

WESTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES (Zoom Livestream Meeting)
Monday 3/13/2023 at 6:30 PM

This meeting was streamed in real time via Zoom. Recording may be found here:
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/weston/video/64108658ca553f0008e1bab0?page=HOME>

Questions or comments? Contact: SchoolCommittee@weston.org -
www.westonschools.org

DOCUMENTS USED AT MEETING

- [Field 1 Presentation](#)
- [Superintendent Search Community Survey Results](#)

ATTENDING PANELISTS

School Committee: Mr. Kenneth Newberg (Chair), Ms. Alyson Muzila (Vice-chair), Ms. Maija Cirulis-Gooch, Ms. Attia Linnard, and Mr. Jeffrey Lucas

Also attending: Dr. Midge Connolly (Superintendent), Ms. Sheri Matthews (Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations), Dr. Lee McCanne (Director of Technology and Libraries), Ms. Keitric Johnson (METCO Representative to the School Committee), Ms. Cortney Leung (Student Representative to the School Committee), Mr. Charlie Hipwood (Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee member), Mr. Matt Seltzer and Ms. Lisa Reitano (members of the joint Budget Advisory Committee to the Superintendent)

OPENING BUSINESS

Mr. Newberg welcomes attendees and calls the School Committee meeting to order at 6:30pm. Mr. Newberg advises that due to the amount of material on tonight's agenda, the meeting will occur at a faster pace. Due to her limited availability this evening, Mr. Newberg postpones further opening business to allow Ms. Linnard to provide the feedback regarding the interim Superintendent obtained during last week's open forums. *For the purposes of these minutes, this information is included under Major Business, Interim Superintendent Search Process.*

Chairman's Report

Mr. Newberg recognizes and congratulates Dr. Carter for being a finalist for Belmont Public Schools' Superintendent. He then reviews the full agenda for the evening.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Connolly advises she is closely watching the incoming winter storm and will advise of any closures/early releases in the morning. Dr. Connolly recognizes WMS Principal John Gibbons and thanks him for his dedication to Weston. She then advises recent and upcoming WPS events. Dr. Connolly provides updates on Field School from Dr. Green and announces the successes of WHS students at the recent DECA competition. Dr. Connolly requests emergency approval from the School Committee for qualifying students to travel to Florida to attend the next stage of the competition, as the deadline is March 14, 2023. **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to approve the trip; Mr. Newberg seconds the motion.** Via roll call vote, the School Committee unanimously votes in favor of the motion.

Subcommittee Reports

Ms. Leung provides updates regarding recent and upcoming events within the district, focusing on the student vs. teacher basketball game and the Fractal Fair. Ms. Muzila provides an update on the composting initiative at Field School. Ms. Johnson congratulates a METCO student for being inducted into the National Honors Society, as well as upcoming METCO-related events.

Public Comment

Mr. Ed McLoughlin, President of the WEA, with a significant number of WEA members seated behind him, reads an abridged version of the union's vote of no confidence letter to the School Committee. As no other community members wish to provide public comment, Mr. Newberg motions to conclude this portion of the agenda and reads a statement in response to the union's vote of no confidence.

MAJOR BUSINESS (25:52)

Fundraising for Field 1 lights (Vote)

Ms. Linnard logs out of the meeting. As a follow-up to his presentation at the January 9, 2023, School Committee meeting, Mr. Hipwood presents further information in regard to adding lights to Field 1. He advises in response to light pollution concerns that the proposed lights would shed light approximately 150 feet from the bulb, not considering any trees or other blockage. The light pollution would be indiscernible from moonlight. Mr. Hipwood advises the projected operating costs and expected use of the field. Ms. Muzila recommends discussing the lights with the town Planning Board, as they have been concerned with "Dark Sky" type lights, and these bulbs do not meet those requirements. He explains that nearby residents have not provided feedback on the plans yet. Mr. Hipwood advises the purpose of his presentation is to obtain the support of the School Committee to proceed with the plans, prior to completing the

fundraising and finalizing logistics. Dr. Connolly vocalizes her support of the plans. Subject to the approval of design and permitting from the School Committee or Administration, **Ms. Cirulis-Gooch motions to approve the request to proceed with private fundraising; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion.** Via roll call vote, the present School Committee members unanimously vote in favor of the motion.

School Choice Public Hearing (Vote)

Mr. Newberg motions to open the public hearing regarding School Choice; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion. Via roll call vote, the present School Committee members unanimously vote in favor of the motion. As no hands were raised, **Mr. Newberg motions to close the public hearing regarding School Choice; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion.** Via roll call vote, the present School Committee members unanimously vote in favor of the motion. Mr. Newberg explains School Choice and the negative financial impact it has on the districts. Dr. Connolly explains the district could participate in the future; however, she does recommend not participating at this time due to the amount of complexities involved with the program. **Mr. Newberg motions to opt of the School Choice program; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion.** Via roll call vote, the present School Committee members unanimously vote in favor of the motion.

FY24 Final Budget Discussion, Deliberation, and Recommendation (Vote)

Mr. Newberg provides background on the FY24 budget and explains that recent staffing changes have allowed for money from the previously discussed budget to be reallocated for the permanent Superintendent search scheduled for next year and any DEI initiatives the School Committee decides to pursue. Dr. Connolly voices her objection to the 17% reduction in salary to the Director of Equity and Professional Development considering the amount of work done by this office and the unprecedented scale of the reduction. Mr. Newberg advises the School Committee does not reduce individual salaries, rather the money available to pay for a position. **Mr. Newberg motions to approve the budget as amended; Ms. Cirulis-Gooch seconds the motion.** Ms. Muzila seconds Dr. Connolly's objection, and adds that while she is glad that there are funds set aside for DEI Initiatives, she is not in favor of reducing a person's salary by 17%. Via roll call vote, the present School Committee members unanimously vote to approve the budget as amended and send it to the town meeting.

Interim Superintendent Search Process (Info)

The following was presented by Ms. Linnard prior to the Chairman's Report: Ms. Linnard provides the feedback obtained during the School Committee's open forums for elementary and secondary parents. She advises that a common theme was that, while building-level communication was adequate, community members felt communication (both in-person and via other outlets) from the next Superintendent regarding the district could be improved. Another major theme was maintaining the status quo while serving as interim. Other feedback included a desire to focus on the secondary schools, academic rigor, and students' wellbeing. Ms.

Linnard advises district administrators and teachers are seeking an interim Superintendent who will support them and the qualified staff currently in place.

The following was presented during the scheduled time for this topic: Mr. Newberg reviews the sources used to obtain feedback for the interim Superintendent search. As a summary, Mr. Newberg quotes feedback from the WEA, district administrators, community members, and students to establish that the common desired traits were a joyful communicator, community builder, collaborative decision maker, a leader familiar with the district, and planner with the ability to set data-driven goals. Mr. Lucas discusses the data obtained from the survey in greater depth. Ms. Leung shares the methods by which she obtained student feedback. Ms. Muzila, Ms. Cirulis-Gooch, Mr. Lucas, and Ms. Johnson voice their preferences on the type of interim they wish to hire, with the overall consensus being interim-to-hire (rather than strictly an interim) with the understanding that a full search for a permanent Superintendent will occur regardless of the type. **Mr. Cirulis-Gooch motions for the screening subcommittee to prioritize the possibility of a longer-term candidate when screening resumes; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion.** Via roll call vote, the present School Committee members unanimously vote in favor of the motion. Mr. Lucas, Ms. Cirulis-Gooch, Ms. Muzila, and Ms. Johnson describe their ideal candidate.

Credential and Licensure Requirement (Info)

Mr. Newberg brings this topic to the attention of the School Committee based on comments received from community members. Dr. Connolly explains that during the COVID-19 pandemic, DESE allowed for emergency licensure to be used in districts given the difficult nature of hiring. She continues to say that the district did not need to take advantage of this until this past year but those faculty members hired have the proper credentials and certification. Dr. Connolly advises that the expectation is that those teachers obtain the proper licensure. Dr. Connolly advises there is no standard timeframe for obtaining the licensure. Mr. Newberg suggests that, given the nature of hiring at this time, there is no need for further discussion; there is no opposition to this suggestion.

CONSENT AGENDA (01:36:02)

Mr. Newberg motions to approve the below consent agenda; Mr. Lucas seconds the motion. Via roll call vote, the present School Committee members unanimously vote in favor of the motion subject to the correction of Ms. Sarah Cahill's name in the minutes for January 17, 2023.

- Meeting Minutes
 - Full School Committee Meetings: January 17, 2023, January 31, 2023, February 1, 2023, and February 27, 2023
- Weston Annual Town Meeting Warrant Book Report
- Regular Warrant

- Appointment of Derrek Joyce as School Committee Secretary

OTHER BUSINESS (01:39:14)

Ms. Matthews advises the other business originally slated for this meeting has been moved to the March 27, 2023, meeting to allow for further research.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING'S AGENDA TOPICS

- Interim Superintendent Search Finalists
- FY23 Financial Update and Line-item Transfer Requests
- Elementary Math Curriculum Update: Illustrative Math Rollout
- Student Opportunity Act
 - Updates to WPS Student Opportunity Act Plan (SY23 - 26)

ADJOURNMENT (01:40:35)

Following the motion made by Mr. Newberg and seconded by Ms. Muzila, the Weston School Committee voted by roll call vote at 8:11pm to adjourn to executive session and not return to open session for the purpose of discussing WEA Collective Bargaining strategy as doing so in open session would have a detrimental effect on bargaining position. Ms. Muzila voted aye, Ms. Cirulis-Gooch voted aye, Mr. Lucas voted aye, and Mr. Newberg voted aye.