

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

August 28, 2019

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:00 PM at Weston Middle School by Mr. John Henry, Chair. In attendance were Mrs. Danielle Black, Mr. Alex Cobb, and Ms. Anita Raman 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. Not present: Mrs. Rachel Stewart.

Also in attendance were Mr. John Gibbons, Middle School Principal; Ms. Kelly Flynn, High School Assistant Principal; Ms. Marla Schay, Grade 6-12 Guidance Department Head; Ms. Kathy Baker, Director of World Languages; and Ms. Lisa Reitano of the Town of Weston Finance Committee.

Mr. Henry welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration and said there would be a brief Executive Session to discuss Executive Session minutes.

I.B. Executive Session

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mrs. Black, at 7:01 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive session, pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements, specifically Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g), to return to Open Session, with Mrs. Black voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

The Committee returned from Executive Session at 7:06 PM and reconvened in Open Session.

I.C. Chairman's Report – Mr. Henry reviewed the Major Business items on the agenda. He reiterated the Committee's full support of Ms. Baker and the direction the World Language Department has taken.

I.D. Superintendent's Report –

Dr. Connolly reported that everyone is excited to begin the 2019-2020 school year, noting that schools look great and all are prepared to welcome students next week. She said that faculty returned today and reviewed the district's motto for the year, *take care of ourselves, take care of others and take care of our community*. She said opening day included guest speaker and author Dr. J. Stuart Ablon, who spoke about "if students could, they would."

Dr. Connolly reported that 77 faculty professional development workshops took place this past summer, with over 210 participants. She said it was a great summer of professional development and that 80% of K-8 faculty participated in Responsive Classroom Training. She reported that during the summer more than \$50,000 was spent to update security across the district, including installation of new cameras and entry buzzers at Country and Woodland Schools, shatter proof film in critical areas of the schools, and other updates that will not be publicly shared. Dr. Connolly noted that bids have gone out for closing off the high school courtyard.

Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that the district filled nine faculty positions this summer and hired several learning assistants and other support staff. She said that unexpected increased Title I funds provided for the hiring of a shared elementary math coach who will work closely with Dr. Carter, Principals, Elementary Math Specialist Tracy Manousaridis, and other instructional coaches to offer extra support to faculty and students.

Dr. Connolly said she has had conversations with Police Chief Goulding regarding traffic issues and challenges they foresee happening. A brief discussion with audience members occurred and suggestions that changing sequencing of lights at Wellesley Street/Route 30 and Route 20/School

Street intersections might help. Dr. Connolly said High School sports are underway and practices for all teams started,

Mr. Henry requested patience with buses and traffic as school year gets underway. Mrs. Matthews reported that Ubica Bus had been bought out by Viafy. Dr. Connolly suggested parents be so informed.

I.E. Subcommittee Reports – None presented.

I.F. Open Forum – Mr. Henry reviewed procedures for the Open Forum, noting personal attacks would not be tolerated.

Many members of the WHS Junior Class and parents were present to address a letter from Principal Anthony Parker that went out late today that informed the community that, due to lack of adequate parking spaces and safety concerns, seniors only would be allowed to bring cars to school and juniors would not have open campus privileges. Students and several parents spoke about being informed so late of this change and questioned why the decision was announced just before school started.

Dr. Connolly indicated the decisions to number spaces and limit parking were made due to safety concerns and noted she had met with Chief Goulding on the matter. She indicated the high school leadership team was involved in the decision and faculty was supportive of it. Mr. Henry noted that although this was not a School Committee decision, the Committee would support the administration in its decision. Some parents expressed support for the decisions but were dismayed by the late notice.

After much discussion, Ms. Flynn offered to have a meeting the next day at 1:00 PM with a group of 10 or so student representatives and form a committee. She said they would try to work out some kind of solution to this and also apologized for the late notification of the changes. Dr. Connolly said she would discuss with police the option of parking on Brown Street. Mr. Henry expressed his pride in the students of Weston and commended the students for their clear, precise and respectful comments. Mr. Cobb noted that he was not aware of the decision and was exceptionally concerned about the late communication from the high school. He assured parents he would address the matter.

Audience member and parent Charlie Hipwood expressed concern regarding the School Committee's decision on July 15 to not run the low enrolled Mandarin at Grade 6. He said parents were notified of that decision in an email on July 29, and he urged the Committee to reconsider its decision, especially since other language classes are now large and the Mandarin teacher would be receiving salary anyway. Parents Jen Betty and Mark Whitworth also spoke on the issue. Mr. Gibbons explained the class size repercussions caused by the cancellation of Mandarin in Grade 6, noting that Latin is now at 27 students and there is room in some French and Spanish classes. After some discussion, the Committee agreed to reconsider.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to reconsider its decision to cancel Grade 6 Mandarin.

The Committee discussed the motion, noting it would be a three-year commitment to Mandarin. Mr. Cobb noted that Ms. Baker had not yet had opportunity to present the World Language Report to the Committee. Ms. Reitano suggested the Committee not change its policy due to special interest groups. Ms. Raman said she was still supportive of the Committee's July decision.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted 3-1, with Ms. Raman voting against, to approve running the low enrolled Grade 6 Mandarin in 2019-20.

IIA. Update on METCO Inc. Organizational Changes

Dr. Connolly updated the Committee on changes taking place at METCO Inc. including a new Director and a change to be implemented next year in the way students will be accepted into

METCO. She said acceptance will be by random lottery, like all Boston Charter schools, instead of a wait list that families could place children on as early as at birth. In addition, Dr. Connolly said that districts in the past could review folders and make a decision about placement for a student with a disability and make a determination if the district has a program. She said that districts can no longer deny placement to such students as students with disabilities are a protected class and noted that cost of services would be borne by the receiving district. She reported that siblings would still get priority. Dr. Connolly said that many districts are concerned. Ms. Jenkins noted it is unsettling for Boston families as well. No action taken.

II.B. Enrollment and Staffing Updates

Ms. Matthews provided updated enrollments as of August 28, reporting a total enrollment of 2,054 students, with 289 at Woodland School, 303 at Country School, 305 at Field School, 485 at Weston Middle School, and 671 at Weston High School. She noted these numbers are close to predictions with class sizes in line with policy. No action taken.

II.C. Review and Discussion of Content of High School Performance Report

Mr. Henry requested Committee members review last year's annual High School Report and email him suggested possible changes to the annual High School Report including what they might like to have included or deleted. He said he would share with Ms. Schay.

II.D. Discussion of Questions for External Program Reviews

Mr. Henry requested Committee members send him questions for the three reviews this year (Athletics, Math, Guidance), and he will forward to Dr. Carter.

II.E. Discussion of Technology Acceptable Use Policy and Regulations

Mr. Henry recommended the Committee approve the revised Student (IJND) and Employee (GBEE) Appropriate Use of Information Technology Resources Policies. He indicated the Guidelines would be removed from the Policy Book and the three new sets of guidelines would be grade specific.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve revised Policies IJND and GBEE

II.F. Discussion of Solar Panels

The Committee held a brief discussion regarding the installation of solar panels on Field School. Mr. Henry noted the Committee previously approved a plan to pursue these but may want to reconsider that decision due to the potential impact proposed 40B housing projects could have on the schools and need to expand. Mr. Henry said they would have more information in a few months and that Director of Facilities Gary Jarobski should keep them informed on the solar panel deadlines and possible penalty situations. No action taken.

II.G. Discussion of Cameras on School Buses

Dr. Connolly informed the Committee that Weston will be piloting cameras on buses beginning this month with the hopes that they will be purchased for all buses by the end of the fall. She indicated this decision was made again with student safety in mind. She said that having cameras will allow bus drivers to focus on the road, and, as has been seen in other districts, cameras on buses helps students to make good decisions. Mr. Cobb asked if cameras could also be placed above the stop signs on the buses and requested that footage be property of the schools. He also said that parents should be informed. Dr. Connolly said there may be need for development of a policy for the cameras.

II.H. Discussion of Executive Session Minutes

The Committee discussed release of Executive Sessions for the past two years. Mr. Henry noted that when minutes are released they would become public minutes after approval.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to release Executive Session minutes of 2017-18 and 2018-19.

II.I. Facility Projects Update (Proctor Field, Case House)

Case House -- Mrs. Black updated the Committee on the Case House renovation project, reporting the project is moving along and contingency is in good shape.

Proctor Field – Mr. Cobb said the handicap access is complete and doors should be fixed on the building.

The Committee discussed briefly the communication regarding student parking. Mr. Cobb questioned the process.

III.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve minutes of February 12, 2018; February 4, July 15 and July 25, 2019; Executive Session Minutes from 2017-18 (September 25, October 16, November 13, 2017; January 8, January 25, February 5, February 12, February 26, April 9, April 24, 2018); and Executive Session Minutes of 2018-19 (November 19, December 11, 2018; February 4, February 11,, February 25, March 11, March 25, April 8, May 7, May 20, June 3, June 17, 2019)

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 Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$2,496,736.48 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Acceptance of Gift

Ms. Matthews informed the Committee of a donation of \$5,000 from the David E. Retik and Christopher D. Mello Foundation to be used for the David E. Retik Scholarship. Mr. Cobb noted that David Retik, an alumna of Weston High School, was a victim of the 9/11 terrorist attack and a memorial bench with a plaque sits on the sloping hill above Proctor Field by Route 30.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept a gift in the amount of \$5,000 from David Retik and Christopher D. Mello Foundation.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Black, at 9:50 PM, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

Documents used by Committee:

- High School Annual Report
- Policy GBEE, Appropriate Use of Technology (Employee)
- Policy IJND, Appropriate Use of Technology (Student)
- Enrollment 2019-2020 as of August 28, 2019
- Letter re Gift from David E. Retik and Christopher D. Mello Foundation