

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
January 25, 2022  
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Those present included Chair Catherine Mirick, Vice Chair Linda Chow, Secretary Leda Eizenberg, members Melissa Martin and Jim Roberti; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Sandy Trach; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; Director of Nursing Ashley Hulme; Jorge Allen, Director of ELL; Advisory Committee member Susan Clapham; and Student Advisory representatives Rachel White and Abraham Budson-McQuilken.

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Maura Wayman, of 244 Linden St., asked for a reconsideration of COVID restrictions for sports and student athletes. She stated the connections made through sports are important for mental health. She added aspects of being on a team that take place off the field or ice, such as using locker rooms, having fans in attendance, and having events like team dinners and banquets are vital to the experience of a student athlete.

Joseph Hsu is concerned about children's health and well-being at school with the shift in testing moving from school testing to home testing. He noted people are not on the same page regarding necessary measures and is worried about trusting people to correctly perform the tests and accurately and honestly report the results. He inquired how WPS will hold families accountable for administering the test and showing proof that the tests are negative and asked how WPS will continue to keep students and staff safe.

Jared Parker, of 33 Jackson Rd., asked for the removal of restrictions for sporting events. He noted there was plenty of room for spectators to spread out and asked for common sense protocols.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ms. Mirick stated the School Wellness Advisory Committee (SWAC) met two weeks ago and they are working on updating the district's wellness policy. She also stated the Mobility Committee met and is finalizing the Sustainable Mobility Plan.

Ms. Martin gave a brief update on the middle school paving project discussed at the previous meeting. The paving will be completed this summer if it passes at Town Meeting. She noted materials regarding the project are in the public documents from the January 19 meeting on the School Committee's website.

**STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT**

Ms. White introduced three new student representatives. Sofia Dobado introduced herself as a freshman who joined because she thought it would be interesting. She likes being a leader and being able to make improvements. Jeremy Lee introduced himself as a 9th grader who is looking forward to working with everyone and providing a student perspective. Evelyn Harrison introduced herself as a freshman who feels lucky to be able to provide student guidance on different issues within schools and is excited to do so on a bigger level.

Mr. Budson-McQuilken stated students concluded the 2nd quarter and are beginning 3rd quarter electives. He added the switch to the quarter system is being embraced by students, who are adjusting well.

Ms. White offered her thanks to Dr. Lussier and Ms. Mirick for forwarding an invitation to the Massachusetts Association of School Committee (MASC) meeting being held Saturday. She stated she will report back on the experience.

### **SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

Dr. Lussier welcomed the newest member of the WPS administrative team, Dr. Jorge Allen, Director of English Language Learners (ELL). Dr. Allen thanked everyone for the warm welcome. He stated he is glad to be part of the district and is looking forward to continuing work that has been done.

Dr. Lussier offered a heartfelt recognition to the school nurses, noting that throughout the pandemic they have expanded their expertise, been flexible, and done their best to meet the needs of students and families. Most recently they have been instrumental in implementing a new testing system that has gone through many shifts and changing mitigation strategies. He noted Ms. Hulme, in her first year in the role, has jumped in and been an energizing presence. Ms. Hulme introduced the team of nurses who joined the meeting. She remarked the nurses have been accessible, flexible, intelligent, calm, and supportive, adding she was grateful for them.

Dr. Lussier recognized two terrific members of the district's leadership team who are retiring after long careers in public services: Sarah Orlov as Director of Student Services and Kathy Dooley as Director of Technology. He noted the search process has begun to fill both positions.

Ms. Mahr provided an update on kindergarten registration for the 2022-23 year. She noted Kindergarten Roundup will be virtual. The District moved to an online registration portal recently, which is working well. Letters will go out to families this week, including to individuals who have a child turning 5 on or before August 31, 2022 and families who were age eligible last year and chose to defer. She added if a family does not receive a letter and has an eligible child, they should still come register. Additionally, if a family does not have a computer or phone to register electronically, they should reach out to the Registrar for guidance through the process.

Finally, Dr. Lussier stated the District was providing parents with curated resources around anti-bullying that Ms. Orlov and school psychologists pulled together. Links can be found on the front page of the WPS website.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Meeting Minutes – January 11, 2022

NE Medical Billing Invoice 12/31/21

Trip Approval: Waterways & Wetlands in Panama 2023

Ms. Martin noted the school based Medical claims revenue was higher than usual. Ms. Mahr noted part of it is retroactive from prior quarters after the state conducted an assessment of prior years. She noted the revenue will be transferred into the special education stabilization fund and the invoice will be paid out of that.

Regarding the Panama trip, Ms. Mirick asked if anything was set up for students who would like to go but have financial hardships. Maggie Lenahan of EF Educational Tours stated families will have an opportunity to make monthly payments. EF also has a scholarship program that is need and merit-based.

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

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **COVID TESTING UPDATE**

Dr. Lussier discussed changes to the state's testing program. For families and staff who opt-in to weekly surveillance testing, rather than conducting tests onsite, testing kits will be sent home to be completed on a designated day each week. The only onsite testing will be rapid testing for symptomatic students and staff, complemented by weekly at home testing. WPS will purchase additional tests to supplement what it will receive from the state to ensure an adequate supply. Ms. Hulme added that over 2,000 families have opted in since the email went out Saturday and it appears there will be more families opting in with this method than there were with in-school surveillance testing. She stated this will increase learning time and is less disruptive, since students will not be pulled out of classes to test.

Regarding vaccinations, Ms. Hulme has applied for a state mobile vaccination unit to come to Wellesley but in the meantime, the District encourages families to look for other opportunities to receive vaccinations and boosters. Ms. Hulme offered an update on student vaccination rates. As of January 24, per the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS), 74% of Wellesley students ages 5-11 are fully vaccinated as well as 76% of students ages 12-19.

Regarding athletics, Athletic Director John Brown stated after a number of cases led to a temporary pause of athletics earlier in the month, numbers are now trending in the right direction with modifications to locker room usage and spectator capacity. Mr. Brown noted there will be a meeting later in the week with WPS Administration, the Health Department, and Ms. Hulme to discuss policies and protocols. He added the hope is if teams make the state tournament, they will be able to have spectators at full capacity.

### **WHS AND WMS 2022-23 PROGRAM OF STUDIES**

Ms. Mirick stated that since the last meeting, the Committee has received an updated detailed description on the proposed dance class at WHS. No other changes to the proposed Programs of Studies have been made.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve the 2022-23 Wellesley Middle School and Wellesley High School Programs of Studies as presented.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **FY23 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Ms. Mirick began the discussion by summarizing the steps leading to this point. The School Committee asked the Administration to model budgets based on the Select Board's guidance of 2.75% over FY21 and for level service. Administration was advised to be sure the budget reflects the District's core values and to identify items that were integral to pandemic recovery and part of the strategic plan. They were also asked to highlight investments around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and to reduce or eliminate fees charged to students. The budget was presented two weeks ago to the Committee and was made available to the public on the District website. A series of budget workshops was held last week to go through questions the Committee had in order to better understand the document.

Ms. Mahr discussed highlights of the budget pertaining to DEI. She noted the salary line has been corrected to include all METCO staff, which was previously in the narrative but not the summary line. She reminded the Committee that salaries are not yet set due to upcoming bargaining. The District's embedded Professional Development (PD) will be determined in the fall, so a cost noting how much PD will be devoted to DEI has not yet been determined. Additionally she highlighted estimated stipends and PD books and materials projected would be expended next year.

Committee members thanked Dr. Lussier, Ms. Mahr and the administrative team for their work and for answering their questions. Ms. Martin thanked them for delineating what DEI will look like. Ms. Mirick stated she appreciated the District's ability to fully utilize all sources of funding to accomplish as much as possible as a district. Committee members remarked that the budget is within guideline but is also able to take steps forward on strategic initiatives. They recognize that the ability to meet historically low guidelines is largely due to federal COVID grants and declining enrollment. They noted it was important to bear in mind that 2.75% may not always work. Similarly, items currently funded by grants such as adjustment counselors will require a funding source once grants are no longer available. Discussion also included looking ahead to the next budget cycle when the District's Strategic Plan will be finalized and can be put into the budget and into practice.

#### **FACILITIES UPDATE**

**Hardy Project** - Ms. Martin stated permitting will begin soon. User group meetings on specific topics pertaining to "nuts and bolts" of design of spaces will take place in the coming weeks. Anyone interested in attending should reach out to her. An easement will be needed based on current traffic flow for use of a portion of property for a roadway. This will go through Special Town Meeting in the fall and will be discussed by the Committee at a later time. Additionally, there is discussion with MassDOT regarding access from Route 9. Ms. Mirick added that Wellesley Municipal Light Plant (MLP) will take up the question of whether they will provide solar panels, as they did with Hunnewell. A decision is to be made before April.

**Hunnewell Construction** - Ms. Mirick stated bids with subcontractors are being finalized. Looking at timelines, the focus is on supply chain delays and contractors are being sure things are ordered now to ensure they are here on time.

**Hunnewell Swing Space Planning** - Dr. Lussier discussed grade distribution for Hunnewell students in their swing space host schools. In September 2022, Bates will host kindergarten and grade 5, Sprague grades 2 and 4, Hardy grade 3, and Upham grade 1. Students in the TLC program will attend the host school of their respective grade. For year two, the students will remain and the staff will move such that Bates hosts kindergarten and grade 1, Hardy grade 4, Sprague grades 3 and 5, and Upham grade 2. Hunnewell students will remain in independent

classes at their host schools. If construction stays on schedule, they move into the new building in February of 2024. Free transportation to all four schools will be offered to Hunnewell families.

**Hunnewell Track & Field** - Ms. Chow stated the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) spent quite a bit of time at their last meeting talking about the proposal. Regarding bathrooms, there is no firm timeline yet but details are being finalized, such as placement of doors, number of sinks and hand dryers, changing tables, etc.

There was a meeting with neighborhood advisors on January 19 where a group of neighbors shared a letter of dissent. The letter will not be included in the proposal itself but as part of a summary of the meeting on 1/19.

Ms. Chow addressed concerns that have been raised. She confirmed that athletic lighting is exempt from pending legislation restricting lighting on field, but the lighting must be Dark Sky compliant. The International Dark-Sky Association has already determined the T&F lighting design meets the standards for the IDA's Community-Friendly Outdoor Sports Lighting. Regarding the number of games and practices, she confirmed the number reflected in the proposal is the "bare minimum" per Mr. Brown. While the language states up to 20, that will not necessarily be the number played. She also discussed how appropriate town partners have been brought into the process to mitigate concerns around traffic.

In discussion, Ms. Martin stated the proposal to the NRC meets the needs of the schools and is responsive to the neighbors' concerns, while also meeting the criteria for land use change laid out by the NRC. She would like the NRC to continue reviewing the proposal and if they determine it does not meet the criteria it would be helpful for them to identify the reasons it did not meet the criteria. In further discussion, the Committee agreed and thanked Ms. Chow and Mr. Roberti for all their work.

### **2ND QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT**

Ms. Mahr presented the financial report for the second quarter. She stated the current surplus is approximately \$387,000. The operating budget is carrying costs for personal protective equipment (PPE) while it anticipates reimbursement from FEMA. She summarized salary, other compensation, and other expense adjustments, changes in out of district placement assumptions, and budget offset adjustments.

Ms. Mahr presented potential uses for the surplus funds. These include targeted academic pandemic recovery support for grades K-12 for \$39,500, funding the 5th grade Hale Reservation program for \$105,200, Responsive Classroom training for staff for \$52,000, and early hiring of new positions proposed in the FY23 budget of building TAs and permanent substitutes for \$75,872 and \$138,600 respectively.

In discussion with the Committee, Mr. Roberti stated it would be good to begin pandemic recovery as soon as possible. Ms. Martin agreed, adding that eliminating the cost to families for the Hale Reservation program has long been a desire for the District. After further discussion, Ms. Mirick stated the Committee would vote at the next meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

At approximately 9:52 pm, Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Leda Eizenberg  
Secretary

**Documents and Exhibits Used:**

NE Medical Billing Invoice 12/31/21

Panama Trip Proposal

Proposed WMS and WHS Programs of Studies 2022-2023

Budget Update DEI

Hunnewell Grade Distribution - Final

Update of Hunnewell Track & Field Proposal

Hunnewell Track & Field Email Exchange Regarding Pending Legislation

Hunnewell Track & Field Projects Q&A 1.25.22

FY22 Q2 Full Report and Attachments

FY22 Q2 Report Presentation