

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
May 10, 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; and Student Advisory representatives Ivy Wang, Sofia Dobado, 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 HEARING/DISCUSSION/VOTE: SCHOOL CHOICE

There was no one who wished to speak at the hearing.

Dr. Lussier explained that WPS has never participated in the School Choice program but is required by law to take a vote every year. He added with all moving parts around swing space and enrollment, the Administration does not believe it is a good idea to participate in the program. Ms. Mahr stated that under M. G.L. c.76, § 12B, all school districts in Massachusetts are presumed to participate in and to admit non-resident students through school choice. Districts can withdraw if the School Committee holds a public hearing and votes to withdraw. Citing elementary projects requiring swing space accommodations and continued post pandemic recovery needs, she reiterated the recommendation for WPS to withdraw from the school choice program.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to withdraw from School Choice for school year 2022-2023 due to elementary building projects requiring swing space accommodations and post-pandemic recovery.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no speakers

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Eizenberg stated last week she attended a virtual demonstration of three documentaries produced by Evolutions students at WHS. They dealt with gaining understanding of a marginalized group the students would previously not have understood and included a history of METCO, perceptions of Muslim Americans, and representation of Latinx in media. She commended the students on their hard work.

Ms. Chow offered Hunnewell Track & Field updates. She stated that following the Committee's vote last week, she and Ms. Mirick went before the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to provide them with an update. The senior ecologist from Epsilon Associates attended the meeting and fielded questions regarding the second analysis performed. She added the proposal is now in the hands of the NRC and if they want to consider holding a community

forum with neighbors, it would be something she would support. NRC will take time to look through the updated proposal and come up with any further questions.

Ms. Martin summarized recent Conversation with the School Committee opportunities with the Hardy and Sprague communities. She stated she and Ms. Chow attended both and there were high level discussions, including around homework at the elementary level, after school care at the elementary level and how important it is, and class size guidelines. She added the importance of finding balance between in person and virtual outreach opportunities going forward, noting that challenging topics can be discussed more robustly in person while Zoom offers increased accessibility. Ms. Mirick added a Conversation with the School Committee with the WHS community is scheduled for Thursday, May 19 from 4:00-5:00. Dr. Chisum has been sending out information in his weekly notes.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier offered the following recognitions:

Thank you to all the schools' PTOs for the many ways our teachers were celebrated last week. From coffees, to raffles, to catered luncheons, our teachers are grateful for the support and recognition.

He recognized the Fine Arts Department for their participation in Step Up Day. It offered a chance for vocalists to perform with and welcome rising 9th graders. It is one of many ways to make connections and transitions from middle school to high school.

From K-12 Director of Fitness & Health Joanne Grant: Congratulations to all who participated in the Middle School Mini-Marathon on Thursday, April 28th. Over 900 students in Grades 6-8 ran the 1.3 mile course. The WMS Mini-Marathon was designed to emulate the Boston Marathon. Students work on building up their endurance to run the race in their P.E. classes so they are prepared for the course on race day. After a two-year COVID hiatus, it was a fabulous return to an event that the Fitness & Health Department has organized and executed for over 32 years.

From Fiske Principal Rachel McGregor: A huge thank you to auction co-chairs Carolyn Price and Jill Hegsted and all the PTO volunteers for organizing the Fiske Auction held on Friday, May 6th. This event funds many PTO and school activities. It was a lovely evening for the Fiske families to come together and support the Fiske community.

From Pre-K-12 Director of Art Thom Carter: Congratulations to the 31 high school Visual Art & ELA students who received recognition at the 2022 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Six Gold Keys (the highest award) were awarded to Visual Art students, 21 Silver Keys and 16 Honorable Mentions were given to 28 Visual Art Students and 9 ELA students in grades 9-12.

The Scholastic Art Award winning art is now on display at the Wellesley Free Library along with other artwork from high school students using ceramic, digital art, drawing & painting, metals, photography, and printmaking mediums. The show is on display through Friday, May 27.

He noted WPS is coming into college graduation season and many alumni from WHS will be graduating in the upcoming weeks. He offered a special shoutout to Michael Mahr, son of Ms. Mahr, who will be graduating from Gettysburg College this weekend.

Dr. Lussier offered a COVID update. He stated as with many areas in Massachusetts, WPS continues to see an uptick in cases with 94 cases reported between May 3 and May 10. He

added the dashboard is updated each day. At this point the Health Department is not recommending substantive changes to current protocols and they are not seeing a significant rise in serious illnesses or hospitalizations. There will be a Board of Health (BOH) meeting tomorrow morning, which Ms. Hulme will attend. He noted Norfolk County has been deemed a high-risk county, for which the CDC recommends masks indoors, staying up to date with vaccines, and testing if experiencing symptoms. There are indoor events at WPS scheduled for this week, including high school and middle school one-acts. Guidance will be offered after tomorrow's BOH meeting.

He stated the District is actively seeking support in public engagement by working with a communications firm. They will have more details in the next week or so.

Finally, he noted the Massachusetts Board of Education (BOE) will be having its May meeting at WHS during the school day on Tuesday, May 24. WHS senior Eleni Livingston is a student representative for the BOE. There will be some reserved parking for board members and it is also not uncommon for media and citizens to attend.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. Harrison stated there will be a Massachusetts Association of Student Representatives (MASR) this Saturday. Additionally, student elections at the high school are beginning, so there will be new faces for next year.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes - May 3, 2022

Gift Acceptances

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

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

UPDATE: HARDY DETAILED DESIGN

Members from Compass and SMMA joined the Committee - Emily Sarazin, Ryan Lynch, Sarah Yacko, Mike Reid, Michael Dowhan, Joel Seeley, Dick Elliott, Alex Pitkin, and Jeff D'Amico.

Mr. D'Amico began by introducing Emily Sarazin of Compass Project Management, the new Project Manager for the Hunnewell project. Ms. Sarazin stated that June 22 is the last day for teachers then the team will begin moving furniture, fixtures, and equipment into swing spaces.

Ms. Chow left the meeting at 7:10.

Mr. D'Amico reviewed the schedule for the Hardy project. Currently, they are conducting the permitting process and will wrap up the design development submission with MSBA. Next is the construction document stage.

Mr. Reid stated plans have not changed much since schematic design. The main public spaces are arrayed along the lobby space, including the media center, cafetorium, gymnasium. The media center is at the heart of the school. Each grade is designed around a shared learning

commons. Student support spaces are grouped to serve each classroom wing. The administration space includes a secure lobby for visitors to be checked in.

Interior: Ms. Yacko walked the Committee through highlights of interior spaces. She highlighted the architectural and design connection to neighboring Morse's Pond with a sense of openness in shared spaces and a use of natural tones, natural wood looks, and natural materials. The typical classroom neighborhood pod will consist of three classrooms per grade radiating around a centrally located learning commons with a small group room accessed from learning common. Skills and student support services spaces include a quiet dining area, small group rooms, EL and FLES, math center, speech rooms, OT/PT, a calm room, testing room, etc. The hallways will offer a sense of way-finding and allow for tactile experiences with sensory installations. She described shared spaces such as music and art spaces as being multifunctional spaces with natural daylight. The gymnasium will include a low climbing wall and bleachers. The cafetorium will include a quiet dining area. The media center will be a multifunction space with areas for books and semi-open or enclosed spaces for reading or small group activity.

Outdoor Spaces: Mr. Dowhan described walkways that will be on the other side of the treeline, away from the road. There will be an outdoor art space. The outdoor Skills space will be an area for students to be active with an outdoor chalkboard and sensory elements while being a more enclosed space and away from the entrance door. With the building footprint moving to where existing fields are, they are looking at space to the west of the building, on the side where the gym will be. There will be a structured play area and active recreation area where the new ballfields will be.

Exterior: Mr. Reid stated the team is going through value management and is working with the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) to refine the design. Mr. Pitkin added they are working with the sustainability team through Facilities Maintenance Department (FMD).

In discussion, the Committee remarked they appreciated the thought that went into the design, specifically acknowledging the use of natural lighting and materials and the student support spaces.

Ms. Martin noted that the Playing Fields Task Force (PFTF) has expressed interest in the new field being artificial turf. The PBC asked if this was something the School Committee would be interested in. She stated that given the impact on the budget, she did not think it was something they would want to pursue. Ms. Eizenberg and Mr. Mack voiced their agreement.

Ms. Mirick thanked the Compass and SMMA teams for all their work and stated the Committee would vote at the next meeting to approve the design.

QUARTERLY REVIEW - EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES FOR RELEASE

Ms. Mirick stated that the Superintendent and School Committee Chair are expected to review on a quarterly basis any minutes from Executive Sessions to determine if they can be released. They have determined there are not any that should be released.

Ms. Chow rejoined the meeting at 8:00.

3RD QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Mahr provided an overview of the FY22 Quarter 3 financial report. She stated the operating surplus is currently \$1,093,886. She stated the District has received 100% reimbursement from

FEMA for carrying the costs of PPE and test kits totalling \$163,000. Revenue receipts from fees and tuition are meeting budgeted expectations. Additionally, the District has received four additional grants and grant funds have increased by \$15,465. She reviewed transfers in Salary and Other Compensation and Expenses accounts between the second and third quarters. There has been approximately \$600,000 in Out of District costs savings from the second to third quarter. Ms. Mahr noted the final Circuit Breaker payment has been received.

She highlighted that the District is working closely with the town, in particular the Fire Department, in seeking federal and state reimbursement through FEMA. While these reimbursements do reflect in the school budget, they go to the town as free cash. Additionally, the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act allows employers to seek reimbursement of up to \$850 per employee for COVID-related illnesses. She offered thanks to Donna Kalinowski and the Payroll Department as well as Monica Visco and Human Resources for their work on this.

Ms. Mahr stated the administrative team met and prioritized four possible uses for a portion of the surplus funds for which they would seek Committee support.

- Additional K-5 ELA and Social Studies materials totalling \$255,000.
- A demographic and enrollment study. The District conducts these every three to five years. Due to the pandemic and building projects, they believe it is important to conduct the study again. The study can be completed for \$25,000 or less. It does have to be formally bid, and they would like to get it out to bid as soon as possible.
- LED light replacement for the stage area at WHS, costing approximately \$38,000. This would complement what FMD is doing.
- An effort to unite all elementary students during the HHU swing space through the purchase of T-shirts, similar to what has been done in years past, totalling \$15,000.

The Committee thanked Ms. Mahr for her presentation and asked clarifying questions regarding the surplus options. In particular, Ms. Trach explained the materials will be replacements of classroom library texts and supplements of library texts, not school library materials. She added that currently teachers are building their classroom collections through the generosity of PTOs and that there is some variability from classroom to classroom over the years, noting this purchase would unify materials across the District. Regarding the enrollment study, Dr. Lussier explained the District is interested in ascertaining whether enrollment trends are short-term and stabilizing, as the pandemic significantly altered prior projections. He added now is the time to establish a touchstone to continue monitoring trends going forward.

While the Committee preferred to defer voting on the use of surplus funds until the next meeting, they stated their understanding and agreement of the timeliness of getting the study out to bid.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to accept the FY22 Quarter 3 report as presented and approve the use of \$25,000 of surplus funds for a demographic and enrollment study.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Mirick stated the Committee will vote on remaining surplus items at the May 24 meeting.

JICFB - BULLYING POLICY, PREVENTION & INTERVENTION PLAN

Ms. Eizenberg stated that the needed changes to the policy were minor thanks to feedback received at the last meeting. Ms. Chow noted the Policy Subcommittee did not hear any feedback from the community and received no emails.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to accept the new policy JICFB as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Chow stated the next step is for the Administration to look at the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP) and, based on changes reflected in the policy, ensure any updates appropriate in the plan and procedures are incorporated there.

CONTRACT - ASSISTANT SUPT. TEACHING & LEARNING

Dr. Lussier reminded the Committee that new members of the administrative team in Central Office are offered one-year contracts for their first three years, after which they are typically offered a three-year contract. He stated after an extensive search last year the position of Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning was offered to Ms. Trach and she hit the ground running by learning, building trust, spending so much time out in schools, and getting to know the team. He highlighted her clarity of vision and thinking about issues of equity.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve the contract for the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning for Sandra Trach for the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION PROCESS

Ms. Mirick offered a quick overview of the Superintendent evaluation process. DESE has a detailed rubric that is used to evaluate all areas. She stated the first step was completed last fall by setting district goals. A midyear report was presented in March and an end of year update will be presented at the May 24 meeting. Dr. Lussier will complete a self-evaluation. Each School Committee member will fill out an evaluation, which Ms. Mirick will compile into one composite evaluation. Each member can set up an individual meeting with Dr. Lussier. The process will be complete by mid-June.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 8:55 pm, Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Leda Eizenberg
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

School Choice 2022 Memo 5.10.22

Hardy Design Development Slides 5.10.22

FY22 Quarter 3 Report

FY22 Quarter 3 Presentation

Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning Contract

JICFB Current

Redlined JICFB 5.10.22

Clean JICFB 5.10.22