

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
March 30, 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; Director of Nursing Linda Corridan; Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Dr. Charmie Curry; Director of Technology Kathy Dooley; 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. Mirick gave an update on the Mobility Committee. She noted there will be a Sustainable Mobility Plan public forum on April 15. Sustainable mobility highlights transportation modes and the supporting infrastructure that increase access while reducing environmental impacts, inefficiencies, and costs. There is a link on the Town's web page to sign up.

Ms. Chow stated that following the previous meeting, she and Mr. Roberti went to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) meeting on March 18. Together, they reviewed a letter outlining next steps regarding track and field projects. She noted they received positive feedback on the process steps outlined. She added she met March 30 with Dr. Lussier, Dr. Chisum, and Mr. Brown to look at requirements around bathrooms and team rooms and to begin talking about requirements around lighting.

Ms. Chow reminded the public that the School Committee holds Office Hours monthly, the next opportunity being April 14 at 7:00 pm.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier offered a reminder that schools will be in recess April 2 for Good Friday. Wednesday, March 31, WMS and WHS will be at a full schedule for cohorts B and C while elementary schools will be half day remote to allow staff to prepare for transition back to full-time on April 5. Viral testing kit distribution began in grades 3-5 this week.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. White had nothing to report.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes - March 9, 2021 Open Session

Van Transportation Bid Award

NE Medical Invoices Wells2006 (\$861.69), Wells2009 (\$191.49)

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which includes approval of mtg minutes of 3/9/21 as amended, and the Van Transportation Bid Award, and NE Medical Invoices Wells2006 (\$861.69), Wells2009 (\$191.49) as presented.

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

SCHOOL REOPENING OVERVIEW

Anne Beauchamp, PreK-12 Coordinator for Curriculum, Assessment & Accountability, joined the Committee.

Dr. Beauchamp began by presenting the results of a feedback survey that was sent to parents, secondary students, and staff. The survey gauged levels of reassurance regarding a full reopening. The survey was anonymous and was available in English, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese. Almost 2,000 parents responded, representing around 3,430 students, as well as 850 secondary students and 459 in-person staff. Her summation of the survey results indicated that across all groups and subgroups, there was a higher percentage of reassurance than concern. The highest levels of reassurance were in the areas of ongoing surveillance testing, contact tracing, and in student/teacher relationships. The highest levels of concern were in the areas of physical distancing, particularly during lunch, close contacts, and changing schedules and routines. The survey did not include any open ended questions.

She then discussed transfer requests. Requesting to move from RLS to full in person were 82 students while 9 requested to transfer from their current hybrid status to RLS in lieu of returning full-time. Once all grades transition, 92% of the student population will attend fully in person.

Ms. Corridan offered health and safety updates related to reopening. She noted cases have leveled off after peaks had been seen in January and February. There had been six cases since the previous week, all of which were community or household acquired, and were spaced across elementary, middle school, and high school levels. She stated she was pleased to report that 600 staff have been vaccinated with at least one dose, which is approximately 70% of the staff. She added there is about 70% staff participation in the viral testing program and she strongly encouraged staff to continue testing even once they have been vaccinated. Students at the middle school and high school vary in the 60% range for testing participating. Finally, she noted grades 3-5 began receiving testing kits this week, which went seamlessly.

Dr. Lussier offered a calendar overview for April. On Monday, April 5 elementary will be transitioning to full five day schedules. The following week, WMS will transition. There will then be April vacation week and WHS will begin transition the week of April 26. He introduced principals Toni Jolley, Ellen Quirk, Mark Ito, Jamie Chisum, and Nora Wilkins to offer details at each level.

Ms. Jolley discussed the logistics of a full return at the elementary level. She noted social distancing will maintain at 6 feet whenever possible, particularly during snack and lunch. There will be a 3 foot minimum to be used only where absolutely required. She stated the only change in scheduling is the return of the usual 12:00 Wednesday dismissal time, which has been 12:15 for remote Wednesdays this year. Each elementary school will handle arrival and dismissal slightly differently given their specific layouts. She added each school has created a safe and secure solution that includes having line up spaces being spread out. She was confident arrival and dismissal will go smoothly. Ms. Quirk stated the kids are excited to welcome their

classmates back and that there is a “great buzz in the air.” Regarding lunches, she offered as an example that at Hunnewell some classes will split with some eating in the classroom and some in the cafeterium, though they will be eating outside as much as possible. She advised parents to dress kids appropriately and in layers. In terms of scheduling, Ms. Quirk stated all students will have PE, art, library, and music. Spanish will meet one time per cycle for 30 minutes for the remainder of the year. Specialists will continue to go to classrooms to minimize transitions.

Mr. Ito discussed the transition plans for Wellesley Middle School. He stated 6th grade will begin fully in person on Monday, April 12 to allow them time to acclimate to the building. Wednesday will be a full day. On Thursday April 15, 7th grade will begin in full and 8th grade will begin in full on Friday, April 16. then vacation. Physical distancing will be at 3 feet in the classrooms and 6 feet for mask breaks and eating. A shorter, 5 minute transition time will allow safety protocols to be maintained. Regarding scheduling, there will be no change to schedules Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. On Wednesdays, 7 periods will be run as they currently are on remote days; however, start and end times will be adjusted to match the other days. For arrivals, doors will open at 7:30 am and more doors will be open to allow students to get to their room with the shortest and fastest route. There will be a staggered dismissal by room. Regarding lunches, weather and condition permitting they will eat outdoors as much as possible. Inside there will be seven areas for eating. He added they will be looking to parents to support lunch duty, which is being coordinated by the PTO.

Dr. Chisum discussed the transition plans for Wellesley High School. He stated 9th grade will be fully in person on Monday, April 26 while all other grades will be remote that day. Tuesday, April 27 all students will be back full time. Regarding social distancing, they will be limiting the number of passing times a day to three times and there will be no locker use. Desks will be 3 feet apart in classrooms. Regarding the schedule, he stated the order of color blocks and order of days will remain the same; however, the day will end at 1:30, as there will not be lunch at school. He explained there was not a way to give all students a lunch period that would include distancing without significantly extending the day. Regarding arrival and dismissal, he stated the school is working on a plan with the Wellesley Police Department and a traffic consulting group. He noted that usually there is a variable start time at the school but there will now be a single start time, which will create more traffic. He added that specific directions to families will follow. A normal dismissal procedure will be maintained. Regarding lunch, he stated there will be spaces for students to eat a snack and have a break but the school will not be running a meal. Grab and go lunches will be available at dismissal. He added the amount of time in classes will be the same and that reducing passing time and eliminating lunch periods will allow for the day to be condensed.

Ms. Wilkins offered an update on RLS. She stated there will be a net reduction of 55 elementary students from RLS returning to in person, a net reduction of 20 to WMS, and a net reduction of 1 student to WHS. She added confirmation letters will go to families notifying them. She noted schedules are going to align with the schedules at each level. She added this was in large part due to shared faculty. She discussed possibilities for end of year programming. Her hope is to provide RLS students with opportunities to participate in any end of year activities being offered at their schools. She added that internally, RLS is planning end of year celebrations in their classrooms at different levels.

Ms. Mahr discussed the latest transportation guidance from the State. She stated masks are to be worn by all riders, windows will be open for ventilation, and there will still be assigned seating. Currently there is some capacity to add riders and families should call the Transportation Office to check availability, adding that Deane McGoldrick and Patty McGuire are

willing to help answer any questions about routes. She then offered an update on food service, noting the federal government expanded the free meals program through September 30, 2021. She stated the District will continue to offer free meals to all students through next September. She also stated RLS students will continue their ability to obtain meals through the signup program. Additionally, limited a la carte items at WHS and WMS will now be available as well as milk and water.

Ms. Dooley noted that the IT Department will be keeping the Help Desk and Call-In service in place for families operating until 4:00 every day.

Dr. Lussier discussed next steps. He offered his thanks to Joe McDonough and FMD for their help with furniture moves and logistics. He also offered his thanks for the partnership and communication with WEA regarding expectations. He noted all schools will be running information sessions for principals to answer site-specific questions from families. Ms. Chow added her thanks to Mr. McGoldrick and the van drivers, as they were very important in helping with kit assemblies.

In discussion with the Committee, it was noted that all but one elementary student was able to return to their home school and that the movement of students was even across grade levels such that there will not be an impact on staffing. It was also noted that considerations are still being weighed for students who may be required to quarantine for COVID-related reasons. Finally, it was discussed that extracurricular activities at the high school would maintain current start times to allow students time to eat following their 1:30 dismissal with the acknowledgement that that plan may need to be adjusted.

ATHLETICS SPRING SEASON UPDATE

John Brown, Athletic Director, joined the Committee.

Mr. Brown offered a presentation of the proposed Spring sports season. He stated most sports will begin April 26 and that Sailing has already begun. Sports included in the Spring season are baseball, softball, dance, which is normally a Winter sport, boys and girls tennis, boys and girls track, girls golf, lacrosse, boys volleyball, coed sailing, and unified track. Again there will be no middle school athletics. He stated competitions will begin Thursday, May 6, adding there will be a full league schedule as opposed to the pods teams have been playing in this year. The State has opened up to league and non-league competition and has added state tournaments. He stated this is because it has been noted that there has been little transmission through sports. Additionally, as there was no spring season last year, this is an opportunity to give spring athletes as much of a season as possible. The tournament will begin June 15. He stated safety considerations will be similar to other seasons.

Dr. Lussier stated he and Mr. Brown brought the slate of sports to the Board of Health (BOH) and they felt good about it. Ms. Chow added the Committee was not planning to vote on spring sports. She stated they did not need to vote on previous seasons but had chosen to. However, since the District is moving to full in person, it did not seem necessary for the Committee to take a vote. On behalf of the Committee she wished the spring athletes a great season.

MID-YEAR DISTRICT GOALS REPORTS

Dr. Lussier explained that each year, District staff working with the School Committee, establish goals. It is currently a little past the midway point in the school year.

Over the summer, the State required each district to develop three plans for the school year. Dr. Lussier noted that throughout the year, the District used various models so it was helpful to have spent the time over the summer developing them. Final plans were submitted to DESE on September 2, 2020.

The second goal was to establish a partnership and MOA with WEA. He noted this process mattered in order to set a tone of collaboration going into the school year. Final ratification took place on September 12 and the District opened schools successfully September 16.

The District's third goal was to provide a wide range of support and professional learning opportunities for teachers and administrators. Mr. LaCava explained this was achieved by maximizing the additional days before the school year began and other opportunities through the year to provide professional learning in the areas of health and safety, social and emotional wellness, hybrid and remote learning pedagogy, and anti-racism development. The District invited outside experts as well as utilized the expertise of District staff.

With regards to viral testing, Dr. Lussier explained the District set two important goals at the start of the year. First to conduct baseline testing prior to the in-person start of school in early October, then to establish a weekly viral surveillance testing program for all staff. Currently, the surveillance testing program includes all staff and students in grades 3-12. He offered his thanks to Wellesley Education Foundation (WEF).

The next goal was to develop metrics and a dashboard to help the District understand when to employ different models of learning based on up to date case trends. These were initially developed as part of the reopening plans in August, were updated in early December, and finalized in February to become the dashboard as it exists today. Dr. Lussier offered his thanks to the BOH and Health Department members.

Dr. Curry discussed the goal surrounding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. She noted 84% of staff have completed the Equity Protocol Training towards a goal of 100% participation. She stated the training orients staff to issues of bias, and trains them how to recognize and respond to it. She added the DEI Office has completed its equity strategy plan, as presented to the Committee in February 2021.

For the next goal, Dr. Lussier explained the District is proceeding with critical school facilities projects. Specifically, funding for the middle school project was approved in the fall and work will be done over the summer on the HVAC system, the grease trap, and case work; Hunnewell has gone through detail design and planning is continuing for Hardy, with both projects going to Town Meeting in the fall.

The final goal was to develop a FY22 budget that meets needs and priorities. Ms. Mahr explained this was a very challenging year with one of the lowest budgets in a number of years but the District was able to build one that meets level service needs and is aligned with Committee and Town guidance.

FACILITIES PROJECTS UPDATES

MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING SYSTEMS

Ms. Martin stated the project is "firing on all cylinders" getting lined up for work this summer. There was a neighbors meeting conducted via Zoom the week prior, which is available to view online. The meeting outlined the logistics of the construction site over the summer.

HARDY

Ms. Martin provided an update on the Hardy project to include some key dates. She stated the project is in the schematic design process heading towards submission to MSBA this summer, which will require supportive votes by the Committee and Select Board on the recommendation put forward by the Permanent Building Committee (PBC). The OPM from Compass proposed a joint meeting of the Select Board, School Committee, and PBC on June 3, which is a regularly scheduled PBC meeting evening. At the meeting Compass will offer a presentation of the draft budget and scope. There is also a tentative date of Wednesday June 9 for a community forum, which will consist of updates on both elementary school projects. The Committee would then vote its support at the following School Committee meeting.

HUNNEWELL

Ms. Mirick provided an update on the Hardy project. She noted it is moving through the design development stage with the PBC. Upcoming milestones include preparing cost estimates that will be coming in at the end of April. A Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) public hearing is scheduled for April 15, which will detail all steps of permitting a Wellesley project.

Ms. Martin noted there is a website for the projects if people want to see slides. It can be found at www.wellesleyhhu.org.

REAFFIRMATION OF ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION

Ms. Chow discussed that with recent incidents and a rise in anti-Asian racism, she believed it was important to recognize and stand in solidarity with members of the AAPI community and people of color and stand behind the statement Dr. Lussier sent to the WPS community the week prior. She noted the resolution originally adopted by the Committee on August 6, 2020 talks about making Wellesley a welcoming community for all students. She stated that as District leaders they cannot remain silent against racism and hate and must ensure DEI is embedded for families, faculty, and staff. She highlighted that Dr. Curry will be launching the 2nd Annual 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge, the details of which can be found on the District's [website](#). Ms. Eizenberg has asked PTO leaders to add the event in their respective newsletters. Ms. Chow encouraged community members to sign up. Ms. Eizenberg stated there was an event hosted by the Wellesley Chinese Language School and World of Wellesley called Making the Invisible Visible. She noted that Dr. Lussier has agreed to have WPS cosponsor a follow-up event as further affirmation of the Schools' commitment to end racism. There will be a panel with experts and an opportunity for community conversation in breakout rooms. The event will take place Sunday, May 2 in the evening with more details to come.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to reaffirm support for the Anti-Racism Resolution passed by the School Committee on August 6, 2020.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ES MINUTES: REVIEW FOR RELEASE

Ms. Chow explained that on a quarterly basis, the Chair and Superintendent review minutes of Executive Session meetings to determine if they can be released. She stated there have been four sets of minutes since November and that at this time they do not feel any minutes should be released.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 9:00 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED: Ms. Martin; SECONDED: Ms. Mirick; 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:

Memo - Student Van Transportation Contract Award
New England Medical Invoices
Reopening Update for School Committee 3/30/21
Full In Person Feedback Surveys SC Presentation
WPS Athletics Plan Spring Sports 2020-21
SY 2020-21 District Goals
Hardy Presentation PBC Meeting 3/25/21