

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

November 4, 2019

I. A. Call To Order

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order at 7:03 PM at Weston Middle School by Mr. John Henry, Chair. In attendance were Mrs. Danielle Black, Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Anita Raman, and Mrs. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; Dr. J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning; and Ms. Sheri Matthews, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations. Ms. Jacqueta Oliver-Bigby, Alternating METCO Representative to the School Committee joined the meeting at 7:18 pm.

Also in attendance were Mr. Anthony Parker, High School Principal; Ms. Marla Schay, Grade 6-12 Guidance Department Head; and Ms. Kath Odell, Elementary Literacy Specialist.

I.B. Chairman's Report –Mr. John Henry welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced members of the School Committee and Administration, and reviewed the agenda's Major Business items. He noted that Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent, was out of the country.

I.C. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Carter highlighted recent events in the district. He reported on the recent Middle School Drama production of *Scared Silly*, a collection of hauntingly hilarious 10-minute plays directed by Claire Higgins and supported by Abe Mills and Becky Kowalski. Dr. Carter noted the play was structured to allow an abundance of student participation, both on stage and behind the scenes. Dr. Carter reported that the High School Math Team, the defending state and New England champions, scored a single meet record of 155 and noted they are going to be tough to beat this year. He informed the Committee that Weston will put forth a Quiz Bowl Team to appear on Season 11 on High School Quiz Show (Channel 2), the first time in eight years. He said they will tape in January with the matches aired in the Spring.

Dr. Carter reported on faculty presenters at conferences, noting that Spanish teacher Alejandro Yegros gave a Standing Room Only presentation, *Teaching Proficiency through Film*, at the annual Massachusetts Foreign Language Association Conference, the first year he offered this particular workshop. He also had another workshop, *Authentic Listening Activities for the Spanish Classroom*, which he has offered for several years at MaFLA. Dr. Carter reported that Susan Erickson, Elementary Science and Social Studies Curriculum Specialist, and Kate Benson, Elementary Technology Integration Specialist, presented at MassCUE last week. They presented on the underwater drone they shared with the School Committee earlier this year. Their presentation, *Meet the Marian Case, Underwater Drone, Explorer of Case Campus Water Bodies*, named for Marian Case since Miss Case had students exploring the Case Estates 100 years ago, and provides students with a unique perspective of comparing and contrasting different bodies of water, both on Case Campus and throughout Massachusetts. Dr. Carter reported that Middle School faculty members Kerri Stoffel and Megan Leddy also presented at Mass CUE "*Differentiated Learning: Reach all learners with an extra T for technology.*"

Dr. Carter noted that Fall sports are winding down this month and reported that the High School Golf Team was 2nd in the state Division 3 golf tournament and Field Hockey, Boys soccer and Football all qualified for the State tournaments. Dr. Carter mentioned that the **Case House Gazette - November 2019** was published last week in electronic form and sent to all families and staff on October 29. He noted some printed copies were available as well.

Dr. Carter reported that Weston Boosters held The Boosters Bash, their annual fundraising event with a "tailgate" theme this year. He indicated there was a good turnout with money raised to support teams as well as scholarships for Weston senior athletes. He expressed appreciation to Boosters for their continued support to athletics across all schools.

Dr. Carter invited attendance at the November 13 community film screening of "Angst: Raising Awareness Around Anxiety," at 7pm, WHS Auditorium. He said this is part of the Weston Public Schools' ongoing social-emotional learning initiative and will open a dialogue in the community regarding an issue facing many WPS students and families. Dr. Carter said all High School

students, parents, and community members are invited, Middle School students are invited with a parent or guardian, and Elementary students are not invited due to the mature content of the film. Dr. Carter noted that another initiative in the elementary and middle schools are taking on is Responsive Classroom, an instructional approach that helps students develop important social/emotional learning skills. Amy Kelly, Director of District Advancement, will hold three workshops for elementary parents, guardians and staff members on practical strategies to promote the "Responsive" approach at home.

Dr. Carter reported that Weston has not yet experienced a hard freeze of four consecutive hours of 28 degrees and lower. He noted the upcoming Friday's predicted temperatures should result in a hard freeze and, therefore, the resumption of elementary morning recess on Tuesday November 12 and temperatures low enough to hold a football game on Friday evening. He said that the end of the EEE virus restrictions is in sight.

I.D. Subcommittee Reports –

Sustainability Committee – Mrs. Stewart said that Solar Select would be able to provide educational opportunity for students.

I.E. Open Forum – Resident John McKenzie complimented the administration on publication of the *Case House Gazette* and encouraged people to read it.

II.A. Discussion of Weston Education Enrichment Fund Committee Proposals

Kimo presented WEEFC grant proposals for Committee approval. He highlighted the four proposals, which included grants for a Middle and High School Assembly on Inspiration and Resiliency with Travis Roy; a Middle School Assembly, "Rehearsal for Life;" funds to support the K-5 Math and Science Night; and funds for "Neuroscience Fun" in AP Psychology.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve WEEFC proposals as presented, per memo of October 29, 2019, totaling \$7,849.97.

II.B. Instructional Coaches

K-8 Instructional Coaches Elizabeth Heichelbech (Middle School), Elizabeth Mania (Field School), Donna Guzman (Woodland School), Felicia O'Brien (Country School), Jenna Poras (Elementary Math), and Melanie Zimmerman (Woodland School Grade 1 Teacher) shared their work in this form of powerful professional development. They reviewed their credential and their vision of coaching, and then discussed ways in which they help support teachers. It was noted that coaching is aligned with the district strategic plan, their work with teachers is supportive and non-evaluative, and they will work to make sure everyone has opportunity to work with a coach. School Committee members expressed appreciation to the coaches for sharing their work. No action taken.

II.C. FY20 Census & Enrollment Report and FY21 Enrollment Projections

Mrs. Matthews presented the annual student census and enrollment report, noting that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requires the report annually based on October 1 enrollments. She reported a total enrollment, Prek-Grade 12 of 2,039 students, comprised of 1,822 Weston residents, 163 METCO students, and 54 faculty or staff children. Mrs. Matthews discussed the fluctuation from projected enrollments and noted the placement of school age children includes those who attend vocational schools (2) collaborative schools (3), out of district placements (10), home schooled (12), in-state private school (553), and out of state private schools (25). She shared how the enrollment projections are developed, based on the October 1 enrollment and the birth data from the Town Clerk and Massachusetts Department of Public Health. She shared Table K, the projected enrolment for next year.

II.D. FY 21 Budget Projection (Budget A)

Mrs. Matthews presented a level service projected budget, Budget A, noting it includes anticipated budget changes in salaries, operating costs and offsets. She noted K-8 sections should remain at 64. Mrs. Matthews reported the projected budget includes an anticipated 3.5 FTE reduction in staff and currently projected at \$43,305,794, a 4.5% increase over FY20. Mrs. Matthews indicated

this is a starting point and the administration will continue to look at making it more efficient, including studying class sizes. She said they fully intend to produce a more reduced budget in January when the proposed budget will be presented. The Committee discussed. There was much discussion regarding the number of sections of students at Middle and High Schools with fewer than 15 students, including undersubscribed Middle School electives. Mr. Henry noted the administration is aware of there being too many classes running with low enrollment and is studying ways to address. Dr. Carter said they are working together to address the dilemma. Ms. Reitano expressed concern about the increase in proposed budget when enrollment is in decline. She suggested some courses be run every other year as a means of addressing low enrollment. Mr. Henry reiterated that the Committee was not anticipating its class size policy but was expecting more efficiency in the process. Mr. Cobb indicated he would not support the budget as it stands now and expressed uncertainty regarding projected enrollments in the Enrollment Report.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted 4-1, with Mr. Cobb voting against, to receive Budget A.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to receive the 2019-2020 Enrollment Report and Projections and adopt Table K, K-12 Enrollment History and Projection, for Fiscal Year 2021 budgeting purposes, using 126 as the projected number of kindergarteners.

II.E. Approval of 2020-2021 School Calendar

The School Committee held a discussion regarding the proposed calendar, including proposed suggestions to move some of the early release Wednesdays to Fridays. The Committee opted to table the calendar approval until the next meeting. No action taken.

II.F. Appointment to Town of Weston Permanent Building Committee (PBC)

Mr. Henry informed the Committee that two candidates had applied for one vacancy on the PBC and noted that their credentials were in packet. He reported that at its meeting on October 29, the Selectmen voted unanimously to appoint Ted Bascom to the Permanent Building Committee, subject to approval by the School Committee, to serve a three-year term expiring October 10, 2022. Mrs. Black expressed support of Mr. Bascom's candidacy.

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mrs. Black and seconded by Mr. Cobb, the School Committee voted unanimously to appoint Ted Bascom to the Permanent Building Committee for a three-year term expiring October 10, 2022.

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

Mrs. Black said the project is moving along, under budget, but with some issues regarding the heating system that were being resolved. She noted there might be a little bit of a slowdown now that the work is primarily indoors but that February is anticipated move in timeframe. No action taken.

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 October 21, 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 Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrant for payment of \$5,611,365.18 by the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Upon motion made by Mr. Cobb and seconded by Ms. Raman, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:28 PM.

Documents used by Committee:

- Revised draft of 2020-2021 School Calendar
- Enrollment Report
- Budget A
- PBC By-laws
- PBC Candidates' Letters of Application