

WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, July 13, 2023 at 6:30 PM

Case House Large Conference Room, 89 Wellesley Street, Weston, MA 02493

This meeting was streamed in real time via Zoom. Recording may be found here:
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/weston/video/64b986357a68bb000836dacb?page=HOME>

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

DOCUMENTS USED

- None

ATTENDING PANELISTS

School Committee: Mr. Kenneth Newberg (Chair), Ms. Maija Cirulis-Gooch (Vice Chair), Ms. Attia Linnard (member), Mr. Adam Newman (member) [attending virtually], and Ms. Keitrice Johnson (METCO Representative to the School Committee). Absent: Mr. Jeffrey Lucas (member), and Ms. Cortney Leung (Student Representative to the School Committee)

Also attending: Dr. Karen Zaleski (Interim Superintendent), Dr. Kimo Carter (Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning), Mr. Stephen Nembirkow (Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations), Dr. Lee McCanne (Director of Technology & School Libraries), and Mr. Derrek Joyce (Secretary to the School Committee).

OPENING BUSINESS

Chairman's Report (00:00)

With a quorum of the Weston School Committee present, Mr. Newberg calls the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and provides all attending panelists the opportunity to introduce themselves, in light of the amount of new members. He then reviews the agenda, including the returning time proposals for each item and the newly added "Old Business" section. He concludes his remarks by reminding in-person attendees how to sign up for Public Comment

Subcommittee Reports (02:39)

There were no subcommittee reports presented at this meeting.

Public Comment (2:40)

As no attendees wished to speak, public comment was not held at this meeting.

MAJOR BUSINESS

Welcome and Update from the Superintendent (2:50)

Dr. Zaleski opens by commenting how exciting the past two weeks have been since beginning her tenure. She highlights some of the ways she has been connecting to the Weston community, including sending out a welcome email and meeting with various stakeholders. She notes that a formal entry plan with specific details is forthcoming.

Proposed Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (04:04)

Mr. Newberg provides a brief history of the role, beginning with the creation of the Director of District Advancement position and concluding with the June 12, 2023, regular School Committee meeting. During this summary, he notes the connectivity between DEI work and past agenda items, such as ELA scores. Dr. Zaleski provides an initial vision for the role, emphasizing the importance of balancing the social-emotional needs of students with the high expectations and academic rigor of the district. She then continues to say that, at this time, she needs to partner with other members of the leadership team to further assess how to best mobilize the work. She concludes by asserting that “all means all” under her leadership and she will be meeting with district leaders to discuss the district’s needs, the pending equity audit, and other data to ensure the role is appropriately designed. As he does not see a reason to delay the work, and as funding for this type of position was already approved in the FY24 budget, Mr. Newberg suggests that the committee allow Dr. Zaleski to proceed with the work with their approval and hire someone based on the previously approved salary. In response to a question, Dr. Zaleski affirms that the role is necessary for the district, but the specific job responsibilities need to be finalized. Mr. Newman notes that given the current systems within the district, it is important for Dr. Zaleski to hire someone for the position in a timely manner. Ms. Linnard adds that she would like someone extremely collaborative in the role and stresses that the work must trickle down to the classroom. Mr. Newman clarifies that he is not advocating for urgency for urgency’s sake and that the right person needs to be in the role. Ms. Johnson discusses the delicate balance between gaining community buy-in and meeting district needs in a timely manner, highlighting that the district cannot wait for 100% support from the community. **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch and Mr. Newberg jointly motion for Dr. Zaleski to proceed with the creation of a DEI -focused position and reallocate funds from the Director of District Advancement line in the budget as necessary;** Ms. Linnard seconds the motion. Via roll call vote, the motion passes unanimously, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye.

Authorize \$250,000 ESSER Grant Allocation to Address Learning Loss for SY23-24 (31:56)

Mr. Newberg provides a brief history of the ESSER Grant funds and states that there are funds that can be reallocated to support student growth at Field School through the hiring of an interventionist, per the recommendations of the curriculum specialists and Principal Dr. Green. Mr. Newberg suggests approving a transfer of \$250,000 to cover the cost of a ELA

interventionist, a Grade 5 ELA review, as well as any unforeseen costs. Dr. Zaleski, Dr. Carter, and Mr. Nembirkow provide the background and rationale for this request. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch emphasizes the importance of tracking the success of this interventionist to ensure they are meeting the needs of the students. Ms. Linnard reminds the committee that creating a recommended budget for FY25 will be difficult and, if the interventionist is proving effective, there will most likely be a need for cuts elsewhere. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voices concern about approving funds in excess of what is actually needed for the interventionist and review; Mr. Newberg clarifies that the amount is his recommendation, but close to the actual estimate. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch suggests motioning to approve the wet costs of the interventionist and review at this time, with any recommendations stemming from the review to be discussed and approved at a future meeting. **Ms. Linnard motions to proceed as suggested, with the Weston School Committee approve shifting funding from the ESSER Grant for the position of Field School ELA interventionist and the proposed the Grade 5 ELA review, with the amount unspecified, but not exceeding the actual costs of those two items;** Mr. Newberg seconds this motion. Via roll call vote, the motion passes unanimously, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye.

Proposed Budget Audit (01:02:59)

Note: Mr. Newman leaves the meeting during this portion of the agenda (01:05:13). A quorum of the School Committee is still present.

Dr. Zaleski explains that as part of her entry plan, she would like to propose a budget audit separate from the annual audit to dissect the how and why of the district's spending. Mr. Nembirkow advises that the district would use a third-party company for the audit and funding would come from different areas of the FY24 budget. Mr. Newberg requests that, once those sources are determined, the administration advise the committee and the transfer of funds can be added to the consent agenda for a future meeting. **Ms. Linnard motions to approve the audit request;** Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds this motion. Via roll call vote, the motion passes unanimously, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye.

Summer Retreat Agenda Overview (01:07:42)

Mr. Newberg provides the present members of the Weston School Committee with a summary of the agenda for their summer retreat on August 1 and August 2, 2023. The committee discusses adding training on the new laws regarding student expulsion.

OTHER BUSINESS

Appoint Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C. as additional District Legal Counsel (01:15:16)

Mr. Newberg explains that, as Dr. Zaleski has worked with Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C. for a considerable amount of time and he supports the idea of hiring a law firm that can manage all aspects of school law, rather than several independent attorneys. Both Mr. Newberg and Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voice their support of this change; Ms. Linnard acknowledges Mr. Newberg's

expertise on the subject matter and supports his judgment. **Ms. Linnard motions to approve the appointment of Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C. as additional Legal Counsel for WPS;** Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds this motion. As the meeting is no longer hybrid and all Weston School Committee members are in agreement, **Mr. Newberg declares unanimous consent to approve the motion.**

Approval of CBAs with the the WEA covering FY23, FY24-26 (01:18:25)

Mr. Newberg provides a brief explanation of CBAs. **Ms. Linnard motions to approve the CBAs with the the WEA covering FY23, FY24-26;** Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds this motion. **Mr. Newberg declares unanimous consent to approve the motion.**

Consent Agenda (01:21:22)

Mr. Newberg moves to the consent agenda and asks if any items need to be removed for individual discussion, listing them individually. Dr. Carter provides background on the WEEFC grant up for approval. **Mr. Newberg declares unanimous consent to approve the consent agreement as presented, including payment of Payroll Warrant 5323 for \$744,035.80, Approval of the Robotics Club WEEFC grant, and School Committee Minutes for June 29, 2023.**

OLD BUSINESS

Policy Revision Project (01:22:50)

Given the executive session following this meeting, Old Business was not discussed at this meeting.

NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA TOPICS — August 1, 2023, 10:30 a.m.

- School Committee 2023-2024 Norms and Beliefs Agreement
- Training: New Student Suspension Law by Paige Tobin - Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C.
- School Committee 2023-2024 Goals
- Weston Public Schools 2023-2024 District Priorities

ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION (01:23:25)

Following the motion jointly made by Ms. Cirulis-Gooch and Mr. Newberg and seconded by Ms. Linnard, the Weston School Committee voted by roll call vote at 7:53 p.m. to adjourn to executive session and not return to open session for the purpose of discussing negotiation strategy with nonunion personnel as doing so in open session would have a detrimental effect on their negotiating position. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch votes aye, Ms. Linnard votes aye, and Mr. Newberg votes aye.