

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
January 7, 2020
Juliani Room, Town Hall**

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, and Student Advisory members Rachel White and Sadhana Mandala.

Ms. Martin announced that the meeting was being recorded by local media.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Elizabeth Lange, Hunnewell parent, expressed her interest in having some of the wood from the Hunnewell tree, which is slated for removal, be repurposed. She suggested using the wood to create a bench, playhouse or perhaps a learning tool that can be placed in the new Hunnewell school.

RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Lussier acknowledged the following individuals and groups:

Congratulations to the **academic team from Wellesley High School** for being selected as one of 17 teams that have earned a spot on Season 11 of *High School Quiz Show*. The competition tests students' knowledge in math, science, civics, literature, history, and current events. The show begins taping in January in front of a studio audience and will premiere on Saturday, February 1, at 6 pm on WGBH 2. We wish the WHS team success in this competition.

Fiske Principal Rachel McGregor recognizes **WHS Assistant Principal Drew Kelton and senior Gael Hyppolite** for working with her to establish a WHS/Fiske mentoring program. Every other Thursday, WHS students come to Fiske to mentor students. This program runs from 3:05-4:05 pm. They play a variety of board games, or go outside to play basketball, soccer or explore the playground. The Fiske students love the program and often stop the principal to ask when their mentors are coming. It has been such a success and could not have happened without both Mr. Kelton and Gael.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Chow reported that the NRC, in cooperation with the Wellesley Free Library, is holding a **nature photo exhibit** at the Library which features photographs of trees. The exhibit will be on display through United Nations World Environment Day on June 5th. Residents are encouraged to submit photos of trees and visit the exhibit.

Ms. Martin reported that two members of the Committee will be visiting the **PAWS PTO** on Friday, January 10th, and the Committee has an **office hour** scheduled on Thursday, June 17th, in Great Hall.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lussier reported that it is almost time for the **Kindergarten Roundups** which are scheduled for February 5th, from 3:00 to 6:00 pm, and March 7th, from 9:00 am to 12 noon, both at Sprague School. This is an opportunity to welcome and register the District's incoming kindergarteners and introduce some of the staff members including principals, school nurses, and building secretaries. Information will be mailed out and also posted on the District's website.

Central Council is scheduled to meet on January 8th in the Hardy Library. Various Town government representatives have been invited to discuss the structure of town government.

Dr. Lussier also informed the Committee that the **Middle School PTO and High School PTO** will be holding their next meeting in Boston on Wednesday, January 15th, starting at 6 pm.

STUDENT ADVISORY

Seminar Day is scheduled for Wednesday in March 7th.

CONSENT AGENDA

After a brief discussion, upon a motion made by Ms. Gray and seconded by Mr. Kelley, the Committee **VOTED** to approve the December 10, 2019 Open Session Minutes as presented. The vote was 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstention.

After a brief discussion, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Committee **unanimously VOTED** to approve the Consent Agenda as amended.

HUNNEWELL TREE STATUS

Ms. Kristen Vlass, the Town's Landscape Architect, joined the meeting to address the condition of the white oak tree at the Hunnewell School. She provided background on the tree and her observations over the past few years, as well as the tree's current condition. She discussed the recent assessment by the arborist at Plant Healthcare Consultants, who deemed the tree as high risk and recommended its immediate removal.

Dr. Lussier indicated that based on the arborist's assessment of the tree being in imminent danger and recommendation of its immediate removal, as well as safety concerns for the community, it is hoped to have the tree removed as soon as possible. He also noted that the main entrance to Hunnewell is currently blocked off as a safety hazard until a decision is made to remove the tree.

Ms. Gray acknowledged the suggestions on how the tree can be memorialized by the Hunnewell community. She indicated that there is a process that will be followed by the PBC to determine how this can be done. Suggestions include having a cross section of the tree trunk on display in the school as a learning tool, making a bench for the school, and having photos of the tree on display in the school. The Committee is supportive of determining ways to properly honor the tree.

Ms. Martin referenced a question from the community relative to the protocol for checking public trees, in particular, in and around school grounds. Ms. Vlass indicated the trees are inspected annually and pruned as needed by the DPW, however, they also rely on school staff and the community reporting any concerns they may have with the condition of a tree.

After a discussion, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Ms. Chow, the Committee **unanimously VOTED** to request that the DPW proceed with removal of the oak tree at the Hunnewell School identified within the arborist report by Plant Healthcare Consultants, dated December 18, 2019.

MCAS RESULTS – SPRING 2019

The Committee was joined by Dr. Anne Beauchamp, PreK-12 Coordinator for Curriculum, Assessment & Accountability, and Dr. Dabrowski, who presented the Spring 2019 MCAS results. Dr. Beauchamp identified the following Schools of Recognition: Hardy Elementary for High Achievement and Exceeding Targets; and the Fiske, Bates and Sprague Elementary Schools for High Growth. She reviewed accountability results overall and high needs, and then ELA, Math and Science results, indicating the percent meeting/exceeding targets and student growth, and key takeaways in each category. Dr. Beauchamp then reviewed peer district comparisons for accountability, percentage meeting/exceeding targets in each of the three academic categories, and student growth percentiles.

Dr. Dabrowski discussed next steps including determining whether and how to adjust curriculum and instruction, especially around middle school ELA and math, and elementary science; identification of state standards that need improvement; and consider adjustments so students across the achievement range improve each year, especially the lowest performing groups. In addition, staff will continue to investigate and address patterns of unmet needs of high needs students, African American/Black students and Hispanic/Latino students; and reviewing data from other high priority areas in order to build a comprehensive picture of student/district outcomes.

Dr. Lussier indicated that MCAS is certainly not a measure of everything that is taught nor valued in the District. Although we want to be informed by the standards, we do not believe in a system that is hyper-focused on statistics. That said, staff takes this data seriously not on an individual basis, but as overall results, in considering the overall instruction of our curriculum.

Drs. Bauchamp and Dabrowski were thanked for their work in presenting this information.

PISA/OECD RESULTS

Dr. Beauchamp, along with Dr. Dabrowski and Dr. Jamie Chisum, presented the PISA/OECD results from May 2019. Dr. Beauchamp explained the purpose of PISA/OECD is to monitor the District's success on an international context for achievement in reading, math and science. The test is administered to a random sample of 83 WHS 15-year-old students and is compared with student results from 80 countries with testing in 2015 and other years. Overall mean performance was

reviewed as well as the individual category performance. Next steps include further analysis of the data, utilization of the results alongside other key data sets for strategic planning, and consideration of PISA administration moving forward.

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (NEASC) RESULTS

Dr. Chisum presented the results of the most recent NEASC accreditation cycle. He was pleased to report that the Committee on Public Secondary Schools voted to award Wellesley High School continued accreditation in the NEASC.

Dr. Chisum reviewed the NEASC Standards, the commendations and recommendations made for each standard. The standards are: Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations; Curriculum; Instruction; Assessment of and for Student Learning; School Culture and Leadership; School Resources for Learning; and Community Resources for Learning.

Overall commendation takeaways include excellent school and community support; a wide variety of offerings at the school; the number and types of supports to address the social emotional well-being of students; and higher order thinking and authentic learning opportunities in classes.

Overall recommendation takeaways include the development and implementation of a system for teaching, assessing and communicating the Profile of a Graduate; continued work towards providing time for teacher collaboration in order to ensure consistency among courses and written curriculum; and continued focus on ways to close achievement and opportunity gaps between/among groups of students.

Dr. Chisum commented that this is his third experience with NEASC, one in another district, and this was the most positive report he has encountered. Next step is a 2-year progress report to respond to the recommendations and report on the changes.

Dr. Lussier recognized the Dr. Chisum for his exemplary leadership and thoughtful work on this accreditation process.

The Committee also congratulated Dr. Chisum and his staff for their work in achieving this accreditation.

FY21 BUDGET

The Committee discussed the Administration's recommended FY21 budget proposal which totals \$79,776,902, or a 3.9 percent increase over FY20. Ms. Martin reviewed the process to date, noting that there will be further discussion and a public hearing at the Committee's next meeting on January 21st, and a vote is slated for January 28th.

Ms. Martin asked if the Committee is comfortable with the amount as presented. There was consensus that the Committee was in agreement with the amount as presented, which included very modest, but critical investments in Strategic Plan initiatives and Other Critical Needs. It was noted that the Strategic Plan items are all directly providing services to students and relate primarily to computer science requests.

Ms. Martin indicated that this budget will be presented to the public for discussion at the public hearing.

HHU ISSUES

Backup Liaison to PBC for Hunnewell

Upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Ms. Chow, the Committee ***unanimously VOTED*** to appoint Melissa Martin as the backup liaison to the PBC for the Hunnewell Elementary School Project.

Redistricting Process Update

Dr. Lussier reported his Redistricting Advisory Committee has been meeting over the past month with the goal of developing redistricting maps for both scenarios: building at Hardy or building at Upham. The group is working with AppGeo which has been an extraordinary partner in this work. He reviewed the process that the group is following in creating these scenarios, noting the School Committee will be presented with four maps, two for each scenario at its meeting on January 21st. Two public forums will be held, January 22nd and 28th, where each option will be explained, as well as the thought process used in their development. The Redistricting Advisory Committee, along with the consultants, will then consider the feedback received, and arrive at one scenario for each school for the School Committee's review and approval.

Ms. Chow discussed that since she owns property that abuts the Hardy School, Town Counsel had been consulted on whether she could participate in discussions regarding redistricting. Town Counsel had opined that it was appropriate for her to participate in such discussions. The State Ethics Commission was also consulted and it deemed that Ms. Chow is able to participate in general redistricting discussions, however, when the discussions start factoring in decision-making relative to Hardy and Upham, Ms. Chow will need to recuse herself.

General Update

Hardy/Upham

Ms. Chow removed herself from the table at 9:33 pm

Ms. Gray reported that the SBC will now be working towards a recommendation for the preferred solution for the Hardy/Upham project to present to the School Committee and Selectmen. The feasibility study and the redistricting options that will become part of the feasibility study, will inform this recommendation.

Ms. Gray reviewed the work plan and intensive meeting schedule including meetings with various Town boards, neighbors and other stakeholders, that will result in an SBC recommendation of the preferred option by early April. The School Committee and Selectmen must both approve the recommendation. Once approved, a report will be made to Town Meeting. The preferred option will then be submitted to the MSBA by May 6th for discussion at its June meeting.

The Committee discussed the timeline to present a report to the Annual Town Meeting if the recommendation is being presented to the School Committee and Selectmen in early April. Mr. Kelley expressed his concern with presenting a recommendation to

Town Meeting if the School Committee and Selectmen have not yet approved it, and if the original recommendation is amended, would there be a need to go back to Town Meeting with these changes?

Ms. Gray noted that the presentation to Town Meeting is a self-imposed mandate from a previous Special Town Meeting to report back on the group's decision. She indicated the Committee will need to continue to socialize the timing of presenting this report to Town Meeting, while keeping in mind MSBA deadlines that must be met in order to secure funding for the project in a timely manner.

Mr. Kelly's concern is that there be a valid and appropriate process for the boards involved as well as Town Meeting and the community when making such an important decision.

Ms. Chow returned to table at 9:56 pm.

Hunnewell

Ms. Gray discussed that the Hunnewell project is now with the PBC. There will be discussions concerning the Hunnewell tree and the design process at the PBC's meeting on January 9th. Six working groups have been created for the Hunnewell design process: education/programming, massing/exterior, interior/FF&E, security/IT, mechanical/electrical/plumbing and sustainability. Members are invited to participate in any of these working groups.

PUBLIC COMMENT No one present wished to speak.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 10 pm, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Mr. Roberti, the Committee ***unanimously VOTED*** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Kelley
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

Declaration of Surplus Memo Hardy Library Books
ACCEPT Annual Report & Audited Financials
Risk Assessment Report of Hunnewell Tree
MCAS Spring 2019 Results Presentation
2018 PISA Results for WHS & Presentation
NEASC Letter & Final Report & Presentation
Initial FY21 Projections
FY21 Budget Request Summary
SBC Meetings Work Plan