

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
January 24, 2023
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Those present included Chair Leda Eizenberg, Vice Chair Linda Chow, Secretary Craig Mack, members Melissa Martin and Catherine Mirick; Assistant Superintendent Sandy Trach; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Technology Megan Bounit; Interim Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Jorge Allen; and Student Advisory representatives Ivy Wang, Sofia Dobado.

Ms. Eizenberg announced that the meeting is being held remotely and recorded by local media and broadcast live by Wellesley Media.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no speakers.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Martin thanked the School Committee for joining the Select Board and the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) at the PBC meeting on January 12 to discuss the Hardy building project. Due to partnering with MSBA, the amount budgeted and presented to Town Meeting for construction funds was based on the feasibility study and some schematic design, which is different from how it is normally done in town. Since that time, inflation has affected costs. The PBC has engaged in multiple rounds of value management and has worked diligently to remain as close to the original budget as possible. As of the January 12 PBC meeting, the project is estimated to be \$60,000 over the budget presented at Town Meeting which is down from \$1,700,000 over budget at the previous estimate phase. This is very good news but two-thirds of the bidding has not yet been completed and it is still possible more funds will need to be requested at Annual Town Meeting.

Ms. Chow provided updates on field projects. There will be a neighborhood community forum regarding the Sprague bathrooms Thursday, February 2. Postcards will be sent soon. Regarding the Hunnewell Track & Field projects, a comprehensive update will be provided at the January 31 meeting with colleagues from the Department of Public Works (DPW). At the recent Design Review Board (DRB) meeting, the bathrooms and concession stand were signed off. Lighting will be discussed at the January 25 meeting. Ms. Chow reminded the Committee and public that the DRB's role is advisory only and they are being asked to review and comment on the design.

Ms. Eizenberg reminded members of the community of engagement norms. She stated the Committee welcomes questions, discussion, and dialogue as part of the educational process. She asked people to remember that educators have students' best interest at heart and emphasized the importance of assuming positive intent.

Ms. Eizenberg stated she attended the Upham band performance the previous week, noting it was a wonderful performance and it was clear how hard the students and band director worked to put it together.

Ms. Martin noted School Committee Office Hours would be held January 26 at 10:00 a.m.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Trach thanked everyone who helped with the literacy webinar. She offered thanks to Grant Smith and the Hardy building team for conducting the community update forum.

The First Robotics Team, Team Ultra Violet, sent a thank you to the Administration and teachers for their generosity and help.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. Wang stated term 3 began this week at WHS and students are adjusting to their new schedules. She announced the formation of a new flag committee. WHS has approximately 20 flags hanging in the cafeteria and there have been numerous suggestions from students about flags to add. The goal is to put all 252 flags representing members of the community in the space.

Ms. Dobado stated students are excited about the new courses that were discussed at the last meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes - December 20, 2022

Gift Acceptances

Field Trip Approval - WHS 2:00 Jazz Band to Greenwich, CT

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

MOVED: Mr. Mack; SECONDED: Ms. Mirick; ROLL CALL: Mr. Mack – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Ms. Eizenberg - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DISCUSSION/VOTE: 2023-24 MS AND HS PROGRAM OF STUDIES

Ms. Trach stated that at the previous meeting, Dr. Chisum and Dr. Ito outlined updates to the WMS and WHS Programs of Studies that included name changes and new courses encompassing a wide range of interests. There have been no further changes since these were brought to the Committee. She clarified that some courses will not be implemented until fall 2024, including AP Language. This will allow for adequate College Board training and syllabus building.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the 2023-24 WMS and WHS Programs of Studies as presented.

MOVED: Ms. Martin; SECONDED: Mr. Mack; ROLL CALL: Mr. Mack – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Ms. Eizenberg - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2ND QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Mahr explained that the FY23 budget is on target with no anticipated surpluses or deficits and revenue receipts are meeting budgeted expectations. She reviewed necessary transfers totaling \$59,402, including the need to cover higher than anticipated substitute and long-term substitute costs. Funds are available to be transferred due to a mid-year retirement as well as the inability to fill TA and paraprofessional positions.

DISCUSSION: FY24 BUDGET

Ms. Eizenberg thanked the Administration and Committee for the informative conversations during the previous week's budget workshops and opened the discussion to the Committee, where topics included the following.

Out of District costs, historically increasing approximately 2.5% each year, will have a state-mandated 14% increase next year that districts must absorb. It was clarified that the Special Education Stabilization Fund cannot be used to cover this \$500,000 increase.

Part of the budget process includes projecting enrollment and budgeting for an adequate number of elementary sections while staying within class size guidelines. Numbers will fluctuate as enrollment opens and continues throughout the spring. The number of sections required per grade and school will not be known until June and decisions will be made at that time.

There was enthusiasm for the decreased bus fee and Ms. Mirick stated it would be great to see it eliminated by FY25. Ms. Martin added that if eliminating fees will increase ridership, that would also be consistent with the sustainability goals of the town.

The Committee discussed the proposed addition of a Recruitment, Development and Diversity specialist. Acknowledging that the position would be helpful and fit with district goals, it is unclear if this is the right year to create this position. Ms. Eizenberg asked if more groundwork should be done to establish best practices for recruitment and retention and to take time to define the job description and scope of the position. Dr. Allen stated the position demonstrated a strategic commitment to diversifying the workforce. He noted the timing was important due to the challenging labor market to have a protected mechanism to support current staff and attract diverse candidates.

Ms. Eizenberg noted there will be more opportunities to discuss the budget before the scheduled vote. She offered thanks to Ms. Trach, Ms. Mahr, and Dr. Allen for answering their questions.

DISCUSSION/VOTE: SPONSORSHIP OF ANTI-RACISM ANTI-BIAS RESOLUTION AND EQUITY AUDIT

Paul Merry, Melinda Arias-Voci, Rachel Voci, Lina Musayev, and John Benzan from the Town of Wellesley DEI Task Force joined the Committee.

Ms. Eizenberg thanked the DEI Task Force members for joining to answer questions in advance of the Committee voting to support and cosponsor Town Meeting Article 17, which would adopt an Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias Resolution as well as appropriate funds for an Equity Audit.

Ms. Mirick thanked the Task Force for their work, noting she was in support of the resolution and equity audit. As it is a town-wide initiative, she asked if it fell within the School Committee's scope. Ms. Arias-Voci stated the hope is to complement the work already being done at WPS and that having a partnership with WPS would facilitate that. Ms. Eizenberg stated that a co-sponsorship would be meaningful by drawing attention to the resolution while having no financial cost with Ms. Chow agreeing it would send a strong message. Mr. Mack also pointed out that there are two School Committee members on the Task Force.

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to cosponsor Article 17 as placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant by the Select Board, which seeks to adopt the Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias Resolution and to fund the Equity Audit, as proposed by the town's DEI Task force.

MOVED: Mr. Mack; SECONDED: Ms. Chow; ROLL CALL: Ms Martin– Yes; Mr. Mack – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Ms. Eizenberg- Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

CGM, LC 2nd. unanimous

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 8:10 pm, Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED: Ms. Martin; SECONDED: Ms. Chow; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Mack - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Mack,
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

WMS and WHS Programs of Studies
FY23 Quarter 2 Report
FY24 Recommended Budget