

## **WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, August 21, 2023 at 7:00 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/64e4f9564564a100085c8605?page=HOME>

Questions or comments? Contact: [SchoolCommittee@weston.org](mailto:SchoolCommittee@weston.org) -  
[www.westonschools.org](http://www.westonschools.org)

### **DOCUMENTS USED**

- [SC Meeting Presentation: August 21, 2023](#)
- [Tennis Court Repair/Replace Options](#)

### **ATTENDING PANELISTS**

School Committee: Mr. Kenneth Newberg (Chair), Ms. Maija Cirulis-Gooch (Vice Chair), Ms. Attia Linnard (member), Mr. Jeffrey Lucas (member), Mr. Adam Newman (member), and Ms. Keitrice Johnson (METCO Representative to the School Committee). Absent: 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), Mr. Derrek Joyce (Secretary to the School Committee), and Mr. Michael McGrath (Director of Athletics).

### **OPENING BUSINESS**

#### **Chairman's Report** (00:00)

With a quorum of the Weston School Committee present, Mr. Newberg calls the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. He opens by reviewing the guidelines for participation in public comment. When discussing public comment, Mr. Newberg highlights the School Committee's policy where, if the meeting is being held in-person, public comment will only be taken from those who are physically at the meeting; the opportunity for virtual participation is only available when the meeting is held remotely - but otherwise, the School Committee had decided at the return to in-person meetings to take public comment in person. Following this, Mr. Newberg congratulates Dr. Warby, who recently accepted a supervisory position out of district and reviews the agenda for the evening.

### **Superintendent Report** (03:12)

Dr. Zaleski opens by announcing that her welcome letter to staff and families went out earlier in the day. She highlights her Entry Plan, which was included in the letter, and provides examples of some of the people she has met as part of that plan. Dr. Zaleski continues by discussing the recent Administrator Retreat and how she will become incorporated into the day-to-day operations of the schools. She then advises the committee and community that the district is in the final stages of hiring a DEI Coordinator, is in stage three of four in the Equity Audit, will discontinue the bagged lunch program, and are exploring options for streamlining the lunch lines. She concludes by sharing a new partnership with Cartwheel (a mental health service provider for schools) and welcoming the new School Resource Officer, Officer John Buckley Jr.

### **Subcommittee Reports** (10:45)

Ms. Cirulis-Gooch provides updates from the PTO. She highlights back-to-school events located at the Field School and Middle School, as well as reminds listeners that the annual PTO Directory is underway and, if they want to opt out of having their name listed in the document, they must do so by August 25, 2023. Ms. Johnson announces that the Boston-Weston METCO Parent Organization (abbreviated: BWMPO) will be hosting another Parent's Night Out in collaboration with the PTO. She then advises that filming for the John Hudson Memorial Scholarship will begin this week. Dr. Zaleski adds that the district administration will be meeting with the BWMPO this week as well.

### **Public Comment** (12:54)

No attendees wished to speak.

## **MAJOR BUSINESS**

### **CPA Funding Proposal: Tennis Courts** (13:10)

Mr. Newberg welcomes Mr. McGrath, the District's Athletic Director, and thanks him for joining the committee meeting during the summer. Mr. McGrath speaks to the state of the High School tennis courts from an athletics perspective, opening by emphasizing the strength of the tennis program in Weston Public Schools and the degree to which the greater community uses the courts. Mr. McGrath opines that the state of the tennis courts threatens the High School tennis program and will only get worse. One of the most frequent points of contention during matches is whether a ball hits the relatively large cracks that exist on the current courts, thus necessitating a re-do. The state of the courts threatens Weston's ability to host competitions, if not this year, than in the near future.

Mr. McGrath advises he did a comparison of three different companies who could remediate or replace the courts - all well-respected for this type of work, and the types of repairs available: resurfacing, applying a Tyvek membrane, or post-tension concrete. Mr. McGrath explains that resurfacing would only grant the courts an approximate 2 years of use before needing repairs, Tyvek would not be the recommended course of action given the courts' high usage, and

post-tension concrete, while labor intensive, would guarantee a minimum of 20–25 years of use with resurfacing occurring every approximately 8–9 years. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch adds that the town's Recreation Master Planning and Steering Committee previously did a study on the town's tennis courts (including those located on school grounds) and obtained comparative costs for each repair type; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch reviews these costs and what they hope for from the School Committee. Mr. Newberg asks if any member would like to volunteer to spearhead seeking CPA funds for this project, and Ms. Cirulis-Gooch volunteered.

Following a brief conversation reviewing the options and confirming that the construction would ideally occur during the summer, **Ms. Linnard motions to approve the renovation of the tennis courts using post-tension concrete. She then adds a second motion to approve a School Committee representative to secure funding for the project from the Community Preservation Commission; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch volunteers as the School Committee representative. Mr. Lucas seconds both motions.** Via roll call vote, the Weston School Committee unanimously votes in favor of the motion, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye.

#### **Cont. Annual Agenda Planning and Meeting Packet Availability** (35:13)

Mr. Newberg advises that it is the committee's goal to have major agenda items planned at the start of the school year to give the school administration, School Committee and the public more time to prepare and anticipate topics. In a similar vein, he advises that he also wants to make meeting packets complete, and then available to the public sooner.

Separately, Mr. Newberg recognized the length of the meetings were a challenge for all and to tighten the running of meetings, Mr. Newberg would put recommended time limits on the total meeting, as well as on individual agenda items. For controversial, or complex decisions, Mr. Newberg proposed implementing more formal procedures for debating, amending, and approving motions, explaining that he wants to keep the current open format for dialogue but then become more formal for making and altering motions when necessary. He reviews what these proposed operating changes would entail in detail.

Mr. Newberg then discusses the goals drafted at the School Committee retreat early in the month. Mr. Newman voices concern about how the timelines are presented considering they are goals and not guarantees. Mr. Lucas voices concerns about measuring the success of one School Committee goal in particular: Partner with the Superintendent in support of her leadership of the District. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch explains it would not be as clear as the other goals listed but the spirit of the goal is to ensure that the School Committee is not hindering progress. As a potential solution, Mr. Newman proposes surveying the district's administration or tracking requests made by the Superintendent and if the committee responded to them. Dr. Zaleski requests that all communication from the committee is channeled through the Chair to her to ensure it remains standardized. The committee updates the language of the goal to reflect that. **Ms. Linnard motions to approve the goals as presented in the meeting packet with the discussed edits; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion.** The Weston School Committee

unanimously votes in favor of the motion, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye.

Ms. Cirulis-Gooch provides the monthly office hour schedule for the year, advising the meetings will be hosted via Zoom and advertised on social media and the district website. Each member of the committee has been assigned a month; however, not all dates and times are provided. Ms. Linnard advises she will supply her dates and time at least 30 days in advance; Mr. Newman provides his during the meeting. As there are no further questions or points of discussion, **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to approve the monthly office hour schedule; Ms. Linnard seconds the motion.** The Weston School Committee unanimously votes in favor of the motion, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye.

### **Cont. Superintendent Search Process** (01:12:12)

Mr. Newberg opens by debriefing the rest of the committee on his conversation with Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of Massachusetts Association of School Committees (abbreviated: MASC). Mr. Koocher recommended posting the position of permanent superintendent early in the school year, ideally shortly after Labor Day weekend, and advised there is negligible value in advertising in print publications and generic online sites such as SchoolSpring as serious candidates are willing to put in the effort of submitting proper applications - and are following local professional job listings such as MASC and Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (abbreviated: MASS) postings.

Mr. Newberg then reviews the two options provided by MASC: the first would cost \$10,500 and assumes MASC runs focus groups, data collection, interview support and the benefits of the second option, while the second is included in the committee's MASC membership and is counts as technical assistance posting the job opening, collecting resumes, providing background/advice on applicants, providing an orientation to the search committees, providing support for interview questions, and information of similar nature comes. Ms. Linnard reminds the committee that, during the interim superintendent search, the surveys asked for qualities the community would like in a candidate for interim as well as permanent superintendent, making focus groups unnecessary. She continues to note that the district spent multiples of MASC's quoted rate in a previous permanent superintendent search without much benefit to the District, so she is comfortable with paying for the service for the other benefits. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch counters that the committee did a great job in the interim search collecting data, thus does not believe they need to outsource. She then clarifies the two options available to the committee, as there is confusion. Mr. Newman expresses interest in obtaining more information about other service providers, citing it is difficult to make an informed decision when there is only one option. Mr. Newberg, in response, provides background on his informal review of various third-party firms, and describes the process he underwent to recommend MASC as the recommended provider - also making the point that they handle more searches than any other known entity, and just recently ended searches for such districts as Concord-Carlisle. If the committee was to decide to use a third-party with an estimated cost exceeding \$50,000, they would need to go out

to bid thus delaying the process by potentially several months before meeting with the providers and making a decision to contract with one of these providers.

The committee then weighs the two options, focusing on the difference between the interim and permanent searches and the role the committee wants to take in this search. In order to respect the opinions shared, **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to use MASC's technical support during the permanent superintendent search; Mr. Newberg seconds the motion.** After reviewing the decision being made with this motion, **Ms. Linnard motions to amend Ms. Cirulis-Gooch's motion, adding that the committee should advertise nationally to cast a wider net of sourcing applicants; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds the amendment.** The Weston School Committee unanimously votes in favor of the amendment, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye. The Weston School Committee then votes in favor of the amended motion, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newberg voting aye, and Mr. Newman abstaining.

Turning to the job description, and in response to an observation made by Mr. Lucas, Mr. Newberg expresses that he would prefer that the job description be updated to state that candidates must have their superintendent licensure in order to be considered for the position, rather than obtaining it while in the position. Mr. Newberg opines that his strong preference is for the hired superintendent to focus on improving outcomes for our students, fearing that being unlicensed (or holding an emergency license) could result in missed opportunities in the first years due to the distraction of learning DESE regulations and other applicable laws. Having a duly licensed superintendent would avoid that distraction. The School Committee and the District's administration discuss the process to obtaining this licensure, to clarify the timeline and the ability to transfer licenses between states. **Ms. Linnard motions to approve the Superintendent job description with the amendment that having superintendent licensure is a required qualification; Mr. Newberg seconds the motion.** The Weston School Committee unanimously votes in favor of the motion, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye.

The Weston School Committee begins finalizing the superintendent search process. **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to authorize Ken Newberg to have a preliminary candidate evaluation rubric created, and solicit "letters of interest" from the community to use as the basis for appointments to the screening committees; Mr. Newman seconds the motion.** The Weston School Committee unanimously votes in favor of the motion, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye. **Mr. Newberg motions to create a representative initial application screening committee to be chaired and have members appointed by the School Committee Chair; Ms. Linnard seconds the motion.** The Weston School Committee unanimously votes in favor of the motion, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye. **Mr. Newberg motions to create a representative interview preliminary screening committee to be chaired and have members appointed by the School Committee Chair.; Mr. Newman seconds the motion.** The Weston School Committee unanimously votes in favor of the motion,

with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye. Ms. Linnard suggests sending a letter to the community summarizing the process in response to Mr. Newberg's observation that the conversation regarding the search could be difficult to follow given that it was a continuation of conversations that occurred at earlier public meetings.

#### **Cont. Administrator Compensation Policy Discussion GCBA** (02:15:39)

Mr. Newberg summarizes why this matter is being brought before the committee and the history of the discussion to this point. He then quickly walks the rest of the committee through the relevant presentation slides, highlighting Lincoln Public Schools' policy on administrator compensation and the suggested changes to Weston Public Schools' policy. Mr. Newberg advises that there is no proposed motion as this agenda item was intended to be informational. He concludes his presentation by reviewing the salary data obtained from his public records request to neighboring, peer districts. Ms. Linnard points out that Weston's elementary model varies from the peer districts, specifically that Weston operates with a K-3 and 4-6, whereas many of the peer districts operate K-5. Mr. Newberg thanks her for this observation and reviews the correlation between school size and principal salary in those districts. After continued conversation regarding the reasoning for this change, the School Committee opts to resume the conversation at a later date given the late hour.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **Consent Agenda** (02:28:42)

Mr. Newberg moves to the consent agenda and asks if any items need to be removed for individual discussion, listing them individually. Mr. Joyce advises that the meeting minutes for August 2, 2023, will be added to the consent agenda for the next meeting. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch advises the warrant is ready for approval. **Mr. Newberg declares unanimous consent to approve the consent agreement as presented, including payment of Payroll Warrants 524 and 724 for a combined amount of \$1,168,753.25, Approval of the Student Club Proposal: Model United Nations Team, and School Committee Minutes for August 1, 2023.**

#### **School Handbooks** (02:30:26)

Mr. Newberg asks if there is any discussion regarding the School Handbooks, as, if there is, he would suggest postponing this agenda item until a later meeting. Dr. Carter points out that, due to the approaching start of school, the hand books do need to be approved and posted, but there are changes the administration knows will need to be made in the near future. Mr. Newberg requests that the administration soften certain language around "mandatory parent meetings" noting that while these meetings are highly informative and important, the District should highly recommend important meetings, or otherwise use similar language. **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to approve the school handbooks with the amendment presented by Mr. Newberg; Ms. Linnard seconds the motion.** The Weston School Committee

unanimously votes in favor of the motion, with Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voting aye, Ms. Linnard voting aye, Mr. Lucas voting aye, Mr. Newman voting aye, and Mr. Newberg voting aye.

**NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA TOPICS — September 11, 2023, 7:00 p.m.**

- International Trip Proposal (Vote)
- New Superintendent Induction Program, Becky McFall presenting (Info)
- Start of School Updates (Info)
- Increased Nurse Staffing Needs Required by IEP (Vote)
- Update on Superintendent Search (Info)

**ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION (02:32:49)**

Following the motion made by Mr. Newberg and seconded by Ms. Linnard, the Weston School Committee voted by roll call vote at 9:33 p.m. to adjourn to executive session and not return to open session for the purpose of deliberating over a Step III Grievance Submitted by the Weston Educational Administrative Assistants' Association and 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, Mr. Lucas votes aye, Mr. Newman votes aye, and Mr. Newberg votes aye.