

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
June 2, 2020
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. Those present included Chair Melissa Martin, Vice Chair Linda Chow, Secretary Matt Kelley, members Sharon Gray and Jim Roberti; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendents Joan Dabrowski and Cindy Mahr; Student Services Director Sarah Orlov; and Student Advisory representatives Rachel White and Violet Lahive.

Ms. Martin announced that the meeting is being held remotely and recorded by local media and broadcast live by Wellesley Media.

PUBLIC COMMENT No one wished to address the Committee.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Chow reported the **fields and tennis courts were opened** last Friday with new signage. She thanked the NRC, Recreation, Health Department and DPW for all their efforts in reopening these resources. With continued compliance and indicators moving in the right directions, she is hopeful there will be additional restrictions lifted. In preparation for Phase 2, the Playing Fields Task Force will be meeting on June 12th to discuss reopening additional playing fields. Ms. Chow also reported she attended the **silent vigil** that was held on Washington Street **for George Floyd and in support of Black Lives Matter**. Over 1,000 people were in attendance taking a stand against racial injustice. Thank you to World of Wellesley for organizing the peaceful protest and helping to mobilize those who want to see positive changes take place. She expressed her gratitude at being a part of a community that values diversity, equity and inclusion.

Ms. Gray announced that School Committee has **office hours** scheduled for Thursday, June 4th, at 7 pm. Anyone interested in speaking can sign up on the Committee's webpage. Ms. Gray also reported the PBC met last Thursday to continue review of the **Hunnewell project** regarding value engineering for the building. The PBC has been in discussion with the architects and educational group regarding the building's square footage, which continues to be reduced, closer to what had been previously proposed at the December Town Meeting. Building envelope commissioning and mechanical, electrical, plumbing commissioning firms were selected, and 5 firms have been selected for the construction manager position, with interviews scheduled for mid-July.

Ms. Martin announced a late addition to the agenda of a **draft joint statement against racism** on behalf of all Town leaders for the Committee's consideration which had been added to the agenda as soon as it was available. She reported that **Annual Town Meeting** is now tentatively scheduled for June 22nd. She urged Town Meeting members to sign up for the remote practice session on Thursday. Ms. Martin also informed the Committee that the **WMS building systems project** will be presented to the Design Review Board on June 10th with the focus on exterior items, such as the roof and back retaining wall.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lussier acknowledged the recent disturbing events which again highlight **racism in the country**, and noting if school were in session, it would be a time for support and conversations between students and staff. Although it is difficult to replicate these conversations in a remote environment, he urged the acknowledgement of these issues as well as reinforcement of the District's Core Values. This was addressed in his statement to the WPS community, and educators are facilitating these conversations with students and one another.

Dr. Lussier announced the **WHS Senior Graduation Parade** is scheduled for June 6th. It is expected that the motorcade will take about one hour going through town and ending at the high school where Dr. Chisum will distribute diplomas to students. Dr. Lussier thanked Dr. Chisum and the entire WHS team, Wellesley Police, Wellesley Fire and Babson College, all of whom worked hard to make this event a reality.

STUDENT ADVISORY

Ms. White reported that she will continue as a **Student Advisory representative** to School Committee in SY2020-21, along with the following newly elected members: **Grace Bida, Ian Lei, and Kate Bhatt**. She informed the Committee that state guidance provides there be five Student Advisory members on school committee, however, only four ran for this position in Wellesley.

Ms. Lahive indicated recent **racial incidents** are on the forefront of students' minds and they are having difficulty focusing on schoolwork. She informed the Committee that some attended the silent protest last weekend.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the May 19, 2020 Open Session minutes as presented to the Committee this evening.

MOVED: Mr. Kelley; **SECONDED:** Ms. Chow; **ROLL CALL:** Mr. Kelley – Yes; Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Mr. Roberti – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: Yes – 5; No – 0

WELLESLEY EDUCATION FOUNDATION (WEF) ANNUAL UPDATE

The Committee was joined by WEF co-presidents Maura Sullivan and Liz Svedlund, who provided an update of WEF's work this past year.

Dr. Lussier recognized the Wellesley Education Foundation for its continued generous support of the District's work through its grants, donations, and volunteerism.

Ms. Sullivan reviewed WEF's mission which is to advance innovation and excellence in the Wellesley Public Schools. She reviewed the annual community fundraising events including the Spelling Bee, Teacher Red Apple Campaign, and Parent Education programs that have been successful due to the generosity and support of loyal donors and volunteers. Over the last 10 years, WEF has awarded over \$2 million towards grants to educators, and through sponsoring programs and initiatives.

Ms. Svedlund announced a new initiative called the WPS PTO Speaker Planning meetings which will pool budgets among WPS organizations in hopes of bringing more dynamic speakers into the District. She reviewed the use of funds during the 2019-20 school year. WEF awarded over \$172,000 through 24 grants supporting all grade levels in the areas of professional development, equipment purchases and high priority areas for the District, such as a grant for the District's diversity, equity and inclusion work.

Ms. Svedlund then introduced incoming co-presidents Liz Larsen and Jenn Fallon who reviewed plans for the upcoming year including virtual fundraisers and working with innovations relative to remote learning, noting that they expect 2020-21 to be a very unique year that will result in unique focuses for WEF.

The Committee thanked Ms. Svedlund and Ms. Sullivan for their leadership this school year and welcomed Ms. Fallon and Ms. Larsen as the new co-presidents. Members expressed their appreciation for WEF's continued generosity and support, and flexibility in the upcoming year on the District's needs.

APPOINTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENT TO THE ACCEPT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Lussier reviewed the District's membership in the ACCEPT Collaborative. As one of the requirements of the collaborative, the School Committee is required to annually approve the appointment of the Superintendent as the School Committee's representative on the Board of Directors.

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to appoint Superintendent of Schools David Lussier as the Wellesley School Committee's representative to the ACCEPT Board of Directors for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

MOVED: Mr. Kelley; **SECONDED:** Ms. Gray; **ROLL CALL:** Mr. Kelley – Yes; Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Mr. Roberti – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: Yes – 5; No – 0

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING

Dr. Lussier provided an overview of the school reopening process. He reviewed the creation of the WPS Advisory Committee on School Reopening, and appointment of technical working groups in the categories of Teaching and Learning, Building Operations and Safety, Technology, Engagement and Communications, and Budget and Resources. He reviewed some of the major considerations that the working groups will be addressing. The proposed reopening timeline by phases as well as the work under each phase, was reviewed culminating with implementation in August. All work will be driven by DESE guidance.

Dr. Lussier reported on his call with the DESE Commissioner who underscored that he expects the state will be defining what the opening will look like and what the school schedule will look like. One scheduling possibility addressed by the Commissioner is a hybrid of having half the students in school one week, while the other half will be engaged in remote learning, and the following week, those roles would be reversed. It

is anticipated that some detailed guidance from DESE will be provided during the week of June 15th.

Questions were raised as to whether DESE's guidance will be a directive or as a guiding tool for how districts should proceed. Dr. Lussier indicated he believes it is clear that this will be a directive to districts and deviations from the directive will require a waiver. There was also a question as to whether the state will include guidance on how costs related to the directives will be addressed, which Dr. Lussier addressed in the next section.

Dr. Lussier then addressed needs for next school year's opening including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and technology equipment. He indicated the DESE Commissioner's advice is to develop an estimate of needs and prepare purchase orders for ordering through state contracts. There is concern with the idea that all districts in the state will be making similar requests simultaneously, so a more regional purchasing by districts with similar needs is being considered.

Dr. Lussier also indicated his concern that the lead time on needed items will be significant and they are considering entering a 3-month supplies order now. Nursing Department Head Linda Corridan is taking the lead on purchasing PPE, some of which she purchased before the school closure. At the next Committee meeting, a proposed plan for purchasing PPE for the District will be presented.

Ms. Mahr indicated that hand sanitizer, which is a critical item for all town departments, will be addressed through a town-wide contract to install sanitizers and refill them on a schedule. She is working with principals to determine how many units will be required, the volume of sanitizer needed and frequency of refills.

Ms. Dooley addressed the technology needs for next year including equipment and platforms, which are not currently budgeted for in FY21. She noted that teachers have done a great job implementing remote learning, however, teaching assistants did not have the devices needed to help teachers present the curriculum. The second area of need is students in grades PK-2 who are not part of the 1:1 program and will need devices if remote learning continues. This is especially true for families with multiple students who currently share units, but may need to log in simultaneously for learning sessions. The cost for this unbudgeted equipment for staff and students is approximately \$524,500.

Ms. Mahr addressed the funds currently available to cover costs. She reviewed the current status of FY20 balances and indicated with a number of funding sources that have become available including \$50,000 in METCO grant funds, the PAWS revolving fund balance, as well as CARES Act funding, and potentially FEMA and MEMA funds, she believes there are adequate funds to cover the unbudgeted amount.

Dr. Lussier indicated there is also significant lead time for purchasing the technology equipment, so it is important to order these devices as soon as possible to ensure that devices are ready for the fall opening. Based on the numbers presented this evening and additional details to be provided at the next meeting, Dr. Lussier believes there is a path forward to support this investment without asking for additional funding for FY21.

A question was asked regarding how the devices will be used in grades preK-2. Dr. Dabrowski addressed the curriculum and what is developmentally appropriate for the youngest learners, noting that devices would most likely not be provided to students this young under normal circumstances, but due to the pandemic, it is necessary to ensure that the District's youngest learners have a way to access and stay engaged with learning and their peers.

Questions were also asked about funding sources, costs of purchasing versus leasing devices, and other uses of devices.

Ms. Orlov provided an update on the extended school year (ESY) program which affects approximately 25 percent of students with IEPs. She and her staff have been discussing the feasibility and challenges of holding onsite services, especially in light of Governor Baker's recent guidance for summer recreation programs. She noted that although the ESY program is not considered a summer recreation program, the Governor's guidance was extensive and would apply if onsite services are conducted. She noted the requirements are important but exhaustive, and result in a number of challenges especially in trying to implement the ESY program by July 1st, which is when the program typically begins. Challenges include a lack of adequate PPE, sanitizing products, and transportation issues.

Based on these considerations, Ms. Orlov announced that the ESY program will not be hosted onsite this year, but will be done via remote means starting on July 6th. She and her staff have been working on remote plans for students. Dr. Lussier noted that this decision is consistent with many surrounding districts, and although it is disappointing, it reflects the reality of the moment.

ANNUAL FOOD SERVICE REPORT

The Committee was joined by Matt Delaney, the WPS Food Service Director, who provided his annual update of the WPS Food Service Program. The District is in its fifth year of a five-year food services contract with Whitsons.

Mr. Delaney reviewed staffing at each level for the current year and next school year. Food highlights for this year included "fun lunch" offerings and the addition of organic smoothies and parfaits at the elementary level; and the addition of organic and locally sourced food District wide.

The composting program was reviewed. The Middle School has had a program in grade 6 and it is hoped to expand it next year, with a pilot starting at the high school and possibility at Fiske School. Mr. Delaney recognized the Wellesley Education Foundation which funded the pilot program at the high school, and the Town's Recycling and Disposal Facility for its assistance in taking compost when it was not picked up by the vendor.

Mr. Delaney reviewed meal participation rates which include a four percent increase through March at the elementary schools; Middle School rate is flat with issues relating to the time it takes to purchase and eat lunches; and the High School had a 2 percent increase to 33 percent—the highest rate since Mr. Delaney has been in Wellesley.

For 2020-21, Whitsons is considering several versions of food delivery including a normal lunch program, only pack lunch or 50/50 home and at school.

WPS was approved to participate in the Seamless Summer Option allowing for meal service to eligible students during the school closure period of March 16 through June 16, 2020. A total of 10,791 meals are being served during this time period, at a cost of \$69,216, of which \$30,612 is expected will be reimbursed through the Seamless Summer program. Ms. Mahr reviewed the federal and state reimbursement program and how Wellesley is reimbursed.

Wellesley meal prices were reviewed with no price increases proposed for next school year. Comparable meal prices with peer districts were reviewed.

The Committee expressed its appreciation for all the work Mr. Delaney and his team have done during the school year, as well as their work in providing meals to qualifying students after the school closure in March.

FOOD SERVICE BID RECOMMENDATION

Ms. Mahr provided an overview of the bidding process for food services and indicated that one bid was received, from Whitsons Culinary Group. Although only one bid was received and it is from the incumbent, the entire vetting process is completed including ensuring that Whitsons met the 13 criteria outlined in the proposal. Based on this review, Ms. Mahr is recommending that the Committee vote to allow the Administration to enter into a contract with Whitsons Culinary Group for the operation and management of the Wellesley Public Schools Food Service Program, pending successful negotiations.

Ms. Mahr reviewed the timing of the approval process including contract development by Whitsons, review and revisions by WPS, a review by DESE which may take a few weeks, and then final execution by WPS and Whitsons.

Questions were raised as to whether there will be different requirements for next year's program versus other years. Ms. Mahr noted that the contract will be put in place based on expected participation numbers, however this is all subject to change based on how next year's plan evolves. There will be a need for flexibility and continued review of the program requirements and cost as time goes on.

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to authorize the School Department to enter into contract negotiations with Whitsons Culinary Group.

MOVED: Mr. Roberti; **SECONDED:** Ms. Gray; **ROLL CALL:** Mr. Kelley – Yes; Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Mr. Roberti – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: Yes – 5; No – 0

TOWN OF WELLESLEY JOINT STATEMENT ON RACISM

Ms. Martin informed the Committee that this topic was added less than 24 hours before the start of the meeting and the document, a draft joint statement on racism, was shared with the Committee late this afternoon. Based on recent acts of violence against people

of color, Town leaders wished to issue a joint statement denouncing racism and these recent acts. The document is a draft and representatives from the major town boards are asked to help with finalizing the document.

Committee members expressed their sadness with these disturbing events. They commended Dr. Lussier for his timely and powerful message to the WPS community reinforcing the District's Core Values.

After a brief discussion, the Committee was in agreement that a joint statement is appropriate and should participate in the process of finalizing the language of the statement.

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to delegate Linda Chow to work with Town leaders on editing the language of the document and approve the final joint statement on behalf of the School Committee.

MOVED: Mr. Kelley; **SECONDED:** Ms. Gray; **ROLL CALL:** Mr. Kelley – Yes; Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes.; Mr. Roberti - Yes
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: Yes – 5; No – 0

PUBLIC COMMENT No one wished to address the Committee.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At approximately 9:15 pm, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session under MGL C30A, Section 21A, exemption 2, for the purposes of discussing strategy with respect to negotiations for all non-union employees with the exception of the Superintendent David Lussier; and to invite into Executive Session Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Cindy Mahr, and Human Resources Director Gayle McCracken; and not to reconvene in Open Session after the conclusion of the Executive Session.

MOVED: Mr. Kelley; **SECONDED:** Ms. Gray; **ROLL CALL:** Mr. Kelley – Yes; Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes.; Mr. Roberti - Yes
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: Yes – 5; No – 0

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Martin
Chair

Documents and Exhibits Used:

SC Meeting Agenda/Posting – June 2, 2020

Draft Minutes 5/19/20

WEF Presentation

WPS Reopening Overview Presentation

Reopening Prop. FY21 Orders Worksheet

Whitsons Food Services Annual Update Presentation

Memo for Food Services Vendor Recommendation

Draft Joint Statement on Racism