

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING
September 29, 2020

Webinar

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

Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 6:15 pm 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; Ms. Onika Jenkins, METCO Representative; Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; and Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Also present was Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology and School Libraries, Dr. Jayme Gaynor, Director of Health Services, and Ms. Michelle Shuckel, member of Medical Advisory Board.

Mr. Henry presented a motion for adjournment to executive session for the purpose of discussion of collective bargaining matters with the intent to return to open session.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee at 6:15 p.m. voted unanimously to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of discussion of collective bargaining matters with the intent to return to open session with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

During the executive session, no action was taken.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee at 7:01 p.m. voted unanimously to adjourn from executive session to return to open session with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

The meeting was reconvened in open session at 7:03 PM by Mr. Henry.

Chair Report

Mr. Henry reviewed the agenda.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly commended the athletes and the athletic teams for their commitment to the safety protocols that have allowed athletics to resume. She also thanked Mr. Mike McGrath for his efforts and encouraged anyone to reach out to him if they wish to join a sport. Dr. Connolly also reported that clubs and activities have started at the Middle School and High School, and thanked Mr. Chris Memoli for his efforts with the music program. Dr. Connolly also noted that a number of Weston families who are not currently residing in Weston are seeking to participate in the Remote Learning Academy. Mr. Henry noted that, absent a pandemic, families must reside in Weston to attend the Weston Schools, but that the pandemic presented different challenges. He stated that the matter would be put on the agenda for the next School Committee meeting and that, in the interim, the district would work with counsel and the affected families.

Approval of WEEFC Proposal

The committee discussed the WEEFC proposal presented by Dr. Carter in the amount of \$1,500 for author Rob Buyea to visit the 5th grade class virtually.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mr. Henry, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the WEEFC proposal with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Ms. Raman voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Mr. Cobb thanked all the families who contributed to WEEFC and Ms. Raman stated that she was pleased that students were continuing to see enrichment programs like Mr. Buyea's visit. Mr. Henry noted that WEEFC reached its fundraising goal for air purifiers and thanked the WEEFC board for their hard work.

Update and Discussion regarding Re-Opening Schools

Dr. Connolly first presented a prepared statement. She acknowledged the feedback from parents, noting that a number of parents are seeking a move to an all-in model. Dr. Connolly noted that the plan of the district since August has been to start in a hybrid model and progress to an all-in model at the elementary. She reiterated that the district planned to bring all hybrid students in grades Pre-K through 5 in to school five days per week from 8 a.m. until noon. She reported that the district does not have the space to bring all secondary students while maintaining 6-foot distancing. Dr. Connolly stated that once Pre-K through 5 students were back in five days per week, the district would explore options to increase in-person learning at the secondary level. Dr. Connolly then reviewed the many safety protocols implemented, including air purifiers, PPE, hiring additional staff, creating a remote learning academy, and accommodating staff health concerns. She reiterated the district's commitment to safety and stated that relaxing the 6-foot distancing requirement and bringing in secondary students cannot happen until rapid, affordable testing or a vaccine is available.

Ms. Michele Shuckel introduced herself and explained her role as a liaison between the state Department of Public Health and the elected Board of Health in Weston. She stated that she acts as a resource related to the coronavirus to the public schools and other organizations in town. She discussed virus tracking and contact tracing efforts in town, as well as her role in supporting the schools.

Dr. Jayme Gaynor presented and explained the DESE metrics for schools to pursue various models of schooling, including full in-person, hybrid and remote learning. She discussed the experience of certain towns in eastern Massachusetts and noted that the medical advisory board would look at three weeks of trending data. Ms. Shuckel then reviewed the current COVID case data for the town of Weston.

In response to a question from Ms. Raman, Dr. Gaynor reported that DESE requires a distance of 3-6 feet, but noted that the 6 foot distance was safest at least until widespread testing is available. Dr. Connolly and Dr. Gaynor confirmed that under the current status, the district would be able to return the Pre-K through 5 students to five day per week classes. Ms. Shuckel stated that while granular data is not available to the public, decisions regarding schools would be risk-based and take into account more than just the number of cases. Ms. Shuckel then discussed how it is determined where cases reside.

The Committee thanked Ms. Schuckel and Dr. Gaynor. Dr. Gaynor thanked the community members and administration for their efforts and their sacrifices.

Dr. Carter described the plan for moving students in grades Pre-K through 5 to attending school five days per week, allowing for approximately 20 hours of in-person instruction. He stated that there would still be asynchronous and live sessions for students in the afternoons and that plans need to be finalized and

negotiated with the WEA. Dr. Carter then discussed scenarios where schools may be required to operate remotely. For a temporary closure, the schools would follow the hybrid schedule with the in-person days becoming live remote instruction. He then stated that if schools were closed for a long period of time, schedules would be adjusted to serve the purpose of an all remote model, noting that he believed such a switch could occur fairly seamlessly.

Ms. Onika Jenkins discussed the transition back to school for Boston students. She reported a broad range of experiences for families, from smooth to “a logistical nightmare”. She noted that the METCO director and liaisons have been a great support for families. Ms. Jenkins reported that Ms. La Toya Rivers was working with families and the athletic director to support the Boston students participating in sports, particularly with transportation logistics. She also discussed efforts at the city and state level to extend after-school programs. Ms. Jenkins encouraged families who may need additional help to reach out to the METCO director or liaisons. Finally, she thanked the transportation department and all parties for their efforts for the students. Ms. Jenkins also asked any potential volunteers to contact her.

The committee then read and responded to questions from the community. Dr. Carter responded to question on subjects including instructional time for secondary students, more time for core subjects, support for students during asynchronous learning, checking in with teachers, reconfiguring the hybrid model, the amount of live remote instruction, academic rigor, length of the school day, maximizing core subject learning, emailing students outside of school, freshmen schedules, and the semester calendar.

Dr. Connolly answered questions about students with IEPs and delivery of services and instruction, notice of changes in sport schedules, publication of final health protocols, increasing the number of hours for the all-in person model, and virus testing.

Approval to Authorize Negotiations of Superintendent Contract

Mr. Henry next opened a discussion regarding potential negotiation of Dr. Connolly’s contract. Mr. Henry noted that Dr. Connolly’s contract was set to expire June 30, 2021 and reviewed the process steps for renewing her contract. Mr. Henry stated that he felt Dr. Connolly’s performance, particularly during the pandemic, has been excellent, and that stability in the superintendent position is very important. Each school committee member expressed their support of Dr. Connolly and her performance this year.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the authorization of Mr. Henry and Ms. Raman to negotiate the potential renewal of Dr. Connolly’s contract with Ms. Raman voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

The committee then read and discussed a proposed draft Code of Ethics. Mr. Cobb suggested wording changes for clarification.

The committee then read and discussed a proposed Social Media Policy, which would replace the current policy on electronic communications. The committee members spoke about open meeting law and discussed social media as a means of communicating and engaging with the school community. Ms. Muzila suggested having a third party take notes of the school committee meetings and use social media to relay the information as quickly as possible. After significant discussion, the committee opted to consider the idea further, but that all feel communication to stakeholders is very important.

The committee then discussed the proposed budget guidelines. Mr. Henry proposed to update the document in order to deal with the current pandemic. Ms. Muzila proposed to update the language

regarding technology. Ms. Stewart asked about MCAS testing and use of MCAS data. Mr. Henry recorded the proposed changes and asked that any other changes be forwarded to him.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of August 24th & 31st and September 4th & 8th, with Mr. Henry voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, and Ms. Raman voting aye.

Certificate of Warrant

Ms. Matthews presented a Certificate of Secretary, approval of warrants for payment and requested School Committee permission to sign.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$2,125,111.65 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, to be signed by Ms. Sheri Matthews, with Ms. Muzila voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Stewart, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:07 PM, with Mr. Cobb voting aye, Ms. Muzila voting aye, Mrs. Stewart voting aye, Ms. Raman voting aye, and Mr. Henry voting aye.

Documents used by the Committee:

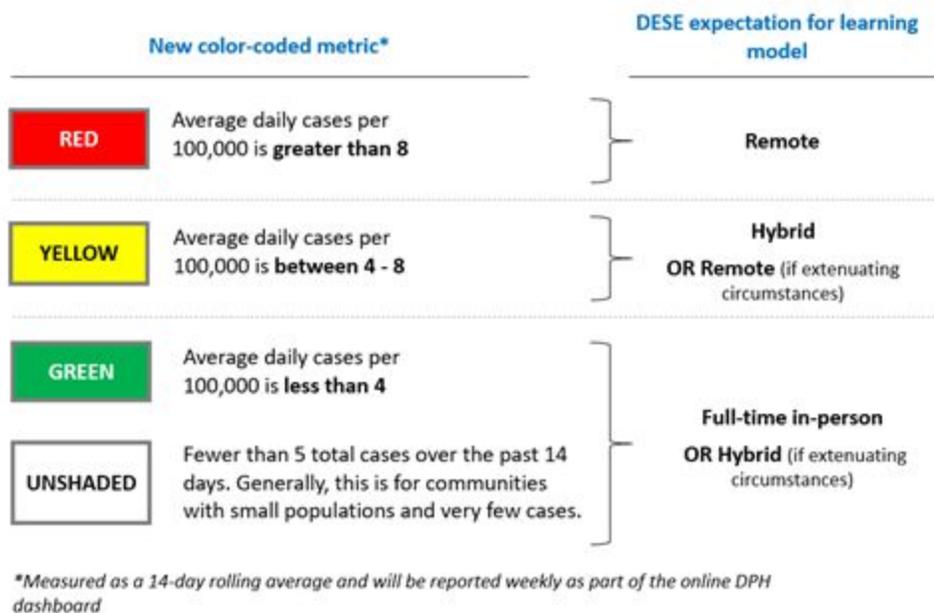
- WEEFC Grant Proposal
- DESE Health Guidelines
- Draft Code of Ethics
- Draft Social Media Guidelines
- Draft Budget Guidelines

Recording of Meeting Provided by Weston Media

Timestamp	Email Address	Title of Grant	Your Name, Position and Contact Email	Please list all schools and grades who will benefit (e.g. Middle School Grades 6-8)	Number of students who will benefit	Description of project and purpose:	Specific goal(s) of project, and expected outcome(s) when the project is completed:	Description of how the project will enhance or enrich the curriculum:	Method of evaluating success of project:	Timetable (when project will begin and end, or specific date of performance, presentation, visit, etc.):	Other possible sources of funding and possible future expenditures linked to this project (e.g. maintenance, parts replacement, etc.):	Has this grant been funded before?	Total \$ requested (include shipping and do not include travel expenses)
9/11/2020 11:00:48	karenj.rietze@gmail.com	Aurthor - Rob Buyea 5th Grade virtual visit	Karen Rietze & Yino Wang, CA Author Visit Committee Members - caauthorvisits@gmail.com	Field School - 5th Grade	Approx 80	Fifth Grade Author Visit: Rob Buyea – award-winning writer. The author of four acclaimed novels, Rob Buyea is best known for BECAUSE OF MR. TERUPT, a challenging and rich novel about a fifth grade class and its teacher. He draws on his many years as an elementary school teacher to create his characters and stories. While keeping his audience captivated with accessible stories, Mr. Buyea imparts many essential lessons about writing, including how to make real-life facts into well-constructed passages that people will want to read.	To engage and excited 5th graders about creative writing, and storytelling.	Exemplifies the writing process, and inspires to writer within.	We collect feedback from teachers and students.	October 28th for a 4 session virtual visits.	None	Yes, as presented	\$1,500

Because the impact of the virus is local, the concept of this particular COVID-19 health/safety designation is focused on the municipal level.

Based on these updated weekly COVID-19 metrics, DESE’s guidance for how these data should be used to inform each school and district’s learning model is as follows:



While average daily cases per 100,000 over a two-week period is the metric that determines the color-coding for each community, districts and schools should also monitor whether cases are increasing or decreasing as compared to the prior period. The local test positivity rate also remains an important metric to monitor. In consultation with local boards of health, districts should consider whether these additional metrics and underlying data may indicate other concerning trends.

- In the case of significant municipal outbreak, as determined by the local board of health or DPH, the superintendent and school leaders must consult with the local board of health to determine whether it is appropriate to close a specific school, schools, or an entire district.
- Before a final decision is made on a school or district closure, the superintendent will consult with DESE for further guidance.

State-wide regression to a previous reopening phase:

If Massachusetts moves back into a prior phase, DESE (in consultation with the Massachusetts

SCHOOL COMMITTEE CODE OF ETHICS
(As Drafted by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees)

Preamble

The acceptance of a code of ethics implies the understanding of the basic organization of School Committees under the Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The oath of office of a School Committee member binds the individual member to adherence to those state laws which apply to School Committees, since School Committees are agencies of the state.

This code of ethics delineates three areas of responsibility of School Committee members in addition to that implied above:

1. Community responsibility
2. Responsibility to school administration
3. Relationships to fellow Committee members

A School Committee member in their relations with their community should:

1. Realize that their primary responsibility is to the children.
2. Recognize that their basic function is to be policy making and not administrative.
3. Remember that they are one of a team and must abide by, and carry out, all Committee decisions once they are made.
4. Be well informed concerning the duties of a Committee member on both a local and state level.
5. Remember that they represent the entire community at all times.
6. Accept the office as a Committee member as means of unselfish service with no intent to "play politics," in any sense of the word, or to benefit personally from their Committee activities.

A School Committee member in their relations with their school administration should:

1. Endeavor to establish sound, clearly defined policies which will direct and support the administration.
2. Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside the administration.
3. Give the chief administrator full responsibility for discharging their professional duties and hold them responsible for acceptable results.
4. Refer all complaints to the administrative staff for solution and only discuss them at Committee meetings if such solutions fail.

A School Committee in their relations with their fellow Committee members should:

1. Recognize that action at official meetings is binding and that they alone cannot bind the Committee outside of such meetings.
2. Realize that they should not make statements or promises of how they will vote on matters that will come before the Committee.
3. Uphold the intent of executive sessions and respect the privileged communications that exist in executive sessions.
4. Not withhold pertinent information on school matters or personnel problems, either from members of their own Committee or from members of other Committees who may be seeking help or information on school problems
5. Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.

SOURCE: Massachusetts Association of School Committees, 5/22/64

Adopted:

SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

As elected public officials, School Committee members shall exercise caution when communicating between and among themselves via electronic messaging services including but not limited to electronic mail communications, Internet web forums and social media.

Under the Open Meeting Law, deliberation by a quorum (three out of five) members constitutes a meeting. Deliberation is defined as movement towards a decision including but not limited to the sharing of an opinion regarding business over which the committee has supervision, control or jurisdiction. A quorum may be arrived at sequentially using electronic messaging without knowledge and intent by the author.

School Committee members should use electronic messaging, between and among members only for housekeeping purposes such as requesting or communicating agenda items, meeting times, meeting dates or to share information for which no action or response is required. Electronic messaging should not be used amongst a quorum of the school committee (which quorum may be arrived at directly or by serial communication) to discuss committee matters that require public discussion under the Open Meeting Law. School Committee members are to be aware that under the public records law, electronic messages between public officials may be considered public records and are to act accordingly.

Members should take the same precautions when posting on any private social media sites and always keep in mind the School Committee policy and Code of Ethics. Recognizing that it may be difficult to determine whether communication constitutes deliberation under the Open Meeting Law, the Attorney General's office cautions public bodies on the use of Facebook and other social media.

When a School Committee member uses social media to communicate about the school district, they should:

1. Clarify that they are communicating as an individual member of the committee, and not an official district spokesperson;
2. Avoid deliberating school district business with a quorum of the committee;
3. If appropriate, and using reasonable efforts, direct complaints or concerns presented online to the appropriate administrator;
4. Avoid posting content that indicates they have already formed an opinion on any pending matters;
5. Post only content that the district has already released through the proper channels to the public;
6. When attempting to restate what happened at a previous meeting, clarify that the posting is not an official record of the committee meeting and be sure to share only information from the open portions of the meeting;
7. Use best efforts to always conduct themselves online in a respectful manner that reflects well on the district;

8. Avoid posting information that has not been made public by the district at an open meeting or otherwise electronically distributed by the district to the public, and never post anonymously about school business;
9. If appropriate, immediately report harassing or defamatory communications to the superintendent if they involve school officials, staff, students or district business;
10. Retain electronic records-including their own posts and content others post to their account-when required to do so by the public records law;
11. Immediately report to the superintendent any potential breach if they lose control of a district-issued or personal electronic device on which confidential district records could be accessed; and
12. Comply with the district's acceptable use policy when using district-issued devices or technology resources, including district Internet access on a personal device.

Adopted:

Weston Public Schools 2021-2022 Budget Guidelines

We are fortunate to live in a town that both demands and supports an excellent school system. The School Administration and the School Committee are dedicated to providing the best possible academic, social and emotional education for our students in a fiscally responsible manner. Uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the 2021-2022 school year make the budget development process especially difficult, and the budget must maintain flexibility to address a number of possible scenarios. The following general guidelines are meant to assist the School Administration in preparing the budget for fiscal year 2022. These guidelines reflect the Town's desire to maintain the overall strength of the school system by supporting the implementation of the Strategic Plan while recognizing continuing local and general economic challenges.

Preserve Excellence in Curriculum and Instruction

Execution of the Strategic Plan requires that we provide adequate resources and funding for major initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased both the cost and complexity of delivering instruction. Planning for Fiscal Year 2022 must consider the likely on-going impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and at the same time provide continued support for our curriculum as well as the need to meet state and federal mandates for student support. At the core of our efforts will be preserving the quality of our programs and services that enable all students to reach high standards and expectations, as measured through data driven assessments, in addition to meeting the state and federal benchmarks established for standardized test scores for all students. This goal must be achieved regardless of the status of the pandemic.

Maintain a Safe and Secure Environment and Infrastructure

The budget should continue to support safe, secure and educationally sound school environments, with the emphasis on addressing the expected disruption and additional requirements of delivering safe instruction during a pandemic. We should continue to collaborate with the Town to achieve economies of scale in the maintenance and operation of our facilities and grounds, as well as in addressing health and safety protocols. We should continue routine maintenance of our facilities, regular building reviews and the multi-year capital project plan. Technology efforts should continue to focus on adequate network capacity, reliability and system security, particularly if remote learning is expected to remain a significant component of curriculum delivery. We will continue to work closely with the Weston Police and Fire Departments and the Board of Health regarding safety and security.

Maintain the Rate of Budget Change at a Responsible Level

The School Administration must continue its sensitivity to the Town's short and long-term financial constraints, including the tax burden of budgetary decisions and the uncertainty of state and federal funds. Staffing levels should be regularly assessed to be sure that they reflect changes in enrollment levels. Budget planning must also consider class size constraints that may be caused by a continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Variations from the minimum class size policy will require the approval of the Superintendent and the School Committee. The School Administration has given primary consideration to supporting program enhancements with offsetting budget reductions. While the School Committee continues to stress the importance of fiscal responsibility, the primary consideration should be given to providing students with the tools and resources they need to succeed at a high level, even in a pandemic.

Approved by the School Committee on : _____