

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
January 16, 2020
Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall**

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 PM, joining the School Building Committee (SBC) in open session. Those School Committee members present included Chair Melissa Martin, Vice Chair Linda Chow, Secretary Matt Kelley, member Sharon Gray, and member Jim Roberti. Members of the SBC present included Chair Sharon Gray, Vice Chair Thomas Ulfelder, Virginia Ferko, Mary Gard, Heather Sawitsky, Joubin Hassanein, Hardy Principal Charlene Cook, Superintendent David Lussier, Melissa Martin, Meghan Jop, Marjorie Freiman, Ryan Hutchins, Matt King, Jose Soliva, and Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr. Facilities Management Department (FMD) Project Manager Richard Elliott was also present.

REPORTS

Dr. Lussier announced that Charlene Cook, principal of the Hardy School, is retiring at the end of the current school year. He and several members of the Committee complimented and expressed their appreciation for her service.

FUTURETHINK ENROLLMENT STUDY REPORT

Dr. Lussier opened discussion of the latest enrollment study commissioned by the town, noting the importance of enrollment projections to the Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham projects, and describing the various studies that have been performed over the preceding eight years. Dr. Lussier introduced Tracy Healey, president of FutureThink, Inc., who had been contracted to perform the latest enrollment study. Dr. Lussier noted that the full report has been posted on the District website.

Ms. Healy presented the results of the study.

- She introduced FutureThink, its background and experience, and discussed representative clients.
- Factors that drive generally enrollment projections include historical enrollment data, birth data, general population estimates, housing development data, non-public school enrollment, and other factors.
- At both the national and state level, there is a trend of declining birth rates. The recent Massachusetts birth rate has been relatively flat.
- With respect to K-12 school enrollment, the national trend has been to increase in the Southeast and West, and to decrease in the Northeast and eastern Midwest. Massachusetts has experienced a 4% decline.
- Ms. Healy reviewed the Wellesley enrollment projections performed by FutureThink in 2016 and their accuracy.

- Over the last ten years, K-12 enrollment in Wellesley is down 1% overall. K-5 enrollment is down 282 students in the last ten years and down almost 400 students in last 11 years.
- The percentage of students attending private school has stayed steady at roughly 20%.
- Birth rates in Wellesley have dropped significantly, with an all-time low in 2018 of 165. For the enrollment projections, Ms. Healy described that she had used a weighted average of recent birth rates, which results in assuming that the birth rate will flatten out rather than continuing to decline.
- Ms. Healy reviewed general demographic data, including income, poverty rate, population data, family size, number of households. The overall population is expected to increase by 2% over the next five years. The school-aged population is expected to decrease by 2%. The median age is expected to increase by 2%, but that data point is skewed by the colleges in town. Median income is expected to remain the same.
- With the exception of 2019, building permit data shows that there has been generally the same number of demolitions and new building permits each year.
- Ms. Healy reviewed the potential for new housing units from new developments, both 40B and other projects. The key question is the “yield factor”, which predicts how many school-aged children will result from each new housing unit. Ms. Healy started by looking at national averages for yield factors. Yield factors vary depending on the type of units (e.g., number of bedrooms and whether or not a development is age-restricted), but her conclusion was to use a range from 17 to 21 school-aged children per 100 units. She then compared that range to existing housing developments in town, as well as similar developments in neighboring towns, and found that there was general agreement between them.
- Ms. Healy reviewed survival ratios for grades 1-12.
- Ms. Healy described that she had produced three projections: “low”, “moderate”, and “high”. The difference between the projections mainly depended on assumptions for how quickly new housing units might come on line.
- The resulting projections over 10 years were:

Scenario	K-12	K-5	6-8	9-12
Low	-930	-351	-324	-255
Moderate	-569	-183	-225	-130
High	-296	-100	-181	-15

- Overall conclusions from the study include:
 - The birth rate is at an all-time low.
 - K-5 enrollment has decreased by almost 400 since the recent peak.
 - The public/private ratio has been steady at 20%.
 - Recent building permits and demolitions have been 1-for-1.
 - New multi-family housing developments will only help offset the projected decline.
 - Under no scenario is the K-5 enrollment expected to reach 2,350.

Dr. Lussier noted that the updated projections are being used in the redistricting process.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:28 PM, upon a motion by Mr. Kelley, seconded by Ms. Chow, the Committee ***unanimously VOTED*** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Kelley
Secretary

DOCUMENTS AND EXHIBITS USED

- FutureThink presentation