

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
March 9, 2021  
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Those present included Chair Linda Chow, Vice Chair Melissa Martin, Secretary Catherine Mirick, members Leda Eizenberg and Jim Roberti; Superintendent David Lussier, Interim Assistant Superintendent Mike LaCava; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; and Student Advisory representative Rachel White.

Ms. Chow 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. Chow welcomed the newest School Committee member, Leda Eizenberg. She stated she looked forward to working with her. She noted Ms. Eizenberg brings the perspective of being an educator and having two school-aged children.

Ms. Mirick stated she participated in Read Across America day last week by reading a story for PAWS students via Zoom. She noted it was not quite the same as usual but she was glad to be able to participate. Ms. Chow added she also read for Reading Across America and stated it was fun as always.

Ms. Chow stated that at the last meeting on February 23, the School Committee voted to move forward on bathrooms and explore another project involving team rooms and lighting. The next steps will be to document what the Committee thinks the proposed process should be moving forward. Mr. Roberti and Ms. Chow will attend the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) meeting March 18 for feedback and input where they are also hoping to get an update on the lacrosse wall. Dave Hickey provided an update at the February 12th Playing Fields Task Force (PFTF) meeting. He asked for a letter to show support from schools and the School Committee for the project.

Ms. Chow also discussed communicating with the School Committee by the public. She stated they always welcome letters and emails from the community. While they may not always respond she wanted to acknowledge that every member receives the messages that come to the School Committee email address. She added they appreciate the varied perspectives and take them into account. Finally, she noted the Committee will have Office Hours Thursday, March 11 at 11:00 AM and there are still openings available.

**SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

Dr. Lussier began by noting the District said farewell to Gayle McCracken on Friday and welcomed Candace Hall-Nourse as the Interim Human Resources Director. He is delighted that she brings so much experience to the role.

He offered a reminder to families that registration is open for next year for all grades. He noted that early information helps with planning for SY2021-22 and encouraged people to register

sooner than later. He also offered a reminder that students who left the District for private school and wish to return next fall will need to re-enroll.

### **Recognitions**

**From Director of Early Childhood 'Becca Zieminski:** PAWS would like to extend a very warm thank you to the following members of the Wellesley Community who volunteered to Zoom in as guest readers for our Read Across America Day celebrations on March 1st and 2nd. The National Education Association's new mission for Read Across America includes a new focus on books that tell children of color or of different gender identities that they belong in the world and the world belongs to them.

Thank you to these friends of PAWS for celebrating this with us:

Kathy Poirier  
Sarah Orlov  
Catherine Mirick  
Linda Corridan  
Sharon Gray  
Mike LaCava  
David Lussier  
Linda Chow  
Janet Schmidt  
Charmie Curry  
Terry Weksel

**Sarah Orlov, Director of Student Services,** would like to recognize the WPS guidance counselors, social workers, and psychologists who are working so hard to support students and families these days. Their work ethic is truly unbelievable as many of them reach out to families after hours and on weekends to problem solve. They treat every student and situation individually, providing assistance and advocating with a myriad of other folks to identify supports. Kudos to all of them!

**Principal Ellen Quirk** recognizes Instructional Library Assistant Dorrie Beckwith who is also temporarily serving as the school secretary. She is an asset to our community and WPS.

### **From PreK-12 Director of Libraries and Innovation Toni Carlson:**

Thank you to Beth Bergeron and the Production Team for all of their help with RLS this year. They spend weeks each month getting materials ready for all the different grade levels in the Remote Learning School and then spend days each month putting the packets together. Beth also stays on Wednesday evenings to help with the family materials pickup each month.

And thank you to Jenn Friedman and the Literacy Specialists who've been helping gather books for the RLS. Jenn visits all the schools to find books each month for students in specific grades and puts them into labeled bags for specific students according to their reading level. She has helped hand out materials at every single RLS family pick-up each month. Additionally, we are thankful for the personalized professional development she offered at last Thursday's faculty meeting for our elementary RLS staff.

### **STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT**

Ms. White stated that Wednesday March 3 was Seminar Day at WHS. This year it was internal and remote, done entirely over Zoom. All seminars were conducted by students and teachers

and included how to build a PC, cooking, and redesigning the Massachusetts state flag among others. She noted it was an interesting day to learn about things in other areas.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Minutes - February 23, 2021 Open Session

Trip Approval - History of Art-France/Spain

Gift Approvals. Of note is a large line item from WEF, which represented their final contribution towards the viral testing program. This brought their total donation to \$600,000.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which includes minutes from 2/23/21 as amended, approval for history of art trip to France and Spain, and gift acceptances.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **HARDY AND HUNNEWELL UPDATES**

#### **HUNNEWELL DESIGN DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

Jeff D'Amico from Compass Project Management and Kristen Olson and Alex Pitkin from SMMA joined the Committee.

Ms. Mirick stated the project is steadily moving forward and they are working with the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) to do value engineering and stay true to the educational plan developed early in the process.

Mr. Pitkin began by stating the dialogue with PBC has been excellent. He discussed a few touchpoints with the project. First, he noted they stay updated with PBC and FMD almost weekly. Recently there was a productive meeting regarding technology, of which there will be ongoing dialogue. There was a meeting regarding specialty spaces and student services, particularly the TLC program. Finally, he noted this current meeting is an important signoff point and checkpoint with the School Committee to be able to move onward.

He then walked the Committee through the proposed floor plans. Each grade level will be a “neighborhood” consisting of three classrooms, a learning center, and a learning common. On the first floor, the main entrance will be a warm, welcoming environment with a professional suite. Afternoon/after school community use spaces constituting the cafeteria, stage, and gym will be able to be locked off for facilities use after hours. Three grade level neighborhoods will be on the first floor. On the second floor there will be three more grade level neighborhoods plus a geographically centralized Media Center. There will be project based learning spaces adjacent to the Media Center. There will be a single use bathroom in each neighborhood as well as two sinks per classroom, matching the MSBA requirement. Classrooms will be larger than currently at Hunnewell but slightly smaller than MSBA guidance due to the common area space.

There will be an OT/PT space across the hall from the gym. The TLC program will have three distinct rooms, which will contain calming spaces. One of the rooms will be a smaller space to be used when students may need a little separation. It can also serve as a resource space for program teachers. The Library Media Center will include small program areas, teaching spaces, reading nooks, project areas out in the open, and a fair amount of soft seating. The Art, Music, and Innovation Space will include activity zones with storage for project work, plenty of sinks in the art space, and the music room will be shaped to help acoustical goals. The Cafetorium will

have a small stage/platform. There will also be a quiet dining area that can also serve as a small conference room. There will be a heat and serve kitchen.

Regarding the site plan, Mr. Pitkin stated there is ongoing discussion regarding the flow of cars and students at drop off and pickup. He also noted there will be no loss of parking. The March 25 PBC meeting will include exterior studies and site plan updates, including adding a generator and transformer to the site model.

Mr. D'Amico then discussed the project's budget and timeline. He stated that with a control budget of \$45,061,000, the PBC challenged them to focus on areas where costs would be reduced. He noted value engineering changes reduced costs by approximately \$1,200,000. These savings included changing materials used for the exterior and flooring, changing from an HVAC to a VRF system, and reducing site features. He discussed budget changes that have occurred since feasibility totaling an additional \$571,000. Overall, the project is tracking projected savings of approximately \$675,000. He noted there is still more permitting to be done, which could add costs and they are carrying reasonable escalation in cost contingency in case the market rebounds and things get more expensive. Upcoming timeline milestones include a Design Review Board meeting on March 31, beginning the subcontractor prequalification process on April 21, returning to the School Committee to review 50% construction documents in May, and issuing construction bid documents by August 6.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Hunnewell Elementary School Design Development Approval memo dated March 5, 2021 and to authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the Committee.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

#### **HARDY UPDATE**

Mr. D'Amico discussed that unlike the Hunnewell project, an MSBA partnership like the one the District is in with Hardy locks in the overall cost and scope of a project after schematic design. Currently they are proceeding through schematic design and are looking to hire a construction management firm earlier than usual. There are interviews scheduled for April 6 and April 7. The plan is for the firms to do parallel estimating beginning April 23, then the team will return to the PBC with a presentation of hard cost estimates from two firms and a total budget with soft costs. After that they will return to the School Committee with the not to exceed number and in June secure School Committee and Select Board endorsement of the project. July 7 is the firm deadline with MSBA in order to bring it for board approval on August 24. They will seek funding approval at Fall Town Meeting. Ms. Martin added the team began with ten construction managers in response to the request for qualifications and the PBC moved five forward. The team is looking forward to seeing the RFPs when they are returned.

The Committee thanked the SMMA and Compass teams for joining them and providing them with their presentation.

#### **DISCUSSION/VOTE: PBC LIAISONS FOR HUNNEWELL AND HARDY**

Ms. Martin reminded the Committee that Sharon Gray was the primary liaison for Hunnewell and Ms. Mirick was the alternate for both Hunnewell and Hardy. She proposed Ms. Mirick

become the primary PBC liaison for Hunnewell and the alternate for Hardy. Ms. Mirick proposed Ms. Martin become the alternate liaison for Hunnewell.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to appoint Catherine Mirick as primary liaison and Melissa Martin as alternate liaison to the PBC for Hunnewell and to appoint Catherine Mirick as alternate liaison for Hardy.

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**

### **COVID-19 UPDATES**

Mr. LaCava began by stating the previous week DESE released updated guidelines for performing arts regarding singing in the building. Students can sing with a mask on when they are 10 feet apart. He notes they can fit in the auditorium being spread out and is getting input from staff on how it will work. He added that there will be no indoor performances in the near future.

Dr. Lussier stated the current case count in the District is 160 total. Last week added six cases, none of which were found through the surveillance testing. Regarding the metrics dashboard, it currently reflects the updated metrics and the District is passing every measure.

In accordance with Commissioner Reilly's directive, Kindergarten through 5th grade will return to full-time, five days per week in person beginning April 5. The students will need to maintain a minimum of 3 feet distancing and will try to have more as much as possible. Principals are currently working through operational details. Grades 6-8 are directed to be fully in person no later than April 28; however Dr. Lussier stated he hoped to get them in sooner. No further guidance has been given for grades 9-12 and he hoped to have more information shortly.

He stated the Administration will be hosting a webinar on Thursday, March 11 at 7:00 to present all the information in greater detail. They will be joined by doctors to give a primer on up to date science and will discuss operations around transition such as lunches and transportation. There will be time for Q&A. A reminder link will go out Wednesday, March 10.

Current hybrid students will be situated then they will work to place any RLS students wishing to return. Hybrid students who do not want to return full time can opt for RLS for the remainder of the school year. Guidance from the State is to expect a full return in fall.

Dr. Lussier stated the District will expand its viral testing to include students in grades 3-5. They will be hosting a separate webinar for those parents. This will begin before the April 5 transition so there will be one week of testing before the students come back. This will add approximately 900 students to the weekly testing program.

### **DISCUSSION: CLIMATE ACTION PLAN**

Wellesley's Sustainability Director Marybeth Martello and WHS student Vaani Kapoor joined the Committee.

Ms. Martello told the School Committee she appreciated the opportunity to join the meeting to introduce Wellesley's climate action planning process. She noted the Sustainable Energy Committee was talking to all boards and committees across town, as it is important to have all

hands on deck. She added that Ms. Mahr is a valuable member of the Committee. She was pleased to note that it appears the Town will meet its goal of reducing emissions by 25% since 2007, adding that the School Department has been an instrumental partner.

Ms. Martello described the Climate Action Plan as a dynamic document that is grounded in data and analysis and is to be revisited every year. They have established working groups focusing on five main areas: Energy, Buildings, Mobility, Waste and Natural Resources, and Governance. The committee is currently interviewing consultants to provide an analysis that will support decision making. In parallel tracks, the committee is seeking community and government engagement to be informed and educated and to provide feedback. In addition, the committee is working on specific projects with the Climate Action Club at Wellesley High School. She noted she had been very impressed with their knowledge and work.

Ms. Mirick stated that she and Ms. Eizenberg had a great meeting with Ms. Martello the week prior and that she would be interested in working on the Mobility piece due to her work with the Mobility Committee and on the Buildings committee. Ms. Eizenberg expressed interest in contributing to the Waste and Natural Resources piece. Ms. Martello noted she was excited to have the Schools on board.

Ms. Kapoor introduced herself as being a sophomore at WHS. She stated she leads the Climate Action Club. The club is currently working to redo the gardens in front of the high school in order to attract butterflies. They would also like to put the composting plan back into action, which was not possible this year. She added there will be a tree planting day coming up for the entire town around Earth Day.

#### **SWAC UPDATE**

Ms. Orlov provided an update on the School Wellness Advisory Committee (SWAC). She began by acknowledging that due to the pandemic, the District has been one entire SWAC this year, as everyone has been so focused on school wellness. She stated the members of the committee comprise a large group that includes multiple stakeholders from various health and wellness entities focused on the wellness of the whole Town. Its mission began with a focus on school nutrition and subsequently expanded to overall wellness. She noted that, as many members are involved with COVID-related tasks around Town, they felt it was important to put subcommittee work on hold and instead to stay connected to one another. They discussed mental health of staff, students, and families and shared information about the possible increase in substance use among students. They recently offered staff and parent presentations on resilience. They have also discussed some unexpected positives and silver linings. Their next steps are to review the Wellness policy and the life threatening allergy protocol. They will look at how the District is implementing school nutrition standards. She noted this is not related to Whitson's or the meals program, rather as related to the introduction of food items in schools by students. She stated SWAC will continue focusing on the four topics they had been exploring - vaping, mental health, school start times, and LGBTQ issues - and how the District can be sure these more vulnerable students are supported in the schools.

Dr. Lussier added the Board of Health will be having a forum on March 19 on mental health issues and related social services the Town is providing. He touted the District's great partnerships with its colleagues in the Health Department.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

At approximately 9:01 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Mirick  
Secretary

**Documents and Exhibits Used:**

History of Art Trip 2022

Hunnewell Compass Design Development Review

Hunnewell Design Development Approval sign-off form

Climate Action Plan Overview

Climate Action Plan Presentation

SWAC SC 2020-2021