

Approved May 24, 2023

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
Wednesday, May 3, 2023, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Doug Smith, Madison Riley, Rani Elwy, Gail Sullivan, David Prock, Bill Schauffler, Pete Pedersen, Jenn Fallon, Christina Dougherty, Wendy Paul, Al Ferrer, Susan Clapham, Neal Goins, and Andrea Ward.

Guests: Catherine Mirick, School Committee; Cindy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Administration and Finance, Wellesley Public Schools (WPS); David Lussier, Superintendent, WPS.

Chair Shawn Baker called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Vice Chair Doug Smith took roll call attendance.

Video of meeting can be found here [May 3, 2023](#) .

Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

Consider and vote the following matter for further study/investigation or recommend action to the School Committee regarding the WPS budget.

Advisory member David Prock made a presentation to Advisory regarding a proposed study/investigation of the WPS budget and requested that Advisory invoke 11.4 of the Town Bylaws regarding investigations.

Questions/Discussion

- Advisory members expressed a variety of concerns about the proposal including that this would create additional work for School Committee and the School Department. It was felt that the School Department is required to report numbers in a certain manner to the state. It was suggested that Advisory work with School Committee and the School administration to understand the numbers in the school budget. It was suggested that Advisory could work in partnership with the schools to create a system to track information in a different and more productive way, but that Advisory needs to be sensitive to the amount of work being created.
- Several members commended the school liaisons, Rani Elwy and Jenn Fallon, for their careful review of the school budget with School Committee and in answering questions presented by Advisory members. It was felt that all Advisory members could review the school budget and develop questions earlier because it is posted on the School Committee's website in early January. School Committee presents their approved/voted budget to Advisory in early February, but this timeframe does not allow Advisory a lot of time to get questions answered. It was felt that the school liaisons process is the appropriate process to obtain responses to Advisory's questions.
- 11.4 of the Town bylaws was read to provide context for the requested investigation by Mr. Prock.
- Mr. Prock felt that this is not something that needs the school's involvement. Mr. Prock stated that his goal is to look at the very large budget and uncover areas of curiosity and then address those areas and dig in deeper and then report back to Advisory. At this point, Mr. Prock stated, this is not a mission where there are specific questions and it's not a project to change the school's reporting. The only support from the schools would be providing requested information

and that this project would be taken on as a group. Mr. Prock felt that he had not received answers to his questions regarding the school budget this year and this is why he wants to investigate the WPS budget.

- Several members felt that clear questions need to be developed and those questions need to be answerable. It was felt that Advisory's questions were answered by the School Committee and administrators.
- Mr. Prock continued to state that his questions were not answered and that he wants free and unfettered access to raw data to do analysis and produce a report. He said his questions are not fully formed and a "data dive" will help form the questions. He felt that it isn't necessary to know the exact question.
- A comment was made that this is data mining and researchers don't do that. It was felt that research should not be done without relevant community partners and that there is more to numbers than just the numbers.
- The Chair clarified that this proposal would be for action by the committee to investigate the entire WPS budget with the goal of potentially unearthing questions for further investigation.
- A comment was made that the goal of the review of the WPS budget by Advisory is to provide a report to Town Meeting. It was felt that there is an opportunity to address different questions each year and perhaps the Advisory Report can focus on other questions each year. It was felt that the district is answering questions about consultants and enrollment as best that they can. Concern was expressed that perhaps people don't like the answer. It was further commented that this is not a business but is about the kids being educated. Everything the district does touches the students.
- Several members expressed concern about the lack of clarity, the amount of work, the lack of a clear process or time frame, the vagaries, and the lack of specificity to the request to investigate the WPS budget.
- One member felt that 11.4 is an exceptional tool and felt there are different ways to get answers to questions.

A straw poll was taken of Advisory members. By a show of hands, 13 Advisory members preferred to continue the existing process to review the WPS budget with the committee working together on process improvements. One (1) member supported continuing the existing process to review the WPS with process improvements and invoking investigatory powers under 11.4.

No motion was made on Mr. Prock's request to invoke Advisory's investigatory powers as outlined in 11.4 of the Town Bylaws.

Liaison Reports

Library/Christina Dougherty— an update of the recent WFL Trustee meeting was provided. At the meeting there was a discussion of the review of programs. The Library offers Nixos database. There was a discussion of the landscape for the sculpture; diversity training; the Friends of WFL recent book sale; Books in Bloom event on May 12; new museum passes from the Friends were approved; and the strategic plan was presented.

Schools/Jenn Fallon – an update on the contract negotiations was provided; the presentation of the results of the panorama survey were discussed; there is concern from students about belonging; the policy update about defining religious holidays was discussed; work on the strategic plan is moving forward.

Planning/Madison Riley – Tom Taylor is the new Planning Board chair; updated rules and regulations to align with the tree bylaws; interviewing for two unfilled positions in the Planning Department.

Recreation/Wendy Paul – an update on pickleball was provided; Recreation is engaging a consultant to study sound for all three current pickleball sites. Morses Pond beach house proposal was discussed.

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CPC/Andrea Ward – at the recent meeting CPC approved an expenditure to engage an appraiser to help with the value determination of the CPC-financed portion of the North 40 for the deed restriction; discussed the housing coordinator position; Morses Pond beach and bathhouse; and a potential request to preserve the Clock Tower.

CAC/Gail Sullivan – CAC will have sustainable events during Wellesley Wonderful weekend; there is an EV showcase on May 11; CAC is discussing succession planning on the committee. CAC is supporting a state bill – empowering municipal voters – which would lead to gas companies providing more information and greater transparency in their activities.

NRC/Al Ferrer – there was a donation of 300 trees; there was a discussion about use of NRC lands/town lands involving noise and lights. NRC was asked to set up some criteria.

COA/Bill Schauffler – the new assistant director has been hired and the COA is almost fully staffed. Bathroom door closures are to be installed from Town Hall. FMD is taking ownership of front door issues at the Tolles-Parson Center.

Select Board/Doug Smith – there is a project at 8 Cliff Road which involves 14 Cliff Road, 4 Cliff Road and 489 Worcester Street; the Select Board adopted a code of conduct for themselves; there are 8 candidates for the Fire Chief position.

Minutes Approval

Madison Riley made, and Gail Sullivan seconded a motion to approve the April 24, 2023, minutes.

Roll call

Jenn Fallon - yes

Neal Goins - yes

Andrea Ward - yes

Al Ferrer - yes

Wendy Paul - yes

Pete Pedersen - yes

Madison Riley - yes

Christina Doherty - yes

Rani Elwy - yes

David Prock– abstain – did not read draft minutes

Bill Schauffler - yes

Gail Sullivan - yes

Susan Clapham - yes

April 24, 2023 minutes were approved, 12 to 0, with 1 abstention.

Adjourn

Jenn Fallon made, and Madison Riley seconded a motion to adjourn.

Jenn Fallon - yes

Neal Goins - yes

Andrea Ward - yes

Al Ferrer - yes

Wendy Paul - yes

Pete Pedersen - yes

Madison Riley - yes

Christina Doherty - yes

Rani Elwy -yes

David Prock– abstain – no reason provided

Bill Schauffler - yes

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Gail Sullivan - yes
Susan Clapham – yes

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Materials <https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/2069>

- WPS Budget clarity – PowerPoint presentation