

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
January 28, 2019
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 (arrived at 6:53 pm); Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Cindy Mahr, and Student representatives Rachel White and Sadhana Mandala.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Catherine Johnson, resident and Planning Board Chair, presented the Committee with two copies of the final Town of Wellesley Unified Plan for 2018 through 2028.

Richard Howes, 9 Oakland Street, expressed his concern with the HHU process, and what he perceives as the rushed development of redistricting maps and an invalid survey. He requested that the School Committee consider other options for school construction and renovation that includes rebuilding all three smaller schools, rather than the current plan to build 2 new schools.

RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Lussier acknowledged a recognition from Robert Cohen, WHS Math & Computer Science Teacher: Congratulations to **Emily Lo** and **Alison Goehringer** who both received a National Honorable Mention of the Aspirations Award by the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT). The award is in recognition of their aptitude and aspirations in technology and computing.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Martin reported she and Jim Roberti attended the **Schofield PTO** Meeting last week. There was good conversation concerning the WPS budget, HHU and redistricting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lussier is working closely with the Board of Health in keeping up to date on the **Corona virus**. There is no change in protocol at this point, but they will continue monitor the situation and be proactive as necessary. A letter has been sent to the WPS community on the topic.

Dr. Lussier announced a change in date for the **Kindergarten Roundup**, from February 5th to February 12th, due in part to the rescheduling of the District's Professional Day. School Committee members were invited to the keynote address by **Dr. Dena Simmons** on February 5th at 1 pm.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. White reported that **Semester 2** started yesterday for all students at the high school.

Ms. Mandala informed the Committee she attended the **Model UN trip** at Yale University last weekend where a student was suspected of having the Corona virus, but was later determined to have the flu. None of students from Wellesley was on any of the same committees or hotel as the student, however, they did leave a day early out of an abundance of caution.

CONSENT AGENDA

After a brief discussion, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Committee **VOTED** to approve the January 7, 2020 as presented. The vote was 3 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 balance of the Consent Agenda as presented.

FY21 BUDGET

Ms. Martin reported that since the last School Committee meeting when she announced that the Town has a \$380,000 budget gap that needs to be closed, she and Ms. Chow met with the Board of Selectmen Chair and Vice Chair who asked what schools could do to help close the gap. At last night's Selectmen's meeting, the Board did discuss the gap, and acknowledged the shared understanding that the turnover had already been captured in the collective bargaining increase amount. The Selectmen also discussed the inclusion of additional funds to cover the variability in Special Education costs and the plan to add \$500,000 to the Special Education Stabilization Fund to replenish the amount expected to be used this year for unanticipated and unbudgeted costs. Ms. Martin also indicated the Selectmen again mentioned the issue of declining enrollment without a commensurate decline in the budget.

Given the Town's current gap, Ms. Martin proposed that the Committee consider reducing the WPS budget by approximately \$75,000, a decrease of .1 percent, toward closing the overall gap of \$380,000, bringing the overall WPS budget increase to 3.8 percent. It was noted that the initial 3.5 percent budget guideline requested by the Selectmen would bring the schools below level service requirements and not something desired by the Committee.

Dr. Lussier noted that the Committee is scheduled to present its voted budget to the Advisory Committee on Wednesday night, February 5th. He will need to meet with his Administrative Council to determine what can be reduced to achieve this amount.

The Committee members discussed at length the various components of the budget, specifically Strategic Plan and Other Critical Needs, noting that the requests are all virtually classroom programs with direct impact on students. It was also acknowledged that although they believe this is a trim, responsible budget, they recognize the need to be collaborative and do its part to work towards closing the \$380,000 gap.

The Committee members discussed that once these reductions are made, they hope to receive assurance from the Selectmen to move forward at that level and not have continuous requests for reductions.

After a lengthy discussion, the Committee directed the Superintendent to work with his team and reduce the FY21 WPS budget by \$75,000, and bring this proposal back to the Committee for its meeting on Tuesday, February 5th.

Dr. Lussier expressed concern with the continued deferment of the elimination of Art fees at the Middle School. As requests for budget reductions are made, elimination of student fees is typically one of the items to be removed from the budget. In addition, of more concern is the continued work and planning behind the scenes on the new Strategic Plan and its investments. If reductions are continuously made due to large upcoming capital projects and budgetary gaps, how will any improvements and initiatives be funded?

WPS Compliance with Tax Exempt Leasing/Purchasing (TELP) Regulation

Dr. Lussier brought to the Committee's attention a compliance issue that must be addressed concerning tax exempt leasing/purchasing of school vans. In order to be in full compliance with State regulations, action on multi-year leasing must be a separate article for Town Meeting approval. The School Department has two vans being replaced in FY21 and a multi-function school activity bus being purchased this year. Town Meeting must vote to authorize this debt that is interest accruing. The funds are included in the operating budget for this item; there is no financial impact, it is a compliance issue.

HHU UPDATES

Ms. Chow removed herself from the table at 7:24 pm

Redistricting

Dr. Lussier reported the Redistricting Advisory Committee met through the month of December to create maps to present to the community, starting with the School Committee on January 7th, posting on the website, and holding community forums. He noted that the maps are not the final versions, but rather to receive feedback for the team to determine how the maps can be improved. Next steps include presenting any changes to the School Committee prior to the public hearing scheduled on February 11th. The Committee is currently scheduled to vote on February 25th on one map for each school that will be built into the MSBA's submission. Dr. Lussier mentioned the redistricting survey has received 550 responses to date, with the survey closing on January 31st.

The Committee discussed common themes that were received in the forums and through emails, as well as the guidelines provided to the Redistricting Advisory Committee and whether some guidelines should be weighed more than others, specifically balancing enrollments amongst the 6 schools, natural boundaries and keeping neighborhoods together.

Mr. Roberti said he is sensing a lack of confidence by some in the community regarding the survey. He also asked for a list of the components and the guidelines provided by the Committee to develop the redistricted areas.

Dr. Lussier commented that the survey was created to gain feedback and try to draw trends to improve the proposed maps. In addition, he noted that some community members were concerned that there is not a 7-school option question on the survey. He explained that the group is not charged to redistrict 7 schools, so that information is not helpful to its work.

Committee members felt it would be helpful to have the thought process used by the Redistricting Advisory Committee in developing the final maps.

Hardy/Upham

Ms. Gray reported that the Playing Fields Task Force has been invited by the SBC to its meeting next week to discuss its particular interest in the Hardy/Upham project, including data around field usage, and the size and location of fields. The SBC is also trying to connect with Historical Commission specifically regarding Hardy's original building. She reminded the Committee of the joint meeting with the SBC and Board of Selectmen on February 6th and encouraged members to provide her with any topics they would like addressed. The SBC is also in the process of scheduling an abutters' meeting.

Ms. Chow returned to table at 8:10 pm.

General HHU

Ms. Martin informed the Committee that there will be a non-binding referendum question on the ballot regarding building 3 HHU schools. It was noted that the HHU Master Plan Committee extensively studied this project and recommended the building of 2 schools, with a enrollment trigger option for a third school. However, since there are a number of different ongoing conversations regarding 3 versus 2 schools, she is suggesting that an estimate be developed on the cost of building three schools of various sizes.

There was discussion relative to what criteria would be used to prepare these estimates. After a discussion, the Superintendent was asked to request the Facilities Management Department to develop cost estimates for the cost of 3 schools versus 2 schools with 12, 15 and 18 section options. The estimate should take into consideration the MSBA reimbursement criteria of 240 student school if 3 schools are built and 365 student school is 2 schools are built.

PUBLIC COMMENT No one present wished to speak.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 8:20 pm, upon a motion made by Ms. Gray and seconded by Mr. Kelley, the Committee ***unanimously VOTED*** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Kelley
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

Slides - FY21 Budget Proposal by Level