

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
February 7, 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 Student Services Kat Bernklow; Director of Technology Megan Bounit; and Student Advisory representative 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. Eizenberg stated she was sad to hear about racist language allegedly used at the boys' basketball game Saturday night and offered her apologies to Weymouth and their fans and to the Wellesley community. She thanked Dr. Lussier, Dr. Chisum, Mr. Brown, as well as the players and coaches for their response to the situation.

Ms. Chow stated there was a Sprague neighborhood forum last Thursday evening, noting approximately 12 neighbors signed up and about six attended. Dave Hickey answered questions specific to the site and Barbara McMahon of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) spoke to how it will be funded.

Ms. Chow offered updates on the Hunnewell Track & Field projects. She and Jay McHale attended Advisory last Wednesday evening to respond to the presentation given by citizens who filed a citizens' petition to put a moratorium on new lights and put together a committee to study the impact of night activities at all 17 parks in town. The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) voted to support the proposal. Additionally, the project is seeking recommendations from the Design Review Board (DRB) around the lighting design. She reminded the Committee that DRB is an advisory board and is not in the position to decide whether or not to put lights on the field.

Ms. Mirick stated she had a great time yesterday going to 8th grade Civics classes where students are completing civics projects, learning about town government and issues going on around town. Adam Blumer put together a panel of Wellesley officials who talked to students about what they do.

She offered an update on negotiations with WEA for the community. The Committee and Administration are looking forward to resuming bargaining tomorrow afternoon with the WEA and are optimistic that they can find common ground and move negotiations forward.

Mr. Mack thanked members of the community who shared thoughts and support for the work the School Committee and educators are doing. He acknowledged the incident that took place at the basketball game and thanked Dr. Chisum and Dr. Lussier for their messages that went out to the community.

### **SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

Dr. Lussier acknowledged the disappointing and distressing incident at the basketball game Friday night. He thanked the administrative team at WHS for their quick work. He has been in touch with colleagues in Weymouth. Students engaged in conversations in Advisory this morning. He stated his hope that this leads to conversations at home between parents/caregivers and students about appropriate behavior and thinking about the impact of our words.

It is a state requirement for all 8th graders to take a Civics course and complete a project at the end. He noted he was pleased with the degree to which the Social Studies Department under Mr. Blumer has run with it and made connections around the civic environment in Wellesley.

Kindergarten registration for the 2023-24 school year remains open. All information is on the WPS website and residents should call the District with any questions.

Strategic planning work continues. A survey has been sent out and the link will remain live through the end of this week.

### **STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT**

Ms. Dobado stated Seminar Day is coming up on March 1. Anyone who has experiences they wish to share is encouraged to participate.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Gift Acceptances

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the Gift Acceptances as presented.

MOVED: Mr. Mack; 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 17, 2023

Ms. Chow asked that the minutes be amended to note that the Executive Session was canceled.

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the January 17, 2023 minutes as amended.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0 WITH 1 ABSTENTION**

### **METROWEST ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY RESULTS**

Hannah Tolla, Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability, and Joanne Grant, Director of Fitness and Health, joined the Committee.

Ms. Trach stated the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey is a survey administered to students in grades 6-12 every other year. Wellesley is one of 12 communities who participate. The survey helps learn about emerging behavior, such as social media use. Wellesley has been conducting the survey since 2006 with a gap during the pandemic. Results being presented are from the survey conducted in the fall of 2021 and are the first set of results post-pandemic. Overall the results seem to be aligned with other districts' results.

Dr. Tolla and Ms. Grant provided an overview of the survey results. Topics covered by the survey include substance use, cyberbullying, mental health, online behaviors, and protective behaviors, among others. Key takeaways include a decrease in vaping usage while the perceived risk of usage has increased; however, alcohol use has remained steady and remains a focus in the health curriculum at WHS. Females at WMS and WHS were more likely to report having been a victim of cyberbullying, while males were more likely to report having cyberbullied someone else, and overall reports of cyberbullying have increased since the 2018 survey. Wellesley students, and particularly female students, reported feeling stressed and "very" stressed at higher levels than the MetroWest while having depressive and suicidal symptoms at equal or lower rates than the MetroWest, again with female students having higher rates than males. However, WMS and WHS students reported having school and non-school adult support has been steady or decreasing over time and their feelings of school connectedness has declined.

Dr. Tolla and Ms. Grant discussed ongoing supports and efforts as well as next steps. Efforts geared towards general social emotional and mental and physical health skills will continue at Advisory at WHS and WMS, through clubs and activities, through Responsive Classroom and Second Step, as well as school-wide assemblies. VOCAL and Panorama surveys will continue to prove useful. To support efforts in reducing substance abuse, SBIRT screenings will continue, an educational component will be added to vaping- and alcohol-related discipline procedures at WHS, and vaping awareness adjustments will be made to the WMS and WHS curriculum. To support mental health efforts, there will be a continued emphasis on coping skills and stress reduction techniques as well as new positions at WMS and WHS to address mental health.

Ms. Grant stated these results will be presented to teachers and parent groups, though those dates have not yet been set.

The Committee asked clarifying questions and had an engaging discussion. They thanked Ms. Trach, Dr. Tolla, and Ms. Grant for taking on the important work and leading them through the results.

**NOTE: FY24 BUDGET**

Ms. Mahr presented updates on the FY24 proposed budget based on School Committee conversations as well as FY23 and FY24 changes that have occurred since the recommended budget was originally released on January 10. She stated there have been three approved discretionary leaves, two resignations, and three retirements leading to a savings of \$216,678. The number of Out of District placements has increased by one student. That along with other related changes has led to an increase of \$222,746 over the original proposal. Circuit Breaker costs have decreased slightly and other placements have been delayed making those not eligible to claim, which results in a loss of revenue of \$135,167.

Additionally, in conversations the last few weeks, there were questions around the newly requested position of Development and Diversity Specialist and whether it would be best to delay it for one year, which results in a reduction of \$83,467.

The overall change to the bottom line is an increase of \$87,832,188. To make up the difference, there will be a slight reduction in Cash Capital of about \$57,000.

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the FY24 Operating Budget of \$87,832,188, which represents a 3.57% increase over the FY23 Operating Budget.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the FY24 Cash Capital budget of \$1,241,365, inclusive of furniture, fixtures, equipment, and Informational Technology to send to Town Meeting.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**VOTE: UPDATED JOB DESCRIPTION - DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

At the previous meeting, the Committee was presented with an updated job description for the Director of Human Resources ahead of the upcoming search due to Monica Visco's retirement. There have been no changes since it was presented.

Mr. Mack noted that language in job descriptions requiring the ability to lift a certain amount of weight has been challenged as exclusionary and Ms. Mirick noted perhaps this can be approved then all descriptions with similar language can be reviewed.

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to approve the revised job description for Director of Human Resources as amended.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE:**

**DISCUSSION/VOTE: GBGAA - HEALTH EXAMINATIONS; BULLYING POLICY, PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN (BPIP).**

Ms. Chow reminded the Committee that Ms. Visco discussed at the previous meeting why policy GBGAA was no longer need.

Dr. Bernklow described changes made to the BPIP since the previous meeting. Changes were all semantic clarifications aimed at removing misinterpretations or vague intent. These include an edit that indicates the principal will investigate bullying regardless of whether or not a complaint was received as well as a minor semantic edit that makes it evident principals are following the district's specified procedures.

Ms. Martin requested the BPIP remain on the WPS website for public review until the next meeting due to the fairly substantive changes made.

Ms. Eizenberg entertained a motion to eliminate policy GBGAA - Health Examinations.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**DISCUSSION: LBC - APPROVAL OF NEW PRIVATE SCHOOLS; EEA - STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES; DN: SCHOOL ASSETS DISPOSAL PROCEDURES; JC - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ZONE**

**LBC** - Ms. Trach stated the existing policy does not have language addressing an existing private school seeking to add an additional grade level. The proposed revision is to add a new section indicating the requesting school shall provide another full submission of the application and provide the application one year in advance of the planned opening.

**EEA** - Ms. Mahr highlighted two minor proposed changes that will include vans and van drivers to the policy alongside buses and bus drivers.

**DN** - Ms. Mahr described two small proposed changes: the title of the party responsible for the disposal of items, and adding language indicating funds for the original purchase may be from donation as well as Town-appropriated funds.

**JC** - Ms. Mahr noted the proposed change is to rename what is currently termed the “open enrollment process,” which is when elementary parents can request to change elementary schools from their neighborhood attendance zone to another school within the district. In order to provide clarity on what the process is, it is being proposed to rename it the “elementary transfer option” program.

All proposed policy revisions will be posted on the District website for public review.

#### **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, Town of Wellesley Assistant Executive Director Amy Friguiletti, 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:**

MWAHS SC Presentation of 2021 data 2.7.23

FY24 Budget Changes

Director of Human Resources Job Description

Policy GBGAA - Health Examinations

Bullying Policy, Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP)

Policy LBC - Approval of New Private Schools

Policy EEA - Student Transportation Services

Policy DN: School Assets Disposal Procedures

Policy JC - Elementary School Attendance Zone