

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
March 10, 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 Superintendents Joan Dabrowski and Cindy Mahr, and Student representative Rachel White.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Corey Spaulding, of Framingham and Natick, requested to inspect the financial records of the School Department relating to grants that were accepted by the School Committee.

Patti Quigley, previous School Committee member, addressed Mr. Kelley, thanking him and his family for his service and dedication to the Wellesley Public Schools.

Upham Principal Jeff Dees, speaking on behalf of the WPS principals, thanked Mr. Kelley for his support of WPS administrators, faculty, staff and students. He acknowledged Mr. Kelley's honesty and integrity in his work and his commitment to doing what's best for students.

RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Lussier acknowledged the following individuals and groups:

Congratulations to Director of Nursing **Linda Corridan** who was named Massachusetts Nurse Leader of the Year.

From Grade 4 Sprague Teacher Moe Henzel: Congratulations to **Grade 5 student Alex Ho** who was selected by the National Geographic Society as one of only 100 semifinalists in the State eligible to compete in the 2020 National Geographic GeoBee State Competition. Thousands of students in grades 4 to 8 from public, private, and independent schools took the same online qualifying test and Alex is one of only five 5th graders in the state who qualified. Most of the other 90+ students are 6th, 7th and 8th graders. The contest will be held at Elms College in Chicopee, Massachusetts on Friday, March 27, 2020. Good luck, Alex!!!!

From Director of Early Childhood Rebecca Zieminski: A big P.A.W.S. thank you goes out to the wonderful **guest readers** from the community who helped the preschoolers celebrate Read Across America Day last week! We loved having special friends come and share their love of reading with our preschoolers in honor of Dr. Suess's birthday!

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Chow reported she attended last week's **Central Council meeting** where there was much discussion concerning the WPS budget and the status of school facilities.

She mentioned that work continues on the **Sprague turf fields** and it is expected work will be completed by March 20th. With regard to **bathroom facilities at Hunnewell** field near the Aqueduct, the NRC has decided to go forward with the custom containers rather than the luxury mobile bathrooms that had been suggested. Installation is scheduled for this summer, and a similar unit will be installed near the stadium.

Ms. Chow also announced that the 4th Annual **Wellesley Creates** event is scheduled for March 28th. This event provides a space for Middle and High school students to come together and solve problems through the development of apps.

Ms. Gray mentioned that Committee members are scheduled to attend **PTO meetings** this week at the Hunnewell and Upham Schools to discuss facilities and other school-related issues.

Ms. Martin participated in **Read Across America** at PAWS and very much enjoyed her time with the students of PS-6. She also reported the **WMS Building Systems Project** was presented to PBC on February 27th. The project will be presented to School Committee at its next meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lussier reported the **SY18-19 Progress Report** has been mailed out to all households in Wellesley. He thanked the team members who were instrumental in getting the report completed: Joan Dabrowski, Amanda Brown, Victoria Ostler, Linda Chow, Anne Beauchamp, and Beth Bergeron, as well as the community sponsors who helped offset the cost of its distribution.

The second **Kindergarten Roundup** was held on Saturday, March 7th. The cohort is currently at 246 students, with 310 projected. Dr. Lussier encouraged parents to register their kindergarteners or inform WPS if they are planning to defer for a year.

Dr. Lussier provided an update on the **COVID-19 virus**, indicating he was notified on Friday, March 6th, that a resident and parent of two WPS students tested positive for the virus. The Upham and Middle Schools where the two students attended had early release so the buildings could be deep cleaned and disinfected. A follow-up message was sent out later in the day which provided information on how to speak with their children about this topic. Dr. Lussier stressed that due to privacy reasons, he cannot provide any information on the family.

Dr. Lussier acknowledged the extraordinary level of coordination among the Health, Police, Fire Departments, and Town Hall in trying to discern next steps in a constantly changing situation. He indicated the Health Department is the main point of contact and will provide a daily update that will be posted on the Town and WPS websites. Dr. Lussier noted that the Governor's press conference today declared a state of emergency, recommending limiting activities and trips, and advised groups to hold only essential meetings. Clarity is needed on how to handle after school activities as well as field trips. Dr. Lussier is connecting with colleagues around the state to socialize these issues.

Dr. Lussier thanked the Facilities Management Department for its quick work of cleaning and sanitizing the affected schools. There have been discussions about

how this type of deep cleaning can be done while school is in session, and the costs involved. Depending on the status of the virus, staff will assess how to proceed as time goes on.

Questions were raised concerning DESE's position on missed days, the type of learning that would take place remotely if schools must be closed, and the process that will be used if it is deemed necessary to close schools.

Dr. Lussier explained that staff has developed plans for remote learning if needed, however, DESE has provide clear direction that remote learning is not intended to replicate the work normally done when school is in session, including the introduction of new curricula and graded assessments. He reviewed some ways students can engage at various levels including CANVAS for students in grades 6 through 12, where students can access assignments and have the opportunity for engagement with teachers; and DreamBox for students in grades 3 through 5, as well as a menu of activities for students in Pre-K through 2. Staff is working on learning segments to provide to families, while being mindful of limiting technology and including hands on work, physical fitness, and providing coordination in households with multiple students in different grades.

With reference to missed days, if classes are cancelled, DESE is requiring all districts to use the balance of their snow days, however, districts will not be required to go beyond their already-scheduled 185 days for students, which for WPS is June 22, 2020.

Regarding the close of all schools, Dr. Lussier explained he will work with DESE and local representatives to determine the appropriate action and when it should be taken. He noted that there are higher than average absences being recorded at each level, however, no students in Wellesley has tested positive for COVID 19 to date. Parents should talk to their physician if they are considering keeping a student home to ensure it is an informed decision.

School Committee members thanked Dr. Lussier for his professionalism in taking control of the situation as it relates to students and faculty, and for providing a sense of calm in the community. They also acknowledged his continued collaborative work with other Town stakeholders.

CONSENT AGENDA

After a brief discussion, upon a motion made by Ms. Gray and seconded by Mr. Kelley, the Committee **VOTED** to approve the February 6, 11, and 25, 2020 Open Session Minutes as amended. The vote was 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstention.

After a brief discussion, upon a motion made by Ms. Gray and seconded by Mr. Kelley, the Committee **unanimously VOTED** to approve February 25, 2020 Executive Session Minutes and the gifts as presented.

KIWANIS GIFT

Ms. Mahr and Early Childhood Director Rebecca Zieminski discussed the gift being offered by the Kiwanis Club to provide financial support to children in need who wish to

attend PAWS. The gift is \$12,000 annually for the next four years, beginning in FY2020.

Ms. Mahr reviewed the terms of the gift, the process developed to determine need, and steps to administer the gift for the current year, as well as a long-term approach for subsequent years. She explained that the funds will be held in an interest-bearing trust, managed by the Town Treasurer.

Ms. Zieminski thanked the Kiwanis organization for addressing a real need at PAWS and providing children the opportunity to attend PAWS.

Questions were raised as to how need would be determined, the number of children that the scholarship will serve annually, and can others contribute to this trust? Ms. Mahr explained that announcements would be sent out, applications will be gathered by the Business Office, and vetted by her and the Director of Early Childhood. It is estimated that 2 to 3 children per year can be assisted, based on the age group and needs of the child. A donation form has been created to accommodate the many requests to support PAWS.

After a discussion and clarifying questions, upon a motion made by Mr. Kelley and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Committee **unanimously VOTED** to accept the Kiwanis Club gift of \$12,000 to be held in trust for the purpose of paying Pre-School at Wellesley Public Schools (PAWS) tuition costs for eligible families who have demonstrated financial need and on such terms as specified in the gift letter dated March 10, 2020.

School Committee members thanked the Kiwanis Club for this generous donation to the PAWS program.

2018-19 NURSING ACTIVITIES REPORT

The Committee was joined by Linda Corridan, Department Head of Nursing Services, who presented the Nursing activities for the 2018-19 school year. Ms. Corridan reviewed the department's mission statement, focusing on the optimal state of wellness for the whole child in order to support academic success. She reviewed last year's statistics at each level, from PAWS to the high school, consisting of an enrollment of 5,165 students. There were 77,478 encounters with school nurses, averaging 421 daily visits, and a return to class rate of 92 percent. Work also included 15,196 case management events, 4,479 support/counseling encounters, and 9,225 screenings. Case management examples included concussion/head injury accommodations and restrictions, and supporting student re-entry after a prolonged absence due to medical or psychological hospitalization.

Ms. Corridan reviewed a summary of nursing services relating to behavioral health including restraint-seclusion assessment, providing coping strategies, self-calming strategies, emotional support, grief counseling, and social skills support.

Ms. Corridan reviewed SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) results in the grades 8 and 10, with a total of 323 students screened in Grade 8 and 379 students in grade 10. She noted that 100 percent of students indicated they have someone they can turn to if they need support.

Last year's professional practice goal was to continue standardization of documentation to better capture student acuity and nursing interventions; identify areas of concern; develop templates and increase the ability to extract data.

The student learning goal is the same as in previous years and addresses strategies to support students in the classroom which is in line with the social emotional support of students. Twenty-five students were chosen who tend to visit the nurse's office on a regular basis without significant medical reasons. The nurse tries to break down some of the reasons why these students are visiting the office and provide them with strategies to limit or decrease the number of times a student leaves his/her classroom, and provide suggestions on the appropriate time to leave a class. These efforts have resulted in 342 decreased visits, from 663 before interventions to 321 after interventions.

Work in the 2019-20 school year includes attendance monitoring, trying to get students back in classroom as quickly as possible after a prolonged absence and with as smooth a transition as possible using health education and re-entry meetings. In addition, inclusion work is ongoing, with the high school nurses involved with LGBTQ issues and elementary nurses working on health education topics.

The Committee thanked Ms. Corridan for her presentation and for her work and the work of all school nurses around the District to support students.

SCHOOL WELLNESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SWAC) UPDATE

Student Services Director Sarah Orlov joined Ms. Corridan in presenting the annual SWAC update to the Committee.

Ms. Orlov provided an overview of SWAC and its charge. Highlights for the 2019-20 school year were reviewed including the creation of subcommittees that focus on vaping, mental health, school start times and LGBTQ issues. She discussed the work of each subcommittee in depth. Other SWAC activities include updating the head injury protocol for Nursing and Athletics, and making a recommendation concerning the purchase of mobilization rescue kits which will be placed next to the AED kits in schools.

Next steps for the spring and school year 2020-21 include continuing discussions on how to reduce/eliminate vaping; sponsoring a mental health event such as a movie about managing anxiety; continue to gather information on school start times; and exploring appropriate supports for the LGBTQ community. SWAC also plans to update the Life-Threatening Allergy protocol and guidance on food celebrations in elementary schools.

Dr. Lussier discussed that staff is continuing its review behind the scenes around school start times at the secondary level. He noted that there are considerable logistical challenges in thinking about what this would like and could result in only adding 20 minutes to the start time. He added that one must consider at what point does the value proposition become so diminished that it does not make it worth what will be achieved?

Parent reaction is mixed when considering the magnitude of what needs to be done to achieve even a small increase in start time.

The Committee thanked Ms. Orlov for the presentation and the thoughtfulness of SWAC's work around these important topics.

MUNICIPAL SUSTAINABLE BUILDING GUIDELINES

Sustainable Energy Committee (SEC) Vice Chair Fred Bunger and Director Marybeth Martello came before the Committee to request a vote of approval of the Municipal Sustainable Building Guidelines that were presented to the Committee in the fall. At that time, the SEC expected to seek Town Meeting approval, however, after discussions with Town leadership it was determined that the most effective way to formalize the guidelines was to hold a public hearing and request signatures from the various building proponents.

Committee members asked clarifying questions including how the additional project costs related to these guidelines will be identified during the project approval process. It was also noted that the guidelines allow for some flexibility which is helpful when developing projects.

After a discussion, upon a motion made by Mr. Roberti and seconded by Ms. Gray, the Committee ***unanimously VOTED*** to approve the Municipal Sustainable Building Guidelines as presented.

MID-YEAR GOALS REPORT

Dr. Lussier, Dr. Dabrowski and Ms. Mahr provided updates on the progress of the District and Superintendent SY2019-20 Goals. The Committee asked clarifying questions and commended the Superintendent and his team for the excellent work that is being accomplished.

UPDATE ON STUDENT OPPORTUNITY ACT PLANNING

The Student Opportunity Act (SOA) is a major overhaul of the state's Chapter 70 education funding formula. Chapter 70 establishes the state and local shares of education costs. The SOA will generate additional funding for school districts starting in FY21.

Dr. Dabrowski discussed that the SOA includes a requirement for districts to develop a spending plan for the additional funds coming in FY2021-23. The plan must include an outline of how the additional funds will be spent to close the achievement gaps and target those students with the greatest needs. The plan must be approved by school committees and submitted by April 1. Dr. Dabrowski noted the plan as presented addresses components that are already embedded in the District's FY21 budget.

Dr. Dabrowski reviewed the draft Student Opportunity Plan for SY2021-2023, including the four commitments presented by the State and how Wellesley will address, meet and measure the outcomes of these commitments: 1) Focusing on Student Subgroups; 2) Using evidence-based programs to close gaps; 3) Monitoring Success with Outcomes and Targets; and 4) Engaging All Families.

Committee members asked clarifying questions. Action is slated for March 24, 2020.

EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES: REVIEW FOR RELEASE

Ms. Martin informed the Committee that she and the Superintendent reviewed the Executive Session Minutes that have not yet been released to determine if any should be released at this time. After review, it was determined that the only minutes ready to be released were the February 25, 2020 minutes approved earlier in this meeting. Otherwise, the remaining Executive Session minutes were not ripe for release due to the nature of the topics in those minutes.

HHU DISCUSSION**Ballot Question**

Ms. Gray discussed the upcoming ballot question and wished to provide some clarification regarding whether the MSBA funding of the project will be at risk if the referendum question passes. Ms. Gray explained that the agreement with the MSBA to receive funding for the Hardy/Upham Project is that the Town build a 365-student school at either Hardy or Upham, in a scenario that reduces elementary schools from 7 to 6. The other option is to not consolidate and continue with 7 schools and build a 240 student/12 classroom school to serve the Upham School students. If the ballot question passes on Tuesday, it directs the School Committee to consider renovating or rebuilding 3 schools, keeping all 7 schools online.

Ms. Gray confirmed that the SBC has not seriously considered building a 12-classroom school at Upham. The SBC discussed this option, but it does not meet the educational plan voted by the School Committee, and does not reflect all of the work that has been done in previous years and the standards adopted over the past 20 years by the Schools and approved by Town Meeting, to have 3 classrooms per grade level. Until recent weeks, there had been no interest from the community in rebuilding Upham at its current size. If the ballot question passes, the impact on MSBA funding is unknown. Based on the agreement with the MSBA, she believes the funding will be at risk.

Mr. Kelley also mentioned the timing that would be required to reverse course and carefully consider the overall project under new parameters, its effect on the educational plan, the Town overall, and the cost of a lengthy delay in the project that will be required to adapt to this new version.

Ms. Gray also addressed the idea that 3 smaller schools can be built for the same or less money than the 2-school proposal. Examples were given in Weston and Newton, which have been open for several years. Based on current construction costs and the educational plan, it is not possible to build 3 schools at a cheaper cost while maintaining the District's educational standards and requirements. She noted that this is not just about classroom space, but there would be a replication of a number of spaces such as the gym, cafeteria, professional education rooms, etc. It is estimated that there would be a premium of at least \$40 million to build 3 versus 2 schools. This estimate was provided by the Town's project manager Jeff D'Amico of Compass, with the assistance of FMD Director Joe McDonough. Ms. Gray also noted that Compass Project Management and specifically, Mr. D'Amico, was also the Project Manager for the Field School in Weston.

Ms. Chow also noted that it is the School Department that must own the plan/building and make it work. Over the past years, many hours have been spent in the development and approval of a solid building plan and educational plan. She expressed concern that it would not be responsible to put a plan aside which was developed by the professionals in this field, and gain ownership of and be accountable for a different plan that has not been created or approved by those who will implement it.

Mr. Roberti noted that the project's debt exclusion must be approved by the Town's voters and that there is a need to build consensus in the community in order to have a plan approved, which he does not believe currently exists.

Hunnewell Project

Ms. Gray reported that the project team will be discussing the project in detail at the PBC meeting on Thursday night, and will be presenting to the School Committee at its next meeting.

Hardy/Upham Project

Ms. Chow removed herself from the table at 9:34 pm.

Ms. Gray reported the SBC has been reviewing various aspects of the plans for each site. An abutters' meeting was held on Wednesday, March 4th, which included approximately 40-50 abutters from the Hardy and Upham neighborhoods. There were questions about blasting and the construction process at Upham, as well as traffic circulation at the Hardy site. The SBC is meeting on March 19th to discuss the criteria and receive additional information on traffic. She also noted that the original plan was to have the SBC make a recommendation on the preferred site on April 2nd, however, given the uncertainty of issues that are beyond the SBC and Town's control, an additional meeting has been added on April 16th to work towards reaching a recommendation for approval by the School Committee and Board of Selectmen, for submission to the MSBA by its deadline.

Ms. Chow returned to the table at 9:37 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Past School Committee members KC Kato, Wendy Paul, Tony Bent and Michael D'Ortenzio, Jr. shared their reflections of working with Mr. Kelley over the past six years, thanking him and his family for the time and thoughtfulness in which he performed his duties as a School Committee member, and recognizing his honesty and integrity in all his work.

The School Committee members and Dr. Lussier each spoke acknowledging Mr. Kelley and his tireless work. while demonstrating a commitment of excellence and dedication to the community. Mr. Kelley was thanked for his leadership, support, wealth of knowledge, and thoughtfulness that he provided in his work on behalf of the Administration, faculty, staff, students and the Wellesley community during his tenure on the Committee. The Town is indebted to him for all his work.

Mr. Kelley expressed his appreciation for the kind thoughts but more importantly, for the valuable friendships and relationships that he established with Committee members,

administrators and teachers during his tenure. He also acknowledged Dr. Lussier for his dedication and excellent work on behalf of the WPS community.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 10:10 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:

SC Meeting Agenda/Posting - 3/10/20
Draft Minutes: 2/11 OS, 2/25 OS & ES, 2/6 OS
Memo RE: Kiwanis Gift – 3/6/20
2018-19 Nursing Report & Presentation
SWAC Presentation
Memo from SEC - Sustainable Bldg. Guidelines
SY19-20 District Goals Update
WPS Student Opportunity Act Draft Plan 3/7/20