

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
February 25, 2020
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; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Joan Dabrowski and Cindy Mahr, and Student Representative Rachel White.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Cliff Canaday, representing Friends of Hunnewell Field, a group of parents of current and former WPS students, came before the Committee to address the issue of the potential lighting of the Hunnewell track and field and its impact on students, schools and the neighborhood. He expressed his concern with the Playing Fields Task Force Light Subcommittee's report which he feels includes misinformation. He urged the Committee not to support this initiative.

Ms. Kate Sullivan of Norwich Road, spoke on behalf of families in the 'Bates 9' component, and submitted a petition signed by families who are opposed to being redistricted to Hardy School, and requested that this area be redistricted to the Upham School. She cited children safety and traffic concerns that will result if Bates 9 is redistricted to Hardy School.

Mr. Mike Sullivan of Norwich Road, addressed the petition for the Bates 9 students advocating for these students to be redistricted to Upham, rather than Hardy. He believes this is the most logistical and safe option, and it will continue to keep that community together.

RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Lussier recognized the following individuals and groups:

From Department Head of Classical & Modern Languages Tim Eagan:

Mike Travers (WHS Spanish), Rebecca Blouwoff (WMS French) and Tim Eagan all presented sessions at the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL) in New York City. The sessions were: *Empowering Diverse Learners: Research-Based Strategies for Success* by Rebecca Blouwoff; *But What About the Grammar?* (awarded Best of Massachusetts) by Mike Travers; and *Feedback to Push Forward: Practical Tools for Monday* by Tim Eagan.

In addition, both Mike Travers and Tim Eagan are serving on the DESE panel review committee for the updating of the World Languages standards, which will be published in 2021.

Director of Early Childhood Rebecca Zieminski recognizes the following wonderful group of people who came to PAWS during vacation week to help with the tremendous work of sorting through the approximately 3,000 donated books that were collected for the **1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Project** at P.A.W.S.

Thank you to:

The **principals and families** at all 10 schools for supporting our book drive last spring that helped collect nearly 3,000 books; to the **Rana Family** from PAWS, for storing ALL of the books in their home for the past 8 months, until we were ready to launch this project; to **Maura Renzella**, for her help in promoting the project to the High School National Honor Society Students and Key Club Members; to the **35 amazing students from the National Honor Society and Key Club** who donated 173 hours during their school vacation week; to parents **Deena Bolen, Linda Lin and Beth Willett** for volunteering their time; and to PAWS staff members **Isabel Chasman** and **Meghan McLaughlin** for their help during vacation week.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Chow reported she attended the February 14th Playing Fields Task Force meeting at which time an update was provided on the **installation of a custom container bathroom** on the aqueduct at Hunnewell Field. The bathroom is slated to be installed by the end of summer. There is also a new option of luxury mobile bathrooms which is being discussed at an upcoming NRC meeting.

Ms. Martin announced the 100 percent design plans for the **Middle School Building Systems project** will be presented to the PBC on Thursday evening. This work is slated to be addressed at a fall Special Town Meeting for a debt exclusion vote.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lussier reported that the rescheduled **Kindergarten Roundup** was held on February 12, at which time 136 new students were registered. Kindergarten registration for school year 2020-21 is currently at 174, including 38 students who registered from the PAWS program. The projection is 310. The next Roundup is scheduled for March 7th at 9 am at the Sprague School.

STUDENT ADVISORY

Ms. White informed the Committee that Seminar Day is scheduled for Wednesday, March 4th, with a number of seminars being offered during the first three blocks. Students are also in the process of course selection for next year. She thanked the Committee for proposing to include an additional computer science course in next year's budget.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Minutes Approval: February 4, 2020 Open Sessions Minutes
- Gift Acceptances
- Declaration of Surplus: Broken WMS Fitness Center Equipment

After a brief discussion, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Mr. Roberti, the Committee **unanimously VOTED** to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

REDISTRICTING

Ms. Chow removed herself from the table at 6:54 pm.

Dr. Lussier reviewed that after the public hearing on February 11th, the Committee asked him to adjust the maps to reflect keeping Schofield Components 2 and 3 at Schofield. As a result of this request, Upham Map 3A was developed and he reviewed the changes that resulted from this adjustment. The map was posted on the website last week.

Ms. Martin reminded the group that the goal is to develop one redistricting map for each scenario: building at Hardy and building at Upham.

The Committee first discussed Upham maps 3 and 3A. It was noted that the Redistricting Advisory Committee had discussed the new Upham 3A and the pros and cons of this map prior to the Redistricting Public Hearing, but they have not met after the hearing was held. Committee members and the Superintendent discussed various scenarios, their thoughts on each map and the impact on school utilization rates based on various changes to the redistricting maps. There was a review of the various Bates components and ramifications of redistricting students to Upham versus Hardy versus keeping the students at Bates.

After a discussion, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Committee **VOTED** to approve Upham Map 3A as the recommended redistricting map. The vote was 3 in favor; 1 opposed; 1 abstention.

The Committee then reviewed the Hardy maps at length. Committee members again discussed various scenarios of changing components, based on their concerns as well as community concerns.

After a discussion, upon a motion made by Ms. Gray and seconded by Mr. Kelley, the Committee **VOTED** to approve Hardy Map 3 as the recommended redistricting map. The vote was 3 in favor; 1 opposed; 1 abstention.

Mr. Roberti expressed his concern with low utilization rates in some of the schools and that all the redistricting scenarios are based on the assumption of a school closure, which he does not support. It was noted that if all three schools were built, building utilization would be lower than in a six-school scenario.

It was discussed that while the maps will not go into effect until 2024 at the earliest, these maps will inform the ongoing feasibility study for both sites, as part of the MSBA process. In addition, since there is uncertainty with enrollment projections, and redistricting is at least four years away, there will be a caveat included to recommend to the future School Committees that enrollment and the redistricting plan be revisited

during the year prior to the planned implementation to determine if adjustments are necessary.

Dr. Lussier thanked the Committee, as well as the Redistricting Advisory Committee, and AppGeo for their work in addressing this complex issue.

The Committee also thanked community members who provided feedback throughout the process.

Ms. Chow returned to the table at 8:15 pm.

VIEWS OF CLIMATE AND LEARNING (VOCAL) SURVEY

Dr. Dabrowski, along with Dr. Anne Beauchamp, PreK-12 Coordinator for Curriculum, Assessment & Accountability, joined the Committee to present the VOCAL Survey data from last spring's MCAS administration. Dr. Dabrowski explained that VOCAL is a relatively new annual, optional survey sponsored by DESE and administered to students in Grades 4, 5, 8 and 10. Participating students were asked to share their views on three dimensions of school climate: engagement, safety, and environment.

Drs. Dabrowski and Beauchamp reviewed each dimension, its components and examples of questions asked within each dimension. Index scores for each dimension, as well as overall school climate, were reviewed by grade level. It was noted that the District falls within the *Typical* range in almost all areas.

Dr. Dabrowski indicated the VOCAL Survey is an evolving data set that targets both elementary and secondary level students, connecting with the District's SEL priority area. This allows for comparisons among/between elementary schools, identifying areas of strength/weaknesses that can help inform work among schools.

METROWEST ADOLSCENT HEALTH SURVEY (MWAHS) 2018 RESULTS

The Committee was joined by K-12 Director of Fitness and Health Joanne Grant who, along with Dr. Beauchamp, presented the 2018 MWAHS survey results for both the Middle and High Schools. Ms. Grant indicated that the survey is quite dense, with a number of topics covered, however the presentation focuses on the areas of substance use, mental health, and protective factors (adult support). The results of each topic were reviewed for both Middle School and High School students, by sex, and compared on regional, state and national levels.

Key takeaways include an increase in vaping and binge drinking, as well as in mental health issues relative to school-related stress, and across all these areas is a trend showing higher incidents in female students than their male counterparts. Adult support within and beyond school is strong at each level.

Dr. Dabrowski discussed ongoing supports and efforts including school-based themes at all elementary schools and the Challenge Success program at WMS and WHS. District efforts toward SEL include the Racial Climate Study and followups; creation of the DE&I Leadership Council, the hiring of Dr. Charmie Curry as Director of DE&I;

creation of the Math Achievement/Opportunity Task Force; and a presentation by Dr. Dena Simmons on Seeking Excellence through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. General SEL and Mental and Physical Health Skills are addressed through the School Wellness Advisory Committee (SWAC), WHS Advisories, Social and Emotional Education Development (SEED) at WMS, Challenge Success and Open Circle.

Ms. Grant noted that she will be presenting this data to parents at various sessions throughout the year.

The Committee thanked Drs. Dabrowski and Beauchamp, and Ms. Grant for a thorough presentations.

SECOND QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Mahr presented the second quarterly report providing a recap of the FY20 adjustments by category and type, breaking it down by salary/other compensation and expenses. She referred to the major adjustment in Student Services due to changes in personnel and not needing to fill three positions as a result of a change in outplacements costs, which will be covered by some of these in-District resources.

In the expense category, Ms. Mahr reported there is a significant change in in the Instruction Category, with some shifting of funds from the Text Book account to the Curriculum and Workshop account to cover PBL workshops this summer. The largest increase in expenses is under Student Services due to an increase in the number of Out-of-District placements since the budget was adjusted in the fall. Overall, some of these cost increases can be covered through other transfers being proposed, resulting in a decrease of about \$70,000 in the need to use the Special Education Stabilization Fund. Ms. Mahr reviewed Out-of-District Placement assumptions, including the increase in the cost of collaboratives, private schools and residential tuitions. In addition, the number of placements has grown over the year from 56 students in October to 64 students in February. Circuit Breaker funds are being fully utilized for both the current year and carry forward funds. The Stabilization Fund need is currently at \$412,000; \$483,000 was projected in the fall.

Ms. Mahr then reviewed the overall adjustments of \$245,840 from Salary and Other Compensation to Expenses, noting this amount does not reflect the use of \$412,253 from the Special Education Stabilization Fund.

School Committee asked clarifying questions and thanked Ms. Mahr for the update.

TELP Update

Ms. Mahr reminded the Committee that at a previous meeting, she had discussed the potential need for a Town Meeting warrant article for the tax-exempt lease purchase (TELP) which is the method the Schools use to purchase its special education vans. In conversations with Town Counsel and Bond Counsel, it has been determined that it is not necessary to get town meeting approval for the Schools TELP because the term is 3 years or less and we are not seeking a general obligation bond to pay for these

purchases. As a result, Schools can continue its current practice without authorization from the Town or Town Meeting.

HHU UPDATES

Referendum Question on March 17th Ballot

Ms. Gray reported that at the Committee's last meeting there was discussion concerning whether the Committee should take a position on the Referendum Question regarding 6 versus 7 elementary schools. Ms. Gray indicated that prepared a draft statement supporting a No vote on the March 17th election ballot question, restating the Committee's position to provide some clarity to the community.

After discussion and revisions, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Ms. Chow, the Committee **VOTED** to adopt the statement relative to its position on the Referendum Question as amended. The vote was 4 in favor; 1 opposed.

General HHU Update

Ms. Gray reported that the SBC is scheduled to meet on February 27th. Topics slated for discussion include impacts to natural habitat and carbon sequestration, updated site alternatives, ledge removal, and updated site alternatives.

PUBLIC COMMENT No one present wished to speak.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:47 pm, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to enter executive session in order to comply with M.G.L. c. 30A § 22 to review the February 4, 2020 executive session minutes, to invite Dr. David Lussier and Ms. Cindy Mahr into the executive session, and to return to open session at the conclusion of the executive session only to adjourn.

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

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 9:55 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:

Memo – Surplus MS Damaged Fitness Equipment – 2/14/20

Wellesley Redistricting Presentation – 2/12/20 Update

SC Memo: VOCAL & MWAHS Surveys

SC Presentations: VOCAL & MSAHS Surveys

MWHAS Reports: WMS and WHS
FY20 Quarter 2 Report & Presentation
SC Position Statement RE: Referendum Question