

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING
April 6, 2020

Zoom: Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/834867118> Meeting ID: 834 867 118
Join by Phone: (646) 876-9923. Meeting ID 834867118

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:02 PM by Mr. John Henry, Chair. Participating were Mrs. Danielle Black, Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Anita Raman, and Mrs. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; and Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Also participating were Ms. Jennifer Truslow, Director of Student Services, and Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries.

Mr. Henry thanked people for their participation in the meeting and acknowledged those participating, and read the following statement required by the Town of Weston for remote meetings:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings in the Town of Weston will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. We will strive to provide access to such meetings via a link to call in, or other similar option. In the event we are unable to accommodate the same, despite best efforts, we will post recorded sessions of the meeting as soon as possible following the same. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings.

Mr. Henry indicated the chat function cannot be used during the remote meetings and asked members of the public to email Mrs. Black at blackd@weston.org or Ms. Raman at ramanr@weston.org with comments instead.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mr. Henry reviewed the meeting agenda. He noted a meeting of the School Committee and Student Advisory Council (SAC) scheduled for the upcoming Thursday will not take place and said they are hoping to find a way to meet with the students.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly reported on the sad and unexpected passing of Woodland School Kindergarten Aide Darlene Rezendes who died last week, noting her passing was unrelated to COVID 19. Dr. Connolly noted that Darlene, the sister of Country School head custodian John Kelly, worked in the Weston Public Schools for 14 years, was a big and important part of the Woodland School community, and will be sorely missed. Dr. Connolly extended thoughts and prayers to her family and friends at this time.

Dr. Connolly provided a brief COVID 19 update, reporting that no Weston students have tested positive and that the few families that were ill with clinical symptoms are all recovering well. She said the latest number of positive cases in Weston is 42 cases, due to a spread in a long term care facility but no community spread had occurred over the past two weeks. Dr. Connolly expressed gratitude to the school nurses who have been working tirelessly with the Town of Weston Board of Health and emergency response team.

Dr. Connolly reported the recent WEEFC Online Auction raised more than \$61,000 and included participation by more than 100 Weston families. She noted the funds will be used by WEEFC to continue to support enrichment for all students at all levels.

Dr. Connolly noted that although it is unknown when or if we will return to school this year, the administration has begun to plan. She mentioned planning for possible alternative learning options for Seniors, scheduled to begin their internships May 8, and looking at creatively finding other ways to celebrate milestones and significant transitional events. She said they need to hear from Governor Baker on the status of returning to school or social gatherings, but said the administration will begin conversations this next week about possible alternatives to those special events and will communicate in a timely manner. Dr. Connolly noted that there will be no school on Friday, April 10, Good Friday.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports

Ms. Raman noted the PTO would be holding a remote meeting this week.

II.A. Weston Schools from Home Update

Dr. Connolly provided an update on Weston Schools from Home. She expressed appreciation to administrators, teachers and the Facilities Department and custodians for their work during this shut down of all school buildings. Dr. Connolly said that School from Home is very different for teachers as well as students and discussed the Ethic of Care during this time of Crisis, noting the better name would be, "School When We're at Home in a Crisis." Dr. Carter talked about social-emotional safety, mental health and well-being of students. Ms. Truslow discussed the most vulnerable learners, including students on IEP's, 504's, ELL students, noting educators are doing the best they can to provide specialized instruction and intervention. Dr. McCanne talked about the role of Technology and the ramping up of Facetime and VideoConferencing while addressing the need to safeguard, making adjustments and being thoughtful. He indicated that teachers have "stepped up and are doing a fantastic job." Dr. Carter spoke about equity and trying to assure that all students receive the same or similar experiences and noted that teachers are collaborating and meeting regularly online as well as communicating with families. Dr. Carter said additional enrichment opportunities would be shared soon and there would soon be virtual coffees conducted by district leaders and principals.

Mr. Henry commended everyone for their work and noted again that Weston is weeks ahead than most districts. He indicated this is a "banner moment" for Weston. Ms. Raman expressed appreciation to teachers and noted it is clear how much work they are doing. Mrs. Stewart, noting School from Home has been great in many respects, asked if parents might be provided with websites for additional work to address so much free time in the day. She also mentioned the mixed results of the Seesaw platform. Some discussion took place, with Dr. McCanne noting they are still trying to figure out what works best. Dr. Connolly suggested parents reach out first to teachers, then principals and/or Dr. McCanne.

Discussion took place regarding grades, transcripts and credits. Dr. Carter noted that high school students have until April 10 to complete make up work for Quarter 3 but indicated that teachers would be flexible. He also noted that during SfH courses will be credit/incomplete with no letter or number grades and that determination about grades being weighted will be addressed if or when school resumes. Mr. Cobb encouraged teachers to increase their zoom time with students. Dr. Connolly said that there will now begin a focus on other components of the school day, including advisories and school council meetings. Some discussion regarding needs of faculty and addressing expenses they may be incurring. Dr. Connolly asked David Poras, WEA President, to keep the administration informed if teachers need anything. She reported that Facilities has deep cleaned all buildings and has enough cleaning supplies to do again when school buildings reopen. No action taken.

II.B. Discussion of April School Vacation

The Committee discussed holding School from Home during the scheduled April vacation. Mr. Henry noted many districts were contemplating this. Dr. Connolly recommended the Committee vote to amend the school calendar to hold classes Tuesday through Friday, April 21-24, noting Monday, April 20 is Patriots Day, a state holiday. She indicated it would be better for students to remain engaged now, school would be completed on June 22, and teachers are in support. She also noted that teachers would be flexible if students did have scheduling conflicts.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Ms. Raman and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to amend the 2019-2020 school calendar and approve the continuation of remote learning from Tuesday, April 21st - Friday, April 24th and to change the last day of school from Friday, June 25 to Monday, June 22, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mr. Henry voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, and Mrs. Stewart voting aye.

II.C. Discussion of Student Trips

Dr. Connolly requested the Committee wait until the next meeting to consider cancellation of the Grade 8 Washington DC trip scheduled for June. She said they have until April 28 to cancel without penalty and, while noting it is unlikely the trip will occur this spring, indicated they would prefer to wait and perhaps propose alternative timing for the trip. No action taken.

II.D. School District Payment to Hourly Employees

The Committee discussed the continued payment of hourly employees, previously approved for payment through April 6. Mr. Henry noted the State has requested districts to continue to pay hourly employees during the mandatory shutdown of schools.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted to continue to pay Weston hourly workers regular pay through the shutdown, to be reevaluated prior to May 4, noting this is not a practice or precedence but a response to an unusual situation, with Mr. Henry voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mrs. Stewart voting aye.

II.E. Third Quarter Budget Update

Ms. Matthews updated the Committee on expenditures through Quarter 3, reporting that there will be a cost savings in utilities and transportation, due to the closing of schools, that she will not have figures for until May. She indicated the report includes all known personnel changes and retirement costs. Ms. Matthews reported the cessation of all non-essential purchases, noting, however, that some purchase orders are being put in by teachers for School from Home purchases and by Facilities for cleaning supplies. Ms. Matthews said, if pressed to approximate, she anticipates there could be a savings of a million dollars for the year.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted to accept the Quarter 3 Budget Report, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Henry voting aye and Mrs. Stewart voting aye.

II.E. Facility Projects Update (Case House, Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee)

Case House – Mrs. Black said she would be meeting with PBC later in the week and had no updates. Dr. Connolly indicated that punch list items are still being addressed.

Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee – Mr. Cobb indicated that the Finance Committee would prefer some alternate wording in the proposed warrant article for funding the HS/MS feasibility study. Mr. Cobb said he would review and will likely come before the School Committee with revised wording. He also noted the printing of the warrant is in flux and item may be deferred. No action.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of March 17 and March 23, 2020, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

III.B. Business Actions –
Certificate of Warrant

Ms. Matthews presented a Certificate of the Secretary, approval of warrants for payment.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$1,693,578.68 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, with Mr. Henry voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Ms. Raman voting aye.

An audience member asked how the schools would handle the reappearance of COVID in the Fall. Dr. Connolly said they will continue to monitor updates and evaluate through the summer to be as ready as possible. Dr. Carter indicated there will likely be intensive summer planning and professional development regarding the need to be ready.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Ms. Raman and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:04 PM, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Documents used by Committee:

- [Third Quarter Budget Update](#)
- [School From Home Presentation](#)

[Recording of Meeting provided by Weston Media:](#)