

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
May 24, 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 Resources Monica Visco; and Student Advisory representatives Rachel White, Ivy Wang, Sofia Dobado, 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.

Ms. Mirick began by sending thoughts and prayers to Uvalde, Texas in light of the school shooting earlier that day. She assured the Wellesley community that safety is a top priority. Dr. Lussier added that WPS will continue to do its part to keep students safe and make them feel safe. He noted other pieces have to be attended to, namely gun legislation and mental health.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Amy McCarron stated she believes an anti-police narrative has resurfaced in WPS, specifically in that 8th grade ELA classes were assigned the book 'All American Boys,' which she believes teaches students that police are brutal, racist, and awful. She added the ELA Department Head was very responsive to her concerns and gave her son an alternative book to read, for which she was very appreciative. She added the schools should choose a less divisive topic.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Eizenberg stated she and Ms. Chow held Office Hours last Thursday, at which they heard from six members of the community and had fruitful conversations. She also stated that she and Ms. Mirick held a Conversation with the School Committee for the WHS community the previous week. She noted there were discussions around semester versus quarter grading, as the Student Congress has brought forth a proposal to switch to semester grading.

Ms. Chow acknowledged the Wellesley Scholarship Foundation for their good work and generosity, noting they are holding their awards ceremony tonight. She offered an update on the Sprague lacrosse wall. The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) voted to allow the wall while adding a few conditions taking neighbors' concerns into consideration. Regarding the Hunnewell Track & Field proposal, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) met last week where commissioners went through thoughts and feedback on the proposal. Key things to come out of the discussion were around enforcement and accountability. Reflecting on their feedback, Ms. Chow stated she felt confident in the proposal's commitment to address any issues. There was discussion about asking the ZBA to add similar conditions to this project as the lacrosse wall. The next NRC meeting is June 2 and they are slated to vote at that meeting. She added members of the community who are in support of the project are urged to express their support to the Committee and NRC via public comment and/or emails.

Ms. Mirick stated last night she went to WHS' Evolutions Capstone Project Showcase, at which she saw students' amazing work. She noted the Mobility Committee is continuing its rollout of the Sustainable Mobility Plan, which can help the town achieve its greenhouse gas and climate change goals. Ms. Mirick also expressed her excitement for WHS seniors.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier stated though he was unable to attend, he wished to recognize the METCO Award Dinner at WHS as part of Wellesley Wonderful Weekend, which celebrates students and welcomes rising 9th graders.

He stated there have been conversations at WHS around a proposal brought forward by Student Congress to School Council around the most effective grading structure, namely moving from quarter to semester grades. School Council voted 5-3 to support the proposal. He noted that feedback so far on the topic from staff, students, and families has been split, adding there has been a robust conversation and a great exchange of ideas. He and Dr. Chisum are in agreement that based on the totality of the feedback, this is not a proposal ready to be implemented successfully at this time.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Mr. Budson-McQuilken noted his appreciation for Dr. Lussier's comments about the proposal brought forth by Student Congress and for being able to have such a complete conversation. He stated Student Congress has elected Armita Hamrah, Evelyn Harrison, Ivy Wang, and Sofia Dobado as student advisory representatives for next year. Senior Community Service Day will be May 25 and the Senior Awards Ceremony will be May 26.

Ms. Wang and Ms. Harrison provided a presentation from the recent Massachusetts Association of Student Representatives (MASR) conference. MASR is a new organization where student representatives from around Massachusetts connect. The first official meeting was held May 14 at Essex Agricultural & Technical High School in Danvers. Next steps for MASR include lobbying for the Financial Literacy Bill currently working its way through the State House as well as creating a student representative handbook and provide training, workshops, and templates for new representatives.

Ms. White stated this would be her final meeting with the School Committee. She thanked the Committee and WPS Administration, noting she had learned so much over the past three years. Ms. Mirick thanked Ms. White for all her help and insights.

CONSENT AGENDA

Meeting Minutes: School Committee Retreat: 3/9/22; Town Meeting Prep: 3/25/22, 3/28/22, 4/5/22, 4/11/22, 4/25/22; Open Session 5/10/22 and 5/19/22.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve the 4/11/22 minutes as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED 4-0 WITH 1 ABSTENTION

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

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Chow left the meeting at 7:15 PM

HARDY DETAILED DESIGN

SMMA and Compass representatives Emily Sarazin, Alex Pitkin, Dick Elliott, Mike Reid, and Sarah Yacko joined the Committee.

Ms. Mirick stated the team Compass and SMMA have returned to provide an update and for the Committee to approve the detailed design ahead of submission to MSBA in the next few weeks.

Ms. Sarazin explained that current cost estimates place the detailed design budget approximately \$3,000,000 over the schematic design projections. This has resulted in the need to enter into a value management process. She emphasized the main guidelines for the value management process were to ensure no program cuts, to maintain the District's sustainability goal, and to maintain parity with the Hunnewell building project. She outlined some ways this is being achieved that are mostly unseen such as using more onsite soil, and reducing numbers related to steel needed as the project has advanced. Additionally, the detailed design has been modified to simplify some finishes of outdoor spaces and there has been a gross reduction in the size of the building of 1,000 square feet, though there is no resultant reduction in classroom space.

Mr. Reid described updates to the interior, explaining reductions in gross footage in corridors, custodial and mechanical spaces. and by rearranging rooms so as to occupy some of the double height space, which can reduce overall square footage. Ms. Yacko noted that some millwork and casework will be reduced in a balanced manner. These include things such as benches and cabinets. For the exterior, Mr. Reid noted there will be a reduction in the overhang but that the general aesthetic will be maintained.

Ms. Martin noted the same process happened at the same point in the Hunnewell project and is typical. As the Hardy project partners with MSBA, there is a more formal procedure of the School Committee needing to sign off on the design, inclusive of the square footage reduction.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve the current design development, including the square footage reduction, as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 4-0

Ms. Chow returned to the meeting at 7:35 PM

TESTING & SCIENCE MATERIALS COORDINATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

Dr. Lussier explained this is a new position that was approved as part of the FY23 budget request.

Ms. Visco explained this position was created at the request of the WHS administration to manage the increasingly demanding standardized testing at the high school. This work is currently spread across multiple staff. The Testing & Science Materials Coordinator will manage the administration, registration of students, hiring and payment of proctors, training, ensuring student accommodations are in place, among other duties. During the summer months, the

Coordinator will help the Science Department inventory and distribute materials and equipment. This will be a 12-month position in bargaining unit D.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve the Testing & Science Materials Coordinator job description as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

WMS PROGRAM OF STUDIES AMENDMENT

Adam Blumer, WMS Social Studies Department Head, joined the Committee.

Ms. Trach stated WMS seeks to amend its Program of Studies to add a course titled “Media, Current Events, and You” as an 8th grade Media Literacy elective. Mr. Blumer explained that WMS has always done some level of media literacy education via Library and Social Studies and ELA classes. This course would cover the role of social media and news in society; practice analyzing sources for accuracy; and examine how to combat misinformation. The course would focus on the students being thoughtful, informed consumers of information and consumers of media.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Mirick stated the Committee would vote on the topic at the following meeting.

WHS ASSESSMENTS REPORT

WHS Principal Jamie Chisum and Director of School Counseling Dana Plunkett joined the Committee.

Dr. Chisum began by offering some context. Due to ongoing COVID challenges, the data represents a cohort of students who experienced a reduction of test-taking opportunities. Additionally, over 1,800 colleges are now test optional, believing the test to be not as valuable as it once was. This has led some students to decide not to take the SAT or ACT.

SAT/ACT Participation: Ms. Plunkett noted the data looks primarily at the Class of 2021, which is arguably the class most impacted by the pandemic. In the fall of 2019 as juniors, they were all able to take the PSAT. They went into lockdown in spring of their junior year, AP tests went online, and the vast majority of students were unable to take the SAT or ACT in spring 2020. In the fall of 2020 as seniors, the majority of colleges went test optional. Overall, 86.4% of the class of 2021 took either the SAT, the ACT, or both. Participation rates varied by race and ethnicity, most notably in that 90.9% of African American students and 50% of Hispanic or Latino students did not take either test.

Score Overview: Per the SAT mean scores, WPS Class of 2021 performed well compared to peers across the state and country despite an overall drop in scores of 1 point. Ms. Plunkett noted it is nationally agreed that now that students are back in school full time, scores should rebound. Compared to local peer districts, WPS fared well in Reading and Math SAT. ACT results saw similar trends with a drop-off in participation rates comparable to other tests. She added that despite a dip in scores across the country, WPS has maintained scores comparable to previous years.

Regarding AP tests, participation dipped from 431 in SY19-20 to 407 in SY20-21, yet Ms. Plunkett noted that for SY21-22, WHS just facilitated AP exams for 422 students. The data for the percent of tests taken that resulted in a score of 3 or higher indicates Wellesley outperformed peers across state and country. She added this year was the first in which the AP Chinese exam was administered and those results will be in next year's tally.

Next Steps: Ms. Plunkett discussed that WPS will continue to educate students and stay vigilant regarding achievement and performance gaps. Additionally, they will support multiple ways to provide evidence for college preparedness, such as GPA, transcript, essays, and letters of recommendation. She noted while college acceptance rates are dropping due to the number of applications increasing, of those students accepted to colleges such as Boston University, Bates, and Tufts, approximately 60% did not submit standardized test scores.

In discussion with the Committee, members voiced appreciation for the acknowledgement of how anxiety-inducing a changing landscape can be for students and families and that a testing optional application process has opened doors for many students yet can feel unsettling to others. Members also expressed interest in digging into the data regarding decline in SAT and ACT participation by African American and Hispanic and Latino students.

ENROLLMENT UPDATE

Ms. Mahr offered an update on FY23 enrollment as of May 23 data. She explained WPS has fully implemented its online registration process. Through this system, families pre-register through PowerSchool, which allows the District to track any outstanding potential registrations and project and plan accordingly.

Enrollment numbers are currently down 38 from October 1, 2021 but are 88 above the projected FY23 numbers with several more registrations likely to be completed throughout the summer. Withdrawals are starting to come in, which is not uncommon at the end of a school year.

When including pre-registrations with fully enrolled students, there are sections at capacity at each elementary grade level and others that are nearing capacity. Potential overflow solutions are being explored. There have been 27 open enrollment applications from 19 families, six of which are related to Hunnewell swing space and looking to consolidate their students into one building. Applications will be reviewed per the School Committee policy with the initial review on May 31 and another on June 30. There have been 9 applications for students of staff equaling 11 students. Decisions on their enrollment will be made in June after open enrollment.

Ms. Mahr explained the District sought guidance from the Committee regarding potential section or grade level closures and additions. She noted section decisions necessary to determine final staffing needs. Current enrollment projections would indicate closing Bates grade 5, Fiske kindergarten and grades 1 and 4, and Upham kindergarten, which would result in single sections for kindergarten and grade 3 at Upham. At Sprague, grade 3 could close at its current numbers, which would put one class at guideline and one class one student above guideline. Conversely, a third section could be opened. Additionally, a third section of Fiske grade 3 is suggested.

In discussion, the Committee noted emails they have received from Fiske and Sprague families urging a third section for grade 3. Ms. Eizenberg and Ms. Martin voiced their inclination to err on the side of small classes and advocate for opening additional sections where class sizes are currently 24 or over. Ms. Mirick expressed concerns about space constraints in host schools and would advocate for using existing sections to guideline. After further discussion, the

Committee agreed it was advisable to add an additional section of grade 3 at Fiske and deferred to the administrative team to determine the best path forward at Sprague given the space constraints.

EOY GOALS REPORTS: DISTRICT & SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Lussier and Ms. Trach described how the District met or made significant progress towards its goals this year. Highlights of work done in each goal area include but are not limited to the following.

COVID Response: Dr. Lussier stated mitigation strategies and implementation evolved multiple times over the year under federal, state, and local guidance. WPS participated in the state's viral testing program, using rapid tests and pool testing along with symptomatic testing. These programs also evolved throughout the year. Families and staff were provided with at home rapid test kits.

Pandemic Recovery: Ms. Trach discussed the team effort involved in focusing on student, faculty, staff, and family well-being. The District implemented Panorama staff and student surveys, which provide important feedback about belonging and engagement. Educators have focused on closing learning gaps and accelerating instruction so students have every opportunity to achieve benchmarks. WPS has implemented tutoring in grades K-12 for students who have been struggling to meet benchmark expectations.

21st Century Learning: An inventory was conducted of project-based learning projects and pilots from this year and resources will be compiled to share with teachers across the district. Grade 8 students participated in a pilot of a Civics project.

Social and Emotional Learning: Thirty staff members received Responsive Classroom training, which is a positive, prosocial way of engaging students in expected positive behaviors, modeling, and common language. Ninety staff members will be trained by the end of the year. The District continues to utilize an Advisory model, particularly in grades 6-12, and has increased social work support at all levels.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: Dr. Lussier described the District's focus on equity in building its FY23 budget, noting it will continue to be standard practice going forward.

High Expectations Teaching: Ms. Trach stated PreK-12 teachers ran and participated in High Expectations Teaching study groups focusing on equitable instruction. Additionally, 97 educators were trained in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), which focuses on a systemic approach to curriculum coherence.

Facility Projects: Dr. Lussier highlighted the District's partnership with the School Committee and noted the overwhelming votes by the community in favor of the Hardy and Hunnewell projects were reflective of the due diligence and work done.

Strategic Plan: WPS is seeking a communications partner to assist in a comprehensive input and rollout plan and engagement strategy for the fall.

Bargaining with WEA: Ms. Mahr stated negotiations with all five bargaining units have been ongoing for a number of months. It is her expectation to have a successor agreement in place by June 30 by working diligently in collaboration with Wellesley Educators Association (WEA).

Communication/Public Engagement: Dr. Lussier stated that Ms. Mahr has developed and implemented an exit survey tool to better track rationale and trends around declining enrollment.

Budget: Ms. Mahr noted a budget for FY23 has been voted into place. She offered her appreciation for all the support to make that possible, adding the budget stayed within guideline and addresses academic and pandemic recovery needs.

The Committee thanked Dr. Lussier, Ms. Trach, Ms. Mahr and their teams for all their hard work and dedication towards these goals throughout the year.

FY22 SUPPLEMENTAL EXPENDITURES

Ms. Mirick reminded the Committee about the items discussed at the previous meeting. At the May 10 meeting, funds were approved for a demographic and enrollment study so it could be sent out to bid without delay. Decisions on the remaining recommended expenditures was deferred until this meeting. Those expenditures include:

- K-5 Social Studies and English Language Arts materials for \$255,500.
- LED light replacement for the WHS stage area for \$37,490. This will complement the existing LED replacement project currently being undertaken by FMD.
- HHU/Swing Space Unite All Students T-shirts for \$15,000.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve FY22 supplemental expenditures as described.

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

SUPERINTENDENT APPOINTMENT TO ACCEPT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Lussier explained that Wellesley is a member of the ACCEPT Collaborative, which is a special education collaborative that allows member districts to provide cost effective options for out of district placements for students. The superintendents of each of the 14 member districts comprise the Board of Directors. Per state regulation, each School Committee must vote annually to approve their superintendent's appointment to the Board.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to appoint Dr. David Lussier as the Wellesley School Committee's representative to the ACCEPT Board of Directors for the 2022-2023 school year.

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

DEBRIEF OF TOWN MEETING/PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Due to the late hour and wanting to give the topic the time and energy it is due, Ms. Mirick stated this agenda item would be postponed until the following meeting on June 7.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 10:15 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:

MASR May 14 Conference Recap
Hardy Design Development Slides
Testing & Science Materials Coordinator Job Description
WMS Media Literacy Elective Proposal
WHS Assessment 2022
SY 2021-2022 District Goals - EOY Assessment
ACCEPT Board of Directors Appointment
Preliminary Enrollment (May 23)