

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING
July 20, 2020

Webinar

<https://zoom.us/j/94015330088>

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:03 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; Ms. Onika Jenkins METCO Representative to 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 present were Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries; Mr. Gary Jarobski, Director of Facilities; Ms. Amy Kelly, Director of District Advancement; and Ms. Jennifer Truslow, Director of Student Services.

Mr. Henry thanked people for their participation and acknowledged those in attendance. He reviewed the agenda, referenced the remote meeting statement posted in the agenda, noted the meeting was being recorded, and indicated members of the public could email questions or comments to be addressed during the meeting to Mrs. Black at blackd@weston.org or Ms. Raman at ramana@weston.org. Mr. Henry reported the School Committee is planning to hold weekly meetings at 7:00 PM every Monday night through August to discuss fall school reopening plans.

I.B. Chairman's Report – Mr. Henry said that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is requesting districts submit reopening plans by July 31 and noted that the administration would be presenting a draft of Weston's plan tonight with their recommendation, will gather feedback, and submit a final plan due to DESE on August 10. He acknowledged that safety is the number one priority in the reopening plans, along with the importance of student learning. Mr. Henry noted the budget impact of the proposed plans, indicated that the School Committee understands the importance at all levels of educational experience. He said this is a very fluid situation and asked that people listen to the proposed draft plan and provide feedback. Mr. Henry, indicating that the administrative team has been working diligently around the clock and may be taking some much needed vacation time next week, asked for understanding if administration is slow to respond to feedback. He also noted that Susan Bairstow would present a statement on behalf of the Weston Education Association (WEA).

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Connolly thanked everyone across the district for their efforts in developing the reopening plans.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports – Mrs. Stewart reported that the Sustainability Committee is working with the youth of Weston to complete an energy use analysis.

Ms. Bairstow, incoming WEA President, read a statement, noting that most faculty have not yet seen the reopening plan but most want to return to in-school learning when possible. She said they are deeply concerned about the safety of children and adults in the buildings and look forward to continued collaboration with the School Committee and Administration.

II.A. Guidelines and Planning for Reopening in the Fall

Mr. Jarobski acknowledged the work of the custodial staff who maintained the buildings throughout the shutdown in the event the schools were needed for a triage situation or other purpose. He presented information on ventilation in the buildings, shared typical classroom floorplans, and discussed how fresh air is circulated. He indicated that 95% of the classrooms are on exterior walls with outdoor air supplied through ventilation system and others have rooftop units. He indicated that the rooftop units are being evaluated by an engineering firm as part of a

capital plan. He said to increase fresh air, they can keep dampers open, open windows, but indicated they will follow recommended state guidelines. There were many questions from Committee members and audience members which Mr. Jarobski addressed. Mr. Henry thanked Mr. Jarobski and suggested people email with any other questions.

Dr. Connolly reviewed the process for planning school reopening to date, noting there have been surveys, forums for faculty and community members, and five planning teams. She indicated the draft reopening plan would be shared with the community on Tuesday. She thanked people for the countless hours they have been working, seven days a week, including during vacations to prepare the plan. Dr. Connolly said Weston's plans include two options – either send the children to school or enroll in a Remote Learning Academy. Sending to school would be one of the three models required by DESE – an all in school model, a hybrid model, and a remote model. The Remote Learning Academy would be a full-year commitment to remote learning. Dr. Carter said this would parallel the curriculum with innovative instructional practices and focus on creating close-knit online communities, would have fewer choices at the secondary level, and an essential parent/guardian partnership.

Dr. Connolly reviewed the safety guidelines for students who would return to school, noting that there would be six-foot distancing, a cohort model for preK-8 students, and required mask or face covering for Grade 2 and up (and recommended for Prek-1). She talked about handwashing and sanitizing, cleaning and disinfecting s, an at home screening process, and protocol when students or staff members get sick. Dr. Connolly said outdoor tents, one per school, were being procured for outdoor mask breaks multiple times a day.

Dr. Carter discussed the three models, noting that the all in person model, the best from a teaching and learning perspective, would be the most risky for ensuring student and staff safety. He said this model would require hiring additional staff to meet the 6-foot distance requirement and would thus be the costliest, with an estimated \$2.5 million cost. The Hybrid model would have two cohorts alternating all in and remote, equally split, and would cost approximately \$800,000 to implement. The Hybrid model, would have students whose last name begins with A-L attend school on Mondays, Thursdays, and every other Wednesday, and students whose last names begin with M-Z attend school Tuesdays, Fridays, and alternat Wednesdays. Dr. Carter said some at-risk students would come every day. The all remote model, which could be temporary, would be the least costly, the safest model, and least effective. He noted this model is separate from Remote Learning Academy but would be more robust than last year's School from Home model.

The Administration presented steps to address Social and Emotional Learning and the full range of services that Student Services will provide. Dr. McCanne talked about Technology, noting that all students will need a device no matter which model is followed. He noted there is a world-wide demand for products but is hopeful that what has been ordered will be filled. Dr. McCanne said they plan to continue to use SeeSaw platform for K-3 and Google Classroom for grades 4-12 but would anticipate a different platform for the Remote Learning Academy.

Dr. Connolly said the Administration is recommending the Hybrid model, to be looked at quarterly, with the hope that students might be brought back earlier, especially younger students. She indicated that parents may decide whether to enroll students in the Remote Learning Academy or send to school, whichever model is followed. The School Committee discussed the plans. Mrs. Stewart asked if more tents could be purchased. Dr. Connolly cited the costliness of a 20 x 40 foot tent as well as the lack of availability. She indicated there would be opportunity for outdoor learning, with assigned spaces. There was much discussion regarding the challenge of knowing how many students at which grades would be returning, who may opt for the Remote Learning Academy, or choose to homeschool.

Dr. Connolly indicated they will ask for parent decision by July 31 and would send a survey out this week to gather information from parents about their thoughts on enrollment. Dr. Carter noted they could not determine who would teach which model until they know enrollments. There were many questions submitted on a range of topics. *(The recording is linked at bottom of these minutes as well as the presentation and the draft plan.)* Dr. Carter said they will further discuss

the Hybrid model and could present the survey results at next week's School Committee meeting. Mr. Henry suggested parents be sent the draft plan along with the survey, non binding, on Tuesday. No action taken.

II.B. School Year 2020-2021 School Rental and Tuition Fees

Mrs. Matthews presented proposed rental rates and fees for 2020-2021 revised to include up to a 10% COVID cleaning charge for rentals.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee unanimously to accept proposed rental rates and fees for 2020-21, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

II.C. MS/HS Sectioning/Class Discussion and Approval of Classes Under 15 Students

Mr. Henry indicated he had shared a document with the Committee that listed classes with fewer than 15 students enrolled. It was noted that the enrollments are likely change once the reopening plan is underway and enrollment in Remote Learning Academy occurs. Dr. Connolly and Mrs. Black acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the work done by high school administration to minimize the number of low-enrolled classes. Mrs. Stewart said she did not receive the document in time to review.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee 4-0-1, to approve classes with fewer than 15, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Mr. Henry voting aye; Mrs. Stewart abstained from the vote.

II.D. Discussion of Networking Project

The Committee discussed a proposal by the Town to upgrade networking infrastructure, with an estimated cost of \$944,000. Dr. McCanne noted the current infrastructure is 10-14 years old and recommended support of the project at this time when relying on infrastructure is vital to support 2020 tools. Mr. Cobb indicated his support for this essential upgrade and mentioned the possibility of bonding the item rather than using free cash.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee unanimously to approve School Committee resolution to support networking project, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye..

Mr. Henry said he would draft a letter of support.

II.E. Facility Projects Update – None presented.

III.A. Approval of Minutes of June 15 and June 29, 2020

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee unanimously to approve the minutes of June 15 and June 29, with Mr. Henry voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Mrs. Stewart 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 Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$1,035,290.29 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, with Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Black voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 10;10 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:

- [School Year 2020-2021 School Rental and Tuition Fees](#)
- [Draft Reopening Plan 2020-2021](#) (and [Presentation](#))
- Courses with Fewer than 15 students

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