

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING

1/11/2021 at 7 P.M.

Zoom Link: [Westonorg.zoom.us/j/94015330088](https://westonorg.zoom.us/j/94015330088)

Documents Used At Meeting:

- [COVID-19 Testing Presentation](#) (For discussion)
- [Student Opportunity Act Plan](#) (For discussion and approval)
- [2021-22 Budget Presentation](#) (For discussion)
- Meeting Minutes (For discussion and approval)
 - [12/14](#)
- [WEEFC Grants](#) (For discussion and approval)

Call to order & Opening Business

A meeting of the Weston School Committee is called to order by Mr. John Henry, Chair. Participating were Ms. Anita Raman, Vice-chair, Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Alyson Muzila, and Ms. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; as well as Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; and Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; and Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries; Onika Jenkins, METCO Representative; WHS Student Representative Dellena Bereket; MS Principal John Gibbons and Assistant Principal Phil Oates; and Elementary School Principals Jennifer Faber, Erin Maguire, and Dan Green.

Mr. Henry, presiding over the meeting, reviews the agenda including the public comment period. He also makes brief comments in support of Dr. Connolly before introducing her to give a report. Mr. Henry gives more details on public comment procedures after the Superintendent's report.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly announces the tragic passing of Bob Lager, beloved custodian of the Woodland School. She also thanks the PTO for all of their hard work supporting and recognizing teachers. She also highlights the success of the WHS Science team, as well as a WHS competitive Diver.

Subcommittee Reports

Ms. Stewart highlights the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)'s upcoming meetings on 02/09/21 and 03/08/21, inviting parents to attend

Ms. Muzila highlights ongoing initiatives from the sustainability committee and WestonAhead. She adds that the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee will be meeting later this week.

Ms. Jenkins highlights that the BWMPO will be meeting this week on Thursday at 6:30 PM.

Public Comment

Community members may submit themselves to make public comment via Zoom Q&A function.

After a brief pause to allow for submissions, the committee sees no comments and closes the comment session, and starts Major Business topics.

Discussion of Hybrid Model, New Middle School Schedule, and Pandemic Response

Dr. Connolly begins by discussing the district's two COVID-19 testing initiatives, both of which have officially launched this week. Asymptomatic students and employees will have access to schedule tests PCR on campus on a weekly basis, while those presenting symptoms in school will have access to rapid-result tests. [Additional information about testing is available here.](#)

Dr. Connolly later adds that community members may access testing via the town fire department. Later on, in the final minutes of the meeting it is clarified that parents should schedule students to be tested once per week.

Dr. Connolly then invites Middle School Principal Gibbons and Assistant Principal Oates to discuss their new schedule. She contextualizes that changes in the schedule are connected to new Student Learning Time requirements from the State, and will allow for hybrid live streaming.

Principal Gibbons discusses the progress on getting to this point, and improving technology use. He thanks staff who contributed to preparing for the changes. He continues detailing processes and timelines of the schedule rollout, and discusses how students will experience changes. He emphasizes that the middle school will now start at 8:30 A.M., with doors opening at 8:20 A.M.

Assistant Principal Oates thanks everyone for all their hard work preparing for this. He asks that parents try to help students succeed by setting them up in a focused at-home workspaces to help minimize distractions during remote learning. He also shares COVID19 safety reminders.

Ms. Muzila asks about transportation changes. Assistant Superintendent Matthews speaks to the transportation department's plans to get students all in on time. Mr. Oates emphasizes that the first week there will be some issues and it will be part of the process to work them out, but students will not be marked late the first week of school due to delays with their bus routes.

Ms. Muzila also asks about the break for students being reduced from 15 minutes to 10 minutes and Mr. Gibbons acknowledges that the break times are good, but the changes are needed to have enough time. Mr. Oates adds that students moving around in transition periods is a break. Mr. Henry adds that the district is close to finalizing a related agreement with the teacher union.

Elementary Schools Discussion

Dr. Connolly initiates the discussion of Weston's elementary schools, first introducing Field School Principal Dan Green. Principal Green discusses various elements of how Weston's elementary schools have responded to the pandemic. He discusses the outstanding work and leadership of teachers and other school-based staff, touching on topics including innovation and collaboration. He then introduces his fellow Elementary Principals Jen Faber and Erin Maguire.

They discuss in more detail topics including but not limited to class sizes, classroom layouts and equipment, daily schedules and transitions, courseloads, students' social/emotional wellbeing,

interactions between students, lack of disciplinary issues, RLA, skillbuilding and independence among students. Committee members thank the school leaders and begin asking questions.

Mr. Cobb asks if there are any other resources that the budgeting process should incorporate. Principal Faber speaks to the value-added of outdoor space and explains that teachers will want to continue enjoying time outside with students, having enjoyed the benefits of the experiences. They also discuss certain helpful technologies, building-based subs, and personalized coaching. After the school leaders share some closing thoughts, the committee thanks all three school leaders before transitioning to discussion of the district's plans for the student opportunity act.

Student Opportunity Act Plan

Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Dr. Kimo Carter introduces the Student Opportunity Plan, contextualizing the plan, which is required by DESE as part of a 2019 law. He explains that every district has opportunity gaps along racial and socio-economic lines; and the plan that is being discussed tonight is part of Weston's plan to address those issues. The plan is connected to the district improvement plan and general strategic plan, but focuses in more detail on specific issues, including action items. Dr. Carter reviews the plan, and then begins providing more specific details. He highlights elementary-literacy, multi tiered support systems, hiring and retention of more educators of color, and the continuing education of our professional staff.

Ms. Muzila asks about attention to kinesthetic learning. Dr. Carter explains it is included in the best practices that they are hoping to scale as part of multi-tiered systems of student support.

Ms. Stewart asks about when the plan comes into effect, and how WPS will measure success in implementing it. Dr. Carter explains that this work is ongoing rather than in one period, but does involve status checks at certain points, which includes relevant stakeholders. Measuring WPS's success for each goal will be taken goal by goal as part of the process of reviewing these plans. The closing of gaps and positive impacts on students is ultimately the best measure of success.

Ms. Raman asks how achieving goals relates to funding. Dr. Carter explains that the formula is more about the composition of the district and student demographics than the setting of goals.

MOTION: Mr. Henry makes a motion to approve. Mr. Cobb seconds the motion, which passes unanimously, with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila and Mr. Henry all voting aye to approve.

FY 2021-22 Budget Presentation

Mr. Henry begins by discussing scheduling of upcoming budget meetings, detailing processes and inviting questions during those January 25 and January 28 meetings on Zoom at 4:00 P.M.

Dr. Connolly begins by thanking Assistant Superintendent Sheri Matthews for all of her and her team's hard work on this process. Dr. Connolly reviews the committee-approved guidelines for the budget process before delving into some of the specific expenses needed over the last year. Next, Dr. Connolly begins discussing next year's recommended budget, which represents an increase of 2.79%, most of which comes from our contractual obligations to increase salaries.

She presents details of the recommended budget additional slides, breaking the data down in different perspectives on different slides. She also discusses changes in enrollment, upgrades to and maintenance of school facilities, and district costs that are paid for directly by the town.

Mr. Henry shares some of his reactions to the presentation, contextualizing potentially-confusing pieces for other members of the committee and the audience. He emphasizes considerations he would like to prioritize, and reiterates that this budget assumes widespread vaccination by Fall 2021. Mr. Cobb adds that next year they may need a new approach for anticipating enrollment.

Ms. Raman asks when the district may know whether or not Weston will offer RLA next year. Dr. Connolly expects to know by the end of the school year. She identifies some key considerations. Mr. Henry thanks Dr. Connolly and Ms. Matthews before inviting Dr. Carter to present WEEFC.

Approval of WEEFC Grants

Dr. Carter presents four WEEFC Grant Proposals. One is \$500 for an author visit to Preschool students; another is \$1020 for a presentation for Field School students on on sea turtles; the third is \$800 for the first phase of a mural, while the fourth (final) WEEFC Grant is \$1125 for an interdisciplinary presentation about the history and science of the historical Lowell Textile Mills.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb makes a motion to approve. Ms. Raman seconds the motion to Approve, which passes unanimously, with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila and Mr. Henry voting aye to approve.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve the minutes from 12/14/2020. Ms. Raman seconds the motion to approve. The committee votes to approve the minutes with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb, Ms. Raman and Mr. Henry all voting aye in favor.

Approval of Warrant

Assistant Superintendent Sheri Matthews will introduce the warrant at the following meeting.

Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to adjourn. Mr. Henry seconds the motion, and the committee votes unanimously to adjourn with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Henry Mr. Cobb and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor of adjournment.