

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
February 9, 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 Sharon Gray and Jim Roberti; Superintendent David Lussier, Interim Assistant Superintendent Mike LaCava; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; Director of Human Resources Gayle McCracken; Director of Technology Kathy Dooley; 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

Jim Miller, of 50 Pine St., stated he was co-chair of the committee recommending lights at WHS stadium. He noted benefits of adding lights include the addition of much needed field time, player safety, and community building and school spirit. He added that 2500 residents have signed a petition in favor of the lights and noted there would be no cost to the town, as they'd be paid for through private donations.

Kristina and Ned Desmond and their WHS senior daughter Maja, joined to voice their support of adding lights at the WHS track and field. Maja stated she had an incredible experience at WHS and hopes her younger brother and others will be able to have night games. Ms. Desmond highlighted the community building aspect, stating her family will want to continue to go to night games after her kids graduate.

Maureen and Rob Lally, of 38 Rice St., are abutters to the field. Ms. Lally believes lights would be a great benefit to the town, offering a feeling of connectedness. Mr. Lally stated there is a well thought out proposal with overwhelming support that will bring the community together.

Karl Tucker, of 43 Kenilworth Rd., is a former coach and is a father of two soccer players. He believes lights will benefit the sports programs. He stated lights can help by extending practice sessions and allowing for makeup practices and games in the event of rainouts. He believes kids deserve a big stage with large turnout under the lights, whereas currently afternoon games have few spectators.

Amy Munchak, of 16 Wildon Rd., joined representing the Wellesley Youth Lacrosse Club. She noted it has been a year since the lights were last discussed and discussions had been ongoing prior to that. She stated the need to prioritize and move forward. While there has been a downward trend in school enrollment, sports programs have been growing with three to five teams per grade, making it difficult to schedule field time. Organizations have spent thousands of dollars using Babson or other colleges for field time.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Martin stated School Committee Office Hours will be held February 10 at 7:00 pm and space is still available for the public to sign up. She also offered a brief update on the Hardy project, noting she will be attending the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) meeting on February 11. They are expecting to have Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) RFQ applications later this week and the process will soon be underway to determine which firms are prequalified to move to the RFP process.

Ms. Gray stated there was a meeting on February 9 with Dr. Lussier, Ms. Mahr, Ms. Mirick, and the project team from Hunnewell regarding internal swing space. She noted there will be relatively frequent meetings over the next few months, during which she is hoping to plan for debt exclusion.

Ms. Chow stated that a number of districts have put together COVID testing guide documents for other districts who are interested in starting a program, which is nearly finalized. It has been shared with the collaborative and has gone to the MASC. Next it will go to MASS and the point person at DESE who is rolling out state testing. She also noted that she and Mr. Roberti participated in a coaching session with the Culturally Responsive Practice Leadership Academy (CRPLA) on February 9 led by one of the founders of BlackPrint Education Consulting. The work involved the disproportionality of referring Black and Latinx students for Special Education. Mr. Roberti added that next month there will be a professional development training from BlackPrint.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier stated he had no new news on vaccinations for educators. He noted the District is about to begin February break. He encouraged families to remain vigilant in their practice and to follow state travel restrictions and protocols. He offered his gratitude to Dave Cohen and the DPW for their work with recent snowstorms.

Finally, he acknowledged the following recognition:

From Bates Principal Toni Jolley:

Bates School would like to recognize Officer Kathy Poirier and Police Service Dog Winnie for coming to Bates to visit with all of the Bates students earlier this month. Winnie was a big hit. She brings joy whenever she is at Bates.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. White thanked Dr. Lussier and the Administration for listening to the WHS students' request to be added to District emails. She stated at Student Congress students expressed appreciation for getting the same information as their parents.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes - January 26, 2021 and Gift Acceptances.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which includes minutes from January 26th as amended and Gift Acceptances as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

JOINT MEETING WITH NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION: DISCUSSION OF PRIORITIES FOR HUNNEWELL FIELDS COMPLEX

Raina McManus called the NRC meeting to order. She recognized members in attendance were Laura Robert, Allison Burson, Jay McHale, and herself.

Ms. Chow noted the committees were also joined by colleagues from DPW, Dave Cohen and Dave Hickey. In addition, Athletic Director John Brown and WHS principal Jamie Chisum joined to discuss priorities around Hunnewell Field Complex.

Ms. McManus began by discussing the role of the NRC. She explained that the NRC owns the land and has a jurisdictional responsibility to be its stewards. With regards to improvements projects, the NRC remains objective as project proposals are brought to them and they can analyze the plan against the land use criteria. Once a plan is approved by the NRC, they then become proponents.

Ms. Chow summarized a timeline of various projects that have taken place at the Hunnewell Field Complex over the past several years, highlighting projects currently approved or ongoing. Notably, bathrooms and team rooms were approved at the 2018 Annual Town Meeting (ATM) with funding appropriated. Subsequently, the funding proved insufficient to cover bids for the project and it is currently at a standstill. In 2019, the NRC and School Committee received a presentation from the Lighting Committee of the Playing Field Task Force (PFTF) at their respective meetings. Currently, the Lee and Warren softball fields are near completion.

The conversation then turned to the School Committee and School Department's priorities. Dr. Lussier stated that for the schools, as users of the space, the priority of what would best meet the needs of the schools is first and foremost the bathrooms. Team rooms are also important, as locker room space was lost with the new high school. He noted they would like to see lighting while being mindful of neighbors.

Priorities - Bathrooms/Team Room

Ms. Chow stated that in order to move forward with the approved but stalled bathroom and team room project, it may be necessary to revisit the scope and funding of the project. She noted that currently underway at the Hunnewell field is an aqueduct bathroom project using a precast concrete solution that is scheduled to be completed spring/summer 2021. This could serve as a model that could be applied for the track and field bathrooms and potentially team rooms as well. Ms. McManus added that the aqueduct bathroom is NRC's current main priority. Town Engineer Dave Hickey offered further details on the current project. He also offered insight into a comparable project in Weston, in which they were able to change the size of the bathroom without lowering its capacity.

Ms. Burson noted that the bathroom and team rooms project as originally presented to the NRC and approved at Town Meeting had them being coupled as one project. If it is to move forward as such, the discussion funding and ownership of the project. Regarding funding, possibilities were discussed that included exploring the use of a precast concrete building combining the bathrooms and team rooms to reduce cost or separating the two into two projects. In the case of the latter, Mr. McHale noted it would be necessary to go back to Town Meeting to get approval to use the allocated funds for a bathroom only, followed by addressing the team rooms as a separate project at a later time. Regarding ownership of the project going forward, Mr. Hickey clarified that this was not currently a DPW Capital project. It was discussed that as the PFTF put forth the article at ATM in 2018, the project would continue to be in PFTF's purview. Mr. McHale stated the PFTF would likely create a subcommittee to take on the project but only if the School Committee and school administration voiced it as a priority. Ms. Chow and Ms. Burson are respective School Committee and NRC representatives to the PFTF and they will bring forward the topic at the February 12th meeting.

Priorities - Lighting

Per Ms. McManus, NRC's priority involving lighting is to fix existing lighting around the tennis courts and to improve lighting at the fields along Rt. 16, the Reidy Little League field, tennis

courts, and Warren field. She believes it will go a long way with the community to fix existing lighting before building new. She described problems with the lighting to include the lights not giving off good light, a hazardous glare that shines off them affecting both players using the field and passersby on the adjacent road and sidewalk. A lighting consultant was hired to determine if the problems could be mitigated by adjusting the lights, adding shields, dimmers, or timers, or if new fixtures are needed or poles need to be moved. She noted fixing the lighting is in the NRC's five-year plan in the budget. She also noted that replacing existing community lighting is allowable for CPA funds and they may look to use those funds to complete the project sooner.

The topic of adding new lighting to the track and field was discussed. Ms. Chow reiterated that NRC is the landowner and it was important to follow the appropriate process. She noted the Committee had heard from speakers in favor of the lights yet they have also received many emails and messages from people who are concerned. Mr. Roberti agreed both sides have been vocal and he believes there is work to be done between the advocates for the lights and the neighborhood. He voiced support for the idea of renting lights as a trial. Ms. Mirick asked if the Lighting Subcommittee of the PFTF included neighbors, to which Ms. Robert replied she did believe there was a neighbor component.

Laurance Stuntz joined the meeting. He is chair of PFTF and a member of the Lighting Subcommittee that NRC asked be put together in the summer of 2019. He stated they have held community forums and have done their best to reach out to neighbors. He noted the Lighting Subcommittee included a plan to improve the Reidy field lights. He discussed there was a previous exploration into using temporary lights. However, they discovered that in order to get grid-connected LED lights, the lights would need to be positioned on the track. These are 40,000 pound units and may have invalidated the warranty on the track, so the idea was dismissed. He acknowledged it may be worth looking into other solutions.

Next Steps

Ms. Mirick emphasized the importance of developing a defined process that will bring a resolution to the community on the proposed projects. Ms. Gray added it is important to define the work and who will be responsible for it.

Ms. McManus stated the NRC requires specific criteria for any proposition of land use change, particularly regarding impacts on natural resources, impacts on neighborhoods, impacts on the town and schools, and cost. Mr. Stuntz stated the PFTF needs to be informed by elected boards and the NRC what they would like PFTF to specifically submit to them.

Mr. McHale stated he notes consensus from all at the meeting that getting a proper bathroom on the field is priority. He is hopeful Mr. Hickey can leverage what he has learned from the aqueduct bathroom project to find a solution. Ms. Chow stated she hoped she could speak for the School Committee that bathrooms remain the top priority and agrees it should continue moving forward.

A discussion and vote regarding lights will be added to the February 23rd School Committee agenda. Ms. Robert offered to share reports and feedback the NRC has received.

At 8:27 pm, Ms. McManus adjourned the NRC meeting.

DISCUSSION/VOTE: FY22 BUDGET

Jenn Fallon from Advisory joined the Committee.

Ms. Chow began by reminding the Committee that in November they gave guidance to the Administration to put together a budget that was in line with the 2.5% guidance from the Select Board as well as a level service budget. She reminded that assumptions were made that students would be returning to full in-person in the fall, that the District would not be making strategic investments for FY22, and recognizing that most likely the District will need to spend to address gaps that may result from hybrid and remote learning from SY20-21. Administration came back with a budget that was in line with the School Committee's guidance and Select Board's guidance.

Dr. Lussier stated the Select Board has asked every department to reduce Cash Capital further. Ms. Mahr stated the \$17,000 to be reduced from the schools would need to come from technology. Ms. Dooley stated the reduction would come in not replacing any printers this year. She noted that if a printer fails, it would come offline. The result will be that remaining printers incur higher usage and more wear and tear.

Discussion with the Committee included thanking the Administration for developing a budget to meet the strict guidelines and reminding the community that the means taken to create the lean budget are not sustainable over multiple years.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve an FY'22 Operating Budget of \$82,540,254, which represents a 2.69% increase over the FY'21 operating budget.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve an FY'22 cash capital budget of \$816,739, inclusive of furniture, fixtures, equipment and technology, to send to Town Meeting.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DISCUSSION/VOTE: 2021-22 MS AND HS PROGRAM OF STUDIES

Dr. Chisum addressed questions that were raised at the last meeting and further explained the proposed changes to the electives structure. The high school has a seven-day cycle in which major classes meet five days with two drop days. Under the current structure, many electives meet three times per cycle for one semester, some three times per cycle all year, some five times per cycle for one semester, and some five times per cycle all year. Additionally, some electives meet exclusively in the 7:30 block. The proposal is to take some that meet three times per cycle for a semester and move them to five times per cycle for a quarter and to take some that meet three times per cycle for a year and move them to five times per cycle for a semester, depending on the course. He stated this would allow more room to explore, as introductory classes would only last one quarter. He also noted that for many students, these classes are the ones that click with them, and the students should have the opportunity to meet with the same frequency as major courses. Mr. LaCava added the administrative team at the high school has been looking at this plan for several years.

In discussion with the Committee, Ms. White stated that Student Government thought the change would discourage students from trying something new and they felt increasing the frequency would be intimidating. Ms. Mirick voiced concerns about students losing two free blocks, which she states are important breaks that students often use for extra help. Mr. LaCava

stated the high school administrative team plans to evaluate the changes as the year progresses and would report back to school committee with their findings.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the 2021-22 WMS Program of Studies as well as new classes proposed for WHS as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve schedule changes to 2021-22 WHS program of studies as presented.

MOVED: Mr. Roberti; SECONDED: Ms. Gray; ROLL CALL: Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – No; Mr. Roberti - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED 4-1

DISCUSSION/VOTE: EQUAL ACCESS POLICY LANGUAGE UPDATES

Ms. Mirick made a motion to accept proposed changes as presented for policies AC, GBA, JB, JFBB, JICFB, JF, JFABD, and to accept new policies JFABE and JFABF.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anne Marvan, of 28 Ledgeways. has two sons who graduated in 2018 and 2022. She stated she was disappointed to hear from NRC and the School Committee about the discussions and process of adding track and field lights possibly starting over. She believes there is overwhelming support for the project. She asked the Committee to support the lights to provide a sense of community.

Wayne Everett, of 29 Rice St., joined to state his opposition to adding lights. He states the fields are typically free on weekends and the PFTF needs to fully utilize fields. He added the only abutter on the Lights Subcommittee was not direct abutter. Further, he asked if it was appropriate to accept a \$400,000 gift to exclusively fund a project on public land.

Cliff Canaday, is against the addition of lights. He believes they will disrupt a clean, quiet, serene environment. He stated there was not a need for them, as the programs have been successful without lights.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:02 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session under Massachusetts G.L. c 30A, §21(A), exemption #3 to discuss strategy with respect to a grievance filed by the Wellesley Educators Association because, as Chair, I declare that to discuss this in Open Session would have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Committee and to invite into the Executive Session Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Cindy Mahr, Interim Assistant Superintendent Michael LaCava, Director of Human Resources Gayle McCracken, and Town Labor Counsel Jim Pender of Morgan, Brown & Joy and to not return to Open Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Mirick
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

Background Information for Hunnewell Fields Discussion

Hunnewell Fields Complex Priorities

WMS-WHS Programs of Studies Updates

List of Policies with Equal Access Language