

WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 11, 2023 at 7:00 PM

This meeting was held in real time via Zoom. Recording may be found here:
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/weston/video/65006ec1bc31930008556f88?page=PLAYLIST>

Questions or comments? Contact: SchoolCommittee@weston.org -
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DOCUMENTS USED

- [Superintendent's Report](#)
- [Proposed Clean Policy-GCBA](#)

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), Ms. Keitrice Johnson (METCO Representative to the School Committee), Ms. Cortney Leung (Student Representative to the School Committee), and Mr. Max Zou (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), Mr. Paul Peri (High School Principal), Ms. Kathleen Baker (Director of World Languages), and Dr. Becky McFall (Retired Superintendent, New Superintendent Induction Program Coach).

OPENING BUSINESS

Chairman's Report (00:00)

With a quorum of the Weston School Committee present, Mr. Newberg calls the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He opens by reviewing the guidelines for participation in public comment and acknowledges that the meeting is being held remotely due to a clerical error on the published agenda. He advises that systems were reviewed to minimize this from recurring. Mr. Newberg welcomes back Ms. Johnson and Ms. Leung, who are returning from summer break, and welcomes Mr. Zou, who will be joining the committee as a second student representative. He then reviews meeting norms and the agenda for the evening.

Superintendent Report (06:55)

Dr. Zaleski opens by welcoming students and families back for the 2023-2024 school year. She acknowledges that temperatures in some areas of the school buildings were higher than desired and assures the community that she is assessing solutions. She advises that Shannon Sheldon has accepted the position of DEI Coordinator and is slated to begin on September 18, 2023. Dr. Zaleski continues to advise that she is finalizing a contract with the Leadership Academy to finish the Equity Audit and will be meeting with the full DEI committee soon. She concludes by highlighting the FIRST Tech Challenge (an international robotics competition), for which Weston High School and its robotics teams hosted the kickoff event.

Subcommittee Reports (17:40)

Ms. Leung provides updates regarding recent and upcoming events within the high school. During the report, Ms. Leung focuses on friends and faculty reuniting after the summer, upcoming sporting events, senior spirit week, picture day, and other events.

Public Comment (18:52)

No attendees wished to speak.

MAJOR BUSINESS

International Trip Proposal (19:13)

Ms. Baker, with the assistance of World Language teachers Ms. Maya Tao, Ms. Amy Mongiello, and Ms. Brigid Sullivan, presents three international trips for School Committee approval: Taiwan for Mandarin students, Italy for Latin students, and Ecuador for Spanish students. All three trips will take place over April vacation and the presenters provide a high level itinerary for each trip. Ms. Mongiello highlights changes to the Ecuador itinerary from last year, noting these are being made due to feedback from parents and students. Per Ms. Cirulis-Gooch's question, Ms. Baker explains how the trip was able to quickly pivot from Peru to Ecuador in light of the civil unrest in Peru at no cost to families. During this, she recommends purchasing travel insurance for unforeseen circumstances. Ms. Johnson requests trip costs for the Ecuador and Italy trips; Ms. Baker advises the approximate price points, noting they may change depending on the number of students enrolled. Ms. Johnson then asks for clarification on the range of students able to enroll in the trips, specifically noting that seniors seem to be excluded. Ms. Baker clarifies that high school seniors are not excluded from signing up; however, historically there has been zero interest from seniors as they are preparing to move onto their next stages. Conversation turns to last year's trips, during which the Ecuador trip is praised and Ms. Baker explains how the French trip was divided into two groups based on age due to the high enrollment. **Ms. Linnard motions to approve the three international trips as presented; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion.** 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.

New Superintendent Induction Program (37:31)

Dr. McFall opens by introducing herself, her background, and her history with the program. She explains the New Superintendent Induction Program is one jointly sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). She continues to advise what her role is as a coach. As an aside, she discusses the differences between DESE's new superintendent evaluations versus their tenured superintendent evaluations. Related to this, Dr. McFall provides the School Committee an unofficial recommendation to allow Dr. Zaleski room to grow and establish herself in the community prior to requesting the series of goals and outcomes expected of a tenured superintendent. She advises when she will be in the district more generally. The School Committee unanimously voices their support and excitement regarding Dr. McFall's coaching Dr. Zaleski.

Start of School Updates (50:24)

Mr. Nembirkow explains that the purpose of the Humanitarian Trips Account fund transfer request is to eliminate obsolete or unused activity accounts and consolidate the funding so that it may be used to financially support students who wish to travel on school sponsored trips. Mr. Nembirkow and Dr. Carter advise that scholarship plans for the money still require work before they can be presented to committee, but this seed money is a starting point. Responding to Ms. Johnson, Mr. Nembirkow explains how the accounts became dormant. Ms. Linnard voices her concern over the use of the word "humanitarian" in the title of the account, given that, as an example, all three trips that were presented earlier in the meeting are not humanitarian in nature; Mr. Lucas also expresses concerns about this wording. Mr. Newman asks that the group consider how to keep these funds evergreen. **Ms. Linnard motions to approve the transfer and consolidation of funds as presented; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds the motion.** 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.

Mr. Peri advises the high school has welcomed 47 new students, with additional students anticipated by the end of the week. He explains that this has amplified the very little movement students have for scheduling and, after identifying courses with high class sizes and waitlists, asks the School Committee for one additional section of Honors Biology and one of CP Social Studies, with additional sections of pre-calculus still being discussed. Dr. Zaleski confirms funding is available for these positions. Mr. Newberg advises a vote is not required for this ask, but he wants to ensure everyone knows the committee supports student choice and voice, and emphasizes the Committee's focus on providing opportunities for all students to take the courses they and their parents believe are best. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch thanks Mr. Peri for his handling of this request and being fiscally responsible. Ms. Linnard reminds the committee that high school scheduling will need to be addressed. Dr. Zaleski advises that those conversations have begun. **Ms. Linnard symbolically motions to support the hiring of the two .25 FTE positions as requested; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds the motion.** 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.

Dr. Zaleski explains that a student has returned to the district who has a 1:1 nursing need and requests approval to hire a nurse to meet that need, to be paid through ESSER funding and contracted for 1 year. Given the sensitive nature of the request and the district's legal obligation to meet it, **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to modify the district's ESSER grant to provide sufficient funds for the hiring of this 1:1 nursing position for the 2023-2024 school year; Ms. Linnard seconds the motion.** 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.

Update on Superintendent Search (01:12:40)

Mr. Newberg advises the permanent superintendent application screening and interviewing subcommittees are still collecting letters of interest. He highlights a slight gender imbalance among those interested, as well as a request that more volunteers from historically marginalized communities apply. Mr. Newberg advises Weston was the first to open their superintendent search this year but is not alone in collecting applications at this time. He continues to list the places the position is being advertised. He concludes by outlining next steps for the permanent superintendent application screening and interviewing subcommittees.

OLD BUSINESS

Cont. Discussion Administrator Salary Policy Revisions (01:16:35)

Mr. Newberg reviews the proposed policy GCBA and explains the purpose of the policy is to remove the school committee from discussions regarding individual employee salaries (provided they are within the established salary bands), while still maintaining their role as the district's financial oversight. Ms. Linnard voices her belief that the committee should not be establishing the bands, rather members should serve in a more advisory role. She continues by highlighting potential unintended consequences of this policy, such as the policy exacerbating salary disagreements between principals and other administrators or all employees being hired at the top of the salary band. Mr. Newman advises the bands need to be wide enough for growth and the superintendent will need guidance when principals are moving through the bands. As an example, he poses the question of what happens when an administrator reaches the top of the band and asks if the employee would grow beyond the band or remain at that top salary. He continues to discuss the "draconian" clause regarding adjustments being prohibited outside of budget season, advising he would hope the district can provide flexibility when conditions change mid-year. Mr. Newberg explains that the spirit of that clause is to prevent changes mid-year without School Committee approval, not prevent changes completely. Mr. Newberg suggests committee members write down these types of edits for further discussion at a future meeting. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch thanks Mr. Newman and Ms. Linnard for their points and believes further thought needs to happen regarding what happens once a staff member reaches the top of the band. Dr. Zaleski voices that she would appreciate flexibility to work closely with HR in accordance with the budget, established salary bands, and current cost of living conditions to establish the right salary for the candidate. The school committee opts to continue this conversation once members have created their own edited versions.

OTHER BUSINESS

Consent Agenda (01:44:58)

Mr. Newberg moves to the consent agenda and asks if any items need to be removed for individual discussion, listing them individually. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch advises she removed a sentence from the August 2, 2023, meeting minutes regarding Priority Based Budgeting as it was factually incorrect and the warrant is ready for approval. **Mr. Newberg motions to approve the consent agreement with the previously discussed change, including payment of Payroll Warrant 924 for the amount of \$877,095.95, all Grants currently or previously received by the district, and School Committee Minutes for August 2, 2023 and August 21, 2023; Ms. Linnard seconds the motion.** 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.

NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA TOPICS — September 18, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

- Field Trip Request: Quiz Bowl in Plymouth, NH (Vote)
- Sleep Study Presentation and Participation Request
- Annual Budget Guidelines Discussion
- Proposed Policy KFB - Management and Use of Tennis Courts Related
- Policy Review Third Read - currently no proposed substantive changes:
- Update on Superintendent Search

ADJOURNMENT (01:50:07)

Following the motion made by Ms. Linnard and seconded by Ms. Cirulis-Gooch, the Weston School Committee votes by roll call vote at 8:50 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Cirulis-Gooch votes aye, Ms. Linnard votes aye, Mr. Lucas votes aye, Mr. Newman votes aye, and Mr. Newberg votes aye.