

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
May 7th, 2021
Superintendent's Conference Room, Wellesley Middle School
40 Kingsbury St**

The working group meeting of the School Committee convened at 10:04am. Those present were Chair Linda Chow, Vice Chair Melissa Martin, Secretary Catherine Mirick, and members Jim Roberti & Leda Eizenberg. Also attending were Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Cindy Mahr, and WPS Registrar Asya Kibko.

A conference call line was opened so the public could attend and remained open throughout the meeting.

Public Comment

Ms. Mirick confirmed that there was no one on the line for public comment.

Reports

Ms. Martin reported that yesterday there was a Hardy project update to the Select Board. Ms. Chow thanked WEF for honoring members of the WPS staff that had served at least 25 years at their annual Chair Ceremony and reported that it was a wonderful event.

Implementation of Policy JG - Student Enrollment and School Assignment

Dr. Lussier introduced the topic by explaining that the WPS registrar and Ms. Mahr are receiving new registrations daily and working to enroll those students in appropriate neighborhood schools and develop sections for SY 2021-22 that fit our class guidelines. There will be fewer sections next year than in the current school year based on enrollment and the administration is looking for guidance. This is a complicated process because there are many uncertainties about how enrollment will change over the next three months and what guidance we may get from DESE regarding COVID protocols, but the district needs to inform teachers. Non Professional Teacher Status (PTS) teachers must be informed of decisions by June 15th, but from an HR perspective it should be done as early as possible. It is also important for the district to make sure that people aren't released and then end up needing to be hired back or filled in for because of enrollment changes.

The district does have the tool of closing classrooms and reassigning new families outside their neighborhood school. This can be effective, but is difficult for new families moving into Wellesley and flies in the face of the neighborhood school model.

The Committee discussed the difficult intersection of class guidelines and Covid restrictions. It is unknown at this time whether there will be distancing guidelines in the

fall. Current guidelines are three feet while masked & six feet with no masks. Toni Jolley, principal of the Bates School, joined the Committee via zoom. She discussed the difficulties of teaching in a classroom at guideline with these distancing requirements. At Bates those classrooms with more than 20 kids don't have room to move outside of their desks. The crowded classrooms inhibit small group work, space for teachers, and room for kids to move. They have no rug, no calming corners and no space to use de-escalation strategies. The larger classes also inhibit push-in inclusion rather than pull-out inclusion because additional adults in the room create even more stressors.

Ms. Jolley discussed the use of multi-grade classrooms in elementary schools, which were a fairly common practice in the district more than a decade ago. While there are benefits to these classes for students, families & teachers, they are much more difficult to implement than they used to be because of the implementation of the Common Core and more specific state standards. The district could undertake to implement them as a pedagogical decision, but they don't make sense as a short term solution for variable enrollment.

The Committee then had a wide ranging discussion about enrollment for next year. Topics included how many students is the right number to put in a classroom with three feet distancing; should there be a COVID policy for a reduction in class guidelines; how long can we wait on this decision in the hopes of guidance from DESE; could pandemic relief funds be used to pay for extra sections; and differences in class sizes across schools.

The Committee also discussed the balance of running only the sections we need to run with our commitment to educating Wellesley kids in the best way. This included discussions about small class sizes at Upham and the possibility of single sections there. The Committee also discussed the cost to the district for onboarding new teachers, should we let current teachers go and then need to re-hire. The district does have the ability to move educators between buildings as needed. Discussion around tradeoffs and the difficult financial situation of the town were included.

It was confirmed that enrollment discussions would be on the agenda for the regular School Committee meeting on Tuesday.

Public Comment

No one was present who wanted to comment.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55am

Moved: Ms. Martin; **Seconded:** Mr. Roberti; **Roll Call:** Ms Eizenberg - Yes; Ms. Mirick - Yes; Mr. Roberti - Yes; Ms. Martin - Yes; Ms. Chow - Yes.

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Mirick
Secretary

Documents:
WPS 2021/2022 Enrollment as of 5/7/21