

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
June 22, 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; 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

Cliff Canaday, of 55 Smith St. stated he believes that adding lights to the high school field would have negative effects on the environment and would also have a significant impact on noise, trash, and traffic. He added that he believes the project would not add value to the community and would not support the school district's values.

Nancy Stakun, of 32 Rice St. stated she believed proponents of the lights project have not sufficiently made the case that they will increase community building. She stated night games can be played at venues that already have lights such as Babson College or that temporary lights could be explored.

Jeanne Mayell, of Seaver St. stated Wellesley has a fantastic athletic program and has succeeded without lights. She added while many people wanted the lights, they were not necessary and would come at a cost to neighbors' property values and quality of life as well as surrounding wildlife.

Marc Shechtman, of 41 Rice St. is a direct abutter to the field and is opposed to adding lights. He stated that with the games and practices currently conducted at the field, idling cars and traffic jams negatively impact the neighborhood and that the Administration should look to decrease the impact on the surrounding neighborhoods, not increase the impact.

Martha Collins, of Rice St. is a member of the Climate Action and Mobility Committees and a Town Meeting member. She noted she was speaking on behalf of herself and not as a member of any committee. She is against adding lights and stated the field is roughly 90 feet from the closest home and residents will be affected by light and sound pollution. She added Newton South is not comparable, as it is near a heavily wooded area. She is also concerned about the environmental impact in regards to greenhouse gas emissions and nearby wetlands.

Rob Lally, of 38 Rice St. joined to voice support for the lighting plan for the sense of community one can find at games. He added he was in real estate and believed property values would go up, seeing lights as an asset. He noted all other towns Wellesley competes against have lights and have not seen negative impacts.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Mirick stated the final Office Hours of the school year were held June 21st. She thanked the people who participated in great conversations and stated she looks forward to more in the future.

Ms. Chow added that one participant in Office Hours was Student Advisory Representative Rachel White. She was glad to have a chance to learn more about the FIRST robotics team Ms. White co-led and congratulated the team on their success. She was also happy to learn Ms. White will continue as the Advisory representative next year, adding Ms. White offered the suggestion to have a Committee member attend at least one Student Congress meeting next year.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier stated the 2020-21 year wrapped up June 17th for students and June 18th for staff. He expressed his sincere thanks and gratitude to the Committee for all its work in supporting the District through so many challenges. He also wanted to commend the staff for their hard work and for persevering and adapting amidst much uncertainty. He also thanked parents and the community for their patience and flexibility to support students.

He reminded families the District reopened the open enrollment process until August 1st for families who want to transfer their students to Upham, citing the continued challenge of significantly lower enrollment at Upham and the desire to maintain a vibrant school community.

Finally he noted there will be significant construction at the middle school continuing all summer. Any member of the public who needs to do business with the middle school or Central Office should email or call. Some services, such as Human Resources, will be done out of the high school. Additionally, District offices will be closed on Fridays throughout July.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. White stated she was looking forward to serving another year as Student Advisory representative. She hoped to be able to recruit more students for next year and the future. She added all students are welcome on Mondays for Student Congress if they want to learn more about it or get involved in student government.

CONSENT AGENDA

Meeting Minutes – June 8, 2021, June 9, 2021
German Exchange Trip Approval (2022-23SY)
Quebec Trip Approval (4/22-4/24/22)
NE Medical Invoice WELLS2012 – 3/31/21
Declaration of Surplus Material – Performing Arts

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

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

Minutes - June 3, 2021, June 15, 2021

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve meeting minutes for June 3, 2021 and June 15, 2021 as amended.

MOVED: Ms. Martin; SECONDED: Ms. Eizenberg; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin– Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Roberti - Yes
MOTION CARRIED 4-0 WITH 1 ABSTENTION

DISCUSSION: HUNNEWELL TRACK & FIELD PROJECTS

Dave Cohen and Dave Hickey from Wellesley Department of Public Works (DPW), Jay McHale from Natural Resources Commission (NRC), and John Brown, WPS Athletic Director joined the Committee.

Ms. Chow began by summarizing the proposed projects to date. She noted at this time no vote will be taken by the Committee. She reminded the Committee of the scope of the proposal. In February, the Committee voted to move forward with three projects at the Hunnewell Track & Field complex consisting of bathrooms and team rooms previously approved at a 2018 Town Meeting, and an exploration of adding lighting. Per Mr. Hickey, the bathroom project is waiting on the architectural firm to discuss layout and there is a layout for the team rooms. Since all of the funding appropriated in 2018 will go to the bathrooms, funding for the team rooms will have to be raised at the same time as the funding for lighting. Lighting has been explored at various times throughout the years, including temporary lights from 2005-2015. Installing the turf field in 2016 meant removing them, as the temporary lighting would damage the track and void the warranty. The NRC is the steward of the land and it was discussed with them in February that adding lights would be considered a change in land use and would require application for a special permit. Additionally, the NRC has a policy requiring a review of the potential impact on the neighborhood and environment. Ms. Chow stated from the School Department's standpoint, lighting remains a priority. The Bay State Conference has made an exception for Wellesley, allowing home games to be played on Saturdays when all other teams in the conference play home games Friday nights.

She added that while community building is a large benefit, it is important to be sensitive to being good neighbors and the goal is to implement a responsible proposal to establish a partnership with the neighborhood. Additionally, the District has made a commitment to support the Climate Action Plan that was approved by Town Meeting and has already demonstrated its commitment to sustainability with the new elementary schools being net zero ready. She noted the idea of checkpointing with stakeholders would include discussion and dialogue with neighborhood representatives. She stated they are looking into Musco Lighting, who seem to be the premier vendor for sports lighting in New England, including surrounding communities. Their lights point directly at the field with very little spillage and glare. Mr. McHale discussed additional steps that could be taken to become certified as dark sky compliant, noting that the row of trees along Smith St. would further buffer the light.

In terms of next steps for all three projects, Ms. Chow explained that Weston & Sampson will provide an updated site plan for the bathrooms and team rooms and Vanguard will provide cost estimates for the team rooms. For the lighting, they will conduct a survey of the neighborhood and identify neighborhood representatives, review the final report from the NRC's consultant,

and finish drafting the proposal for the NRC. Additionally, they will look to further consult with the Climate Action Committee (CAC) and Wetlands Protection Committee. The proposal will then be presented to the Committee and NRC, a public hearing will be held, and the Committee and NRC will vote on whether to approve.

In discussion, the Committee voiced their appreciation for bringing in all stakeholders and emphasized their receptiveness to feedback. Ms. Chow thanked the guests for joining.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Ms. Chow explained that at the end of each year, the Committee takes time to reflect on the year and discuss what went well and what are potential areas of improvement.

Ms. Chow stated that throughout such a tough year, she has appreciated the dedication and agility shown by the Administration and staff as well as the flexibility and understanding of students and families. She noted what was shown was a community at its best at several key times. In reflecting on the year, she added it was important to keep in mind that there were different levels of risk tolerance across staff and families, that for every comment that the District was not being aggressive enough getting back into schools, there were just as many happy with the speed of reopening. She noted several accomplishments from the year, including developing reopening plans and establishing the RLS, safety protocols, and viral testing programs. She also acknowledged the importance placed on DE&I and noted the Committee adopted then reaffirmed an antiracism resolution. She stated the School Committee found themselves pulled into more operational things than ever before and now need to figure out how to get back to focusing on governance and the things that School Committees are supposed to focus on.

Mr. Roberti remarked on the number of hours staff and Administration had spent working in the past 18-month period, often ten to 12 hours a day, under a lot of pressure. He recognized that this time has been a marathon. He noted the unique nature of the year, as the country experienced public teaching through Zoom, where parents and other people were able to be in the classroom, adding pressure and scrutiny to the teachers' jobs. He applauded them for getting through it and doing a good job.

Ms. Martin stated the role of the Committee and Administration this year in making decisions felt far weightier than normal. It was not only about education but also decisions that impacted health and safety. She added everyone took it very seriously and tried to make the best decision with the information they had at any given point in time. One thing she did wish they had done differently was to focus not only on the metrics that would guide partial or total closures but also on metrics to guide reopening. She stated she was pleased with the amount of engagement from the community and encouraged continued and more engagement through Public Comment, emails to the Committee, and Office Hours.

Ms. Mirick stated the Committee received approximately 1,500 emails from the community this year, which averages to be about 30 per week. She added they were often at opposite ends of the spectrum and she emphasized that the Committee was always listening and weighing input as they worked to balance the safety and mental health of the students. She commended Dr. Lussier and the Administration team for moving forward with prioritizing educating Wellesley students.

Ms. Eizenberg stated the children of Wellesley spent more time in classrooms than many in surrounding towns. She was astounded at how well educators made this unprecedented time work and that teachers made the students feel they were the priority every day. She added that the work of the Administration and School Committee to safely reopen empowered educators to have that impact. She noted she was proud the District has put emphasis on DEI work and stated she had learned much from the Committee in her short time.

FY21 BUDGET UPDATE AND CLOSEOUT

Ms. Mahr stated there were still a significant number of budget items to process for FY20 and she will come back with a final close at a later date. She offered an update as to where things currently stand. She noted that in terms of salary and other compensation there was currently about a \$1,000,000 surplus. Factors for this include not having middle school athletics or any intramurals, significant savings in substitutes due to the reduction of school days and fewer unplanned leaves, and a reduced need for TAs and paraprofessionals. Additionally, transportation costs were significantly reduced. Circuit breaker reimbursements came in higher than projected and there was an increase in revenue in the high school special education tuition account. Overall, it is projected that \$1,900,000 will be able to be turned back to the town though she emphasized there will still be many adjustments over the next few weeks.

Ms. Mahr stated she was seeking a vote to approve budget transfers, including to allow for year-end technology purchases, noting that as the FY22 budget was built, the technology budget was reduced multiple times. These purchases include device charging stations for classrooms, replacing printers that are at the end of their life cycles, five portable neat boards and five neat bars that will allow for hybrid meetings, and Apple TV replacement devices at the elementary and middle school levels that are beyond the end of their life cycles. Additionally, transfers are requested to cover RLS art supplies, software purchases, and professional services in Student Services.

She also requested the Committee offer guidance regarding carrying forward the Circuit Breaker balance, as districts are allowed to carry forward a balance for one year. She stated the District originally anticipated a 70% reimbursement yet received 75%, totaling a difference of about \$239,000 with about a \$171,000 difference between what Annual Town Meeting projected and what receipts will be. Dr. Lussier added he believed turning the money back to the town is the prudent step. Ms. Mahr stated that since the special education stabilization fund has started building up, they have not been carrying forward Circuit Breaker. After a brief discussion, the Committee agreed the Circuit Breaker balance should not be carried forward.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve transfers requested for Year-End and Business Office technology purchases in the amount of \$209,390, coverage of RLS Art materials in the amount of \$18,672, professional services in Student Services in the amount of \$8,459, and software purchases in the amount of \$30,190, for a total of \$266,711.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

PRELIMINARY FY22 PICTURE

Ms. Mahr stated the approved FY22 budget is \$82,540, 254 with cash capital of \$816,739. For updates, she noted the budget had included 107 elementary sections; however, based on enrollment numbers and conversations with the Committee, they have reduced the number funded to 101, which allows for a savings of approximately \$512,000. She added enrollment is fluctuating each week. Staffing has been fluid and currently there is approximately \$232,000 in savings from what is known and reasonably known. Circuit Breaker will be filed within a week and she noted her appreciation for all the work done to put that together. She added that ESSER II and ESSER III funds total approximately \$1,400,000 and \$1,500,000 respectively and the District will need to think strategically about how best to use them within the given parameters.

NON-UNION SALARY INCREASES

Ms. Mahr stated the District is proposing a 2% increase for all positions, which aligns with the collective bargaining for all five union units. Two salaries are not included in this calculation: the Director of Human Resources, which is a position that is currently vacant, and the Superintendent, which is voted separately. Other proposed changes include for daily and long-term substitute pay. She noted there is difficulty attracting substitutes to Wellesley, which could possibly be partly due to rates of pay being lower at the early end of the scale. The proposal is for a four-step scale instead of six-step as well as a jump in the flat rate for long-term substitutes to attract candidates. Additionally, she requested a change in salary scale for van drivers that would create a new step 5 and remove the current step 1 and would look to add longevity at 5, 10, and 15 years.

Dr. Lussier added the District had conducted a comprehensive review of salaries, looking at comparables across roughly 12 communities to ensure that by category and individual position Wellesley is offering competitive pay. He recommended three additional salary adjustments: for the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations he proposed an additional \$6,600, for the Director of Student Services an additional \$3,700, and for the elementary principals he recommended an adjustment of approximately \$3,800. These recommendations were based on comparable salary analysis.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the non-union salary increases as recommended.

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

SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION AND MERIT PAY INCREASE

Ms. Chow began by explaining that the evaluation form is a composite of each member's evaluation, stemming from the self evaluation conducted by Dr. Lussier. She stated at the beginning of the year, the Administration sets goals for the District specific to the Superintendent and leadership team and the Committee is updated throughout the year on progress towards those goals. Dr. Lussier conducts a self evaluation that is reviewed by the Committee who then put together their own evaluations. Each member met with Dr. Lussier individually then Ms. Chow compiled the evaluations into one document, which she gave to the Committee to review. She stated he was evaluated in four categories of standards and was found to be proficient in

two and exemplary in two with an overall exemplary rating. A summary of comments include that he demonstrated exceptional leadership in times of uncertainty, kept his focus on how best to educate students despite many moving parts, made many adjustments throughout the school year, ensured compliance with health and safety protocols while maintaining focus on educational goals, and collaborated between the Administration and WEA throughout the reopening planning process.

Dr. Lussier emphasized that almost nothing he does is individual and offered that words of support and thanks should go to the entire team, including the Committee. He added the collective work and leadership has been essential and he was fortunate to work with an incredible and unbelievably dedicated team. He noted he appreciated the continued support at often challenging times.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the summative Superintendent evaluation as presented.

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

Ms. Chow stated that per the Superintendent's contract, he is eligible to receive up to a 2% merit increase. She entertained a motion to approve a 2% merit increase as of July 1, 2021.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SUPERINTENDENT VACATION CARRYOVER

Dr. Lussier stated he has used 16 vacation days this year leaving a balance of 19. He requested that ten days be carried over, noting he would surrender the others.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Superintendent's request to carry over ten vacation days.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Committee members emphatically urged Dr. Lussier to use his earned and deserved vacation days this coming year.

EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES: REVIEW FOR RELEASE

Ms. Chow stated approximately every quarter it is customary to review the minutes of executive sessions that have taken place to determine if any can be released. At this time the Committee does not feel that any should be released.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENTS

Ms. Chow stated that during the recent School Committee retreat they had a chance to talk about assignments. It was discussed that Ms. Eizenberg would replace Ms. Mirick on the Policy Subcommittee and would also replace Mr. Roberti on the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee. Ms. Martin added that Ms. Mirick had been appointed to the School Building Committee (SBC) for the Hardy project.

In terms of reorganization, Ms. Martin nominated Catherine Mirick for the role of School Committee Chair for the coming year effective immediately. Mr. Roberti seconded. Ms. Mirick stated she would be happy to do it and is happy others have confidence in her abilities, though she was a bit daunted by the incredible examples Ms. Martin and Ms. Chow have set the last few years. She noted she would have a good team behind her.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Chow handed Ms. Mirick the virtual gavel and turned the meeting over to her.

Ms. Mirick sought nominations for vice chair. Mr. Roberti nominated Linda Chow for the role of Vice Chair. Ms. Martin seconded.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Martin nominated Leda Eizenberg for the role of Secretary. Mr. Roberti seconded.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**FACILITY PROJECTS****HUNNEWELL 50% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS**

Ms. Mirick stated that the Committee discussed the documents at the previous meeting on June 15th and they needed to be signed off on at this meeting. She added the team is currently working on the 90% documents.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to allow her to sign the letter as School Committee Chair.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN LOCAL APPROVALS & ACTIONS LETTER**

Ms. Martin stated at the June 15th meeting the Committee discussed a draft of the Local Approvals and Actions letter. She noted it is normally signed by the Chair; however since Ms.

Chow was not participating in matters related to Hardy during her time as Chair, the Vice Chair had been authorized to sign through June 30th. Now that Ms. Chow is Vice Chair and cannot sign, Ms. Martin asks the Chair be authorized to sign on behalf of the Committee effective July 1st for this Local Actions and Approval letter in submission to the MSBA.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

HARDY SCOPE AND TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET, INCLUSIVE OF FEASIBILITY STUDY FUNDS

Ms. Martin explained that at the June 15th meeting, the Committee voted on the scope and budget as it had been presented by the PBC, which included a not to exceed budget of \$70,000,000 for the construction phase portion of project that would go to Town Meeting for debt exclusion. She noted that at the recent Select Board meeting, they voted for \$72,500,000, which included construction phase funds plus the already appropriated \$2,500,000 for the feasibility study. She is requesting the Committee votes the entire \$72,500,000 to be included in the submission to MSBA, adding that the PBC will do the same.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to endorse the PBC recommendation from June 10, 2021 for a proposed approximately 80,039 GSF building, Shawmut Construction Schedule with Occupancy in August 2024 and a not to exceed budget of \$72,500,000 inclusive of the previously funded \$2.5 million feasibility phase funding to form the basis of the John D. Hardy Elementary School Project Submission to the MSBA.

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

MOTION CARRIED 4-0 WITH 1 ABSTENTION

Ms. Mirick acknowledged Ms. Chow and thanked her for her leadership this year, particularly with regards to the viral testing program, DE&I work, and the Hunnewell Track & Field project. She added she looked forward to working closely with her.

Dr. Lussier commented he was appreciative of the close relationship he shared with her as Chair and Superintendent. He marveled at the fifth gear she found in working through operational issues during the pandemic and her ability to stay calm and unflustered. On behalf of the entire staff he thanked her for her leadership, collegueship, and friendship.

The Committee remarked on Ms. Chow's calming influence, strength of purpose, commitment, thoughtfulness, and dedication. On behalf of the Committee, Ms. Martin presented her with a card and a few small gifts.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Committee was joined by Katey Goehringer, Sharon Gray, and Jesse Boehm.

Ms. Goehringer acknowledged Ms. Chow's dedication to WPS, drive to do what was right for every student, balanced leadership, professionalism, organization, willingness to learn

something new, as evidenced by charting a path with the viral pool testing. She added it was a joy to work with her.

Ms. Gray noted Ms. Chow would best be described as unassuming and gracious as a person. Yet this year she had to take on about a million things and had no time to be lowkey. She applauded all she was able to accomplish.

Mr. Boehm stated the town was indebted to Ms. Chow and wished to add to the long list of thank you's she was deservedly receiving.

Ms. Chow thanked everyone for their kind words. She stated it was a privilege to work with everyone, adding it was quite an experience being pushed out of her comfort zone in many ways. She felt she grew a lot during the year.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 9:50 pm, Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED: Mr. Roberti; SECONDED: Ms. Martin; 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:

German Exchange Form
Quebec Trip Form
NE Medical Billing Invoice
Surplus Materials - Performing Arts
Hunnewell T&F Projects Update 6.22.2021
Hunnewell 50% Construction Documents approval
FY21 Projected Year End_SC Packet
FY22 School Committee Update - June