

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
March 2, 2022
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm. Those present included Chair Catherine Mirick, Vice Chair Linda Chow, Secretary Leda Eizenberg, members Melissa Martin and Craig Mack; Superintendent David Lussier; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; and Student Advisory representatives Ivy Wang, Sofia Dobado, and Abraham Budson-McQuilken.

Ms. Mirick announced that the meeting is being held remotely and recorded by local media and broadcast live by Wellesley Media.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Mack stated he was happy to be here and was honored to represent the community on the School Committee. He added the majority of his career has been in education, though serving in town wide office is new. He intends to approach the role with vigor and passion. He offered congratulations to WHS students Ivy Wang and Sky Jacobs, who were elected to Town Meeting.

Ms. Martin stated she would be going to Advisory later that evening for the presentation of the WMS paving project. She welcomed Mr. Mack to the Committee and noted he was jumping right in and accompanying her to the Fiske PTO meeting the following evening.

Ms. Chow stated there are Conversations with the School Committee scheduled for the WMS community on Friday, March 4 and for the Fiske community on Monday, March 7. These will take place over Zoom and links are available from the principals. Additionally, she welcomed Mr. Mack to the Committee.

Ms. Mirick stated the Committee sent to Advisory answers to questions they had regarding the proposed budget. Additionally, they were given the Academic Excellence presentation from the February 15 School Committee meeting and provided a link to the video as reference material related to the petition of Article 44.

She stated the town has thus far borrowed \$81,000,000 at a rate of 2.2% for the school building projects among others. Modeling had projected the rate at 4%. As a result, the median tax bill will be significantly lower for residents. She offered thanks to the town's finance staff for making that happen.

Ms. Mirick also stated there were theater performances coming up. Next week WHS will be performing *Mama Mia* with tickets going on sale Thursday, March 3. Later in March, WMS will be performing *Frozen Jr.* with more details to come.

Finally, she noted Sustainable Wellesley will be hosting a discussion Thursday, March 3 titled *Coping with Climate Distress* and is for anyone feeling distressed about the threat of climate change. Those interested can register on Sustainable Wellesley's website.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier welcomed Mr. Mack to the Committee.

He echoed the excitement for the upcoming performing arts shows, noting they are great opportunities to see the kids in action.

He congratulated the WHS 2:00 Jazz Band, which earned a gold medal at the District Massachusetts Association of Jazz Educators (MAJE) Festival. Additionally, three soloists earned Outstanding Musicianship Awards. He offered a special congratulations to Steve Scott, WHS Jazz Band director and all Jazz Band students.

Dr. Lussier recognized the special tradition in Wellesley of holding a Seminar Day on the first Wednesday in March that high school students take the lead in organizing. Members of the staff and community share their knowledge and skills over several sessions.

Finally, he stated he and Ms. Eizenberg are participating in Wellesley's Civil Discourse Initiative as facilitators. He noted the program highlights the importance of civil discourse and is a useful template that can be applied in dealing with difficult issues.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Mr. Budson-McQuilken stated Seminar Day went very well. He offered his appreciation for Dr. Lussier and other members of the community who shared their skills and experiences.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes - February 8, 2022

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve the minutes as presented.

MOVED: Ms. Martin; SECONDED: Ms. Chow; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Mack - Abstain.

MOTION CARRIED 4-0 WITH ONE ABSTENTION

Surplus Memo - WMS Health Office Equipment
Surplus Memo - WMS Steinway Piano Auction March 2022

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve the WMS health office equipment and Steinway piano as surplus.

MOVED: Ms. Eizenberg; SECONDED: Ms. Chow; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Mack - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

COVID UPDATE AND VOTE: UPDATED COVID MITIGATION PLANS

Ms. Mirick thanked Dr. Lussier, Ms. Hulme, members of WEA and the Joint Labor-Management Committee (JLMC), the Board of Health (BOH), and the Health Department for everything they have done over the past two years, noting the partnership across town has been invaluable.

Ms. Hulme stated that coming out of February break, there have been 17 positive cases compared to 318 after December break. Families have reported utilizing the home kits and doing surveillance testing. She offered her thanks to Niki Ofenloch and parent volunteers for sorting and distributing the kits. She added the District has ample supply of testing kits for symptomatic students and staff regardless if they signed up for the surveillance program or not.

Anyone needing a kit should contact the school nurse. Dr. Lussier added the dashboard will continue to be updated. Currently, vaccination rates are exceptionally high with all buildings above 80% of those eligible.

Dr. Lussier described the process used to develop the COVID mitigation transition proposal. Frequent discussions and work at the staff level, with the Health Department, and the BOH was done to be sure everyone was on the same page. This proposal has been presented to the BOH and Health Department and both showed their support. The JLMC met before break and engaged in robust conversations about the proposal resulting in a unanimous vote from JLMC to support the recommended proposal. Main points of the proposal, proposed to take effect as of March 7, are as follows.

Masks - Buildings will transition to a mask-optional other than in health offices or for those returning between 6 and 10 days of a positive diagnosis. PAWS will continue to follow Early Education and Care (EEC) guidance, which allows parents to make decisions regarding masks going forward. Most recently, the CDC has removed guidance for masks in indoor spaces with low or moderate risk, which includes our county. This includes making buses mask-optional.

Lunches - Beginning the week of March 7, schools will begin to make the transition to normal, indoor lunches in the cafeteria. Logistics of new routines and schedules will be phased in during the week and each school will look a little different. WPS does recognize the value of eating outdoors when possible regardless of pandemic and will continue to do so.

Visitors and volunteers - Pre-pandemic policies and procedures will resume. If someone is symptomatic or not feeling well, it is asked they not come in.

Performing arts/Athletics - Limitations on spectators have already been removed. Participants are now mask-optional as well.

Field trips - Field trips may be approved provided the field trip coordinator researches the venue guidelines and communicates to students and families regarding vaccination or masking requirements for any venues.

Continued mitigation measures - WPS continues to encourage vaccinations and boosters for those eligible and will support at home testing. The Facilities Maintenance Department (FMD) will continue to maintain the highest level MERV13 filters. Water fountains will remain closed through the end of the year with bottle filling stations open. Masks will be available to any student or staff who request them. Windows will be kept open weather permitting and lunches outdoors when possible. The District will continue to monitor everything very closely and will consider any necessary changes if an unexpected uptick occurs. Principals have been advised to think about and plan norms around mask use and sensitivity to choices, noting there is an excitement about making the transition but still anxiety.

In discussion with the Committee, it was noted that WPS will continue to communicate to families. Conversations among staff have turned to things like faculty meetings and parent conferences, as it has been noted that remote engagement has broken down accessibility barriers in many ways while many still lament the loss of in-person engagement. Ms. Hulme added each school nurse is working with the principal to communicate developmentally appropriate ways to discuss and prepare kids for the transition. Dr. Lussier noted JLMC will continue to meet on a regular basis.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to support the WPS COVID-19 Transition Plan as presented to begin March 7.

MOVED: Ms. Martin; SECONDED: Ms. Chow; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Mack - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

UPDATED FY23 CASH CAPITAL BUDGET

Ms. Mirick explained that the Administration was asked by the town to reduce their recommended Cash Capital budget by approximately \$57,000, which it did. Ms. Mahr explained if the town had the opportunity to replace the money they would. The town has in fact said WPS can have the \$57,000 back and she noted the District is very appreciative.

Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to approve an FY'23 cash capital budget of \$1,055,497, inclusive of furniture, fixtures, equipment and information technology, to send to Town Meeting.

MOVED: Ms. Chow; SECONDED: Mr. Mack; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Mack - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLE 31 - PERMITTING ENFORCEMENT

Ms. Chow stated that Paul Cramer, Chair of the Recreation Commission, gave a presentation to Advisory in which he explained their existing policy that requires individuals to obtain a permit before using a public facility for personal gain, which includes tennis courts and pools. He stated there have been incidents recently where individuals have been conducting lessons without a permit. The Commission is looking to enact a bylaw that would impose fines for policy violations. As the School Committee and Natural Resources Commission (NRC) own the land on which these resources and facilities are located, the boards need to review the language and vote on it. It was emphasized this is not to discourage people from conducting lessons but it is an effort to enforce the process of getting proper permitting. The Recreation Department will enforce the fining and appeals processes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cecilia Brooks, of Precinct D, joined to comment about School Committee candidate Neal Glick from a letter circulated to members of the Wellesley community prior to the election. She stated he was a great member of the Planning Board and that statements in his campaign were misconstrued.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 6:35 pm, Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED: Ms. Martin; SECONDED: Ms. Eizenberg; ROLL CALL: Ms. Eizenberg – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Mirick – Yes; Mr. Mack - Yes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Leda Eizenberg
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

WPS COVID Transition Plan 3.7.2022

Article 31 Motion - Updated

Recreation Advisory Presentation - Article 31