

**Westport School Committee
Regular Meeting
DATE: Thursday, October 21, 2021
TIME: 6:30 p.m.
PLACE: Virtual Meeting**

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
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MINUTES

Members Present: Michelle Orlando, Melissa Pacheco, Nancy Stanton Cross, Antonio Viveiros

Members Absent: Nancy Tavares

Also Present: Kevin Aguiar Assistant Principal Westport Middle School, Thomas Aubin Superintendent, Laura Charette Principal Westport Middle School, Jennifer Chaves Extended Day Director, Stacey Duquette PreK-Gr. 4 Principal, Darren Elwell Director of Curriculum, Mike Fernandes Start 'Em Young Program Director, Michael Grandfield Assistant Principal Westport High School, Kristin McDaniel Human Resources Director, Kerri McKinnon Principal Westport High School, Lori Melo Administrative Assistant, Rick Monast Teacher, Sean Persico Assistant Principal Westport Middle School, Michelle Rapoza School Business Manager, 14 Community Participants

I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance - Vice Chair Stanton Cross opened the Virtual School Committee Meeting at 6:31 pm. with a quorum of the members present, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Vice Chair Stanton Cross announced:

This meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, Section 20 and on June 16, 2021 Governor Baker signed an Act relative to extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency.

Comments and Statements from the Public - Ms. Dufresne a parent who has children in grades 5 and 8 shared concerns on COVID policies. Ms. Dufresne mentioned that DESE guidance states that mask breaks should be given during the day. She reported that 5th graders are not getting mask breaks.

III. Informational Agenda

A. Superintendent Report - Mr. Aubin reported the district received a notice that U.S. News and World Report recognized Westport Middle School as one of the top 20% of all middle schools. There was a meeting with the Finance Committee on Tuesday for a preliminary discussion on the FY23 budget. Mr. Hartnett mentioned it is looking like a tight budget year coming up. They are meeting and keeping the lines of communication open. A meeting was held with Mr. Viveiros, Mr. Davidson and the Business to Business group to discuss the potential usage of the old high school building.

B. Bill Warrant: 10-22-21 - Vice Chair Stanton Cross asked if everyone has reviewed the bill warrant dated 10-22-21 in the amount of \$163,385.02? Vice Chair Stanton Cross asked if there were any questions or discussion? There were none.

C. Discussion of WMHS Grades 10-12 Field Trip to Japan – April Break 2023 - Mr. Monast gave an overview about the trip. He has been negotiating with EF Tour and mentioned there is a large amount of interest. The trip is filled up to the maximum and people can change their minds at no risk until February of next year.

Ms. Pacheco mentioned on the agenda it states “enjoy time to explore on your own” and asked if the children are supervised? Mr. Monast said yes, they split groups into 2 and there is a 5 to 1 student to teacher ratio. Ms. Pacheco asked if anything is done for students that cannot to afford to go? Mr. Monast explained that EF Tour provides a quarterly scholarship for students and there are fundraising opportunities as well. Payments are spread out to increase affordability.

Vice Chair Stanton Cross asked if there were any further questions? There were none.

D. Start 'Em Young Program Update – Mr. Fernandes reported he is working closely with many of the Westport staff. There are over 80 students in Grades 1-4 signed up to participate in the program. These activities are helping children get active and off the couch, as well as helping deal with social emotional issues. In addition, enrollment in the senior class of 2021 is down by 40%, and in 2020 by 63%, so these programs may increase numbers. There is no better time to be ingrained in the Wildcat culture than to start at a young age. It has been proven that kids involved in extracurricular activities do better with attendance, grades and behavior. They are looking to work in partnership with the high school students to serve as mentors for athletics. Another important aspect is students have a lasting impression on the things they did in addition to their core academics.

Vice Chair Stanton Cross thanked Mr. Fernandes and mentioned she is concerned about turning away students. Mr. Fernandes mentioned they have 67 students with 2 coaches. They need more coaches. Mr. Grandfield explained the program sign up closed on October 12 and they were receiving calls to sign up after the deadline. They began to create a waiting list. Ms. Stanton Cross mentioned if good student athletes from the high school can be found, maybe they could receive compensation. Student athletes could be trained by the coaches.

Mr. Viveiros asked if students can get credit? Ms. McKinnon explained they offer community service hours for both middle and high school.

Ms. Pacheco shared that she likes the idea of incorporating high school students and added that engaging college student athletes could also be looked at.

Ms. Orlando shared this is a great program.

Vice Chair Stanton Cross asked if there were any further questions? There were none.

E. Enrollment Update – Ms. Rapoza reported they are experiencing an all-time high enrollment. Since September there are 1,430 students. The numbers presented gives an idea of where the district stands right now. Ms. Rapoza will bring figures to represent a 7-year comparison.

F. Business Manager Report – FY22 Quarterly Budget Review - Ms. Rapoza shared her screen with a spreadsheet entitled “**Summary of Expenditures for Westport Community Schools” 7/1/2021 - 9/30/2021**. This is the 1st quarterly report for FY22 that covers General Education, SPED, Transportation and total budget figures. Ms. Rapoza reported the district is basically in line at this time.

Vice Chair Stanton Cross asked if there were any further questions?

Mr. Viveiros pointed out SPED salaries were 30% higher than regular ed salaries.

The committee requested for Ms. Rapoza to provide a 3-year comparison using 2018, 2019, and 2020 showing the state average compared to Westport’s average for salaries and enrollments.

G. Mask Mandate Update - Mr. Aubin reported on September 27 the Commissioner of Education put out a statement extended the mask mandate for K-12 students until November when it will be looked at again. If middle and high school students as well as staff reach 80% vaccination rate then it may be lifted.

Ms. Duquette will be sending out a survey to parents/guardians of students between the ages of 5-11 to find out if there is a market for holding vaccination clinics.

Ms. Stanton Cross asked if mandatory mask breaks are left up to districts to determine? Mr. Aubin clarified that DESE states masks can be removed at lunch and outside. Having leadership develop a protocol that teachers can adhere was mentioned. Ms. Stanton Cross asked the leadership how they handle mask breaks at their respective schools.

Ms. McKinnon at the high school reported they do not define mask breaks and leave this up to the teachers. She is seeing frequent mask breaks.

Ms. Charette at the middle school sent out a staff email suggesting a mask break in the morning, one in the afternoon and at lunch for a total of 3 times. Ms. Charette mentioned teams work together on mask breaks and she will ask teams to schedule mask breaks amongst themselves.

Ms. Duquette reported last year they had set times for mask breaks and tents. This year there is no tents. They have mask breaks at recess, PE outdoors, and some teachers have been teaching outdoors. She reported having no issues.

Ms. Orlando asked to clarify what is DESE guidelines for lunch and assigned seating?

Ms. McKinnon at the high school reported students can take masks off at lunch. There are 7 chairs to a table. Whenever students are out of their seat's masks are on. There is no assigned seating.

Ms. Charette at the middle school reported after talking to nursing staff it was suggested to do assigned seating at lunch for contact tracing. Mr. Persico and teachers assigned students to tables not same seats. Students sit with other students they are most familiar with since the beginning of school. They do give students a chance to move out of those seats and know that some kids might need to move. Ms. Charette explained they teach self-advocacy to students. It was noted this age group is not vaccinated.

Ms. Duquette explained at MAC students walk into the cafeteria with masks on. When they sit down they can take their mask off, eat lunch, and when done get up and put mask back on. Students can chat with masks on. They keep track of where students are sitting.

Mr. Grandfield explained at WES Grades 1-4 students enter cafeteria with their class. Students can choose where they sit and can eat with friends. Tables can fit up to 4 students but they typically have 3 to a table. Extra tables allow kids to move if there is a need to be separated.

Vice Chair Stanton Cross asked if there were any further questions? There were none.

H. Subcommittee Updates - Mr. Viveiros reported a School Building Committee meeting took place last night. A question on when the gym would be completed was asked? Mr. Gilchrist gave a November 1 date for completion. They are adjusting the gym floor, re-stripping, painting, sealing and need to move backboards. Funds will be taken from contract contingencies.

The following items are also being completed:

Auditorium is being wrapped up, hanging curtains, staging being put up.

Alternative gym space - waiting on floor and for the FFE contractor to get equipment setup.

Floor - working to get this resolved.

Light controls - still working on this.

Staff have been reporting any problems they run into. Lists get sent to the contractor, OPM, and architect. There are 2 separate lists one for middle school and one for high school.

Mr. Aguiar reported they had a meeting with Mr. Gilchrist every week at 7:30 am. to increase the lines of communication.

Vice Chair Stanton Cross asked if there were any further questions?

Ms. Pacheco asked if any claims for insurance are being made? Mr. Viveiros explained you need to be at a certain percentage in the contract before you can do this.

Mr. Aubin announced there will be a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on November 12 at 10:30 am. MSBA and dignitaries have been invited.

Mr. Viveiros mentioned there was supposed to be a meeting held by the Campground Subcommittee last night but they did not have enough people in attendance.

1. Request for a SBC Member to Provide Weekly Updates - Vice Chair Stanton Cross requested to table this item for a future agenda.

2. SBC Minutes - A copy of the Minutes from September 15, 2021 was included in the packet.

VI. Action Agenda

A. Review and Act on Minutes of Thursday, October 7, 2021 -

A motion was made to approve the Minutes of Thursday, October 7, 2021.

Motion by Pacheco, seconded by Orlando

4/0/0

B. Review and Act on Washington DC Trip – Grade 8 – June 1, 2022 to June 4, 2022 – Ms. Charette explained a vote is needed. They would like to hold an informational meeting on November 3 at 6 pm. for families.

A motion was made to approve the Washington DC Trip for Grade 8 from June 1, 2022 to June 4, 2022.

Motion by Orlando, seconded by Viveiros

4/0/0

C. Review and Act on Daily Substitute Rates – K. McDaniel - This was reviewed at the last meeting and a chart was presented.

A motion was made to accept rates set out for Daily Substitutes.

Motion by Pacheco, seconded by Orlando

4/0/0

D. Review and Act on Additional Food Staff at the Middle-High School – M. Rapoza - This item was tabled until next meeting.

V. **Routine Matters - Correspondence and Notices** - Vice Chair Stanton Cross reported information was received on the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review and the U.S. News and World Report’s accommodation for grades 7 - 8, which are now the present 9th and 8th graders.

VI. Topics the Chair could not Reasonably Anticipate Forty-eight (48) Hours in Advance of the Meeting -

Vice Chair Stanton Cross mentioned there have been several parents that have concerns about their K student’s backpacks being smaller than the student Chromebook carrying cases. Ms. Duquette verified that the cases are big. The Chromebooks are meant to go back and forth right now to practice and learn educational programs used in the classroom and typing skills. At some point teachers will be telling the students they do not need to bring them in everyday, but for now they are in a routine. Ms. Duquette will talk to teachers about this issue and will work with families.

Discussion took place on any Chromebook issues. It was reported that students do forget to bring them in as well as the chargers.

FOLLOW UP ITEMS

The committee requests:

- Ms. Rapoza to provide a 3-year comparison using 2018, 2019, and 2020 showing the state average compared to Westport’s average for salaries and enrollments.

VII. **Adjourn** - A motion was made to adjourn. With members being present and voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes.

Motion by Viveiros, seconded by Orlando

4/0/0

Roll call vote:

Orlando	Yes	Pacheco	Yes	Stanton Cross	Yes	Viveiros	Yes
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The Virtual School Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:09 pm.

MEETING DOCUMENTS

- WMHS Grades 10-12 Field Trip to Japan – April Break 2023
- Start 'Em Young Program Update
- Enrollment Update
- Business Manager Report – FY22 Quarterly Budget Review
- Mask Mandate Update
- Washington DC Trip – Grade 8 – June 1, 2022 to June 4, 2022
- Daily Substitute Rates
- Meals Per Labor Hours
- Lunch FY22
- Final Report Tiered Focused Monitoring Review
- U.S. News and World Report communication on Westport Junior/Senior High School