

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
March 21, 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 Christina Horner and Catherine Mirick; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Sandy Trach; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Kat Bernklow; and Student Advisory representatives Ivy Wang, Sofia Dobado, Evelyn Harrison, and Armita Hamrah.

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dylan Ade, of 28 Norwich Rd., attended the Standards-Based Grading (SBG) forum at the high school. He stated no one had positive things to say about SBG and he asked how the District can get back to what it was doing previously.

Julie Covino, of 400 School St., stated the strength of the traditional curriculum and grading system made her son prepared for college. She claimed SBG has increased confusion and stress by parents and students and it puts students at a disadvantage. She asked that the administration listen to parents and students and stop SBG.

Pete Roney, of 53 Norwich Rd., has two daughters who attended Bates and now are at WMS. He noted there was not much quantitative data available about SBG and cited a peer-reviewed study that showed statistically insignificant differences in ACT scores from students in traditional curriculum settings.

Tracy Xing, of 14 Malthazar Rd., appreciated that the District has put a lot of effort into DEI and inclusivity efforts. However, she stated it is hard to understand how a child will be graded using SBG and it is hard for parents to know how to help their student succeed in school.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ms. Eizenberg welcomed Christina Horner to the Committee. She stated Ms. Horner is a career educator, administrator, and coaches education leaders.

Ms. Horner stated she was looking forward to working with the Committee and the school community and was looking forward to serving everyone.

Ms. Chow welcomed Ms. Horner and stated she was looking forward to working on the Committee with her.

A hearing was held on March 3 regarding pickleball noise. The Recreation Department is moving forward exploring other locations in the near term; however medium and longer term planning are needed.

Ms. Mirick stated Hardy is under construction currently with site prep, soil work, and creating a driveway off Rt. 9. There will be a groundbreaking ceremony on April 6 at 9:00a. On the Hunnewell project, exterior sheathing is being put up as well as interior rough-ins and framing.

She offered an update on negotiations with WEA. The Department of Labor Relations (DLR) assigned a neutral third party mediator and the first mediation session was held last Friday afternoon. Additional sessions are scheduled for tomorrow and the first week in April. The Committee has heard a vote of no confidence in the superintendent and School Committee has been taken; however, WEA has not presented details. She stated that staff, the Committee, and administration are equally frustrated that an agreement has not been reached, adding WPS has amazing staff deeply committed to their students. The Committee and administration value them and are committed to reaching a fair and equitable outcome while working within budget parameters set by the town.

Mr. Mack offered updates from the School Wellness Advisory Committee (SWAC). At their recent meeting they discussed the MetroWest Health survey, which provides a well-rounded perspective on where students are with regard to their health. He also stated the Committee has received a number of emails about SBG on both sides. All feedback received is being used to shape how to move forward. Finally, he recognized the vote of no confidence. He stated the Committee has full confidence in the educators and values them.

Ms. Eizenberg attended the forum on SBG. She and the administrative team heard the feedback. She is grateful the forum was provided and noted there will be more to come.

Ms. Horner left the meeting at 6:58.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

Dr. Jamie Chisum joined the Committee.

Dr. Lussier thanked Ms. Eizenberg for her summary at Wellesley Night at the Wellesley Club last night.

A community forum regarding SBG was held two weeks ago. It was structured as an opportunity to hear from the public with additional information and links provided. He stated the forum provided the administration with a lot to think about and internal work will follow.

Dr. Chisum stated they will continue to take feedback, make adjustments, and understand the implications of the adjustments within a timeframe that makes sense. He noted they are targeting a very different look next fall and do not see a path forward with SBG as it is currently being utilized.

Dr. Lussier congratulated WMS students and staff who put together the amazing musical *Fiddler on the Roof* last weekend.

The 5th grade orientation is happening at WMS tonight.

Dr. Jorge Allen has been serving in an interim capacity as Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. He has been an extraordinary thought partner for work across the district and the community. Effective July 1 he will be the permanent director and the District will be posting for a new ELL director.

The WEF spelling bee will be held Wednesday, March 29 at 7:00p at WHS. He added it is always a great night of fun supporting a great cause.

The WMS science olympiad team competed on March 5 and tied for 3rd place.

Today was state advocacy day at the State house for the METCO program. Dr. Lussier joined Interim METCO Director Karsten Cash and Nile Fox, WHS Academic Coordinator, and a terrific team of students and parents. The students lobbied to increase the METCO grant to include the cost of transportation.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Minutes - January 31, 2023

Gift Acceptances

Acceptance of Donations by Direct Pay from PTO/PTSO

Acceptance of Bates Gaga Pit Donation

Field Trip Approval - 8th Grade Quebec Trip

Field Trip Approval - Academic Decathlon National Finals

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

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

### **MWRA PRESENTATION - SCHOFIELD GEOTECHNICAL INVESTIGATION (SUMMER 2023)**

The Committee was joined by Joe McDonough, Paul Savard, Brad Miller, Sean Navin, and Carmine DeMaria.

Mr. McDonough stated they are asking for approval of a license agreement that has already been approved by town counsel for the MWRA to conduct a geotechnical investigation at the Schofield site.

Mr. Savard offered a brief description of the metropolitan water tunnel program and the need to do a geotechnical investigation. Tunnels are 200-400 feet deep and have been operating since they were constructed as far back as the 1950s. In May 2010 there was a water main break going into the city tunnel. The current tunnel project is to help prevent something like that happening again. Through Wellesley, the tunnel goes near Schofield. They have to do borings down to the depth of the tunnel to test the condition of the rock. Construction of the tunnel is scheduled to begin in 2027 and prior to that, they are conducting geotechnical investigations as part of the design phase.

At the Schofield site, the work will be done in the bus dropoff lane and will be done during summer 2023 when school is not in session. The project will take approximately six to eight weeks and will include a temporary construction fence to secure the site. At the conclusion of the project, the hole will be completely filled and the area restored.

Dr. Lussier noted the agreement has been reviewed by town counsel.

### **REVIEW SUMMARY FINDINGS FROM STRATEGIC PLAN SURVEY**

Alex Psilakis and Michael Scotto from Melwood Global as well as Sharon Gray joined the Committee.

Ms. Gray reviewed the strategic planning priorities, process, and schedule. The fall and winter have been spent having initial discussions, creating the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, holding focus groups, and developing and conducting a community survey. The current phase of the process includes working through an analysis of the needs of the district and evaluating feedback. Dr. Lussier added that it does not look like a plan will be finalized by the end of the school year.

Ms. Gray described the survey that was conducted over two weeks in January and February. The questions centered around many aspects of WPS with the goal to do a check-in on where people are and gather ideas for the future. The survey was distributed as widely as possible and, while they would have liked to have received more responses, they believe the results represent a good cross section of the community. A total of 1,913 community members completed the full survey, including 714 current parents, 148 staff, 940 WHS students, and 111 other community members, which includes former parents, private school parents, and Wellesley residents. In addition, 207 8th graders completed a shorter version.

Ms. Gray then presented the results of each question. Results indicate that participants are generally satisfied or very satisfied with overall aspects of WPS as well as WPS programming and social aspects, including the quality of academics, educational experience, school safety and security, quality of facilities, and quality and use of technology.

Themes emerged when asked for priorities for growth, improvement, or enhancement. These include increases in academic rigor/opportunities, an increased focus on STEM, social emotional learning (SEL), inclusion/belonging, settling the teacher contract, public speaking, traditional grading systems, lights on the Hunnewell field, and a focus on DEI efforts. Themes also emerged when asked what should be preserved or remain the same. These include academic excellence, quality teachers, neighborhood schools, the world language program, performing/visual arts, sports, SEL, sense of community, and writing instruction.

After a brief discussion, the Committee thanked the team for their work and presentation.

### **DISCUSSION/VOTE: WMS MASTER SCHEDULE CHANGE**

Ms. Eizenberg noted that no feedback or questions were received from the community following the presentation at the last meeting. She entertained a motion to approve the change to the Wellesley Middle School Master Schedule as presented at the February 28 meeting.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

### **WHS PROGRAM OF STUDIES - ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL/AMENDMENT**

Ms. Trach stated the Family and Consumer Science Department is requesting that the Intro to Yearbook Design and Production course shift from being a one-quarter offering to a

semester-long one. This will provide a clearer start and end to the experience. Students have already begun enrolling and are doing so with this proposed change in draft form.

As it was determined it would not disrupt students currently enrolling, the Committee will vote at its next meeting, per standard practice.

#### **DISCUSSION OF ARTICLE 43**

Ms. Chow discussed Article 43 on the Town Meeting warrant, which is a citizens' petition to form a committee to conduct a study of the impact of night activities on natural resources, neighborhoods, etc. on 13 different parks and fields in town. The article's second motion would place a moratorium on any new lights, which speaks directly to lighting on the Hunnewell Track & Field. She and Jay McHale participated in Advisory meetings on February 1 when proponents presented the article for the first time to Advisory then again on February 23 when the proponents presented an amendment. She noted they will have 15 minutes to present in opposition at Town Meeting and is asking the Committee to authorize her to write memos and make decisions on what to present.

Ms. Mirick made a motion to authorize Linda Chow to represent the School Committee on all matters associated with Hunnewell Track & Field Phase II, to include lighting and other projects.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

#### **QUARTERLY REVIEW - EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES FOR RELEASE**

Ms. Eizenberg stated that the superintendent and School Committee Chair review Executive Session minutes quarterly to determine if any can be released to the public. She noted that at this time, they do not believe any should be released.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 9:00 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 Rick Gello, Labor Counsel, and to not return to Open Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Mack,  
Secretary

**Documents and Exhibits Used:**

MWRA MWTP Presentation to Wellesley School Committee 03-21-2023

Proposed Course Amendment to WHS POS SY 23-24

Strategic Plan Update to SC 3-21-23

Article 43 Excerpt from 2023 ATM Advisory Book

Background Information for Article 43 Discussion on 3.21.23

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

IDA's OSL Phase I Letter of Compliance and Updated Lighting Performance Summary - Hunnewell  
T&F 3.14.23