

## MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING

11/23/2020 at 7 P.M.

**Zoom Link:** [Westonorg.zoom.us/j/94015330088](https://westonorg.zoom.us/j/94015330088)

### Documents Used At Meeting:

- [Restraint Policy](#) (for approval)
- [Policy Regarding Students Experiencing Homelessness](#) (for approval)
- [Policy Regarding Students from Military Families](#) (for approval)
- [Policy Regarding Students in Foster Care](#) (for approval)
- [Draft SY 2021-22 Calendar](#) (for approval)
- [WEEFC Grants](#) (for approval)
- [Meeting minutes from 11/9](#) (for approval)

### Call to order & Opening Business

A meeting of the Weston School Committee was called to order by Ms. Anita Raman, Vice-chair. Participating were Mr. Alex Cobb, Ms. Alyson Muzila, and Ms. Rachel Stewart of the School Committee; as well as Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent; 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 School Libraries; and Jen Truslow, Director of Student Services; they were joined by Angela Smagula, legal counsel for the district.

Ms. Raman, presiding over the meeting, reviews the agenda and celebrates various successes.

### Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly shares music department updates, celebrating various student accomplishments. She also shares that Weston students have been working with the Greater Boston Food Bank, (GBFB) which awarded their "2020 Nally Award" to that group of 30 students from Weston. They won the award for raising over \$10,000 towards ending hunger, by creating a simple exercise challenge. Superintendent Connolly shares a video from the GBFB featuring the 30 students.

### Subcommittee Reports

Ms. Muzila shares that the new Equity Committee had its first meeting this month, including over 20 members. She says it has great potential.

Ms. Stewart highlights that the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) meets monthly; she reminds families that SEPAC is a great resource. Contact her for more details!

### Discussion of Hybrid Mode and Pandemic Response

Dr. Connolly shares that WPS has applied for and received state-funding to begin testing symptomatic students, faculty and staff for COVID-19. She shares that recent surveys indicate over 95% of teachers would be willing to be tested, and over 85% of families would be willing to

have their students be tested. She also shares other findings from the surveys, and explains that the Medical Advisory Board continues looking into testing.

Dr. Connolly also shares that because COVID-19 rates have been increasing in Weston and surrounding areas, WPS will continue planning and working with faculty to prepare for more time in schools, but the Board of Health and other experts are advising WPS to stay the current course over the holiday season as we continue to monitor spread.

Dr. Connolly then introduces Dr. Carter to speak to secondary school initiatives. Dr. Carter speaks to efforts at the middle and high schools to identify and expand best practices for instruction in the hybrid model. He explains that there is a positive reaction to live-streaming overall, but WPS is clarifying which elements of instruction work the best for live-streaming. WPS works closely with teachers on synchronous learning and best practices for asynchronous learning. The middle school is also working to alter the schedule to allow for more core academic time, and the possibility of live streaming.

Mr. Cobb thanks Dr. Carter for the updates. He then asks about how WPS will accommodate students who are traveling over Thanksgiving break, such as students waiting for test results. Dr. Carter explains that those plans are currently being developed, and communications will be going out soon.

Ms. Muzila asks about communications with families regarding holiday and travel precautions. Ms. Stewart asks about different risk factors. Dr. Connolly speaks to upcoming communications. Ms. Stewart suggests paraphrasing state guidelines to make details more digestible for families. Dr. Connolly thinks it is important for parents and families to review official state travel policies.

Mr. Cobb encourages being intentional and specific when communicating about the policies. He suggests the district show families plans to accommodate students missing that time in school. He also asks about implications for families who violate state travel guidelines, suggesting that WPS should focus on communicating the shared consequences of violating state travel guidelines. Ms. Raman agrees about clarifying to families all of the options and plans in place.

Mr. Cobb asks about expanding in-person learning by bringing secondary students in-person on Wednesdays. Dr. Connolly explains that the remote Wednesdays have received positive feedback, and seem to be working for students and staff, but they will continue to look at it.

Mr. Cobb follows up by asking about more time for the core curriculum on those days, and emphasizes it as a major secondary-parent priority to address. Dr. Connolly says the district shares that parent priority, and will continue working towards it. Mr. Cobb encourages Dr. Connolly to let the school committee know if it will require more resources to reach that goal.

Ms. Raman asks when the newly adapted middle school schedule will be implemented, and Dr. Carter shares that the draft of the new schedule is almost complete. Working out the final details and logistics could take a few weeks or even up to a month for the school to implement.

Ms. Muzila asks how common it is for WPS teachers to record lessons to share with students. Dr. Carter explains that it is not common now but they are working towards expanding that as a practice, although the recent focus has been more on the quality and quantity of live instruction.

### Policy Review and Approval

Ms. Angela Smagula, who serves as district legal counsel, speaks to the revised restraint policy. She thanks SEPAC for their thoughtful input. She underscores that these policies are governed by state regulations and clarifies differences between restraint policies and restraint procedures.

Ms. Stewart asks for clarification around regulations, which come from the state government, and the procedures, which is basically a manual that is created and implemented by the district. SEPAC and the school committee can be consulted on revisions to the restraint procedures, though that is not typically done.

Ms. Stewart asks where the policies and procedures can be found once updated. Ms. Smagula explains official policies would be posted in the school committee policy manual online, and discusses policy rollouts. Ms. Muzila asks about past compliance with state restraint policies; Ms. Smagula explains that Weston has always been in compliance with the State law.

Ms. Muzila asks about updating other procedures. Ms. Smagula gives context on the policies and procedures involved. She also speaks to the key role of staff training surrounding restraint.

Ms. Raman suggests approving the policy, then working with SEPAC and other stakeholders to finalize the specifics of the procedures. She adds that they could revisit the policy if issues in drafting appropriate procedures arise.

Ms. Stewart suggests removing the language requiring complaints to be filed within thirty (30) school days and in writing. Ms. Smagula explains the importance of a time limit and writing requirement. Ms. Raman suggests sixty school days.

Ms. Muzila expresses discomfort in approving the policies before having developed the procedures. She expresses preference for postponing passing the policy tonight.

Mr. Cobb asks Ms. Smagula if she sees the changes as an improvement to current policies. Ms. Smagula explains that there is not technically a policy in place for restraint at this time and encourages passing the policy and then finalizing procedures with the understanding that the policies could be revisited after. Ms. Raman agrees with that course of action, explaining why she prefers it to delaying passage of the policies. Ms. Stewart agrees to approve the policy if that additional review is added to the agenda for a future meeting. Mr. Cobb and Ms. Muzila both agree with that course of action.

**MOTION:** Ms. Stewart moves to approve the policy, with the caveats that the number thirty (30) will be changed to sixty (60) school days as the statute of limitations for complaints. The policies will also include the training language from SEPAC, and will be passed with the understanding that they will be revisited in four week's time, after the corresponding implementation procedures have been finalized.

Ms. Muzila seconds. The motion to approve the new policy passes unanimously with Ms. Muzila, Ms. Stewart, Mr. Cobb, and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor.

The committee then transitions towards discussion and approval of three other policies. The first is about students experiencing homelessness. Mr. Cobb asks about waiving immunizations. Jen Truslow, Director of Student Services, explains the purpose of that language is to not deny enrollment to students. Mr. Cobb recognizes that, but notes that these policies came before the pandemic.

Ms. Raman suggests looking at what other districts have been doing on these policies. Ms. Truslow shares what she knows about similar districts, and agrees to investigate it further. Mr. Cobb does not want to delay adopting the policies, but would put them on a list to revisit. Ms. Stewart agrees about passing the policies and circling back to add language about vaccines in the future. Mr. Cobb expresses interest in continuing to update policies, including these three.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to adopting all three of the policies before the committee, which pertain to 1) students experiencing homelessness, 2) students from military families, and 3) students in foster care. Ms. Muzila seconds, and the committee votes unanimously to approve all three policies with no additional changes, with Ms. Stewart, Mr. Cobb, Ms. Muzila, and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor.

The committee then transitions to discussion of their policies and practices for public comment. Ms. Stewart likes the proposed changes, supporting the return to public comment at the start of meetings. Ms. Muzila agrees, and sees WPS moving in a positive direction on communications with families. Mr. Cobb adds that school committee meeting attendance is up substantially since the pandemic started, and wants to be sure other guests of the committee have opportunities to participate at other points in the meeting besides just at the beginning. He recognizes that this is more difficult to do over Zoom, and suggests addressing online issues in the policy, while still making sure that the policies will still be appropriate for when the committee returns in-person.

Ms. Raman asks the committee for their attitudes about returning to public comment at the start of the meeting, as opposed to Q+A at the end, for their next upcoming meeting. Ms. Stewart expresses interest in trying it again. Mr. Cobb wants to be sure speakers are being screened. Lee McCanne speaks to some potential screening options, and says he will investigate further after hearing additional thoughts from Ms. Stewart and Mr. Cobb.

The committee then transitions to discussing changes to the calendar. Ms. Raman speaks to changes made since the last meeting, and Ms. Stewart shares thoughts on accounting for Labor Day. Dr. Connolly agrees that it is challenging. Ms. Raman notes assumptions of the calendar.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve the calendar, and Ms. Muzila seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb, and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor of passing the motion to approve the calendar.

### WEEFC Grant Approval

Dr. Carter share the two WEEFC grants. One is for an online nature program for preschooler students, and the other is for air purifiers to help pay for air purifiers donated by WEEFC.

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve both WEEFC grants. Ms. Stewart seconds the Motion. The committee votes unanimously to approve both grants, with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor of both.

#### Question & Answer Period

The committee next reads and responds to public comments and questions.

One community member expresses that it would be helpful to have plans for teachers and families to go remote as needed. WPS plans to survey families on their plans.

One community member expresses dissatisfaction with the middle school schedule. The middle school is working on changing the schedule.

One community member asks about costs per test. We do not have that information yet.

One community member asks about emails being overlooked and what can be done to optimize email formatting to avoid this. While some emails may look similar to past emails, new emails will have new information. It is critical that parents are staying up to date with that information.

One community member asks about more time in person for the high school. We are planning for increased in-person time but no date has been set.

#### Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Ms. Stewart moves to approve the minutes from 11/9/2020. Mr. Cobb seconds the motion to approve. The committee votes unanimously to approve the minutes with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor.

#### Approval of Warrant

Assistant Superintendent Sheri Matthews introduces a regular warrant for \$1,984,256.84

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to approve the warrant. Ms. Stewart seconds the motion, and the committee votes unanimously to approve the warrant, with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor of approval.

#### Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Cobb moves to adjourn. Ms. Stewart seconds the motion to adjourn, and the committee votes unanimously to adjourn with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb, and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor of adjournment.

The committee wishes everybody a Happy Thanksgiving!