

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
March 22, 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 Craig Mack; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Sandy Trach; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; Director of Human Services Monica Visco; and Student Advisory representatives Ivy Wang, Jeremy Lee, Evelyn Harrison, 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

Cliff Canaday joined to voice his opposition to the lighting proposal at the Hunnewell Track & Field. He stated the project has an extensive financial and environmental cost and provides issues but no benefit.

Brandon Faneuf, of Warwick, RI, is a certified biologist representing Friends of Hunnewell Field. He refutes the environmental impact report from Epsilon Associates, stating it used older data and underestimated the wildlife. He stated the Hunnewell field contains areas critical to wildlife, biodiversity, and water quality.

Odessa Sanchez, of 48 Barton Rd., is a guardian and parent of a WPS 10th grader and joined in response to a recent email Wellesley parents received regarding the resignation and job change of Dr. Charmie Curry. She stated a lot of work had been done for the town to have a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) specialist within the schools; however, she did not see much of an impact during Dr. Curry's time.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Eizenberg stated she attended a recent Culturally Responsive Practice Leadership Academy (CRPLA) meeting. She noted they engaged in great conversations and dove deep into equity work. She added the Wellesley participants were paired with colleagues from Chelsea.

Ms. Chow stated the Policy Subcommittee will bring the anti-bullying policy back to the full Committee at the next meeting. She noted they are working on incorporating feedback and discussing further with attorney Amy Rogers. The subcommittee will meet early next week.

Ms. Mirick stated she participated in the Conversation with the School Committee with the Upham community last week with Dr. Lussier and principal Jeff Dees. Discussions with families included topics of evidence based grading and how Hunnewell students will be integrated into daily life at Upham for the next two years. Additionally, the Power Up self-defense class at WHS held its graduation last week. She offered thanks to Kathy Brophy, Fitness and Health teacher, for continuing to run the program. Ms. Mirick stated there will be an upcoming seminar sponsored by WEF on facilitating social recovery conducted by Dr. Elizabeth Englander on March 31 at 7:00 pm. Finally, she noted that yesterday was the first day of spring athletics, stating more than 760 WHS students have played sports this year.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier offered the following recognitions:

Schofield principal Gerardo Martinez has accepted a position with Lexington Public Schools for an elementary principalship and DE&I Director Dr. Charmie Curry has accepted a position at DESE as an Associate Commissioner. Dr. Lussier stated the WPS team wished them well as they transition into new professional roles.

From Toni Carlson, Director of Libraries and Innovation:

Congratulations to Hardy School Librarian Lisa Sheehan who has been presented with the Massachusetts School Library Association President's Award. This award honors school librarians making an impact on student learning early in their careers.

Lisa has been in our district for two years. Her accomplishments include helping students explore their creativity, offering students the opportunity to collaborate as they design solutions for problems from stories, research, and everyday life through Makerspace and STEM activities. Lisa's extensive knowledge of diverse literature has been invaluable not only to students but to the community as a whole as she helps teachers learn about and use these timely and relevant materials.

From Director of Early Childhood 'Becca Zieminski, A big thank you to WEF for funding a grant to purchase multicultural books for the preschool that will provide Windows (a glimpse out into the wider world) and Mirrors (seeing themselves reflected in the books they read) for students. The grant also included an author visit via Zoom with author and illustrator Grace Lin. The preschoolers enjoyed a 30 minute Zoom session with Grace Lin where she read the book A Mooncake for Little Star, did a drawing lesson and held a question and answer session with the preschoolers. The preschoolers were very excited to "meet" one of their favorite authors/illustrators!

From Director of Performing Arts, Mike LaCava, congratulations to WHS senior Molly Gandler, who was selected to perform with the National Association of Music Education Mixed Choir this past January. Molly is an active member of our WHS Choir program and has been recognized for her musical excellence through participation in the Massachusetts District and All-State Festivals. We congratulate Molly on this wonderful accomplishment for representing our department and school community so well. You can see Molly perform with her colleagues as the Music Director for a capella group Renegade this Friday and Saturday night, March 25 and 26 at Acastock.

Bates principal Toni Jolley would like to thank Bates parent Emily Halpern and Bates librarian Liz Rey for coordinating the Bates book fair last week. Students and families enjoyed visiting the book fair and taking part in this joyful celebration of reading.

From WHS Department Head of Science, Technology and Engineering Nora Wilkins, congratulations to WHS Science Olympiad team that placed 5th in the 2022 Massachusetts State Science Olympiad Tournament. A total of 64 teams from across the state competed. This year the team was led by senior captains Jacob Landau, Jana Chan, Andrew Ng, junior captain Paul Awdeh and treasurer Tom Huang. This is the best finish in the state tournament in the team's history. Big thanks and congratulations also go out to our two Science Olympiad advisors, Dr. Jeff Robin and Ms. Dana Fuchs.

Dr. Lussier offered a COVID update. He stated the District continues to update the dashboard daily. Since making transitions in mitigation strategies there has been a slight increase in cases. WPS is working closely with the Health Department in monitoring cases. In response, larger lunches have been broken into smaller ones, which will continue this week. He reminded the community to remain vigilant in participating in home screening and staying home if students are not feeling well. He added school nurses have an ample supply of home tests and families can contact them to receive some.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. Harrison congratulated fellow student representative Ivy Wang and sophomore Skye Jacobs who won seats on Town Meeting. She offered thanks to those working on the Hardy and Hunnewell projects, stating she has heard from parents, staff, and students that they are excited. She noted more students seem comfortable removing their masks and the overall anxiety level has seemed to decrease, which is a great sign.

Ms. Wang stated that, following the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) conference that the student representatives attended in February, student representatives from around the state wanted to continue the effort. Recently, they had their second official meeting of Massachusetts Association of Student Representatives (MASR). She noted they discussed mask mandates and MCAS among other things. They will be starting social media accounts and can be found on Instagram at mastudentreps_official and on Twitter at @mastudentreps.

Ms. Martin offered a brief update on the Hardy and Hunnewell projects. Hardy has entered into the permitting phase. It will be going before the Planning Board next month then onto the Design Review Board. There has been a series of meetings over the past few weeks with members from Hardy, the Administration, and experts on various areas focused on special education spaces and specials spaces, such as art and music. Ms. Mirick added that the Municipal Light Plant (MLP) voted to install solar panels on the Hardy roof similar to Hunnewell with planned installation in the summer of 2025. Regarding Hunnewell, the construction managers are ordering materials and will be ready to hit the ground running with construction after the school year.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes - March 2, 2022

Field Trip Approvals:

- JSA Spring State, Washington D.C
- German Exchange 2023

Declaration of Surplus Memo - WMS furniture

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

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ANNUAL HIRING REPORT

Ms. Visco stated she joined WPS in early August 2021 and was welcomed by a great team of hardworking, wonderful people. Immediate challenges included a difficult hiring environment unlike anything she has seen, largely due to COVID, working on and successfully implementing

a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Wellesley Educators Association (WEA), and entering into a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) year.

In working to increase efficiencies in Human Resources (HR), Ms. Visco examined the current HR process and implemented new paperless integration systems for recruiting and onboarding new staff, professional learning, and an evaluation system for all staff.

She then discussed ongoing HR projects, including reviewing and revising job descriptions as needed, revising job posting descriptions, and conducting recruitment and administrative searches. She noted she has weekly meetings with the WEA President and that WEA leadership have been great colleagues.

Regarding recruitment and retention, the HR Department is looking to revise the screening and interviewing process and plans to increase diversity recruitment by involving hiring managers in the Wellesley community. She also hopes to have live recruitment events again, noting those are coming back slowly but surely. Additionally, they have formalized an exit interview process to capture and aggregate data to aid in retention. She discussed WPS' partnership with Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education (MPDE). Over 30 member districts from all over Massachusetts meet monthly to offer professional resources and hold an annual recruitment event. She also discussed WPS' partnership with DESE Teacher Diversification Professional Learning Community.

Ms. Visco discussed historical staff demographic data. She noted that over the past ten years there has been a slow increase in the percentage of non-white staff but there is still a lot of work to be done in recruiting and retaining a diverse staff.

Finally, Ms. Visco highlighted key searches for the 2022-23 school year, namely Director of Student Services, Director of Information Technology, Schofield Principal, and Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.

In discussion with the Committee, they asked clarifying questions regarding the exit interview and opportunities for students to be involved in the interview process. Ms. Visco shared that the exit interview asks participants why they felt it necessary to leave and asks if they have advice on how to retain staff. Regarding student involvement, she stated it was important to see interactions with students and get their feedback, adding that for recent searches finalists went to the high school where students interviewed them and were given feedback forms.

CONTRACT APPROVAL - EASTERN BUS

Ms. Mahr presented the recommendation to award the five-year School Transportation bid to Eastern School Bus. She stated they are the District's current transportation provider and the current contract will end June 30, 2022. She noted that for this contract, WPS worked with the Inspector General to put out a single bid that would cover the re-bid for the five-year contract as well as the Hunnewell swing space for 18 months. The bid was issued on February 10. Six vendors reached out and Eastern Bus was the sole vendor to submit a bid. She stated Eastern Bus has served WPS' needs very well and she was confident they will continue to serve the District well in the future. Regarding cost, she stated it was not uncommon for the first year of a contract to have a large cost increase and years two through five level out. The District budgeted for a 15% increase and the actual will be 10.81%-19.57% depending on the category.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to award the School Transportation bid to Eastern School Bus for the period of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2027, inclusive of the Hunnewell Swing Space.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

HUNNEWELL TRACK & FIELD

Ms. Chow discussed the recent Natural Resources Commission (NRC) meeting on March 17. She stated they discussed the shared goal to balance needs of key stakeholders while assuming positive intent as well as honoring the missions of the respective boards. Feedback on the lighting proposal was received and fell into key themes of gaining clarification and setting expectations surrounding usage and traffic, comments around further mitigation surrounding things like trash and noise, and comments around engendering trust and good will.

Clarification and expectation setting - Lighting would be for school use only. The revised plan would clarify the usage to be for 15 night games and 6 night practices. No regular season game or practice requiring lights would occur on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday night except for football. The potential does exist for playoff games to be held on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday per scheduling by MIAA. Regarding traffic and parking, a traffic management plan was put together and reviewed with WPD, which focuses on events with attendance of 1,000 or more. For smaller events, Chief Pilecki has said WPD would follow strategies for major events but scaled back somewhat.

Suggestions for further mitigation - A suggestion was made to expand the trash cleanup zone beyond the stadium. Custodial staff has immediate responsibility after the game to clean the stadium area, including bleachers. DPW typically comes in the next day to do a sweep. Regarding sound and noise, the sound policy has already been modified to reduce usage.

Trust and good will - Regarding operational chain of command, Athletic Director John Brown and Assistant Athletic Director Kyle Williams will be points of contact. It was emphasized that student athletes will have responsibilities in respecting neighbors. Additionally, there will be Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) language to reassure the lighting is for school use only.

In its discussion, Committee members noted they were grateful to get a very clear and reasonable ask clarified. They want students to benefit from these opportunities. Additionally, they agreed with having check-ins with stakeholders part way through the year, which would allow for modification with direct feedback or midcourse adjustments. Mr. Budson-McQuilken added that many students feel strongly in favor of lights. Ms. Harrison noted that 80% of students at WHS play at least one season of sports and that all teams want to support one another.

Ms. Chow stated the next step is to modify the proposal based on NRC feedback and bring it back to the School Committee to vote, then bring it back to NRV in the form of a joint meeting.

TOWN MEETING PREP

Ms. Mirick stated the Advisory book is available. She noted on Thursday, March 24 there will be a League of Women Voters Town Meeting prep session, at which Ms. Mirick will speak about the highlights of the budget.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Leda Eizenberg
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

Annual Human Resources Department Report

SC Recommendation - Eastern Bus 3.22.22

Discussion on NRC Feedback of Hunnewell Track & Field Proposal by SC 3.22.22