Westport School Committee
Regular Meeting
DATE: Tuesday, March 18, 2025
TIME: 6:30 p.m.
PLACE: WMHS – Auditorium

MINUTES

Members Present: Gloria Cabral, Evan Gendreau, Jason Pacheco, Melissa Pacheco, Christopher Thrasher
Also Present: Kevin Aguiar Westport Elementary School Principal, Thomas Aubin Superintendent, Laura Charette Westport Middle High School Principal, Stacey Duquette Macomber Principal, Jack Keane Student Representative, Ryan Keane Student Representative, Lori Melo Executive Secretary, Michelle Rapoza School Business Manager, Melissa Sousa Executive Assistant for Business Services, 2 Community Participants

I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance - Chair Evan Gendreau opened the Regular School Committee Meeting at 6:48 pm. with a quorum of the members present, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Evan Gendreau announced Under MGL Chapter 30A, section 20(f) – This meeting is being recorded.

II. Comments and Statements from the Public - Sarah Broadbent community parent commented there is a lack of communication to parents when things happen within the schools when safety events occur. She requested to consider having better communication moving forward.

IV. Informational Agenda
A. Student Representatives – Ryan & John (Jack) Keane *(taken out of order)*

Ryan Keane reported the following: last parent teacher conferences for the middle school were held today, third term will end April 7, English Language Arts MCAS for grades 7 and 8 will be April 8 and 9, Spring Dance for grades 5,6, and 7 will be April 11, middle school Student Council is running a fundraiser for Forever Paws Animal Shelter, Spring sports is beginning at the middle school and high school with tryouts and practices for baseball, softball, lacrosse and tennis, tomorrow night the Sophomore class will be hosting a Bingo Night Fundraiser.

Jack Keane reported the following: last parent teacher conferences for the high school is March 19, English Language Arts MCAS for grade 10 will be March 25 and 26, congratulations to all seniors for college acceptances and future career plans, Senior Dinner will be March 28 seniors have invited staff members who have made a positive influence on their lives, graduation yard signs for seniors are now on sale with order deadline of April 29, yearbook orders deadline is March 31, Westport High School student body extends a warm welcome to all Japanese exchange students who arrived this past weekend with a celebration at the Black and White Semi-Formal March 21, Senior Class is holding a Krispy Crème Donut Fundraiser deadline is March 28, Westport Advocats and R.I.S.E. are sponsoring the 2nd Annual Jaden Araujo Bowling Fundraiser April 13, Westport Drama Club had a very successful production of *Into the Woods,* Winter Sports season officially ended congratulations to all participants, Co-op Hockey made it to the MIAA State Tournament.

III. Special Agenda – FY26 Education Budget Public Hearing

A. Proposed FY26 School Committee Education Budget - Chair Gendreau announced they are ready to open the public meeting to present the Proposed FY26 School Committee Education Budget.

A motion was made to officially open the Proposed FY26 School Committee Education Budget Public Hearing.

Motion by MPacheco, seconded by Cabral 5/0/0

Public Budget Hearing opened at 6:58 pm.

B. General Discussion of FY26 Proposed Budget - Chair Gendreau gave an overview of the proposed school budget. Latest figures show Town's number at $23,654,943, schools' number is at $23,771,362 with a gap of $116,419. Finance Committee has not approved their number to date.

Superintendent Aubin mentioned there are changes within the Department of Education and was told by Massachusetts Association of School Committees MASC to expect about a 25% cut in revenue which amounts to about $118,000.

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any comments from the committee?

All members expressed their appreciation to everyone involved.

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any comments from the public? There were none.

A motion was made to officially close the Proposed FY26 School Committee Education Budget Public Hearing.

Motion by MPacheco, seconded by Cabral 5/0/0

Public Budget Hearing closed at 7:13 pm.

IV. Informational Agenda

A. Student Representatives – Ryan & John (Jack) Keane - Done above.

B. Superintendent Report – Superintendent Aubin commented that the arts are getting better but not fully back in Westport. In addition, this was a great season for all the sports with credit given to staff and businesses.

C. Committee Liaison Reports - Mr. Thrasher reported the Superintendent Search Subcommittee had its first meeting last week, next meeting will be an Executive Session Friday March 21, 2025 at 4 pm. to choose candidates to interview.

Mr. Pacheco reported he attended the Superintendent Search Subcommittee meeting as a member.

Ms. Cabral and Ms. Pacheco had nothing new to report.

Chair Gendreau reported the Audit Committee met and reviewed the draft auditor letter. No weaknesses were identified; however, areas of concern were raised with security, cash handling, and grant spend downs. Meetings are available to the public.

D. Staff and Student Attendance Report - Chair Gendreau mentioned that all members received copies of these reports covering January 27, 2025 - March 7, 2025 and asked if there were any comments or questions?

Discussion took place on the need to continue these reports on a monthly basis. It was decided to change the frequency to quarterly or when something needs to be brought to the attention of the committee.

E. WCS Bill Warrant: 3/7/25 & 3/21/25 - Chair Gendreau reported bill warrants dated 3/7/25 in the amount of $182,551.01 and 3/21/25 in the amount of $495,620.89 were emailed to school committee members for review.

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any comments?

Mr. Thrasher asked with the rise in electric and gas bills have there been any wild spikes? In addition, did the energy credits get figured out? Mr. Aubin shared in the past they received a bill from Eversource that

was $10,000 over the previous month. Since then we have been wrestling with credits. Ms. Sousa reported the district just received last month credits and she is working on how we stand by the end of March.

Mr. Pacheco asked what is SG Projecto 3, LLC? Ms. Sousa verified that is the solar bills.

F. Proposal of Graduation Requirements – Ms. Charette proposed two changes to the present graduation requirements. First, she is requesting the technology requirement be removed from the formal list to give students more flexibility in their schedules. Second request is to take a pause on the community service requirement to graduate so it can be revamped. Ms. Charette would like to integrate opportunities into the academic courses. Ms. Charette gave examples of how this is being done.

Ms. Charette explained presently students need at least 1 technology course in order to graduate. Ms. Charette mentioned in both the middle and high school technology has been incorporated through many courses. For community service, students need 20 hours to graduate.

Mr. Pacheco mentioned the new budget added a Business Technology Teacher and now we are removing a technology requirement. Ms. Charette explained they still have courses that are business related and she received feedback from students that would like to have entrepreneurship, stock market, and digital literacy. The district still has a business requirement of personal finance.

Chair Gendreau shared his concerns and would like to keep the current requirement until replaced.

Ms. Charette is willing to come back later in Spring to the committee and adjust the proposal for community service showing what a pause would look like. There is still time with no urgency because it is not impacting 2025. The technology requirement is for students to choose courses and needs to be done soon.

Chair Gendreau asked if there was anything further? There was nothing else.

G. Discussion of School Choice for the FY26 School Year – L.Charette, K. Aguiar and S. Duquette

Ms. Rapoza reviewed the current student enrollment as of March 13, 2025, School Choice allotted enrollment, School Choice enrollment that came in for year 24-25, and total School Choice enrollment. There was a total of 14 students that came in out of 35 open slots for School Choice. Money received from School Choice totaled $138,582 and comes directly to the district and not the town.

Projection for next year's enrollment with student to teacher ratios was also reviewed.

Chair Gendreau asked if increase in enrollment is outweighed by the cost of services? Ms. Rapoza explained some situations that this may affect.

Ms. Charette shared it is important to be mindful of the graduation requirements. Students coming into the district at grades 11 and 12 will have a lot of work, so she is not recommending to open School Choice for these grades. Getting them earlier has a better impact, with family buy in much greater at the younger levels.

Ms. Duquette shared that School Choice affects the allocation of resources, adding extra to staffing. In the upper grades, the child is invested in their choice versus in the younger grades it being a family choice. She would like to focus on what can be done for Westport residents first. This could also affect their increase in family engagement.

Mr. Aguiar shared staff concerns and the physical classroom size at 23 students for grades 1,2,3. In grade 1 there is no classroom paraprofessionals just the teacher. Mr. Aguiar is not recommending School Choice for grades 1-3, however grade 4 is an area where students can be increased.

Discussion took place on the pros and cons of School Choice.

Ms. Pacheco requested to get data on enrollment and student to teacher ratio over the past 5 years.

Chair Gendreau mentioned after hearing from the building leaders School Choice is being recommended for just grades 4, 9, and 10. It was noted if you cut School Choice there will be cuts to revenue and staff.

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any questions or comments?

Chair Gendreau mentioned this does not need to be decided until June 1. This will be added to next meeting's agenda for further discussion.

H. Discussion of Superintendent Search Community Survey - Mr. Thrasher explained it was suggested by several members of the Superintendent Search Committee to create a survey to send out to the community on what they would like to see in a new superintendent. Mr. Thrasher is asking for committee approval to move forward with a survey. This survey will be sent out before finalists are chosen and shared on social media and the school website. Ms. Pacheco offered to assist with the survey if needed.

A motion was made to authorize the Superintendent Search Subcommittee to create and disseminate a survey.

Motion by Thrasher, seconded by JPacheco 5/0/0

V. Action Agenda

A. Review and Act on SC Meeting Minutes: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 and Friday February 28, 2025-

A motion was made to approve the School Committee Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, February 25, 2025 and Friday February 28, 2025.

Motion by MPacheco, seconded by Cabral 5/0/0

B. Acknowledgement of $1675 WEF Grant – WHHS Exchange Club – Cultural Outing to NYC and Boston -

A motion was made to approve the $1675 WEF Grant from the WHHS Exchange Club for a Cultural Outing to NYC and Boston.

Motion by MPacheco, seconded by Cabral 5/0/0

C. Review and Act on School Choice for the FY26 School Year -

A motion was made to table a decision on School Choice for the FY26 School Year.

Motion by MPacheco, seconded by Cabral 5/0/0

D. Review and Act on Proposed Graduation Requirements -

A motion was made to approve the removal of the technology requirement for graduation.

Motion by MPacheco, seconded by Cabral 5/0/0

E. Review and Act on Superintendent Search Community Survey - Done above.

V. Routine Matters - Correspondence and Notices - Chair Gendreau reported the FY26 school budget documents are online as well as the presentation to the Finance Committee and Selectboard Meetings.

VI. Topics the Chair could not Reasonably Anticipate Forty-eight (48) Hours in Advance of the Meeting - There were none.

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

Motion by MPacheco, seconded by Cabral 5/0/0

Roll call vote:

Cabral Yes Gendreau Yes JPacheco Yes MPacheco Yes Thrasher Yes

The School Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Documents
FY26 Proposed Budget 2.7.25
Staff and Student Attendance Reports
WCS Bill Warrants: 3/7/25 & 3/21/25
$1675 WEF Grant WHHS Exchange Club Cultural Outing to NYC and Boston
Westport Community Schools School Choice for the 2025-2026 School Year
WHS Graduation Requirements

Submitted by Sharon Pinho School Committee Recording Secretary