

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
Wednesday, February 9, 2022, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Tom Cunningham, Jake Erhard, Jenn Fallon, Neal Goins, John Lanza, Jeff Levitan, Corinne Monahan, Doug Smith, Susan Clapham, Al Ferrer, Wendy Paul, Pete Pedersen, Madison Riley, Patti Quigley.

Neal Goins called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and introduced members of Advisory in attendance.

Citizen Speak

Marguerite Chatelier, 11 Colburn Road, School budget noticed emphasis on DEI for new budget 2023 do not see a specific line for DEI budget; would like to know how track year by year and measure for success. Many teachers of color have left, are there specific goals of hiring teachers of color? What are initiatives for hiring teachers of color

Neal Glick, 89 River Street, put in context Article 44, Academic excellence in WPS. Expressed opinion that the schools are not excellent anymore based on the U.S. News and World Report rankings. Expressed concerns with WPS.

Wellesley Housing Authority – Article 30 Presentation

Janice Coduri, Wellesley Housing Authority (WHA), Maura Renzella, WHA and Jackie Sullivan, Director, WHA were present and provided an overview of WHA. The proposal to change the bylaw to add a tenant representative was presented and described. It was noted that this change in bylaw wording is required by the State.

Questions/Comments

- Is the WHA eligible for housing funds from CPC?
 - Yes there is CPC money for housing. WHDC is also eligible for these housing dollars. WHDC is under the Select Board and their budget rolls up under the Select Board budget. They do not evaluate the WHA budget because the funds come from other sources.
- What is the overview of the difference in housing WHA provides and what WHDC should be doing?
 - We are not familiar with the structure and function of WHDC. WHA is not affordable housing; it is subsidized housing. Wellesley's public housing meets 30 percent to 50 percent Average Median Income (AMI) and WHDC will look at 80 to 100 percent AMI. Residents pay 30 percent of income towards rent at WHA owned properties.
- Is WHA owners of these properties?
 - Yes
- Are rental subsidies and rents intended to be break-even and not to make a profit?
 - Yes
- WHDC and WHA serve different segments of the population who cannot afford full rent, why is it split into two entities?
 - There are different populations and tiers to housing. In WHA the minimum rent is \$5 for some residents. In WHDC it would be higher. These are different market segments with different needs. Many times WHA residents are coming from being homeless.
- Is the tenant on the board from just the WHA properties?
 - Yes.
- Where does the money come from if WHA wants to do work on these buildings?

- DHCD gives a specific amount each year to WHA. If there is a larger project, WHA will bank some of the annual funds until there is enough money for the larger project. WHA works with DHCD who completes the bid process. WHA sets up a 5-year capital plan and projects get prioritized. Due the age of buildings there are some emergencies. There is money to access from DHCD. Redevelopment of a property often requires partnering with a private developer.
- Is there a WHA member on CPC?
 - Yes
- Does WHA answer more to the state than to the town?
 - We do not answer to the Select Board. WHA reports to DHCD. The crossover to the town is that 3 positions are elected positions so we come under the town bylaws.
- What is WHDC?
 - It is appointed by the Select Board. It focuses on affordable housing as opposed to subsidized housing.
- Is the redevelopment and potential expansion of Barton Road funded through same channels?
 - There is no state money for redevelopment and expansion. There is not easily accessible money. Many housing authorities will partner with private developers. We are in the beginning stages of this. We have a feasibility study. The next step is a visioning study with the Planning Board. We are probably 5 to 10 years out.
- What made the change to the bylaws to have a tenant on the board?
 - WHA has had a tenant on the board for the last 6 years. Mass Union represents the rights of tenants and has lobbied for legislation to provide opportunities to have voices on housing boards.
- Is there consideration for funds from the state if the age of the buildings is considered?
 - It does not have to do with age but the size of unit. For five years we get the same amount then DHCD reassesses.

Wellesley Public Schools FY23 Budget Presentation

Catherine Mirick, Chair, School Committee; David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools (WPS); Joe Hutton, Instructional Technology, WPS; Sarah Orlov, Director of Student Services, WPS; Cynthia Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, WPS; Sandy Trach, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning WPS, Linda Chow, School Committee were present.

FY23 budget guidelines, budget process, budget drivers, FY23 budget request, historical cash capital, and data visualization (ClearGov) were presented and reviewed. Article 11 – SPED Stabilization Fund was presented and reviewed. www.cleargov/massachusetts/norfolk/town/wellesley/ everyone has access to this and the website includes informative data for the public.

Questions/Comments

- A comment was made that the student population is dropping but the employee population is up and it feels a like system out of control. It was felt that the numbers should be aligned or moving in the same direction. A request was made to reconcile that in 2016 the schools managed more students with less employees.
 - There are a few things to consider. The relationship with overall student count and FTEs is not a linear relationship. The largest number of increases is to related to SPED needs where more staff is needed for a smaller number of students. At the elementary level a position can't be eliminated until a tipping point is reached. For example, if the distribution of a 100-student reduction is across 100 classes then this will not have an impact on FTEs. If it is a 100 student reduction at one school, then there will be an impact to FTEs.

- An additional comment was made that it feels like there is not enough attention to controlling costs.
 - Not all staff are the same and not all student needs are the same.
- Are any correctional steps or training programs being taken to compensate for the suffering of the students during COVID?
 - We are doing a number of things around pandemic recovery. The current year budget provides for additional academic support to students. As we are assessing students we see social and wellness wellbeing needs. For FY23 we are making the investment with the addition of school adjustment counselors at each of the elementary schools. Math is the subject area that we have seen the most retraction due to the pandemic. For FY23 Math specialists are being added to help teachers. Some changes don't cost money but are a shift in resources. We are making course changes at the high school in courses and creating new courses that are for teachers that are already there.
- What are we doing to improve educational system as it exists? Concern was expressed over the proficiency of students as they leave high school and the current decline in U.S. News and World Report rankings. What initiatives are being funded? Do we partner with any of the local colleges?
 - We don't agree with the ranking question. A comparison of Wellesley (26) with Bromfield (5) in the U.S. News and World Report rankings was provided including the overall score card and metrics. The increase in AP tests taken from 2013 and 2022 was presented. For the MCAS results for the top 10 Massachusetts schools, Wellesley is #2 and is #1 for the English MCAS. The story of Wellesley not being committed to excellence is not true.
 - We have several relationships with local colleges. Students take courses at the local colleges and in schools in Boston.
- A question was asked about the elimination of the World Language teacher at Fiske and Hunnewell.
 - The declining enrollment affects all programs. Traveling teachers have a shared responsibilities across schools. The reductions are coming from enrollment. There is no change in the program
- An explanation of the difference between having a permanent sub versus increasing the teacher pool was requested.
 - The sub pool has been challenging during the pandemic as subs can be signed up across multiple districts. A permanent sub will be a person who knows they are working every day for the district so there is no competition from other districts. This gives an additional lift in predictability to have a stable pool of individuals. Subs are not counted as FTEs. Permanent subs will be moving into salary positions. By being permanent subs, they can establish a consistent relationship and familiarity with the procedures of the district.
- How was it determined that 11 permanent subs were needed?
 - We looked historically at how much was spent on subs, the fill rate on subs and absences. We wanted to be fiscally responsible and are redeploying current resources. We feel 11 will cover the majority of absences. This allows the permanent sub to become a part of the fabric of the school. We wanted a sufficient pool while being respectful of the budget. The 11 permanent subs will cover pre-K to 12 and the HR director will deploy them to the schools with the greatest absences.
- What is the amount in the SPED fund and how high can this balance be?
 - It can be no more than 2 percent of Wellesley's actual net spending. Currently this fund has \$1.7 million and \$1.9 million would be the cap.
- In the Hunnewell swing space, positions are eliminated but this is shown as a partial position

- These are specialists they work throughout building with all students. As the number of sections is reduced there is a reduction of specialist needs. It is harder to determine FTEs for a specialist because they see all the children in the building so calculating increases and decreases is more complicated with 94 elementary sections. With Hunnewell we are taking one building offline so it is easier to show in this budget as a reduction in Hunnewell. In reality it is a reduction across all building. We will continue to work on this in the Spring so the reduction at each school is determined. We will get the cost savings presented.
- Why is there a sudden change in amount for FY23 technology spending?
 - We are trying to level the budget each year. We had deferred replacements that are now catching up to us. There are many capital items that had to be replaced in the life cycle of the high school replacement. The Select Board in a belt tightening request asked all departments to cut back capital in FY21 and FY22 budgets. In FY23 we tried to recoup those deferred purchases.
- An explanation was requested of why the FTEs are increasing but the number of teachers is being reduced.
 - The makeup of staff is varied. There are a significant number of TAs and paraprofessionals working in SPED and at a lower cost than others. We can provide a more thorough answer later and show a breakout of teachers versus para versus subs.
- A comment was made that the percentage of DEI professional development increased 163 percent. What is being spent on regular professional development?
 - Imbedded professional development is imbedded in everyone's salary. We shifted some of the professional development to current needs and to dig deeper. There is significant professional development in the general fund and in teaching and learning. This allows us to bring speakers from the outside; summer workshops to do work in developing and shifting curriculum. The Title 2A grant is federal funds for professional development. More information to be provided later.
- What is driving disparity between the rankings? What are unknowns that drop us down in the rankings?
 - The algorithms change all the time. The nature of the rankings creates distributions and differences often with no clear distinction. We can look at data points and show clearly where we compare to our colleagues. We don't think rankings should be our focus. We are not trying to manipulate the system to achieve the rankings. Academics is a driver but not the only driver. A well-rounded public education includes the richness of extracurriculars; award winning performing arts are examples. We do not believe equity and success are opposites. We want to be a district that focuses on all students and we do not want to change the system to satisfy the rankings.. In terms of rankings, it is short sighted to measure ourselves against a publication from people that are not educators. We measure ourselves against a rubric developed by education experts.
- A comment was made that the addition of school adjustment counselors to provide support in the buildings is good but it was felt that those needs were always there and have been exacerbated by COVID. What is the landscape going forward and will these positions be continued?
 - It was agreed the need existed before COVID. We have two years of funding for these positions through the grant. During that time, we will evaluate if we need the same level of staffing or how to structure the support.
- How was the number for the student activity fees determined?
 - When we collect fees there is a fee offset. We looked at straight fees and the number of students in clubs and activities – visual arts/student activities: Middle School – 82; High School – 176. Performing arts are a fee-based program and not part of the student activity fees.

- A question was asked about how the salary reserve number was determined and whether it was prudent, from a negotiating standpoint, to include this substantial bucket of money in the budget.
 - We are starting negotiations and cannot provide detail as it might impact negotiations. It is a competitive market and we look at comparable communities to come up with set of assumptions.
- A comment was made that other communities have rebounded to pre pandemic enrollment levels and to what extent is Wellesley's declining enrollment seen as a performance indicator and how is this being addressed?
 - In reality, we are building new schools and there are several movements for students. The elementary school projects are disruptive and COVID was disruptive.
- A request was made to look at our peer communities and their data regarding employees.
- Comment was made on DE&I and the intensity about what is being done and there is information on the website. A transparency report was suggested.
- How do you maintain some level of control around costs and the funding of equipment in the IT budget?
 - We continually re-evaluate to determine the best devices at each grade level and how long we can use them. This can shift from year to year.
- What is out of state SPED? Are we sending students out of state or are we funding education for those moving out of state?
 - If a student moves out of Wellesley we do not fund their education. We do not generally place students out of state. There are some approved schools just out of the state and we sometimes get into a legal situation with parent and when we get the settlement with the parent, the child is in school just outside the state. Sometimes we do not have any but this year we have three out of state.
- Is SPED going up or holding steady and are all schools in the state experiencing this? Is there cooperation with other districts and the state so the cost can be lowered for everyone?
 - We collaborate with other districts and have a membership in the ACCEPT collaborative which consists of 13 districts. We pool money to create programs for students. This is a cost-effective way to provide education for students whose needs cannot be met by WPS. The state SPED average is 18 percent and Wellesley is slightly lower than this. Massachusetts has more students in special education because of more generous needs. We have to educate and meet the needs of students. People move to Wellesley for strong the SPED and they move here for the strong general education. Our excellent in-district programs save a lot of money. We provide a high level of service for students and we have excellent outcomes.
- What was deferred from last year's IT budget?
 - Network infrastructure was cut 50 percent; no document camera replacements; reduced the number of iPads for staff for those shared devices required in the classrooms; audiovisual equipment at the high school. We put most of these back into this year's budget but some are deferred out to FY24 and FY25.
- Can we expect cash capital to come down or stay at this level?
 - We are trying to keep level at \$1 million each year but we are going to have increases in the out years. In FY31 and FY32 we will need to replace items at Hunnewell and Hardy but we have flexibility in the out years.
- What is the critical needs line item?
 - This is on page 33 and 34 of the presentation.
- Where do we stand with teachers of color and how many do we have and what is the delta to last year?
 - We do not have the number right now but can provide it. We hired some teachers for one year. Most turnover is not professional staff but more around support staff. We have 7 to

8 percent teachers of color. We are shedding staff so we are contracting. There is a contractual process that we need to go through. As we are trying to recruit, we are reducing FTEs. The pandemic has been hard and people are retiring. There is higher turnover in general.

- A request was made to see the actual numbers of staff demographics in the budget presentation.
- A question was asked if we could consider a permanent sub position for those whose position is being eliminated like the recently hired Hunnewell fitness teacher.
 - All of this is managed by the collective bargaining agreement. We are always looking for ways to retain employees and it does create a challenge in individual situations. As positions are going away, people are being bumped across other schools and it affects the entire district going forward. We try to be creative and flexible as much as possible.
- Are we on a sustainable path to stay within reasonable town guidelines?
 - Key resources allow us to make key investments. The investments we want to continue to make going forward depends on the guideline. We were covered by COVID grants which has helped us. When enrollment goes up as predicted it will be hard to meet the budget guidelines.
- A request was made to provide a simple per capita cost per student and benchmarking of other towns might be helpful and information to know what other towns look like in terms of elementary enrollment.
 - The per capita cost per student is in the budget documents where comparable student costs over last 5 years are detailed.

Citizen Petition Article 44 – Academic Excellence

Stephanie Hubbard, who is no longer a resident of Wellesley, made a personal statement regarding her family’s experience with Wellesley Public Schools and expressed her opinion of Wellesley Public Schools’ education. Bruce Franco, proponent of Article 44, made a personal statement and expressed his opinions about WPS. Both speakers shared that they transferred their children out of WPS due to concerns over academic quality. Bruce Franco presented an overview of the Citizen’s Petition for Academic Excellence.

Questions/Comments

- A comment was made that the phrase “Academic Excellence” sets off alarm bells from a personal perspective of having been a longtime volunteer at all school levels. U.S. News and World Report’s methodology uses one criteria of AP tests but standardized tests have a known bias. Concern was expressed that this focus on “Academic Excellence” will come at the cost of other items.
- A comment about personal experience with four successful children in WPS and that they all had a great experience in the WPS.

Advisory extended an offer to School Committee to provide a response to the Citizen Petition either in writing or at another meeting.

Minutes Approval/Liaison Reports/Administrative Items

Liaison Reports

Schools/Jenn Fallon: School Committee met on Tuesday and discussed paving project; COVID testing; and voted on the budget that was presented tonight.

DPW/Pete Pedersen: At the recent BPW meeting the \$400,000 for storms was discussed; Article 23 for the Stormwater Enterprise fund is not going forward; and Walnut Street was discussed.

Approved February 16, 2022

Select Board/Patti Quigley: The Select Board reviewed the budget during their meeting on Monday; worked through the capital budget; they are waiting to hear from CPC; they approved NRC, CAC and Planning jobs and making the positions full time; and added \$25,000 for a COA study of options to make the kitchen at the Tolles Parsons Center operational.

Coming attractions

- Meeting on Saturday, February 12 Advisory will start voting on warrant articles. Script will be circulated in advance.
- February 16 – Select Board articles including Land Use Lease and HS LED; Discussion and voting on Warrant articles.
- February 23 – Meeting for missing presentations and continued discussion and voting on Warrant Articles.
- March 2 – Final TWFP; MS Paving; Recreation Article 31; HR Article 25; DPW Article 19

Minutes

Jeff Levitan made and Madison Riley seconded a motion to approve the February 2, 2022 minutes and adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call Vote

Jennifer Fallon – yes
John Lanza – yes
Corinne Monahan - yes
Patti Quigley - yes
Tom Cunningham – yes
Jake Erhard – yes
Jeff Levitan - yes
Doug Smith – yes
Susan Clapham - yes
Al Ferrer - yes
Wendy Paul – yes
Pete Pedersen - yes
Madison Riley – yes
Shawn Baker – yes

February 2, 2022 minutes were approved, 14 to 0 and the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Documents Reviewed

<https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1370>

- Wellesley Housing Authority presentation 2/9/22
- FY23 WPS Advisory Presentation 2/9/22
- Warrant Article 44 Slide Deck