

WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUMMER RETREAT MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 2, 2023 at 9:00 AM

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

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

ATTENDING PANELISTS

School Committee: Mr. Kenneth Newberg (Chair), Ms. Maija Cirulis-Gooch (Vice Chair), Mr. Jeffrey Lucas (member), Mr. Adam Newman (member), and Ms. Keitrice Johnson (METCO Representative to the School Committee). Absent: Ms. Attia Linnard (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), Mr. Derrek Joyce (Secretary to the School Committee), and Ms. Lauren Goldberg (Legal Counsel, KP Law.).

OPENING BUSINESS

Chairman's Report

With a quorum of the Weston School Committee present, Mr. Newberg calls the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. and reminds attendees of the agenda for the day, as it was reviewed in detail at the August 1 meeting.

MAJOR BUSINESS

Training: Introduction to Zero Based Budgeting

Mr. Nembirkow provides an introduction to Zero Based Budgeting (abbreviated: ZBB) and explains that, rather than carrying and adjusting every line item each fiscal year, the budget is built from scratch to ensure that it reflects the current needs of the district. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch advises that she wants to have the data obtained from the ZBB process so that the School Committee can fully support and explain the budget since the school budget is the most scrutinized portion of the town budget. Mr. Newberg and Dr. Zaleski advise that they want to know the "why" of the district's spending. Dr. Zaleski confirms that there is an annual district budget audit and that she previously proposed a separate audit that analyzes district spending. Mr. Newman stresses the importance of exercising strong change management skills with this type of change. The School Committee as a whole discusses balancing qualitative and quantitative types of data and how they would be taken into account with ZBB. As an example,

they discussed what the metrics for an art or music course could very well look different than a math course. The School Committee decides to refer to ZBB as Priority Based Budgeting (abbreviated: PBB) to better reflect the goal of the exercise and to keep the focus on aligning our spending to the District's educational priorities, and capturing data that not only suggests finding spending efficiencies but also unmet needs and opportunities for additional investment. Those present conclude by holding an initial discussion on how to best implement PBB and how to incorporate building leadership, educators, and the community into the budget process.

Continued Discussion from Tuesday, August 1, 2023 and Potential Vote on 2023-2024 Goals, Priorities, Norms and Beliefs

Mr. Newberg thanked the rest of the committee for their continued work on this topic after he departed the day prior. Based on the last topic of major business, the committee updated their goal surrounding ZBB to reflect the PBB model. They then finalized their goals for the committee itself for the coming year and had an initial discussion on communication goals for the Office of the Superintendent.

Initial Discussion on Routine Fiscal Oversight, Annual Budget Process, and Administrator Compensation and Letters of Agreement

The present Weston School Committee members and the present District Administrators discuss the current processes for invoices, payroll, and warrants. For the committee, the areas of concern includes spending line items that over time have become less informative such as Amazon invoices, and substantial concerns around prepayment of liabilities prior to the signing of the warrant. Committee members explain these two issues make it difficult to ensure the district is spending its funding responsibly, and to put a pause on items that need further explanation. The Administrators discuss potential solutions, including having a representative of the School Committee sign the warrants outside of the regular meetings. No solutions are settled on at this time. Per [School Committee Policy DI](#), the district is expected to provide quarterly budget updates to the committee; committee members ask that this be a priority for this coming year as the scheduled quarterly updates from the year before, under the former Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, were not met.

Executive Session: To Meet with Grievant regarding a Step III Grievance Submitted by the Weston Educational Administrative Assistants' Association (WEAAA)

Following the motion made by Mr. Newberg and seconded by Ms. Cirulis-Gooch, **the Weston School Committee votes by roll call vote at 11:00 a.m. to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of discussing a Step III Grievance submitted by the Weston Educational Administrative Assistants' Association (WEAAA) with the Grievant.** Ms. Cirulis-Gooch votes aye, Mr. Lucas votes aye, Mr. Newman votes aye, and Mr. Newberg votes aye.

Following the motion made by Mr. Newberg and seconded by Ms. Cirulis-Gooch, **the Weston School Committee votes by roll call vote at 12:15 p.m. to re-enter open session.** Ms.

Cirulis-Gooch votes aye, Mr. Lucas votes aye, Mr. Newman votes aye, and Mr. Newberg votes aye.

Training: Annual Municipal Law Primer by Weston Town Counsel, KP Law

Ms. Goldberg provides an overview of several laws pertaining to Open Meeting Law (abbreviated: OML) and School Committees including: sunshine laws, the nature of meetings under OML, legal requirements of an open meeting, serial communication and violations to OML, subcommittees, and superintendent searches. She then provides generalized suggestions to ensure a given School Committee is compliant. The Weston School Committee poses questions stemming from this, Ms. Goldberg then discusses the use of technology during an open meeting and how it can cause OML violations. She concludes by providing information and recommendations on meeting management, namely how to provide notice of the established rules, what constitutes a free speech law violation, posting meeting agendas and minutes, and the authority of the chair in governing the meeting.

Permanent Superintendent Search Process: Discussion and Establishment of Process, Subcommittees, and Schedule

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

Ms. Cirulis-Gooch proposes a general plan of action similar to the interim superintendent search with the addition of creating two subcommittees (one for the screening of applicants, another for interviewing candidates). The committee reviews the interim superintendent search from earlier this year to ensure Mr. Newman had the information. They then discuss the merits of having a third-party organization managing the search, including the substantial delay that having such a third-party involved could cause and whether there would be a proportional value, as opposed to one being led by the School Committee or a hybrid model. Following this, they weigh their options in terms of scope. Mr. Newman advocates for casting as wide a net as possible. There was discussion on how best to widely advertise the opening. After some discussion on the pros and cons of this, the conversation changes to the community groups that could make up the proposed subcommittees as Mr. Newman departs. Ultimately, the School Committee decides that the screening subcommittee and interview subcommittee should strive to reflect a representative cross section of the community, including parent and non-parent community members, teachers, administrators, and people experienced with general and special education students.

NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA TOPICS — August 21, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

- CPA Funding Proposal: Tennis Courts
- Cont. Superintendent Search Process
- Cont. Annual Agenda Planning and Meeting Packet Availability
- Operating Norms and Beliefs (vote)
- School Committee SY2023-2024 Goals

- Office Hours Scheduling
- Cont. Administrator Compensation Policy Discussion GCBA

ADJOURNMENT

Following the motion made by Ms. Cirulis-Gooch and seconded by Mr. Newberg, the Weston School Committee votes by roll call vote at 4:12 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Lucas votes aye, Ms. Cirulis-Gooch votes aye, and Mr. Newberg votes aye.