

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING - 7:00pm, May 10, 2021

Full Recording: [Weston.vod.castus.tv/vod/](https://weston.vod.castus.tv/vod/) (Find timestamps for each section in parentheses)

Documents Used At Meeting

- [Presentation re: Social and Emotional Learning](#)
- [Ongoing and Upcoming School Committee Priorities](#)
- Meeting Minutes For Approval
 - [April 12](#)
 - [March 8 \(technical correction\)](#)

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, and Ms. Alyson Muzila of the School Committee; as well as the METCO Representative to Committee Ms. Keitrice Johnson; as well as Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; and 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 Libraries; Amy Kelly, Director of District Advancement; as well as High School Math Teachers Mr. McLaughlin, Ms. Fierabend, and several students from WHS math classes; as well as Mr. Kenneth Newberg and Ms. Attia Linnard, both of whom were elected to the School Committee and will be sworn in on May 15th.

Mr. Henry reviews the agenda, explaining elements specific to this meeting, which will include a presentation by students and faculty from WHS, followed by various updates and presentations from district leaders.

Fractal Fair Presentation (01:38)

Mr. McLaughlin introduces the Fractal Fair program, which has a storied history at WHS. Ms. Fierabend shares more about the program and special circumstances for this year. After that context, several students share the topics and some highlights from each of their projects and video presentations. Next, the committee watches a video made up of smaller segments of each of the various student projects' videos, highlighting the depth and range of the various projects.

After the videos, committee members applaud the students for their work and ask questions of the students and faculty, who respond to the questions. Members again thank the participants.

Superintendent's Report (18:53)

Dr. Connolly shares with sadness that beloved Country School reading interventionist Ms. Jody Bigham passed away early that morning. Her 20 years of service will have a long lasting legacy.

She goes on to thank Mr. Henry and Mr. Cobb for their many years of service on the committee. Ms. Raman also thanks Mr. Henry and Mr. Cobb for their service and dedication to the students.

Subcommittee Reports (20:45)

Ms. Muzila highlights that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee continue moving forward and look forward to future work.

Mr. Cobb previews the upcoming town meeting and emphasizes the importance of participating. He also discusses and gives updates from the town recreation master plan steering committee.

Public comment (24:40)

Mr. Henry gives directions for public comment and welcomes community members to give public comments. Hearing none from any members of the public, the committee moves forward.

Discussion of expansion of in-person learning, end of year events (25:21)

Mr. Henry invites Dr. Connolly to give an update on in person instruction, including reopening plans and processes. She discusses schedules, lunches, safety planning, student experiences, and more. She also discusses public health guidelines and how they follow from the State rules, as well as the district's ongoing collaborations with the Board of Health. She also discusses end of year events, including plans for graduation on the Town Green. Dr. Connolly and members continue to discuss graduation considerations, raising and responding to a variety of questions.

Presentation on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) (33:30)

Dr. Carter begins by introducing Amy Kelly and discussing their work together, and discussing essential connections between SEL and high-level academics contributing to student success.

Ms. Kelly goes on to present on her work in Weston, outlining her presentation before further discussing the relationship between academics and SEL. She and Dr. Carter both emphasize that you cannot have one without the other, and discuss some of the frameworks used in WPS, such as "multi-tiered systems of supports." Frameworks she discusses include three pillars, and the five features of that pillar system. She also shares other ways to visualize those frameworks.

As she continues her presentation she also introduces the different teams engaged in this work and related work. She emphasizes SEL skill building, as well as seeing and responding to students as individuals. She also gives examples of SEL systems, classroom practices, and more. Later in the presentation she discusses collection and use of data for measuring progress on student outcomes regarding related school and district goals, and also covers professional development, culturally responsive teaching, and how that all connects to academics and SEL. She also discusses the ongoing work of the district's diversity, equity, and inclusion committee.

Throughout the presentation, Ms. Kelly touches on various frameworks that tie together at key points. Towards the end of her presentation she summarizes key takeaways and previews some next steps. She ends by thanking school committee members and underscoring the district goal of every student "bringing their whole self" to school. Committee members thank Ms. Kelly before asking questions.

Ms. Raman asks about overall response from teachers to the big changes to instruction that are involved in this work. Ms. Kelly responds that teachers respond well to “the why,” and once they try the tools involved. She explains it can be scary for teachers to give up control over elements and moments within the classroom, but have found success/satisfaction with these approaches. Dr. Carter adds additional insights and points to the strength of WPS teachers’ community and how they support each other.

Ms. Muzila asks Ms. Kelly what she is most excited about over the coming year, and Ms. Kelly emphasizes building students’ skills and confidence as independent learners, and exploring and developing the classroom support teams further, building on current successes. Dr. Carter is optimistic about WPS following through on this ongoing work in a thoughtful, responsive way.

Ms. Raman asks about measuring progress and the use of data. Dr. Carter explains how the District Improvement Plan facilitates that process, and discusses key considerations involved. Ms. Kelly adds that, while the district already has baseline data, more data coming in over this year and coming years will continue to help track progress regarding school culture and climate.

Mr. Cobb expresses support for this work but emphasizes the importance of data in measuring progress towards goals, especially underperforming student achievement. He asks for evermore urgency for students needing support right now, who cannot wait years for large scale change. Ms. Muzila recognizes Mr. Cobb’s point and responds, and discusses data and more. Dr. Carter also responds, discussing programs, different pockets of data, the role of the strategic plan, and more. He emphasizes the need to measure trends over time, and sheds light on their approach.

Ms. Linnard thanks everyone working on this, and adds her perspective. She asks questions regarding how this work plays out in practice for teachers, administrators and more. Dr. Carter and Ms. Kelly respond, leading into discussion of human resources, goal-setting, and more. Mr. Cobb circles back to “achievement gaps” and how difficult they can be to address, emphasizing the enormity of the task, and suggesting important considerations for bringing this work forward. Mr. Henry, seeing no further questions, thanks Dr. Carter and Ms. Kelly for their work and report.

Ongoing and Upcoming School Committee Priorities (1:24:00)

Mr. Henry and Mr. Cobb review a document they prepared and shared in advance, discussing recent, ongoing, and anticipated-future school committee priorities. These priorities include but are not limited to topics such as: the elementary/secondary schools respectively, departmental reviews, budgeting, facilities and capital projects, collective bargaining negotiations, committee governance, communications, school committee policies, and more. After they review the many sections of the document and add additional considerations. Towards the end Dr. Connolly and other administrators engage in the committee discussion of some points raised by Mr. Henry.

Meeting Minutes Approval (1:49:00)

MOTION: Mr. Cobb makes a motion to approve the April 12 minutes and the amended March 8 minutes. Ms. Raman seconds the motion and the committee members vote unanimously to approve with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Muzila, Ms. Raman, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Warrant approval (1:49:29)

Ms. Matthews presents a regular warrant for \$1,872,598.25.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve the warrant and Ms. Raman seconds it. The committee votes unanimously in favor, with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila, and Mr. Henry all voting aye, approving the warrant.

Executive Session and Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to adjourn the meeting to executive session for the purposes of discussing collective bargaining without the intent to return to open meeting before adjournment. The committee votes unanimously in favor, with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Henry all voting aye, approving the adjournment.