

MINUTES OF WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE ONLINE MEETING

12/14/2020 at 7 P.M.

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

Documents Used At Meeting:

- [Middle School Schedule Presentation](#)
- [High School Program of Studies Presentation](#)
- Meeting Minutes (For approval)
 - [12/07](#)

Call to order & Opening Business

A meeting of the Weston School Committee is called to order 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; 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; Onika Jenkins, METCO Representative; HS Principal Paul Peri, MS Principal John Gibbons and MS Assistant Principal Phil Oates, as well as Department Heads Kate Lemons, Jim McLaughlin and Stephen Ribisi.

Mr. Henry, presiding over the meeting, reviews the agenda including the public comment period.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly discusses BinaxNOW coronavirus testing program, which provides rapid-response testing for symptomatic students or employees in schools; and discusses other testing matters. She also thanks the Middle School Wellness Staff for organizing the Turkey Trot, discussing it.

Dr. Connolly also thanks WEEFC for supporting the high school music programs and all of the students. She shares a joyful and calming video from the Music Department, featuring Weston students playing orchestral music on wind and brass instruments. The students were recorded individually, edited together in a musical collage with synchronized audio. [Find the video here:](#)

Subcommittee Reports

Ms. Stewart highlights the upcoming SEPAC meeting, underscoring the PTO Newsletter.

Ms. Muzila speaks to and clarifies the name of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

Ms. Muzila speaks to the sustainability subcommittee, highlights a "recycling challenge" being coordinated by students Weston. There will be recycling stations put at the high school.

Ms. Jenkins reports that the BWMPPO had a successful meeting with school administrators, and a successful fundraiser for the high school seniors, with future fundraisers coming in the future.

Public Comment

Community members may submit themselves to make public comment via Zoom Q&A function.

Lisa Lappi mentions that Mask Breaks are being held inside the schools. She has some safety concerns. She is curious about policies and procedures, and would like to hear more about that. The committee responds to her concerns.

After a brief pause to allow for submissions, the committee sees no comments and closes the comment session, and starts Major Business topics.

Discussion of Hybrid Model and Pandemic Response

Dr. Connolly explains that, due to FERPA and HIPAA, the district is unable to publicly share confidential health information related to the pandemic. She apologizes that we are unable to share more information, explaining the confidentiality regulations. WPS would share more if we could, but anyone who is identified as a close contact to a positive case is being contact-traced. We work closely with Weston Board of Health, with no known cases of transmission in schools.

Dr. Connolly asks that everyone continue to follow all health and safety protocols, including staying home while awaiting test results or if symptomatic. She then discusses both rapid-result testing for symptomatic people in schools and testing for all asymptomatic community members. She encourages families to contact school nurses with any questions about anything re: COVID.

Dr. Connolly next shares that the state department and board of education are updating student learning time requirements, revising schedules to add more live synchronous instruction time. She also discusses mask breaks, and the conditions in which mask breaks are allowed indoors.

Dr. Connolly then introduces Middle School Principal John Gibbons and Assistant Principal Philip Oates to share planned changes to the MS schedule, presented for consideration. They present the changes, which reinforces safety, includes all courses per day, and allows for live simulcasting classes, so that students at home can engage with live in-person hybrid instruction. For example, Hybrid Cohort A is in person in a class, while Cohort B is livestreaming that class.

Mr. Gibbons explains the changes discussing benefits, key steps, and anticipated challenges. Mr. Oates discusses how families can help support students to prepare for and engage with livestreams. They next clarify the rollout timeline, which includes a MS parent forum about the new Hybrid model schedule on 1/7/2021 at 6:30 P.M. held over Zoom, hosted by Mr. Gibbons. After several more minutes of detailed presentation of the new schedule and related changes, and discussing teachers' perspectives, they invite questions and comments from the committee.

Ms. Stewart asks if HS times will be impacted by changes. The schools are collaborating, all on the same page. She asks if cohorts will mostly be kept together, with minor changes, and this is confirmed. Ms. Muzila asks about transportation changes. Bus routes may shift slightly earlier.

Ms. Muzila also asks about addressing certain challenges discussed during their presentation, and suggests more surveying of families about how to optimize the new system as it rolls out. Mr. Gibbons discusses responding to those challenges and discusses surveying the community. Mr. Oates expands on those discussions and encourages families to let them know about

issues or challenges that arise. Ms. Muzila also asks about tech issues that may arise in live streamed classes, and Dr. McCanne discusses challenges with computers, and upcoming improvements.

Ms. Stewart asks if cameras will be required to be on. Students are asked to keep cameras on. Ms. Raman asks for clarification on the difference between simulcasting and other live streams, and Mr. Oates details that distinction and related considerations for how these classes operate. Ms. Stewart asks about prioritization and concerns about remote students maybe falling behind.

Mr. Cobb asks about increasing or improving technology use, and world language class periods. Mr. Cobb also asks about having students in school on Wednesday, even if it is a small cohort. Ms. Jenkins asks about communicating new transportation schedules to families ahead of time. Mr. Henry asks about changes to RLA. That schedule will mirror the new hybrid schedule. Mr. Henry also asks about impacts on world language classes. Ms. Muzila asks about students who may need additional in-person days and creating flexibility for students and families who need it.

Ms. Muzila also asks about snacking during mask breaks, which is the time for students to eat. Ms. Muzila also asks if high school students might be able to contribute volunteer time, and this is already going on through the national honor society program. MS would love more volunteers.

High School Program of Studies

Mr. Henry introduces WHS Principal Peri, who introduces additions and changes to the program of studies for World Languages, English, Science, and Mathematics. He and department heads review respective changes for each department. Mr. Cobb asks about English honors classes, and expresses skepticism for proposed changes. Mr. Henry echoes his skepticism and invites further discussion. Ms. Lemons, English Department Head, contextualizes changes. Mr. Henry and Ms. Raman each ask additional questions about changes to the English program, and Ms. Lemons responds to each of their questions, further elaborating on reasoning behind changes.

Ms. Stewart asks about the origins of honors classes in the English program, which Ms. Lemons clarifies. Ms. Stewart asks Mr. Henry to explain what changed a few years ago, which he had mentioned. He explains what the discussion was about, and its origins. Ms. Stewart asks Dr. Connolly to share her perspective on it. Dr. Connolly suggests a potential blend of the versions.

Dr. Carter shares his perspective about the changes and Ms. Muzila agrees, explaining why she sees this as a good opportunity. She asks other members to explain their hesitation. Mr. Henry points to a broader conversation about honors courses within the broader HS program of study. Mr. Cobb points out that in 2017 there were several proposals discussed during the formal review of the English program and curricula; but the new proposal regarding 10th grade honors english was not one of the recommendations made by the professional ELA/Drama Program Review that was presented to the School Committee on 3/20/2017. Mr. Cobb goes on to explain why he does not yet feel ready to vote on these changes. Dr. Connolly suggests reconsidering changes to the honors sections of the English program to look at more data, and moving ahead with other pieces. Ms. Lemons clarifies two other points before the discussion changes subject.

Principal Peri introduces the additional changes. Committee members have no further questions at this time. Mr. Cobb suggests voting on all of the proposed changes, except for the English department. Mr. Henry suggests that Dr. Connolly, Dr Carter and Ms. Lemons return to discuss the English program at a later meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Henry makes a motion to approve the four total changes to the program of studies for High School World Language (1), Science (2) and Mathematics (1). Mr. Cobb seconds the motion to approve, which passes unanimously with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila and Mr. Henry voting aye to approve.

Ms. Stewart asks for additional data reports about the English program and its honors section. Ms. Raman asks for additional data reports along the same lines. Ms. Lemons will investigate. The committee thanks the high school leaders before transitioning to discussion of the budget.

FY 2021-22 Budget Discussion

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Sheri Matthews provides another review of the budgeting process, although not much has changed since the meeting one week earlier. There is no information yet about additional federal funding. The district was able to secure C.A.R.E.S. Act Grant funding. Ms. Matthews also highlights some upcoming budget meetings. Mr. Henry reminds families that January and February budget hearings invite public comment. The committee commends Ms. Matthews

Appointment of Dr. Connolly to the EDCO Collaborative Advisory Board

MOTION: Mr. Henry makes a motion to appoint Dr. Connolly to the advisory board. Mr. Cobb seconds the motion to approve, which passes unanimously, with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila and Mr. Henry voting aye to approve.

Approval of WEEFC Grants

Dr. Carter presents a \$5000 WEEFC grant to host an author to speak to elementary students.

MOTION: Mr. Henry makes a motion to approve. Mr. Cobb seconds the motion to approve, which passes unanimously, with Mr. Cobb, Ms. Stewart, Ms. Raman, Ms. Muzila and Mr. Henry voting aye to approve.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Mr. Henry moves to approve the minutes from 12/07/2020. Ms. Raman seconds the motion to approve. The committee votes to approve the minutes with Ms. Stewart, Ms. Muzila, Mr. Cobb and Ms. Raman all voting aye in favor. Mr. Henry abstains because he was not in attendance.

Approval of Warrant

Assistant Superintendent Sheri Matthews introduces a regular warrant for \$1,941,860.90

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

The committee agrees to respond to unanswered questions or public comments directly offline.

Adjournment

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