

WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUMMER RETREAT MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 1, 2023 at 10:30 AM
Case House Large Conference Room, 89 Wellesley Street, Weston, MA 02493

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

DOCUMENTS USED

- [WSC Norms and Beliefs](#)

ATTENDING PANELISTS

School Committee: Mr. Kenneth Newberg (Chair), Ms. Maija Cirulis-Gooch (Vice Chair), Mr. Jeffrey Lucas (member), and Mr. Adam Newman (member). Absent: Ms. Attia Linnard (member), Ms. Keitrice Johnson (METCO Representative to the School Committee), 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), Mr. Derrek Joyce (Secretary to the School Committee), and Ms. Paige Tobin (Legal Counsel, Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C.).

OPENING BUSINESS

Chairman's Report

With a quorum of the Weston School Committee present, Mr. Newberg calls the meeting to order at 10:34 a.m. and, to grant the opportunity for committee members to settle in, immediately called a brief recess. At 10:40 a.m., he calls the meeting back to order and reviews the agenda for both summer retreat days, including information regarding the Step III Grievance being presented on August 2 during executive session as it involves a personnel issue and a matter concerning collective bargaining with the administrative assistant's union.

Superintendent Report

Dr. Zaleski begins by advising there are an additional 10 students newly enrolled at the elementary level and due to the resulting increase in class size, recommends creating a new section as a result. She goes on to advise that there is no cost impact as the funds are being reallocated from a budgeted but unneeded kindergarten teacher position. Mr. Newberg advises a motion is not needed to approve this request as there are no changes to the approved budget and the administration is adhering to established class size policy. Mr. Newberg provides his appreciation for Dr. Zaleski's transparency and partnership with the School Committee.

Dr. Zaleski then alerts the School Committee that Weston was notified of its non-eligibility to continue to receive Title I grants exceeding \$100,000. Due to fluctuating backgrounds of our students, eligibility for federal Title I dollars changes from year-to-year because the percent of students who are considered economically disadvantaged naturally fluctuates. Dr. Zaleski confirms that only students who reside in Weston are counted for Title I dollar purposes. Those dollars, when we are eligible, are used to pay for academic interventionists who provide small group support to struggling students.

Mr. Newberg shares his strong support for keeping our interventionists despite the loss in funding because losing ground on early literacy would have a broad-based cascading effect on achievement for our young learners and entire classes long into the future. Early intervention is one of the most cost-effective dollars spent to improve outcomes even in seemingly unrelated fields later on.

Dr. Zaleski alerts the committee to remaining ESSER funds that are specifically purposed to support learning and learning loss from the pandemic. She recommends using ESSER funds to fund the interventionists for this school year (given the timing of school starting) and then reevaluating need during the FY25 budget process. The Weston School Committee unanimously voices their support, despite the request not requiring a motion for approval.

Dr. Zaleski concludes by discussing free/reduced lunch and the benefits it provides. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch confirms that if people apply for the program it will only benefit the district.

MAJOR BUSINESS

School Committee 2023-2024 Norms and Beliefs Agreement

The Weston School Committee begins by discussing the draft WSC Norms and Beliefs document written in SY'2022–2023. As they progress through the document, Mr. Joyce, at the request of the committee, makes some proposed changes. The present individuals also discuss the nature of the document during the read through, touching upon how it is not legally binding and created in good faith, how the Norms and Beliefs Agreement is separate from the state-mandated policies outlined by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and how the document could be streamlined to better reflect its purpose. Ultimately, the School Committee and present members of the Administration decide to continue discussions at the next meeting to receive broader input.

Training: New Student Suspension Law by Paige Tobin - Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C.

Ms. Tobin provides training on issues that most commonly come before School Committees, including civil rights issues, Title IX (Sex Discrimination) and related investigations, Title VI (Discrimination based on Race, Color, or National Origin), Section 504 (Discrimination based on Disability), harassment laws, laws related to school suspension, laws relating to discipline, and good social media practices.

School Committee 2023-2024 Goals

Note: Mr. Newberg leaves during this portion of the meeting. A quorum of the Weston School Committee is still present.

As a collaborative discussion, the School Committee distinguishes between their obligations/responsibilities (such as hiring a permanent superintendent) and long term goals. They discuss how to move forward with the district, touching upon subjects such as the strategic plan, technological advancements, and innovative teaching practices. The discussion turns to creating time and space for long-term strategic goals spanning 10 to 20 years in the future. Mr. Newman suggests incorporating a “theme” into the meetings for the year to slowly make progress. The School Committee discusses implementing long-term and short-term goals, focusing on the budget, upcoming superintendent search, policy review, and the overall management of the committee. These goals will be cleaned up and presented for a final discussion and potential vote at the next regular meeting on August 21, 2023.

Weston Public Schools 2023-2024 District Priorities

In light of Mr. Newberg’s departure, the Weston School Committee decides to discuss this matter at a future meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Consent Agenda

Ms. Cirulis-Gooch moves to the consent agenda and asks if any items need to be removed for individual discussion, listing them individually. **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch declares unanimous consent to approve the consent agreement as presented, including payment of Payroll Warrant 324 for \$1,104,193.21 and School Committee Minutes for July 13, 2023.**

NEXT MEETING’S AGENDA TOPICS — August 2, 2023, 9:00 a.m.

- Training: Introduction to Zero Based Budgeting
- Continued Discussion from Tuesday, August 1, 2023 and Potential Vote on 2023-2024 Goals, Priorities, Norms and Beliefs
- Initial Discussion on Routine Fiscal Oversight, Annual Budget Process, and Administrator Compensation and Letters of Agreement
- Executive Session: To Meet with Grievant regarding a Step III Grievance Submitted by the Weston Educational Administrative Assistants’ Association.
- Training: Annual Municipal Law Primer by Weston Town Counsel, KP Law
- Permanent Superintendent Search Process: Discussion and Establishment of Process, Subcommittees, and Schedule

ADJOURNMENT

Following the motion made by Ms. Cirulis-Gooch and seconded by Mr. Lucas, the Weston School Committee voted by roll call vote at 3:16 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Lucas votes aye, Mr. Newman votes aye, and Ms. Cirulis-Gooch votes aye.