

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
May 11, 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; Interim Director of Human Services Candace Hall-Nourse; 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 HEARING/DISCUSSION/VOTE: SCHOOL CHOICE**

Dr. Lussier explained that each year the School Committee needs to vote on whether or not to participate in the School Choice program. Ms. Mahr explained this program allows districts to accept students who live outside the District. She stated factors to consider include resources available are capped below the per pupil expenditure, fairly high enrollment at the middle school and high school, and the upcoming building projects that will utilize swing spaces, making space a potential issue.

The public hearing was open for comment. As there were no members of the public present to speak on the subject, the hearing was closed.

In brief discussion with the Committee, Ms. Mahr answered that once a student is accepted they would be enrolled through graduation. Additionally, of all comparable communities in the area, none have opted in over a four-year period.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to vote to withdraw from the School Choice Program for the 2021-22 school year.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Amy Gottschalk, of 44 Audubon Rd., is an Upham parent. She urged the Committee and Administration to ensure there were no single section grades at Upham in the 2021-22 year. She stated this would lead to educational inequality compared to peers in other schools. She urged creative solutions be explored, such as a creation of buffer zones.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ms. Mirick stated the last SWAC meeting of the year was held the previous week. They reflected on positive things to come of the pandemic, such as getting students outside and keeping people out if they were sick. She added they are looking ahead to renewing and updating the Wellness Policy next year.

She noted the Mobility Committee received a state Shared Streets Grant to install covered bike racks at the school, which will be installed when the parking lots are repaved. The goal is to encourage more kids to ride bikes. Additionally, the townwide Sustainable Mobility Plan is

underway. There is a link on the town's page to one-minute surveys aimed at engaging information from the town.

Ms. Chow offered appreciation to WEF, in particular the team that introduced this year's Chair Ceremony. She stated she was honored to be a part of honoring educators and staff who have worked in the district for 25 years.

She noted the School Committee had upcoming Office Hours on May 20th at 9:00 am with a few spots still open.

### **SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

Dr. Lussier stated he was delighted to see the budget pass at Town Meeting. He added it had been an extraordinary month, as the transition of all schools and levels to full in person has been completed. He offered thanks to principals, leadership teams, educators, and support staff. He stated on May 19th from 6:00-7:30 the Administration will be hosting a Return to School Listening Session. This will be a chance to engage with the community to see how transitions have gone. It will be on Zoom for anyone to participate.

He offered his thanks to WEF for the traditional Chair Ceremony. Last week was Educator and Staff Appreciation Week so was apt timing. Thank everyone who helped organize.

### **Recognitions:**

#### **From Director of Nursing Services Linda Corridan**

Wednesday May 12th is National School Nurse Day. I would like to recognize all the school nurses for the incredible amount of work they have done this year. They have worked countless hours conducting contact tracing, surveillance screening, provided education to students, staff and parents on how to stay safe during this pandemic, attended many, many seminars in order to remain current in pandemic management and continually adjusted their practice as we began to better understand COVID-19. Wellesley Public Schools is fortunate to have this team caring for their children. I salute this group of dedicated, professional nurses and say thank you for all that you have done.

#### **From WPS Principals**

Thank you to all the PTOs for their thoughtful recognition of our teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week. Thank you also to Central Office administrators for the cookies and coffee. Teachers felt very appreciated.

#### **From Department Head of Classical & Modern Languages Tim Eagan**

Congratulations to J.J. Kelleher, WMS Spanish teacher, who had an article on SEL and language teaching published in the recent issue of the [MaFLA newsletter](#) —Massachusetts Foreign Language Association.

### **STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT**

Ms. White had no updates.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Gift Acceptances

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which includes Gift Acceptances.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**DISCUSSION/VOTE: APPOINTMENTS OF ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF TEACHING & LEARNING AND NURSE LEADER**

Ms. Orlov noted that current Nursing Leader Linda Corridan is retiring this summer, adding that she will be greatly missed. She was happy to introduce Ashley Hulme as the new Nursing Leader as of July 1. She stated Ms. Hulme has nearly 20 years of experience as a nurse in a variety of settings, most recently with Wayland Public Schools. Ms. Hulme thanked Ms. Orlov, the Administration, and the Committee for welcoming her. She added she is very aware of the large shoes she is to fill. In speaking with Ms. Corridan and the team of nurses, she could not be more excited to join the District. She added her first and foremost priority is safety and getting the students back to a sense of normalcy.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to appoint Ashley Hulme as Nurse Leader effective July 1, 2021.

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**

Dr. Lussier offered his thanks to Mr. LaCava for his incredible work as Interim Assistant Superintendent. He also thanked Ms. Hall-Nourse for her leadership in the search. Ms. Hall-Nourse noted they received a very high number of applications for the position, which culminated in four finalists being given the opportunity to meet with several groups, including School Committee members Ms. Martin and Ms. Mirick, the parent community, assistant principals, and high school students. Dr. Lussier introduced Sandra Trach and offered highlights of her resume, most recently as Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning in Andover. Ms. Trach stated she was incredibly humbled and honored, and felt warmly welcomed. She added she was looking forward to listening, learning, collaborating, supporting, and being present for everyone.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to appoint Sandra Trach as Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning effective July 1, 2021.

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**

Ms. Chow left the meeting at 7:14

**FACILITIES PROJECTS**

**Hardy Design Presentation**

Jeff D'Amico, Compass Project Manager, Alex Pitkin, Kristin Olson, Mike Dowhan, and Martine Dion from the SMMA design team, Dick Elliott from Wellesley Facilities Management Department (FMD), and Joe Pollack, Construction Manager from Shawmut joined the Committee.

Ms. Martin stated there will be a joint meeting of the Permanent Building Committee (PBC), Select Board, and School Committee on June 3rd to approve the project scope and budget for the MSBA project to build at Hardy. presentation given to sb last week.

Mr. D'Amico stated that currently the project is approximately 30% completed with the overall design progress of the project. After a thorough vetting process and interviews for a construction manager, Shawmut Design and Construction was chosen as construction manager. They are currently in the estimating phase, looking at logistics and schedule, and will present at the June 3 joint meeting.

Mr. Pitkin presented an overview of the floor plans. He noted the footprint will be the same as Hunnewell with learning neighborhoods and cohorts per grade with the biggest difference between Hardy and Hunnewell being that the Media Center will be on the first floor. There will also be an Innovation Space with a STEAM lab downstairs. There will be a robust outdoor learning space and a cafetorium with a connection to a slightly larger gym. There will be a Skills suite on both floors, split roughly by age cohort as well as a Skills outdoor classroom.

Mr. Dowhan presented an overview of the site plan. He noted a primary focus of the site is flow of traffic and pedestrian circulation. He described the three access points by car that will flow to a rolling queue in front of the building for drop-off. He highlighted that there will be no areas where kids have to cross active, moving cars. Additionally, the Hickory Rd. path will be maintained and there will be plenty of space for soccer fields and athletic opportunities. There will be an abutters meeting at the end of May to get feedback and input.

Mr. D'Amico then discussed the schedule. After the joint meeting with the PBC, Select Board, and School Committee on June 3rd, there will be a Community Forum on June 9th to provide an update on the draft project scope and budget. The PBC will then vote to recommend a project scope and budget and the Select Board and School Committee will take votes to support their recommendation at their respective meetings. The schematic design package must be submitted to MSBA by July 7th.

Discussion with the Committee centered around special education spaces and outdoor queuing spaces. Dr. Lussier explained the team worked with special educators on both building projects with the result being the neighborhood, compact design that assured specialized spaces were not far from peer cohorts. Mr. Pitkin discussed that a traffic engineer was involved in the process with the goals being to assure the neighborhood school is walkable and bikeable while recognizing there will be a lot of cars dropping students off.

Ms. Martin and Mr. D'Amico briefly introduced colleagues from Shawmut, Bob Joubert and Joe Pollock, noting Mr. Joubert is also working on the Middle School Building Project.

#### **Discussion/Vote: MSBA Project Name Change Request**

Ms. Martin explained that originally Upham was invited into partnership with MSBA on the building project. While the result of the feasibility study was the decision to build at the Hardy site, on a bureaucratic level, the project is still officially listed as Upham Project with MSBA. Mr. D'Amico added it was important to clarify the name before Town Meeting. Ms. Martin noted MSBA stated they would accept a letter from the Committee requesting name change.

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to formally request that MSBA change the project name from Ernest J. Upham to John D. Hardy Project and to authorize the Vice Chair to sign on behalf of the School Committee.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

**Hardy Project Updates**

Ms. Martin noted there will be abutters meeting at the end of May and a community meeting on June 9th. She stated she will be updating the FAQ on the HHU website, as there has been a lot of progress made since it was last updated.

Ms. Chow rejoined the meeting at 8:20.

**Hunnewell Project Updates**

Ms. Mirick stated there will be a second meeting in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) the following week to continue working through the site plan review. On May 13 they will be at PBC to continue to finalize value engineering pieces as they work to develop a final price to go out to bid on. Additionally there has started to be a discussion about swing space and there will be information about that at the community forum on June 9th. She noted the budget for the swing space will be a separate article at Town Meeting.

**WMS Project Updates**

Ms. Martin noted the project is moving along and the Shawmut team is excited to get in the building the first moment they can when school is out. The grease trap was replaced over April vacation week.

**DISCUSSION: FY22 ENROLLMENT PLANNING**

Toni Jolley, Bates principal, joined the Committee.

Ms. Chow began by explaining the Administration is seeking guidance from the Committee regarding enrollment planning and elementary sections that will be needed. She noted there has been little guidance from DESE around if there'll need to be distancing in the fall. She stated on May 8th the Committee received a snapshot of the current enrollment picture and heard from principals about challenges they are facing in terms of planning for the fall with possible pre-pandemic class size numbers and potential distancing requirements. She reminded the Committee that interim policies are still in effect and will remain in effect while there's an emergency declaration, including the interim policy that class size guidelines can be suspended at the Superintendent's discretion.

Dr. Lussier noted the community has been incredibly emphatic about maintaining the neighborhood schools model. He added some dilemmas in doing so are to be efficient and equitable across schools noting the District has seen declining enrollment for a number of years, which plays out at different grades in different schools. While acknowledging the Administration does not want to make decisions too soon that would potentially eliminate needed staff, they do not want to wait too long and lay people off too late for them to find something else. Therefore they will have to make some decisions with incomplete and imperfect information about enrollment and staffing for next year.

Ms. Mahr presented the current enrollment snapshot. She noted the class size guidelines for grades K-2 are 17-22 students and for grades 3-5 are 22-24 students. She indicated that currently no grade in any school has hit a point where a section needs to be open that was not

budgeted, adding that many sections are still below guidelines. Dr. Lussier added that current numbers account for only currently registered students and do not account for COVID spacing.

Ms. Jolley described what elementary classrooms currently look like. Given three-foot distancing requirements, grades 3-5 classes with 21-24 students means desks are wall-to-wall with a teacher desk and no additional furniture. There is very little room for additional adults such as special educators or TAs to move around the room, and it is hard to go to a student's desk to work with them or speak to them privately. This has had a significant impact. She stated with classrooms of 20 or more students, there is no physical space for small group work. Students stay in their seats the entire day with no room to move or work with a partner. She stated it is great to have everyone back, but as the District plans for next year, she asks on behalf of her elementary colleagues that they consider the impact on instruction of a classroom of 20 or more students.

After discussion, Ms. Chow stated the conversation will continue at the next meeting.

#### **GRADE 5 WOW UPDATE**

Mr. LaCava stated the District has been working with World of Wellesley (WOW) to reinvent the 5th grade WOW essay. They met several times to update prompts. The students have three options: a traditional personal essay, a spoken essay where they create a video of themselves reading the essay, or a creative project. Information has been sent out to families. He will bring the entries to the June 8th meeting.

#### **DISCUSSION: PICKLEBALL AT SPRAGUE TENNIS COURTS**

Paul Cramer, Chair of Wellesley Recreation Department joined the Committee.

Mr. Cramer explained that pickleball is a growing game that is played on a court about the size of a badminton court. It is often played using half of a tennis court with a portable net and chalk lines drawn. He stated Sprague currently has four tennis courts, two that can be reserved and two that are open. He is requesting pickleball court lines be added to each side of two tennis court nets. The same reservation system would be used to reserve the pickleball courts and users would bring their own net then take it away. The Recreation Department would take care of any costs incurred. The School Committee must approve the changes, as the courts belong to the School Department. Ms. Chow reiterated that reservations would be outside the times that the schools need the tennis courts. paul - no negative impact on school. Ms. Mirick noted the concern that the tennis courts are already in high demand.

Ms. Chow stated that in order to give the public an opportunity to comment, the Committee will vote at the next meeting.

#### **UPDATE ON HUNNEWELL TRACK & FIELD PROJECTS**

Jay McHale from the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) joined the Committee.

Ms. Chow stated she and Mr. Roberti joined Mr. McHale at the NRC meeting May 6 to provide an update on the projects. Bathrooms are still on track to be able to propose installation of a building with 8 to 10 stalls, which is much fewer than what was approved and appropriated in 2018. DPW has engaged the engineering firm Weston & Sampson who will help with sizing and placement of the bathrooms and team rooms. Ms. Chow thanked Mr. McHale for his work regarding team rooms. He engaged a national vendor, Vanguard, who worked within the

requirements to develop a layout of team rooms. Weston & Sampson will review the plan and provide feedback. Regarding lighting, on April 7th, Ms. Chow and Mr. Roberti along with Assistant Athletic Director Kyle Williams met with the Lighting Subcommittee. On May 3rd they met with Mr. Brown, Dr. Chisum, and Dr. Lussier to review a draft lighting usage policy. The next step is to share the draft policy with the community, in particular neighbors and abutters. They want to hold a community forum and want a total price estimate for lighting and team rooms to come up with a target for fundraising. She added there will need to be discussions with FMD and DPW regarding maintenance and cleaning. Additionally, NRC wants to look at traffic and trash removal after a night event. She stated these are all things that need to be included in the proposal that will come back to the Committee and ultimately to NRC as the landowner.

#### **OVERVIEW OF SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION PROCESS**

Ms. Chow stated they are nearing the time this process needs to be completed. She reminded everyone they are each expected to fill out an evaluation report. Dr. Lussier will complete a self-evaluation. Each Committee member will have an opportunity to meet with Dr. Lussier individually the last week of May or beginning of June. Ms. Chow noted she will compile a draft evaluation that the Committee will review. She will send out materials and information in more detail in the coming days.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

At approximately 10:22 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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**

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Mirick  
Secretary

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

School Choice letter to School Committee  
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning - Trach resume  
Nurse Leader - Hulme resume  
Pickleball court pictures  
Hunnewell Track & Field Update  
Draft Hunnewell Track & Field Lighting Usage Policy