

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
January 31, 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; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Sandy Trach; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Technology Megan Bounit; and Student Advisory representatives Sofia Dobado, Evelyn Harrison.

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

FY24 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

Ms. Eizenberg opened the public hearing at 6:31 pm. No one present wished to speak. The hearing closed at 6:32 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Alexis Lee, of 11 Pushing Rd., is a sophomore at WHS and member of the First Robotics team. She thanked the Administration and Committee for funding the team this year and hopes it is funded in future years. She thanked Ms. Wilkins and Dr. Chisum for proposing and the Committee for approving a robotics course for next year's Program of Studies.

Lara Crawford, of 15 Rice st., asked the Committee to form a committee or group to study detailed parking and traffic plans and work with the neighborhood surrounding the Hunnewell Track & Field. She cited current issues with parking and idling often becoming safety issues.

Joelle Reidy, of 60 Prospect St. thanked the Committee for their hard work on the Hunnewell Track & Field lights. She stated there is continued support within the community.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Martin provided an update on the Hardy project. At a recent Permanent Building Committee (PBC) meeting, it was determined there will not be a need for School Committee to go in front of Advisory in advance of receiving all bids.

Ms. Mirick provided an update on the Hunnewell project. The exterior sheathing is going up and we can begin to see what the building is going to look like and where the windows are.

She provided an update on contract negotiations with the Wellesley Educators Association (WEA). She stated the Administration continues to strive to arrive at a fair and equitable contract while staying within the set budget parameters. The bargaining teams have met 41 times over the last year and have reached tentative agreements on 34 proposals brought forth by WEA, one School Committee request, and nine mutual interest items. In December the Administration reached out to the state, noting they needed help to work through the last few issues, where the sides remained far apart and were not making significant progress. The Department of Labor Relations (DLR) has asked the parties to schedule additional bargaining sessions to clarify and hopefully work through issues.

Ms. Eizenerg thanked the educators who have been writing to the Committee. She noted her gratitude for all that educators do for everyone in the community. She added the slowness of the process is not a reflection of effort or desire and that the team is ready to go back to the table.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier stated the Strategic Plan survey went live on Friday, January 27, and will remain open until Friday, February 10. He encouraged members of the community to offer their feedback. The link for the survey can be found on the District's website.

He offered the following recognitions:

From Toni Jolley: Thanks to the "HunneBates" staff, faculty, and families for a spectacular Day of Play on January 25. Students engaged in the design process building projects out of cardboard and other recyclables, working with partners and groups, learned valuable lessons and had a great deal of fun. We are especially grateful to the over 90 parent volunteers who helped make this a successful day for our students.

METCO Director Karsten Cash, Interim DEI Director Jorge Allen, and Dr. Lussier participated in a METCO Program-wide Leadership Retreat at Gillette Stadium on Friday, January 27. Among the topics discussed were a blueprint for METCO best practices, conversations on funding, enrollment, and expansion and development of a METCO Headquarters Strategic Plan.

WPS Performing Arts Department is excited to announce that WHS Choral Director, Dr. Kevin McDonald has been selected to receive the Massachusetts Music Educators Association (MMEA) Lowell Mason Award for 2023. The Lowell Mason Award is presented annually to recognized members of the MMEA who have been leaders in the music education field in Massachusetts. Dr. McDonald is the first Wellesley educator to be honored with this award since Amy Young Burns in 1975.

On January 30, the District hosted its first strength and support meeting focused on retention of BIPOC staff members. Dr. Allen thanks everyone who attended and partners at World of Wellesley (WOW) for their sponsorship.

February 1 is Winter Walk to School Day. Dr. Lussier noted his appreciation of Ms. Mirick's leadership around the Safe Routes to School program, which encourages students and families to think about coming to school via a method other than by car.

Finally, Dr. Lussier noted there was an extraordinary 7th Grade assembly today at WMS honoring student Thomas McCarthy. Wellesley Facilities Management Department (FMD) has been a place of affinity for Thomas and they have essentially adopted him as a member of their team. At the assembly, Thomas was awarded as the first recipient of the Tom Zinck Above and Beyond Award.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. Harrison stated that the Massachusetts Association of Student Representatives (MASR) met and introduced their first bill regarding voting rights of student representatives. They are hoping to introduce more bills in the future. She noted that Ms. Wang is the Director of Curriculum for MASR and that Ms. Dobado and Ms. Harrison attended the meeting.

She stated many questions, suggestions, and feedback regarding Standards Based Grading had been received through the Student Representatives Instagram page.

Ms. Dobado stated Seminar Day is coming up on March 1 and asked people with skills or experience to share with the WHS community to sign up to participate.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the January 10, 2023 minutes as amended.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Minutes - January 19, 2023 Budget Review Sessions 1 and 2; January 20, 2023 Budget Review.

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the remainder of the Consent Agenda as amended.

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

MOTION CARRIED 4-0 WITH 1 ABSTENTION

DISCUSSION: WHS STANDARDS-BASED GRADING

Dr. Jamie Chisum, WHS Principal, joined the Committee.

Dr. Lussier began the topic by reviewing the Profile of a Graduate (POG), which outlines focus on the competencies most important for all graduates to have when they take their next step after high school. To achieve these goals, students are provided feedback through assessments and acquire competencies over time.

Dr. Chisum discussed the Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC), an organization creating a platform to communicate to colleges about mastery of competencies seen in POG and to tell a more compelling story of a student by showing what they have learned rather than grades they have earned. While WPS is not a member of MTC, there is a large group around the country looking at how to report on mastery, not just on grades. Additionally, he discussed recommendations received through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process. These recommendations have helped create context for the interest in using standards.

Ms. Trach discussed the progression of curriculum organization from the conventional curriculum to standards-based curriculum that came on board through Common Core and broke standards into discrete units, including practice standards and indicators, which lead to challenges in how to organize dense content and curriculum. Eventually moving towards evidence-based curriculum, the same standards will be narrowed or prioritized in a more focused way to leverage skills that will link to the POG. Each course has key skills the content will focus on for the student to achieve and students will receive feedback. She emphasized the courses are still providing the rigorous core education they always have. Dr. Chisum added that standards are required by the state and that the goal is to be able to assess how well standard skills are being acquired.

Dr. Chisum then discussed the reasoning behind shifting to Evidence-Based Grading (EBG), first noting that while the objective of Standards-Based Grading (SBG) is achieving standards, the objective of EBG is to achieve a core set of skills that link to the POG. He stated EBG shifts the responsibility of learning to the students and provides better metrics of learning by not judging students on their worst day. It provides students with a chance to be empowered and to engage. He noted that currently at WHS, individual teachers are using SBG in English, math, and science while all Evolutions, social studies, and world languages use SBG.

He addressed common questions and concerns, particularly around the decision to begin during the tumultuous pandemic year. He also acknowledged the feedback that the practice has been inconsistent, noting that they are working to align courses. Regarding increasing transparency about how students are performing, they are working on getting more information into PowerSchool for students and families. There have been questions regarding how to interpret feedback and how to look at the standards score and understand how it will translate to a letter grade on transcript. He noted each course has an explanation and that essentially, feedback gives an understanding of where the student is at a particular moment in achieving a certain skill.

Regarding next steps, Dr. Chisum stated WHS teachers are identifying essential skills for all courses as part of NEASC Accreditation recommendations. Additionally, professional development is ongoing in order to learn, understand, and develop the components of evidence-based instruction and grading. Ms. Trach and Megan Bounit, Director of Technology, are looking at how to transfer the curriculum and feedback from Canvas to PowerSchool, where families and students can view and track grades. The community is invited to an in-person SBG presentation followed by a Q&A session on March 9 from 7:00-9:00 pm at WHS.

In discussion, Committee members and Student Representatives offered feedback and comments around areas needing further clarification. It was noted that much of the approach centers on student agency and that there is a need to better define that. Additional clarification was noted to be needed regarding the application of SBG in classes and how much teacher agency there is. It was also discussed that the process is being refined through professional learning and more educators will continue to participate in the PD into this summer.

HUNNEWELL T&F UPDATES

Dave Cohen and Jay McHale joined the Committee.

Ms. Chow described key updates to the Hunnewell Track & Field projects since she last presented to the Committee at the December 6, 2022 meeting. She stated the Design Review Board (DRB) reviewed the bathroom/concession stand structure and recommended a red brick exterior with a gray slate roof. They voted 3-0 in favor of the design with one abstention. DRB reviewed the lighting plan at their January 25 meeting joined by representatives from Musco, who will provide a rendering for the February 8 DRB meeting. Next steps will involve meeting with town staff to be sure the projects are part of the capital plan.

She discussed a citizens petition placed on the upcoming Annual Town Meeting warrant, Article 43, which calls for a committee to study night sports activities' impact on the environment and traffic. It would also put a moratorium on any lights on public land. Ms. Chow and Mr. McHale have been invited to participate at Advisory on February 1 and will be able to respond after the petitioners speak.

She reviewed the estimated Phase II costs, which Mr. McHale stated might increase slightly. The fundraising goal is \$1,500,000. It is hoped that the project will get to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) by next month, after which equipment can be ordered. The team will continue to partner with the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and Department of Public Works (DPW) through regular checkpoints. They will provide periodic updates for NRC and join DPW at NRC meetings as needed, especially for plan approvals. They will collaborate with NRC on a usage policy.

For the Sprague practice wall, the wall is expected to be delivered next week.

UPDATED JOB DESCRIPTION: DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Dr. Lussier stated Monica Visco will be retiring at the end of this school year. Before the position is posted, he noted there was an opportunity to calibrate the job description to be sure it is up to date.

Ms. Mahr noted the Director of Human Resources position has a lengthy and in-depth job description, though is currently not as detailed as many neighboring communities. Recommended changes make it clearer about the qualifications that are sought, preferred experience, particularly experience with labor associations, collective bargaining, grievance procedures, as well as investigations around Title IX issues and working with recruitment and retention and focusing on WPS diversity goals. She stated the position will be posted once the updated job description has been approved.

Ms. Eizenberg stated the Committee will vote at the February 7 meeting.

DISCUSSION: FY24 BUDGET

Ms. Eizenberg stated that at last week's meeting, the Committee was able to ask questions about the budget and have another week to process. As Dr. Lussier was not at the previous meeting, it was thought it would be helpful to have another open conversation about the budget.

In providing a vision of the role of the proposed Recruitment, Development and Diversity specialist, Dr. Lussier stated that in using MTSS to look at what equity looks like in a classroom, it is important to look at how staff is recruited, onboarded, mentored, and retained and becomes more challenging when thinking about trying to diversify staff. It is felt there is a need to augment the current team to make more progress in this area. Committee members affirmed the commitment to the work of attracting and retaining diverse workforce, understanding it has been an area of focus for quite some time. However, they expressed hesitancy with adding the position this year while bargaining continues and the budget remains over guidance. There was concern it might impede the ability to gain community support for the work.

The proposed K-5 Social Studies Department Head position was then discussed. Ms. Trach stated history and social studies frameworks were updated by the state in 2018 with many more standards and civic engagement components. Currently the area is covered by a stipend position as opposed to a full-time position that can fully develop the curriculum.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:50 pm, Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session under Massachusetts G.L. c 30A, §21(A), exemption #3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wellesley Educators Association because, as Chair, she declared that to

discuss this in Open Session would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee, and to invite into the Executive Session Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Cindy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Sandy Trach, Director of Human Resources Monica Visco, Coordinator for Community Engagement Sharon Gray, Laura Giordano and David Guarino from Melwood Global, and Jim Pender, Labor Counsel, and to not return to Open Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Mack,
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

SBG Presentation 1-31-23

Update on Hunnewell T&F Phase II for SC 1.31.2023

Exec Summary for Advisory - Hunnewell Track & Field Phase II Enhancement Projects

Job Description - Director of Human Resources