

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
April 7, 2020  
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. Those present included Chair Melissa Martin, Vice Chair Linda Chow, Secretary Matt Kelley, member Sharon Gray and Jim Roberti (left at 8:10 pm); Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendents Joan Dabrowski and Cindy Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov.

Ms. Martin announced that the meeting is being held remotely and recorded by local media and YouTube.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Marc Schwabish, Hardy parent of 2 students, addressed the proposed end date for school and suggested the Committee should consider lengthening not shortening the school year. He acknowledged the new remote learning plan that is being presented, but feels the amount of daily 'live teacher time' is not adequate.

Peter Neergaard, WPS parent, echoed Mr. Schwabish's comments, and looks forward to a comprehensive and solid learning plan. He is pleased that there will be new material introduced. He also hopes the plan will continue to be reviewed and adjusted as time goes on.

Rocco Coli, WPS parent, also echoed the two previous speakers' comments. He added that he feels there is a need to ensure that teachers continue to follow the curriculum and teaching plans developed at the beginning of the school year so that students can continue to learn and progress. He also feels that the school year has already been shortened due to COVID-19 and should be extended, rather than shortened since students are already studying less time per day than when in school.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the March 24, 2020 Open Session minutes as presented.

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

**MOTION CARRIED:** Yes – 4; No – 0; Abstention - 1

**SCHOOL CLOSURE/REMOTE LEARNING/CALENDAR REVISION**

**Remote Learning Version 2.0**

WHS Principal Jamie Chisum, WMS Principal Mark Ito, and Fiske Principal Rachel McGregor joined the discussion to bring their perspective to the next version of remote learning that is being launched next week.

Dr. Lussier informed the Committee that the current planning approach is grounded on the possibility of an even more extended closure and based on the new guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), which provides more

flexibility towards new learning and moving forward curriculum. This work was developed while continuing to balance a sense of equity and access, with acknowledging that families and staff may have impediments to working in the current environment.

Dr. Lussier underscored that remote learning is never intended to replicate the work done in school, but it is hoped to facilitate meaningful and productive learning for all students while ensuring that students are not in front of screens all day. The 'schedule' will include working directly with teachers in a real time environment, prerecorded videos, independent reading time as well as physical activity, similar to a student's day when school is in session. This approach considers the whole student - supporting both academic development as well as their social and emotional wellbeing.

Dr. Dabrowski acknowledged the many experts across the district who weighed in on ways to think about remote learning. She reviewed the guiding principles used in preparation of the updated PreK-12 model, the definition and scope of the remote learning plan including the content, length of day, daily online and offline opportunities – including prerecorded lessons (asynchronous) as well as live sessions (synchronous) via video or phone conferences, and how student feedback will be presented.

Dr. Dabrowski indicated a fundamental goal in the K-12 WPS remote learning plan is for all students to have at least one daily opportunity to engage with a teacher through a synchronous experience.

Ms. Orlov addressed the Special Education priorities within the 2.0 remote learning plan including the safety and wellbeing of students and staff, maintaining regular and ongoing connections with students and families, providing both indirect and direct supports, with parents determining the highest priority of focus for their child. Ms. Orlov indicated special educators and related service providers will work with parents to build a support plan for their students during remote learning. The focus will be on preventing regression and maintaining skills.

Plans by level were reviewed with Dr. Dabrowski providing an overview of the learning plans for PAWS and grades K-5. Dr. Ito reviewed the Middle School plan and Dr. Chisum reviewed the High School plan. Each reviewed the requirements of offline learning, synchronous and asynchronous online learning and activities. With regard to grading, K-5 will use a credit/no credit system. For Term 3 in the Middle School, students will receive a letter grade for work received before March 12 if enough was collected, otherwise it will be a credit/more learning needed (MLN) model; for Term 4, students will receive a credit/MLN designation. A determination of final grades for full year courses will be based on the first semester only. With regard to the High School, a credit/no credit designation will be used during remote learning; determination for final grades for half year courses, as well as full year courses have several options which were reviewed. Senior Projects are cancelled. Seniors will need to stay engaged in their remote learning and are responsible for all their classes.

Dr. Dabrowski reviewed how students will be held accountable for their work and steps that will be taken to follow-up when a student is not engaged. The remote learning

length of school day was reviewed at each level, as well as daily offline and online opportunities for students.

Advanced Placement exams will be 45-minute online exams; SATs have been cancelled for March and May--June is currently still available; April ACT has been rescheduled for June.

Dr. Lussier informed the Committee that his team will be working across the district to launch the updated approach with elements that will go 'live' at different times throughout the coming days. Real-time teacher check-ins with students, if not already underway, will begin earlier in the week and will allow teachers to orient students to new remote learning expectations. Instructional lessons will begin to be phased in later this week and next week. He noted that Passover and Good Friday are both upcoming later this week, so many staff and students will be observing these holidays and will have limited ability to engage. He urged the community to watch for school and teacher-based messages about expectations.

Committee members asked questions regarding potential online conflicts among different teachers with the same students; scheduling; the status of WHS advisories; how the plan will be refined if needed; how are struggling students identified and supported; how will specials such as art, library and music be addressed at the elementary level; how should parents with students on IEPs proceed if they would like to discuss a student's IEP or next steps for their child?

In response to conflicts with online meetings with teachers and students, a schedule has been developed to avoid conflicts as much as possible; scheduling will be adjusted as needed. WHS advisories are encouraged but not required. Some advisories have been meeting throughout this time. The remote plan will be triaged as issues arise. With regard to struggling students, the principals addressed outreach steps for these students at each level. Regarding specials at the elementary level, visual arts, music, fitness and health, and library lessons are currently being created and will be embedded in the weekly plan for students. Parents of students with IEPs can reach out to the team chair or their child's liaison and have a conversation with them. For parents who feel strongly that an IEP meeting is needed, requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Committee members thanked the Superintendent and his team for the thoughtful and complicated work that has occurred in the development of this plan. They encouraged everyone's support and collaboration while navigating through this time of uncertainty and complexity.

Mr. Roberti left the meeting.

### **2019-20 Academic Calendar**

Dr. Lussier informed the Committee that based on the DESE Commissioner's guidance issued last week, local districts can determine whether they want to keep or cancel April vacation, which is the week of April 20<sup>th</sup> for Wellesley. This includes the Patriots' Day holiday on April 20<sup>th</sup> and the following four weekdays.

Dr. Lussier indicated there are several reasons for this proposal with the most important being a desire to maintain continuity for students, particularly so close to launching the new expectations for remote learning. Secondly, while the Governor's last directive was that schools would reopen on May 4th, there is a chance that schools may be closed for the year, rendering the scheduled final day a moot point. However, this may not be known before the April vacation and by making this decision now, learning can continue during the vacation week. He informed the Committee that the WTA is in support of cancelling this vacation week. He explained that the school year for students is 180 days; staff contracts are also based on this number. If the 4 days during the vacation week are added to the school year, they will need to be deducted from the end of the year. If approved by the Committee, the final day for students would be June 16<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Kelley indicated he is in favor of cancelling April break, but would also be in favor of maintaining the projected end of year date of June 22, which would mean 185 days of instruction rather than 180, providing a bit more time of learning for students. He asked if it is possible/feasible to extend the end date. Dr. Lussier indicated that adding these days would be a significant shift contractually and will need to be bargained with the WTA. He expressed concern that even if the WTA would be willing to consider this idea, there would be significant financial implications. Ms. Gray also mentioned community concern with the loss of educational time that students have experienced to date and the desire to extend the school year. While recognizing the complexities of implementing such a request, she would be interested in determining if this is a possibility and the financial impact of such a request.

After some discussion, it was decided that an executive session would be scheduled to discuss this issue and impact on contractual obligations. Action was deferred until the next meeting.

### **HHU UPDATE**

#### **Hunnewell Project – Project of Significant Impact (PSI)**

The Committee was joined by Town Executive Director Meghan Jop, Planning Board Chair Catherine Johnson, Planning Director Don McCauley, and Facilities Management Department representative Steve Gagosian, to discuss the Project of Significant Impact (PSI) submission to the Planning Board for the Hunnewell project.

Ms. Martin reviewed that the COVID-19 situation happened just at the time that the project team was preparing to submit the application for the PSI. School Committee discussed this at last week's meeting and reached consensus that they were comfortable with the Chair signing the PSI application and moving it forward to the PBC and then the Planning Board in order to potentially have a public hearing in June with the Planning Board.

Ms. Martin indicated that her interest in moving forward was predicated on the thought that by June public hearings would hopefully be held in person. One week later, she is no longer feeling confident that this is a possibility. She invited representatives from Planning to address how it is envisioned that public hearings will be undertaken during the state of emergency, how the recently enacted legislation related to COVID-19 will affect the permitting process, and how the general timeline would be affected if the PSI

submission is shifted to a later date, keeping in mind the need to ensure public access to information and opportunities to comment.

Mr. McCauley indicated the Planning Board is moving cautiously in this era of remote meetings in determining how to go forward with public hearings and trying to defer matters that will have extensive public participation. He reviewed the overall PSI process and timing once the application is submitted, including a period of review by various municipal boards, Police, Fire, the traffic consultant and Design Review Board. These findings are then submitted to the Planning Board. Planning will initiate a public hearing within 65 days of the date of application submission, allowing time for review by the various entities and Planning Board review of the findings from these groups. Once the public hearing is open, the Planning Board has 90 days to conclude the public hearing and provide a decision.

There was considerable discussion regarding timing of submitting the PSI application, as well as scheduling hearings when there is ample opportunity for the public to provide input, and whether the various reviews and studies could be done over the summer with the public hearings held in early September. School Committee is not comfortable moving forward with the public process during a time when the ability to provide and receive information is difficult at best. However, perhaps the municipal services studies and reviews could be done during the summer months.

It was noted that traffic is minimal at this time and during the summer months, so any updates to the traffic studies that might be needed may be unlikely to provide accurate information.

Mr. Gagosian stated if the public hearing is delayed until the fall timeframe, the project completion could be delayed by approximately six months. He noted that this is an estimate and will be determined by the landscape of the construction industry once the COVID-19 crisis is over.

Ms. Johnson indicated that once the application is received and deemed complete, a public hearing must be opened within 65 days from that point, however, legislation now allows for a 45-day delay beyond whenever the crisis ends. Procedurally, the PSI can be submitted and the Planning Board can open a public hearing and then continue the hearing to the fall, however this will result in uncertainty on when the process will conclude.

Mr. McCauley suggested that once the Committee submits the PSI, Planning can start its internal review process and technical reviews, and then hold the public hearing in September and finalize the Planning Board's decision.

Mr. Gagosian provided an update on the design work for Hunnewell, noting the schematic design drawings, project manual and report are currently under review by FMD and Compass. In addition, the PBC's initial feedback provided at a recent meeting is being reviewed. He estimates the period of analysis will continue for approximately one month. Once approved, design development would begin. Since user and public feedback is problematic to receive during the summer months, the completion of the schematic design appears to be a natural stopping point until the fall.

It was also noted that the PBC has been provided the schematic design documents for review, with feedback to the project team expected to be provided at the April 23<sup>rd</sup> PBC meeting.

After a discussion, the Committee decided to defer action on the PSI submission until its next meeting.

### **Hardy/Upham Project**

Ms. Chow removed herself from the table at approximately 9:26 pm.

Ms. Gray reported the SBC is meeting on April 16<sup>th</sup>, and outlined what the schedule will look like if the project is paused. More definitive information should be available by next week. Last week SBC discussed traffic, and an additional Upham option that had been requested by members of the community. Updates can be found on the HHU website.

Ms. Chow returned to the table at 9:30 pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – There were no speakers.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

At approximately 9:33 pm, Mr. Kelley moved to adjourn the meeting.

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

**MOTION CARRIED:** Yes – 4; No – 0

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Kelley  
Secretary

### **Documents and Exhibits Used:**

SC Meeting Agenda/Posting – 4/7/20  
Remote Learning 2.0 Presentation  
Remote Learning 2.0 Parent Guidance  
DESE Guidance – April Vacation  
Draft Revised 2019-20 WPS Academic Calendar