

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
April 13, 2021
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Those present included Chair Linda Chow, Vice Chair Melissa Martin, Secretary Catherine Mirick, members Leda Eizenberg and Jim Roberti; Superintendent David Lussier, Interim Assistant Superintendent Mike LaCava; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; and Student Advisory representative Rachel White.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Debra McConnell of 12 Sabrina Rd., is the parent of a student currently attending the Wellesley Community Children's Center (WCCC) kindergarten after school program and a preschool student at WCCC. She asked that the District allow WCCC to open their after school program in the fall and asks that they speak to their counterparts in other towns to solve the issue. She noted the WCCC serves 300 children in a typical year, has been operating since June, and added she has been pleased with their COVID protocols.

Jing Jiang, Haihong Li, and Ally Pike joined to request the Administration consider adding AP Chinese and Culture class to the WHS curriculum. Ms. Jiang noted that Asian students represent more than 10% of Wellesley's student population and that Chinese is one of the four foreign languages currently offered at the middle school and high school; however students cannot take the AP exam after years of studying the language and culture. They also request Asian-American history be added to the curriculum and that more Asian teachers be hired so that representation of teachers reflects that of students.

Lauren Davis of Woodlawn Ave. joined to advocate for the WCCC being allowed to plan and open the after school program in the fall. She stated parents are facing the prospect of there being no afterschool program and will need to seek out other options, such as hiring help. She added there is already guidance from the state on the DOE website that should allow it to open.

Alisa Fine of 12 Arlington Rd. has two sons in WPS, one of whom attended the WCCC after school program. She joined to express support for WCCC. She stated the WCCC provides logistical support as well as emotional support, noting her son made friends and developed a range of new interests through WCCC activities and field trips. She asked the Administration to look to neighboring towns for best practices and lessons learned as they set up their after school programs.

Jen Middleton of 349 Oakland St is the parent of a 4th grader at Fiske as well as incoming 1st grader, who is currently part of WCCC K day and K play programs and joined to voice her support for the program. She stated WCCC is a true complement to the WPS experience for students and families. She added she has seen their ability to react and adapt to uncertain times and stated they need to begin hiring staff as soon as possible.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Chow offered an update on the Hunnewell Track and Field projects. She and Mr. Roberti attended a meeting with the Lighting Subcommittee. She also met with the DPW to get updated on the status of a number of projects. Projects are moving forward and the Committee will receive updates as they go along. Paul Kramer, Chair of the Recreation Department, expressed

interest in painting pickleball lines on the tennis courts and the Committee will hear more about it at the May 11 meeting.

Ms. Chow discussed the **See Yourself in STEM** program that WEF is sponsoring. The program includes a few hackathons and a panel featuring recent WHS graduates. On April 26 the CEO of Mirimus, Prem Premsrirut will give a talk titled, "A Journey into Pooled Testing: What Happens to my Saliva Sample?"

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier asked that anyone anticipating enrolling their student into WPS do so as soon as possible, as accurate enrollment numbers are important to plan for next year.

He noted the following week will be April vacation week and underscored the importance of the community remaining vigilant. He dissuaded non-discretionary travel out of state and urged families to continue to follow state travel guidelines in order to help stay on track for transitions.

He also encouraged all staff and students in grades 3 through 12 to continue to participate in the viral testing program. Finally, he noted that over 80% of staff have been vaccinated.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. White stated that students and teachers were looking forward to being back in the building full-time the week after April break. She added there were some concerns about lunch, since going from eating as early as 10:45 to waiting until dismissal at 1:30 will be a big change. She noted it would be helpful if teachers advised students when would be the best time during their class to take a mask or snack break.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes - March 30, 2021 Open Meeting

Gift Acceptances

Ms. Chow acknowledged the generosity of donors, as always.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which consists of minutes as amended and gift acceptances as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SCHOOL REOPENING UPDATES

Dr. Lussier discussed the transitions bringing students full-time into buildings that were currently underway. Elementary began Monday, April 5 and it went smoothly in large part due to careful planning and partnerships. Wellesley Middle School began transitioning Monday, April 12. Lunch had thus far shown to be a challenge. The transition at Wellesley High School will be phased in the week of April 26. He stated if anyone had questions regarding logistics, they were encouraged to watch the recorded videos posted on the WMS and WHS websites.

He discussed the updated Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with WEA around full reopening. As the District approached transitions, it worked with WEA to get clarity on expectations and logistics. The document will supersede the previous MOA ratified August 29 but some pieces will continue. If there is a surge in COVID cases, the District will go back to hybrid or remote learning. In terms of health and safety, the Joint Health and Safety Committee will continue to meet. Other details of the MOA include social distancing, expansion of viral testing, contact tracing, and submitting seating charts. WEA members in full remote positions will be able to complete the year. One change in the new MOA is around the challenging issue of when a student is out due to COVID or as a close contact. There will be no Zoom at the elementary level for students; however teachers still have an obligation to teach them through Seesaw and other programs. At the secondary level Zoom will be allowed within strict parameters as defined by the Nursing Department. All other absences will be treated as they were pre-COVID. Dr. Lussier expressed he was grateful to his colleagues for working hand in hand to codify the MOA.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the updated MOA for full in-person instruction and to delegate responsibility to the Chair to sign the MOA on behalf of the School Committee.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Dr. Lussier stated the high school will have a single start time of 8:00 am. He added that when the weather is good he hopes students choose to walk or bike to help ease traffic congestion. Additionally, he advised parents dropping off their students that a new pattern will exist for circulation in front of the building and they might want to drop off a few blocks away. He noted the District is working with Wellesley Police Department for support.

Mr. LaCava offered an update on MCAS. He stated the current guidelines include a remote option for grades 3 through 8 only. High school students will need to come into the building and the logistics are still being developed. Districts will receive training. Additionally, a team at each level is working with Ms. Dooley on technological aspects of administering MCAS and they are conducting infrastructure testing. He added there will be a vote on April 20 regarding eliminating the MCAS requirement for current 11th graders.

Mr. LaCava discussed summer programs. The Special Education Extended School Year (ESY) program will be in person. Ms. Orlov stated the program will run as usual for students who have the services in their IEP. Due to construction over the summer at the middle school and Sprague, all K-12 ESY will be done at the high school. Per guidance from DESE, a remote option will be offered for students who cannot be in person for medical reasons. Mr. LaCava noted the ELL program will be offered through Anne Higgins, which will offer tutoring or instruction during the summer if recommended. Additionally, a third program was established last summer for grades 1 through 12 ELA and Math and will be offered again this summer. Students who are recommended will receive 30 minutes of small group instruction three times a week for three to four weeks. It will be done remotely, as each session is only 30 minutes. Dr. Lussier added resources will be available to extend social work time over the summer as another layer of support.

Dr. Lussier discussed end of year activities. Guidance from the state strongly discourages proms and the Wellesley Health Department agrees. A large concern is that should transmission happen, it could prevent students from enjoying other activities, including graduation. The District is working on another car parade to accompany graduation and there will be more information to come.

Dr. Lussier then discussed after school care and the District's long standing partnership with the Wellesley Community Children's Center (WCCC). He noted there are several challenges this year that are causing uncertainty in planning for the fall. In particular, which spaces will be available will be dependent upon the standards set for student spacing, as excess furniture removed to allow for proper distancing is currently being stored in areas the WCCC would use. Additionally, the spaces would need to be cleaned after the third party usage before school the following day. He stated he has shared the challenges with WCCC and has encouraged them to begin a pre-registration process to get an idea of possible enrollment numbers. Ms. Mahr added there have been ongoing conversations regarding alternative spaces that could be used. Dr. Lussier stated the District is appreciative of the WCCC's timeline in order to retain their staff, fearing uncertainty may cause them to seek employment elsewhere and emphasized the shared desire to make it possible.

WPS 2021-22 ACADEMIC YEAR CALENDAR - REVISIONS

Dr. Lussier reviewed changes to the current 2020-21 calendar. He noted the current calendar has been revised to reflect transitions back to full in-person. Additionally, Wednesday, June 2 will remain a half-day so staff don't lose preparation and planning time that week. Thursday, June 17 will be the last day of school and will be a half day for students. Finally, he noted the addition of Juneteenth to the calendar, which is now a state-approved holiday.

He then presented two proposed changes to the 2021-22 calendar. Following the recent Select Board decision to rename the October holiday Indigenous Peoples Day, Monday, October 11 has been renamed on the calendar. Additionally, Juneteenth will fall on a Sunday, which will be observed on Monday, June 20. Maintaining a 185 day calendar, the last day of for students will be on June 24, 2022, which assumes five contingency days.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the revisions to the 2021-22 Academic Calendar as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

FEDERAL GRANT OVERVIEW

Ms. Mahr discussed the COVID-related grants the District has been awarded. There have been seven totalling just over \$2.8 million. She stated that with these grants, districts have been given latitude to go back and charge expenses from the start of the pandemic, which is a flexibility normally not given with other grants. She added most funds will be fully expended by the end of this fiscal year. The Reopening Grant was used for tents, summer programming last summer, purchasing technology, Zoom licenses, etc. The ESSER II and ESSER III grants will be used in the future. ESSER II requires that \$10,000 be used for mental health services. She noted the District planned to offer those services this summer, and will likely apply for these funds in early summer for this purpose. Amendments can be filed as necessary if plans change. The ESSER III application will likely be completed in the fall, as more conversations are needed around what the fall will look like and if there will be any additional academic or mental health supports the District will want to offer from the end of this year.

DISCUSSION/VOTE: WPS FEE REFUNDS

Ms. Mahr stated the District is proposing a partial fee refund for bus transportation, student parking, and elementary activity fees based on the number of service days. A per-day cost was

calculated by dividing the annual fee by 170 total days. The number of days was based on grade level and cohort. The District is not recommending refund for high school athletics, middle school and high school visual arts and student activities, or PAWS tuition. The anticipated refunds will be approximately \$16,000 in student parking, \$91,000 in bus transportation, and \$880 in elementary activity fees. She stated the student parking fees go into the facility rental revolving account and she does not anticipate a significant budget impact. There will be no impact from the elementary activity fee refunds. She added a loss of revenue for bus transportation had already been budgeted and the anticipated refunds are in line with projections. Regarding process, Ms. Mahr stated fees would be refunded via the same method of payment a family used to pay the fee. She added that if a household has a negative balance, refunds will be applied to the balance before giving a refund. She offered her appreciation to the Business Office, as this will be a heavy lift, as it was last year.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve WPS fee refunds as proposed.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

FACILITIES PROJECTS UPDATES

Middle School Building Systems

Ms. Martin stated the project is moving forward. During April vacation they will be breaking ground and putting in a large grease trap.

Hardy

Ms. Martin extended her appreciation to members of the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) and to the Prequalification Subcommittee who evaluated five proposals in response to the Request for Proposals for the Hardy project. The Prequalification Subcommittee also participated with the PBC in two nights of hour-long interviews with each candidate firm. The decision was to recommend Shawmut Construction as the construction manager for Hardy was.

Additionally, she noted there will be a community forum in June. On June 3 there will be a joint meeting of PBC, School Committee, and Select Board to present the current project scope and budget, which will need an affirmative vote by the Committee and Select Board in order to move to MSBA in July. She suggested the community watch the PBC presentation from April 8 and noted the [Wellesley HHU website](#) has slides from the meeting.

Hunnewell

Ms. Mirick stated the project is moving along with PBC. She noted Thursday April 15 there will be a public hearing at the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) regarding site plan review. She added that the community forum in June will include discussions about both Hardy and Hunnewell projects.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jenneth Rogers, of Bryn Mahr Rd., stated in listening to the meeting she was happy to hear Dr. Lussier acknowledged there will be an after school program. She echoed the previous speakers' thoughts regarding the WCCC, that it is critical to the community and well-being of our children, and that it offers opportunities for clubs, outdoor play, sports, and new friendships. She added that this year has impacted working parents greatly.

Michael Broshi, of Granite St., has a son in first grade in the RLS who will be returning to Sprague for second grade. He stated an after school program is critical to the social-emotional wellbeing of students and families and provides much needed structure and socialization. He has no doubt the WCCC can operate under any challenges and noted they need to be able to begin hiring and planning.

David Prock, of Schaller St., stated the Committee has done an unbelievable job during the pandemic in establishing a testing program and remote learning. He stated he represents 25 families who are very concerned about certain topics, particularly the Black Lives Matter flag currently displayed at the high school and a presentation made last week regarding police and protests.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 8:30 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Mirick
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

Full Time Return proposed MOA
2020-21 Academic Calendar - Revised
2021-22 Academic Calendar - Revised
FY21 Grant Update - Report to School Committee
FY21 Refund Discussion