

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
May 5, 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 and Violet Lahive.

Ms. Martin announced that the meeting is being held remotely and recorded by local media and broadcast live by Wellesley Media. It was also noted that YouTube will no longer be live streaming government meetings, however, all meetings are available for viewing on the [Wellesley Media website](#).

PUBLIC COMMENT No one wished to speak.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Chow reported that she and Ms. Martin held the Committee's first **virtual School Committee office hour session**. It is planned that additional sessions will be scheduled and Ms. Martin will be seeking Committee volunteers for these sessions. A Sign-Up Genius sheet has been created for the community to sign up for these sessions as they are scheduled.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lussier announced it is **Teacher Appreciation Week** which is a great time to acknowledge teachers every year, but certainly this year, given the ongoing challenges for teachers and students. He remains proud of the District's educators and work force for supporting students and families during these difficult times.

Dr. Lussier informed the Committee that the results of the **remote learning surveys**, which were sent to parents and students in grades 7 through 12, will be presented at next week's meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the April 21, 2020 Open Session minutes as presented to the Committee this evening.

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

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

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the gift acceptances as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Action on the April 28, 2020 Executive Session minutes was deferred.

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The Committee acknowledge all the generous gifts made by individuals and community members, and specifically the very generous gifts from the Wellesley Education Foundation to the various classes and departments, totaling over \$223,000.

WMS BUILDING SYSTEMS DESIGN UPDATE

The Committee was joined by Steve Gagosian, the Design and Construction Manager for the Facilities Management Department. Mr. Gagosian indicated the WMS Building Systems project is at the conclusion of the design development work and ready to move on to the construction phase.

Mr. Gagosian provided an overview of the floor plans where the primary work will be done including classroom casework and soffits on each floor; complete renovation of the Art Rooms; complete renovation of the kitchen storage and service areas, modifications of the server area, including HVAC and exhaust updates; new HVAC units for gyms A & B, the science lab and fitness center; and a new HVAC unit in the auditorium. There will also be targeted repairs around the envelop of the building which include masonry work, painting, restoration work on the cupola, repair of the retaining wall in the back of the school and new guardrails. In addition, Mr. Gagosian reviewed the installation and placement of the mechanical screen which is needed for the new AC unit in the auditorium, and work to improve access to the roof.

Cost estimates and the schedule/logistics for the work were reviewed. He noted that the overall project estimate has been reduced by approximately \$292,000, and based on recent developments and feedback, he is confident the trend will continue in this direction so that the additional items can be absorbed and the overall project cost will still be reduced. He commended Shawmut Construction, the construction manager for the project, for their very thoughtful work with regard to cost estimating and scheduling.

Mr. Gagosian reviewed the logistics plan, which has been approved by the Building Inspector and provides information on staff entrance/exit locations as well as use of the parking lot by the contractor. The schedule provides that work will start as soon as possible in June 2021 after school ends, with substantial completion before the start of school in the fall of 2021. Mr. Gagosian noted that most all of the work will be done concurrently during the summer. Any work that needs to be completed once school is in session will be done on a second shift. The punch list will be addressed after the opening of school.

Ms. Martin indicated it is planned to present the construction funds for approval at a December 2020 debt exclusion after a fall Special Town Meeting. If successful, this will provide ample time for the ordering of all the necessary equipment and materials for the kitchen work as well as the cabinetry for classrooms. The goal is to have all work done over the summer of 2021, before the opening of school in September 2021.

After approval of the design by the Committee, construction bid documents will be prepared and sent out in August 2020. Once the bids are received, Shawmut will review and determine the guaranteed maximum price which will be presented at a fall Special Town Meeting for approval and then in December for a debt exclusion vote.

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Once approved by the voters, it is hoped to get the construction contract signed as soon as possible in order to begin the ordering and procuring of materials and equipment, some of which have long lead times.

After questions by the Committee regarding scheduling, COVID-19 safety protocols for the project, Mr. Gagosian was thanked for the thoughtful work that has gone into the planning of this project. Action is slated for the next meeting.

WHS GRADUATION

The Committee was joined by WHS Principal Jamie Chisum to discuss the plan for the high school graduation in June. Dr. Lussier indicated that due to this year's unexpected school closure, Dr. Chisum and his staff, as well as members of the Administration have been working closely with Town leaders on an alternative "Graduation Parade" that will provide for an in-person recognition of this year's seniors and the distribution of diplomas, while still adhering to social distancing mandates. Some other events under consideration are Awards Night in video form, and a final day at the high school for seniors to say farewell to teachers, classmates and their school.

Dr. Chisum indicated WPS officials have been working with representatives from the School Committee, Board of Selectmen, Board of Health, the Police and Fire Chiefs as well as the Town's Executive Director to ensure that the approved plan is viable for all involved.

It is proposed that the parade will take place on June 6th, with graduates riding in the passenger seat of their family car which is hopefully decorated for the graduation celebration. Dr. Chisum stated that there are 380 graduates which he estimates will result in approximately 1.5 miles of cars. The students will be following a route created with the assistance of the Police Department, that will allow for the celebration of WHS seniors by the entire Wellesley community. It is planned to have as many WHS staff members as possible at the high school welcoming students at the end of the parade. Dr. Chisum will hand out diplomas to the students who will still be in their cars, and then they will exit the parking lot. Due to COVID-19 mandates, students will not be permitted to congregate in the lot to engage with classmates. Once the procession begins, it will take about an hour for the lead car to complete the route and enter the WHS parking lot. The total event should take approximately 2 hours from the start of the parade.

Dr. Chisum has also been working with the senior class officers on a survey that was given to students regarding additional events to honor graduates. He will be reviewing results with students and parents soon. He is also working with the PTSO and there is a parent meeting scheduled to address the parade and other possible ways to celebrate the graduates.

Questions were raised concerning whether the graduation/parade will be recorded and whether it is possible to have speakers. Dr. Chisum indicated he expects Wellesley Media will work with him on the best way to record the graduation events, and he is working with students on determining the best way to include speakers for graduation.

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The Committee thanked Dr. Chisum for all the work and thought that has gone into this planning and looking at ways to celebrate the Class of 2020.

THIRD QUARTER FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Mahr presented the financial report for the third quarter noting that the closure of school has created a positive financial overview for the schools. Of note, Ms. Mahr indicated that when the second quarter report was presented, Ms. Mahr was projecting a \$415,000 deficit in Special Education. This deficit has declined by \$77,739 to an overall deficit of \$374,714. Due to the closure, enough savings have been generated to fully cover this deficit, so there will be no need to withdraw funds from the Special Education Stabilization Fund in FY20. In addition, there is an overall surplus of \$29,527 anticipated after the coverage of the Special Education deficit.

Ms. Mahr reviewed the key aspects of what is driving the savings in Salaries and Other Compensation, totaling \$240,293, with the majority of it due to the COVID-19 closure. Ms. Mahr did note one additional cost of \$13,000 that is embedded in the savings which is the result of a proposal that will be addressed later in the meeting, relative to the transfer of the cost of .5FTE Child Lab teaching assistant salary from the Revolving Fund to the General Fund.

Expense adjustments were reviewed by category, noting there were significant savings in operations due to the lack of a spring sports season which ended the need for athletic transportation and athletic game officials' costs; paying only a portion of the Eastern Bus contract; and a \$30,000 savings on the METCO Grant. Some additional costs are offsets due to refunds being made to families for items such as bus transportation, art fees and athletic fees.

Ms. Mahr addressed Out of District (OOD) placement assumptions and adjustments, showing this year's historical view through Quarter 3, noting no Stabilization Funds will be needed.

The final Quarter 3 report reflects an overall surplus of \$29,520, resulting in a FY20 Quarter 3 budget balance of \$76,754.403. Ms. Mahr noted there will mostly likely be additional adjustments needed as the end of year draws near.

Questions were raised concerning the status of the METCO grant balance, the projected Special Education savings, and the status of OOD placements.

Ms. Mahr informed the Committee that districts have been given guidance by the Massachusetts Operational Services Division (OSD) and DESE, both of which approve and have oversight over OOD schools. Their guidance suggests that districts should assume that remote learning plans are in place in those schools and requested that districts should pay 100 percent of the tuition to those schools. Many districts do not feel this is the correct approach. There are certain operational costs that are not being incurred, for instance a nonresidential school is no longer providing meals for students. There is a state-wide effort asking for districts and professional organizations to sign on to a letter requesting that DESE verify whether remote services are considered FAPE, and that the OSD invoke its regulatory authority and revise OOD costs during the

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COVID-19 time. Many districts are planning to defer paying April invoices until there is more engagement with the state around this issue. Ms. Mahr confirmed that the OOD budget that is presented this evening reflects 100 percent payment but she hopes this is not the final decision.

There was a question as to whether there are areas where expenses may be higher than this evening's projections show due to COVID-19 and depending on the approach used for opening schools next year – whether it is a full opening, a blended approach of some classroom and some remote learning? Ms. Mahr noted that the various online learning platforms are software costs under the operating budget which were purchased this year and these will continue to be purchased annually. Depending on the status of school next year, there may be a cost for platforms that are free of charge this year, such as Zoom. She noted there may also be unanticipated costs related to instructional materials where teachers may have made some purchases for online learning work. There are no significant needs anticipated for the remainder of this year, however, since the FY21 capital budget for technology is being reduced, she is looking into some potential purchases that can be made with this year's funds that may help mitigate next year's cuts.

After some additional discussion and questions, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to accept the Quarter 3 Financial Report as presented.

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

DISCUSSION/VOTE: FY20 FEES AND POTENTIAL REFUNDS

Ms. Mahr reviewed the information presented at last week's meeting including a summary of proposed refunds by category, frequency, per person cost, and refund options. She then addressed the Child Lab fees refund options which have been modified for the Committee's consideration.

The initial versions were reviewed:

Version 1 takes into consideration the number of school days held this year (113) versus number of days expected (172) or 65 percent of the time used. The anticipated refund would be 35 percent of the \$5,500 tuition or \$1,925 per person. This would result in a total refund of \$35,000, leaving an \$18,800 deficit in the fund balance for FY20.

Version 2 considers that 95 percent of the Child Lab tuition covers the salary of one full time faculty member and one part time teaching assistant who have continued to be paid in full during the closure. This version proposes to refund the amount that is not related to salaries, which totals \$6,900, or \$385 per person, leaving an \$8,900 balance in the fund for FY20.

Ms. Mahr then presented Version 1A which provides the re-assignment of a portion (.5FTE of the .8FTE) of the Child Lab teaching assistant's salary (\$13,035) to the General Fund for FY20 only. While absorbing some of the program's costs, this will

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also minimize the impact to the fund's balance, which would be \$1,473 at year's end. With this change, families will receive a refund of a 35 percent equivalent, however the impact to the project fund balance for FY20 would be a \$1,473 balance, rather than a deficit \$11,562 as in Version 1.

Ms. Mahr also reviewed the projected FY21 impacts of each version. With Version 1, based on expected revenue and costs, there would be an estimated deficit of \$21,519 at the end of FY21. In order to eliminate this potential negative fund balance, tuition would need to increase by \$1,200 for next year, to about \$7000.

In Version 1A, with the reclassification of part of the teaching assistant's salary to the General Fund, it will leave a positive balance at the end of FY20 of approximately \$1,500, resulting with a projected negative fund balance at the end of FY21 of \$8,500, resulting in a potential fee increase of approximately \$500 for next year.

Version 2 results in a positive fund balance in FY20, and would end FY21 with a small positive balance of approximately \$3,200. This results in no tuition increase for the next school year, as had been recommended in the FY21 budget submission.

Dr. Lussier feels that Version 2, providing a lesser refund but no tuition increase in the fall, is the most reasonable approach, reminding the Committee that this year's staff salaries continue to be paid from the fund balance.

Mr. Kelley feels it is better to refund the larger amount now since services are not being provided to the current year's parents and as for increasing tuition fees next year, parents will know the amount in advance and make their decision appropriately.

The Committee reviewed the various approaches proposed for refunds in the various categories. Mr. Kelley expressed concern with the proposed turnback of approximately \$30,000 to the Town at the end of FY20 which was just addressed in the Q3 Report, rather than potentially refunding parents to a higher level in some of the categories.

Dr. Lussier noted that all conversations with the Town are predicated on a challenging fiscal landscape that is emerging as the result of COVID-19 relative to incoming state revenues as well as local collections. He also noted that while the current request for reductions is on the capital side, he believes there is a sense that there may be a request to find reductions and apply fiscal stewardship, since it is unknown where everything will land once things return to normal.

After some discussion on various approaches for Child Lab refunds, the Committee agreed with the overall structure for the refunds in all categories, with the exception of Child Lab tuitions. Action on the Child Lab tuition refund method was deferred until the next meeting. Ms. Martin encouraged members to provide the Administration with any questions, concerns and suggestions regarding the Child Lab refund approach during the week, for discussion and action at next week's meeting.

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the FY20 refund schedule with the removal of Child Lab refunds as presented.

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

FY21 CASH CAPITAL REDUCTIONS

Ms. Mahr reviewed the proposed reductions presented at the last meeting.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve FY21 Cash Capital reductions in the amount of \$276,230 as presented.

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

HHU UPDATE

Hunnewell Project

Ms. Gray reported the project team met earlier in the day to delve into the details of how the design has evolved during the schematic design process, looking closely at estimated cost and square footage of the overall site. She expects there will be substantive discussions at the PBC meeting next week regarding square footage reductions as well as overall value engineering. This process is expected to take the next four to six weeks. If there are proposed changes in the educational scope, they will be brought back to the School Committee.

The construction manager selection process is underway. The project will be using the Construction Manager At Risk process which requires having a construction manager on board early in the project, which is a process approved by the PBC and FMD to ensure that the project is value engineered and managed properly from the early stages. This concept was also used on the Middle School Building Systems Project. Eight firms responded to the request for qualifications. The selection process starts this week with subcommittee meetings to review the responses and select finalists for interview sessions with the PBC.

Hardy/Upham Project

Nothing was reported relative to this project.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Amy Gottschaulk, resident of Audubon Road and Town Meeting member, addressed a comment made by Mr. Kelley at last week's meeting regarding the Hardy/Upham project financial considerations. She wants to ensure that there is an apples-to-apples financial comparison of building at both sites. She noted that the \$3.41 million purchase of the three properties near the Hardy School is primarily for the purpose of a means of egress to the school property, and should be considered as part of that site's cost. She indicated that if the property purchase is included in the equation, there is a \$600,000 difference between the cost of building at Upham versus Hardy.

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ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 9:30 pm, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to adjourn.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: Yes – 5; No – 0

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Kelley
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

SC Meeting Agenda/Posting – May 5, 2020

Draft Minutes 4/21/20

WMSBS Project Presentation, Floor Plans, Design Development Sign off Memo, SD Report on Sustainability

FY20 Q3 Budget Report & Presentation

FY20 Refund Discussion Slides

FY21 Revised Cash Capital Slide