

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
February 4, 2020
Juliani Room – Wellesley Town Hall**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM. Those present included Chair Melissa Martin, Vice Chair Linda Chow, members Sharon Gray and Jim Roberti, Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr, Director of Human Resources Gayle McCracken, Town Director of Human Resources Scott Szczebak, Town Executive Director of General Government Services Meghan Jop, and Town Treasurer/Collector Marc Waldman. Secretary Matt Kelley joined the meeting at 5:08 PM.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present who wished to speak.

Executive Session

At 5:02 PM, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session under Purpose 3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wellesley Teachers Association; because she, as Chair, declared that an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee; to invite into the executive session Executive Director Meghan Jop, Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Cindy Mahr, HR Director Gayle McCracken, Treasurer Marc Waldman, and HR Director Scott Szczebak; and to reconvene in Open Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

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

MOTION CARRIED: Yes – 4, No – 0.

The Committee entered executive session at 5:03 PM and returned to open session at 5:32 PM.

Consent Agenda

New England Medical Billing Invoice #WELLS1909 - \$925.59

Upon a motion made by Ms. Gray and seconded by Mr. Kelley, the Committee **unanimously VOTED** to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

FY21 Budget

Ms. Martin reviewed that at last week's meeting, the Committee asked the Administration to review the current budget proposal and reduce it by approximately \$75,000 (0.1 percent of the budget) to help reduce the current Town budget gap of \$380,000. She reported that the Selectmen discussed the School's budget as a group last night at which time Ms. Martin believed that the Selectmen did not feel that a

\$75,000 reduction was sufficient and suggested they would request that the Committee present a 3.5 percent budget, including the impact of this budget on level service.

A 3.5 percent guideline was the initial guideline provided by the Selectmen to the Schools early in the process and was based on a figure that was not accurate. After a number of meetings, there was clarification on the application of turnover, but the guideline was not adjusted to reflect the correct figure.

Ms. Martin reported that earlier today, she and Dr. Lussier met with the Selectmen Chair and Vice Chair who indicated they viewed development of the 3.5 percent budget preparation as a step in the process, to provide some greater education on the impact of a 3.5 percent guideline on the Schools, and to have the Advisory Committee included in review of the 3.5 percent budget.

Ms. Martin noted that the path forward is not clear, which is frustrating in light of the numerous meetings that happened early in the budget process and the additional data provided to prepare for a better budget review process than had occurred in the previous year. There was also concern that the percentage guidelines are detached from a dollar figure, since the 3.5 percent guideline discussed now is not the same 3.5 percent guideline initially approved by the Selectmen in September due to the misunderstanding regarding the accounting for turnover. The Committee and Administration have worked to be as consistent and transparent as possible on how the budget is developed.

Dr. Lussier and Ms. Mahr presented the proposed reductions to the FY21 budget totaling \$86,454, as directed by the Committee at its last meeting. The cuts include further reduction of a WHS English as Second Language teacher from 0.10 to 0.20FTE (\$27,476), the reduction of one Special Education teaching assistant (\$33,978), Transportation cost reduction (\$5,000), and removal of the elimination of MS Art fees (\$20,000).

Dr. Lussier again expressed concern with the continuing guideline of approximately 3.5 percent each year, which is approximately the increase needed to cover the Schools' contractual obligations. He questions the future of Strategic Plan work as well as critical needs which continue to be reduced due to nondiscretionary costs that must be covered each year and no alternate funding being proposed such as overrides, which were used a number of times in the past to help stabilize the Town's financial status.

Ms. Lina Musayev, Advisory's liaison to WPS, suggested that the Committee prepare the 3.5 percent budget, showing the impact of such a budget.

After a discussion, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Mr. Roberti, the Committee **unanimously VOTED** to approve an FY21 operating budget of \$79,715,448 which represents a 3.82 percent increase, plus an additional appropriation for Special Education of \$664,203 for a total FY21 WPS operating budget of \$80,379,651.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Mr. Roberti, the Committee ***unanimously VOTED*** to approve an FY21 cash capital budget of \$1,104,921, inclusive of furniture, fixtures, equipment and technology, to send to Town Meeting.

The Committee then directed the Superintendent to prepare a proposed budget reflecting a 3.5 percent increase over last year's appropriation, and the impact of this guideline on level service, strategic plan and critical needs, for presentation to the Advisory Committee on February 5th. There was concern that the proposal will be presented without review or discussion by the Committee, so there will be a caveat on the presentation that indicates that the reductions have not been vetted by the School Committee.

HHU Update

Hardy/Upham Update

Ms. Gray reported a joint meeting is scheduled of the SBC, Selectmen and School Committee on February 6th, at which time the following topics will be discussed: the conceptual costs of 3 schools, updated design plans for the Hardy/Upham project, updates from the Playing Fields Task Force and Historical Commission, and a review of the responses to the MSBA regarding the Preliminary Design Program.

Redistricting Update

Dr. Lussier reported staff has been working to incorporate the feedback that has been received from the redistricting community forums, survey and other communications. The Redistricting Advisory Committee is meeting on February 5th as a group to process this information, and he expects to be releasing updated maps on Friday, February 7th, in advance of the public hearing scheduled for February 11th.

Adjournment

At 6:20 PM, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Committee ***unanimously VOTED*** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Kelley
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used

NE Medical Invoice #WELLS1909

Memo - FY21 Reduction Proposals 1/31/20