

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
April 14, 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, members Sharon Gray and Jim Roberti; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendents Joan Dabrowski and Cindy Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; and Student Advisory representatives Rachel White, Sadhana Mandala, and Violet Lahive.

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, expressed concern with the amount of live time with teachers that is provided in the newest remote learning version and hopes it will increase over time. With regard to the WTA agreement and how long the school year should go, he believes that since teachers are contractually bound to 180 days, school should continue into early July since it has been closed for the last few weeks.

Jennifer Hanley, WHS parent, thanked the Committee for its work in the community. She expressed her disappointment with the overall remote learning experience, and hopes that the overall approach and limited learning time that is being offered will be addressed.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ms. Chow reported that work on the **Sprague turf fields** is nearly complete, with the removal of the old turf and line painting remaining. Since line painting is not an essential service, this work will be delayed until the state of emergency is lifted.

Ms. Martin congratulated the student-athletes who were chosen to be **Boston Globe Winter All Scholastics**. She also reported that the detailed design for the **WMS building systems project** has been presented to the PBC and will be presented to the School Committee at some time in the near future for approval of some key scope elements. Ms. Martin also **thanked Wellesley Media** for its efforts in helping keep local government up and running during the COVID-19 crisis.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Lussier reported that the second finalist day for the **Hardy principalship** was held earlier in the day, with the candidate meeting virtually with parents, faculty and staff. There are two very strong finalists and he hopes to have a decision soon.

Dr. Lussier also informed the Committee that he and his colleagues across the state had a conference call with DESE Commissioner Riley earlier in the day. He believes a decision will be likely to come next week on the status of the May 4<sup>th</sup> **reopening of schools**. In addition, he reported that **MCAS exams** have been waived for this year for all testing dates.

**STUDENT ADVISORY**

Ms. White said she feels that remote learning is evolving in a positive way and appreciates having the opportunity to connect with teachers and fellow students. There have been some challenges with uninvited Zoom participants, scheduling conflicts and power outages. She also suggested it would be helpful to have a contact at the high school who can address general questions such as who to notify when a student is sick, needs to miss a class, etc. Ms. Mandala echoed Ms. White's comments and recognizes that as time goes on these issues will likely be resolved.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the March 26, 2020 Open Session minutes as presented.

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

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

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the March 31, 2020 Open Session minutes as amended.

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

**MOTION CARRIED:** Yes – 3; No – 0; Abstention - 2

**SCHOOL CLOSURE/REMOTE LEARNING/CALENDAR REVISION****MOA with WTA**

Dr. Lussier reviewed with the Committee the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Wellesley Teachers Association (WTA) which is an update from the original MOA from March and based on the extended school closure to May 4<sup>th</sup> and perhaps beyond that date. He thanked the WTA for their collaborative work in developing this updated document. Dr. Lussier indicated the expectations in the MOA provide for meaningful productive learning for students, while being mindful of equity and access, the social and emotional well-being of students and staff, as well as family dynamics where there may be obstacles preventing appropriate support. He reviewed the required learning time at each level, both online opportunities as well as self-directed work. Dr. Lussier indicated the document represents a lot of good thinking that is now being employed and acknowledged that some pieces of the remote learning process are still rolling out while coordinating with teachers.

School Committee members asked about the required professional development course which was explained. They also acknowledged all the work that has evolved over the past few weeks which in addition to providing a framework for remote learning, allows opportunities for educators and students to try approaches that have not been used in the past. They are supportive of this approach and asked for patience while the process is tweaked as issues arise.

After a discussion, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement with the Wellesley Teachers Association entitled Version 2.0 Appendix A – Wellesley Public Schools Educator Best Practices, Updated April 3, 2020.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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

Dr. Lussier reviewed that the Administration had brought forward a proposal to cancel April vacation this year and to designate June 16<sup>th</sup> as the last day of school. The proposal allows for continuity of learning, in particular since version 2.0 of the WPS remote learning platform had just recently been released. He emphasized that this is not a shortening of the school year, but rather a redistribution of the days. It is still a 180-day calendar, and although the definition of a ‘day’ has radically changed, in the eyes of the state, it is not different.

There was some question as to whether it would be feasible to cancel vacation week, (Tuesday through Friday since Monday is a holiday), as well as keep the additional days already embedded in the calendar. The challenges of this suggestion were discussed in yesterday’s Executive Session. The daily expense of the staff services for these days would be approximately \$350,000, totaling between \$1.3 and \$1.4 million dollars for the four additional days. Equally important is the shared sense among the administrators, educators and the WTA that by the middle of June, in spite of best efforts to work within the remote learning environment, there will be a general fatigue with remote learning and a desire to move towards some sense of normalcy. Dr. Lussier does not minimize the amount of gap closing and bridge work that will need to be done, but there is a sense that there would be limited value in those four days at the end of June, given all that has preceded it. The administration and educators are not recommending this approach.

The proposal is to adjust the calendar so that next week, Tuesday through Friday will continue to be learning days for WPS, with Monday being a holiday. The four days used next week, will come off the end of the year, bringing the last day from June 22<sup>nd</sup> (which would be the day if April vacation was not cancelled) to June 16<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Lussier reviewed the criteria and guidance provided by the state in adjusting the school calendar for this year.

After a discussion, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the revised WPS 2019-20 Academic Calendar dated April 7, 2020, as presented.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY:** Yes – 5; No – 0;

### **Operational Impact of Closure**

Ms. Mahr provided the Committee a preliminary overview of how some of the cost structures are being impacted by the school closure. She reviewed that the figures are

based on the current closure period from March 13<sup>th</sup> through May 4<sup>th</sup>, with March 13<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> marked as snow days to be made up in June, and no change to April vacation. This will be updated to reflect the calendar change voted this evening, and as more information becomes available.

Ms. Mahr reviewed the major categories, and the savings and anticipated additional expenses within each. With regard to salaries, WPS has continued to pay all union and non-union employees, however, there are estimated savings in salaries of \$112,000 from the cost of day-to-day substitutes and additional teaching assistant/paraprofessional student support that is not in use. In Student Services, it is unlikely that the Chapter 222 tuition account funds will be used this year, which is a \$39,000 savings. Out of District tuitions continue to be paid as residential schools were not closed and non-residential schools are in a remote learning environment. Regarding Athletics, spring sports are currently on hold which results in a savings of approximately \$73,000 from transportation to athletic competitions, payment of athletic officials at games, and the avoided cost of not moving forward with the bid for the one-year lease of the Raiders Van. She noted that most of spring sport fees have been collected from the high school (\$128,100) and middle school (\$15,000). These fees will likely be returned if school does not reopen or spring sports are cancelled. Transportation savings from two contracted bus service providers and inhouse van drivers and fuel cost savings total \$332,300. School bus fees were paid in full last spring for the 2019-20 school year, and requests have been made for partial credits back to families. Once there is clarity on the status of school for the balance of the year, this will be revisited to determine impact. With regard to Food Services, Whitsons has been providing 90-100 meals per day to eligible students at a cost of approximately \$45,000, with an anticipated USDA reimbursement of \$13,249.

Ms. Mahr also provided a listing of other potential impacts, both positive and negative, including professional development offerings, compensatory services that may be required for Special Education students this or next fiscal year, fee/tuition refunds, legal services, graduation expenses, and supplies and materials.

The Committee was informed that the Town has asked that all departments reduce their FY21 cash capital budget by 25 percent, which is a reduction of \$276,000 to the WPS plan. Dr. Lussier reminded the Committee that this reduction will primarily affect technology requests and these needs do not go away. It will result in moving away from spreading out technology costs over time.

Questions were raised concerning how substitutes are handled with the online learning environment; what is the process that will be used for determining the reductions in cash capital; how are spring coach stipends being addressed; and the status of bidding out the food services contract?

Dr. Lussier indicated that it is not likely to hire short term substitutes if a teacher is out sick, but they will likely rely on colleagues to cover for a particular teacher. With regard to the capital budget reductions process, Dr. Lussier indicated there will be some conversations on how revenue assumptions are changing and what it will mean in terms of reviewing priorities in FY21. State funding for education will be in question. As this information becomes more evident, there will be more conversations at the staff and board level. It appears that Town Meeting will be extended later; the further it is

delayed, the more information that will be available to make better decisions. Regarding coaching stipends for spring sports, the first installment has already been paid. Once there is more clarity on the status of the balance of the school year, this question will be revisited. Ms. Mahr indicated that other club activities continue to be paid and are continuing during the remote learning period.

Ms. Mahr informed the Committee that four companies have requested bid documents for the food services contract. She reviewed the bid process and stated she expects to bring a recommendation to the Committee in June for a contract effective date of July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **HHU UPDATE**

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

Ms. Martin thanked all who joined the discussion last week regarding the PSI submission process. She indicated the Planning Board discussed the PSI process at its meeting last night and how it will be moving forward with public hearings during this time.

At last week's meeting, the Committee was unanimous in its desire that the Hunnewell PSI should be presented to the Planning Board, with public hearings starting in September. This is in consideration of the importance of public input and commentary on this project, and that public hearings in a virtual setting have not been perfected.

Ms. Martin has signed the application which is now with the PBC, and will be submitted by the consultants on behalf of the PBC and School Committee to the Planning Board. With the Committee's overall intention that public hearings start in September, Mr. Gagosian suggested that the School Committee write to the PBC stating its interest to submit the application in June so that staff work can occur over the summer, with a goal of having the first public hearing start in September. This memo would also be submitted to the Planning Board along with the application.

Mr. Roberti discussed his role as both a member of the Planning Board and School Committee. He explained that while there is no financial conflict of interest, he does not want any appearance of a conflict, so when the Hunnewell PSI is addressed, he will step down as a Planning Board member and participate as a School Committee member. An associate member of the Planning Board will sit in on those discussions and hearings in Mr. Roberti's place.

Ms. Martin and Ms. Gray will draft a memo to the PBC that states the Committee's interest in submitting the PSI application but ensuring that the first public hearings will start in September. It is expected that this will result in overall delays in the project's timeline of perhaps up to six months.

Ms. Gray discussed the status of the Hunnewell project indicating that the project is still going through the schematic design phase, as well as starting the first permitting phase, which is the PSI submission. There has been discussion concerning pausing the project during the crisis, and based on advice received from PBC and FMD it is recommended to pause a design project at a milestone. For the Hunnewell project, this

milestone is the end of the schematic design phase, which has approximately a month's work remaining. Since the permitting process is being delayed, and based on the desire to ensure ample opportunity for public engagement, it is likely that this project will be paused after completion of the schematic design.

Ms. Gray reported the Hunnewell working groups have been discussing the various aspects of the project which have coalesced into a cohesive design for which the project team has prepared preliminary cost estimates. These estimates will be presented to the PBC on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. From there, there will be discussion on scope, and next step will be a value engineering phase which will be presented to the School Committee, PBC and the administration to determine if there is agreement on the scope.

### **Hardy/Upham Project**

Ms. Chow left the meeting at 7:55 pm.

Ms. Gray reported the Hardy/Upham project will likely go on hiatus after the next SBC meeting on April 16. The plan is to temporarily suspend consultant work, given the challenges of having meaningful public engagement at this time. SBC is currently in discussions with the MSBA relative to how long work can be delayed without risking funding. She hopes to have more information by Thursday's SBC meeting. In addition, SBC will be discussing some initial project costs, recognizing that these costs may change again in the fall. The SBC will take the next few months to consider the analysis of materials that have been presented over the past 8-10 months, so it will be ready to make a decision on this project when SBC resumes.

Ms. Chow returned to the table at 7:58 pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** No one wished to speak

### **ADJOURNMENT**

At approximately 7:59 pm, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to adjourn.

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

**MOTION CARRIED:** Yes – 5; No – 0

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Kelley  
Secretary

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

SC Meeting Agenda/Posting – 4/14/20  
Draft 3/26 and 3/31/20 Meeting Minutes  
WTA MOA – Version 2.0  
2019-20 WPS Academic Calendar – Revised  
COVID-19 Financial Impact Presentation