

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
May 12, 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.

SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM PUBLIC HEARING/VOTE

Ms. Mahr explained that the School Choice Program allows parents to send their children to a public school in another district that is a School Choice district. The DESE considers a district as School Choice unless the school committee votes to opt out by June 1st of each year. In addition to voting to opt out of the School Choice Program, the Committee must provide the reasons it is opting out. Ms. Mahr indicated that given that the High School has had to add staff in the last few years due to peak enrollment and student demand in courses; the Middle School has added staff to support the increasing social/emotional needs and intervention requirements of students; and the District has been working on a long-term plan for the upgrade of elementary schools, with a recommendation to close one school, she recommends that the Committee vote to opt out of the School Choice Program for the Wellesley Public Schools for the 2020-21 school year.

The public hearing was open for comment. No one wished to address the Committee, so the hearing was closed.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to withdraw from the School Choice obligation in the school year beginning September 2020 through June 2021 in accordance with MGL Chapter 76, Section 12B.

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: Yes – 5; No – 0;

PUBLIC COMMENT No one wished to address the Committee.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Gray reported the PBC is meeting on Thursday evening to discuss the **Hunnewell project**. Topics will include value engineering relative to reducing project costs and square footage, a review of mechanical systems, and a review of the short list of construction manager firms that have applied for the position. There will also be discussion regarding the work plan and timeline for the project.

Ms. Gray also reported that the MSBA has accepted the revised project schedule for the **Hardy/Upham project** that the Town requested through a letter from the Board of Selectmen. The new feasibility study agreement expiration date is November 1, 2021. It is the SBC's intent to meet the deadline by going to the MSBA Selection Board with a site selection for the Hardy/Upham project by December 2020 and spending the first half of 2021 working on schematic design, and arriving at a project scope and budget agreement by November 1, 2021.

Ms. Chow reminded the community that **playgrounds and fields continue to be closed**. There should not be any activities happening on the fields. She reported that much progress has been made on the **Sprague Field tennis courts**, with line painting remaining.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lussier thanked FMD for working with the schools to provide **limited building access** for staff with all appropriate restrictions last week so educators could secure materials to complete the school year. Nursing Department Head Linda Corridan and all school nurses were also able to disseminate medications back to families. There is still the challenge of the typical work that happens in the summer in cleaning classrooms and returning student materials that remain in the classroom. Dr. Lussier hopes to have an opportunity to do this once additional restrictions are lifted around the state--hopefully before summer begins. Dr. Lussier also indicated there is a lot of work happening behind the scenes planning for multiple contingencies for **school opening in the fall**, as well as for the District's **extended year program**.

STUDENT ADVISORY

Ms. Lahive indicated the entire senior class appreciates the efforts of parents and school administrators for the planning of graduation. Seniors feel the car parade that is being proposed as a great marker for graduation and the end of school, but not as an official ceremony. In the student survey, 92 percent of seniors prioritize a July graduation ceremony.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the April 28, 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 – Abstained; Ms. Chow – Abstained;

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

Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the April 28, 2020 Executive 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; Ms. Chow – Yes; Mr. Roberti – Abstained;

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

REMOTE LEARNING SURVEY RESULTS

The Committee was joined by Dr. Anne Beauchamp, PreK-12 Coordinator for Curriculum, Assessment & Accountability, and Dr. Dabrowski, who presented the results of the Remote Learning Surveys that had been distributed to all WPS parents/guardians and to students in grades 7 through 12. Dr. Beauchamp reviewed the methods used and participants in the survey, noting that there were 1,179 parent/guardian responses at all levels and 529 student responses. Approximately one third of families in the District participated. The three major segments of the survey were reviewed: Technology, Time on Remote Learning, and Meeting Student Needs, and an overall summary was provided. Committee members asked questions at the end of each section.

Technology for remote learning responses were reviewed for both groups including accessibility to devices and reliable internet, use of device by students per day, technology independence for general education students, and for students with disabilities. It was noted that most families have enough devices and adequate internet access to accommodate remote learning. Dr. Lussier noted that the District has been working with families who are still in need of technology assistance, accommodating those who do not have devices or internet access. It was noted that most students use a device 4 or more hours per day, which includes social uses. With reference to technology independence, there is a dramatic increase of independence at the middle and high school levels, with less independence among students with disabilities.

The next section was on time on remote learning, specifically how much time adults spend helping their children with remote learning. Dr. Beauchamp indicated that adults in nearly 60 percent of families help their children with remote learning for two or more hours per day, with the amount decreasing by level. Nearly 75 percent of parents/guardians found that the amount of time of remote learning is manageable or easily manageable. Most families have indicated they are experiencing very little scheduling conflicts. It was also reported that parents/guardians reported 2-3.5 hours of remote learning while students reported slightly more. Dr. Dabrowski noted that this data aligns with the District's goal and DESE guidelines of meeting approximately half of a regular school day of learning.

A question was raised relative to what is included in remote learning. Dr. Dabrowski explained that remote learning includes synchronous (live), asynchronous work (prerecorded sessions), and self-directed time away from the screen that includes reading, writing, physical activity, music and art.

Ms. Martin noted that 35 percent of elementary parents find remote learning barely manageable and recognized the needs of young learners for parental assistance in their work. Dr. Dabrowski informed the Committee that the survey was administered prior to the District-wide launch of SeeSaw and Google Classroom platforms. It is hoped that with the implementation of SeeSaw in preschool through grade 2, and Google Classroom in grades 3-5, that students will be working more independently and ease the burden for the parents of young learners.

The Meeting Students Needs section was reviewed, with learning independence increasing significantly between the elementary and middle school levels.

The perceptions of rigor and challenge were reviewed from both the parents' and students' perspectives, with parents' perception ranged from much too little to the right amount, whereas students typically perceive rigor and challenge to be the right amount.

With regard to the feeling of disconnection, parents/guardians feel there is too much disconnection, which Dr. Dabrowski feels is not surprising since the feeling of disconnection is a global effect of the pandemic. Students feel there is the right amount of connection based on the current situation.

Ms. Lahive suggested that there are more students disconnected than indicated because those students who do not engage as much in school most likely did not participate in the survey. Ms. White noted the drop in student connections at the high school from the middle and elementary school levels.

Dr. Beauchamp reviewed overall comments by parents who typically found school and district communication to be adequate or better, satisfaction with the remote learning program varied for parents/guardians, with students being more satisfied than parents.

Dr. Beauchamp reviewed the suggestions for improvement from both groups, as well as the students' reported remote learning benefits.

Next steps include sharing the survey data widely with key stakeholders, using data to build on remote learning success and refine where appropriate, and use this experience to inform the SY20-21 reopening plans.

After questions, the Committee thanked Drs. Dabrowski and Beauchamp for their work in developing, implementing and analyzing the data in a very timely manner.

GRADE 5 WOW ESSAYS

Dr. Dabrowski provided an update on the revised World of Wellesley equity project that is currently underway. This replaces the fifth grade WOW essay contest of previous years which was postponed due to the pandemic and the logistics around sharing essays while trying to social distance. It was decided to make this an opportunity to share student thinking as they consider issues of equity, caring and cooperative relationships, and human differences through the Covid pandemic.

Dr. Dabrowski explained that she, along with WOW President Michelle Chalmers, DE&I Director Charmie Curry, Director of Libraries and Innovation Toni Carlson, and PreK-5 ELA Department Head Jenn Friedman, worked to refine the prompts asking students to think about issues related to Covid-19 that will allow them to move beyond the genre of the written word and express themselves through a podcast, music, or art form, providing them the opportunity to respond in a wider variety of ways, and all through a remote learning environment. WOW and WPS representatives will review all of the projects and post them on their websites. All students will be recognized for their work at the Committee's June 9th meeting. The project prompts are:

1. *Have you read about or been directly involved with someone who is helping during the COVID-19 pandemic? What do they do and how do they inspire you? How might Wellesley, Massachusetts and the world be a better place if people followed their leads now and in the future?*
2. *Issues such as bias and discrimination, access to healthcare, food insecurity, and job loss have been very challenging for some people and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. What differences have you noticed or experienced? What do you think about these differences and how we might address these now and in the future?*
3. *Some Americans of Asian descent have faced bias and discrimination because some people are wrongly blaming them for this virus entering the United States. What do you think it would look like to be an ally to our friends, neighbors who are Asian American? And, how would this help us to build a more just, equitable country?*

MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING SYSTEMS PROJECT DETAIL DESIGN SIGN OFF

After a brief discussion, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the WMS Design Development Signoff Memo dated April 30, 2020.

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

DISCUSSION/VOTE: FY20 REFUNDS FOR CHILD LAB

Ms. Mahr reviewed a revised proposal for the method of refunding tuition to Child Lab families, based on discussions over the past two meetings

Ms. Mahr indicated that there are still three versions being proposed, with the only difference being in the method in which the staff salaries will be charged in Version 1A. She explained there are 1.5FTEs that are charged to the fee-based revolving fund. Ms. Mahr reviewed the positions of the three individuals whose salaries are charged to Child Lab, and who in addition to Child Lab have other duties in classrooms. After reviewing the positions in depth, she was able to extrapolate the portion of salary that should be charged to Child Lab only versus other duties in the high school. It was determined that the teaching assistant (.8FTE) works the entire time in Child Lab; the remaining .7FTE is comprised of two teachers who have the responsibility of teaching both high school students in child development courses as well as working in Child Lab with the preschool students. Based on their roles and the split responsibilities, .3FTE was charged from one teacher and .4FTE was charged from the other teacher specifically to the Child Lab account. This reduced the salary amount for the Child Lab account to \$97,761 from \$100,000.

Ms. Mahr is proposing moving forward with Version 1A, which is a refund of \$1,925 per participant, and rather than moving .5FTE of the teaching assistant salary to the General Fund, .6FTE would be moved to the General Fund. There is a \$30,000 positive general fund balance to which this can be charged against. This adjustment will result

in ending both FY20 and FY21 with no deficit, and no change in fees until FY22 as previously proposed when the budget was presented.

Mr. Kelley asked if there are any limitations to transferring funds to the General Fund to cover Child Lab costs? Ms. Mahr indicated this action is within the department's ability to move funding as appropriate. She also noted that the 1.5FTE charged for Child Lab is based on the State's licensing requirements for this type of child care facilities, however, the amount of staff that contributes to the program is greater than 1.5FTEs.

After a discussion, Ms. Martin entertained a motion to approve the FY20 refunds for the Child Lab as outlined in Version 1A.

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

SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION PROCESS

Ms. Martin provided a brief overview of the process for evaluating the Superintendent for his performance in the 2019-20 school year. Later this week, she will distribute a timeline for the evaluation as well as related documentation.

Ms. Martin asked that members schedule individual meetings with the Superintendent to discuss his evaluation.

PUBLIC COMMENT No one wished to speak.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 8:20 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 12, 2020

Draft Minutes 4/28/20

Remote Learning Survey Results Presentation

WOW Equity Project Presentation

FY20 Child Lab Refund Option Slides