Muzila emphasizes one of the grants, which connects Weston with a school in Uganda as a pilot program under Field School.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve all five grants and Ms. Muzila seconds. The committee votes unanimously in favor, with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Henry all voting aye, approving the grants.

Mr. Henry discusses some outside fundraising activities, to be approved at the next meeting. The funds will go towards starting blocks for the pool, and a tree planting on Case Campus.

### Warrant approval (1:19:10)

Ms. Matthews presents a regular warrant for \$2,280,205.10.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve the warrant and Ms. Muzila seconds it. The committee votes unanimously in favor, with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Henry all voting aye, approving the warrant.

### Announcement (1:19:50)

Mr. Henry announces that former committee member Ms. Rachel Stewart has resigned her position on the school committee, effective today (4/12/2021). The committee will hold a joint meeting with the select board to appoint a replacement to serve through the seat's 2022 term.

Mr. Henry thanks Ms. Stewart for her service. Going forward, he also expresses his support for appointing an interim committee member with prior experience on the school committee or the Select Board, referencing upcoming contract negotiations. Ms. Raman also thanks Ms. Stewart and agrees with Mr. Henry that having another member with prior experience would be beneficial to the district.

### Adjournment

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