

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
May 25, 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; 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 COMMENT**

Rafael Rodriguez, of 39 Oak St., joined the meeting regarding pickleball lines at the Sprague tennis courts. He represents approximately 16 residents with whom he has played in the past year. He stated it is challenging to find space to play with only one court at Schofield. He added he is also a tennis player and pickleball is a fun sport that does not require a lot of skill or conditioning. He noted the added lines should not be confusing, citing the lines for several sports painted on soccer fields.

Melissa Landman, of 16 Tanglewood Rd., has a first grader at Upham and a preschooler. She stated single section grades are disadvantageous to students and said a petition opposed to single sections has received 72 signatures. She noted policy JG was passed in 2019 to end single sections. She added that the approved budget plans for two sections and urges the District to maintain two healthy sized sections at Upham.

Christopher Spagnuolo, of 14 Paine St., stated he was disappointed in the negative press WPS has received. He noted WPS has dropped in rankings since he moved in 12 years ago and the latest data shows a decline in SAT scores. He wants the BLM flags removed and believes the symbol and ideology have no place in schools.

Lina Musayev, of 26 Cedar St., is the parent of a Schofield third grader and incoming kindergartener. She is in support of affinity spaces. She stated they are not new and are positives for teacher and student communities that are meant to create safe spaces to process emotions and experiences. She hopes the Committee and Administration will continue to stand in support of the affinity spaces.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ms. Mirick stated there was a Mobility Committee meeting the previous week at which they reviewed and gave feedback on the Walnut St. reconstruction plans, particularly how to balance car, bicycle, and pedestrian needs. The public can view the plans on the town's website. A consultant will be sending out one-minute surveys to get a sense of how people in Wellesley move and how mobility around town can be improved.

Mr. Roberti commented that it was the one year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. He wanted people to take a minute to honor all BIPOC men and women who have died due to racism, poverty, and gun violence.

Ms. Martin stated she and Ms. Eizenberg attended Office Hours the previous week. She stated they had great conversations and received great questions regarding plans and safeguards for the fall

including continued viral testing as well as questions regarding standards based grading. She also noted that the Committee is usually invited to the capstone projects for Evolutions, though was not this year due to restrictions. She attended as a parent and stated it was wonderful to see students doing project based learning.

Ms. Eizenberg added that Office Hours allow opportunities to keep open lines of communication with the community, particularly around reopening and plans for the fall.

Ms. Chow offered an update on the Hunnewell Track & Field projects. There is a web page on the school department website specific to project updates. She noted there will be an abutters and neighbors meeting May 27th at 7:00 pm. A flyer went out via mail and email. There will also be a community forum June 2nd that will be open to a larger audience for all projects. The key focus will be lighting and understanding what the requirements are from the schools' standpoint. They are seeking input on a lighting usage policy that has been drafted and hope to continue the dialogue.

Ms. Chow discussed communications to the School Committee from the public. She noted that emails sent to the Committee's email address go to each member and they take input and information into account in deliberations. She added that, as chair, she tries to respond to emails as much as she can. She reminded people that Committee members are elected officials and they take their responsibility to the schools, the town, and all students seriously. She noted the Committee recently held a retreat where they spent time talking about norms as School Committee members, particularly the expectation to treat one another with respect and to assume positive intentions. It is her hope those expected norms can be extended to emails from community members. The Committee has received messages recently that have crossed the line, that have been disrespectful, included profanity, and contained personal attacks. She reminded the public they are all members of the same community and she remains hopeful everyone can remain civil and respectful.

### **SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

Dr. Lussier began by echoing Ms. Chow's sentiment and emphasized the need for civil discourse.

He discussed Gov. Baker's announcement the previous week regarding restrictions being lifted as of May 29th. He noted many of the reduced restrictions do not apply to schools. In particular, wearing masks inside will remain in place for the remainder of the school year. Outside restrictions will be reduced after consultation with the Health Department in that when outside, students can have masks down even when not able to fully distance. When they are eating, all attempts should be made to try to distance. Adults can also have their masks down when outside if they can maintain distancing. As far as how the new guidelines will affect end of year activities, he will be meeting with the Health Department May 26th to develop better guidance. Viral testing will continue through the end of the school year.

He noted there remain many unanswered questions for next year and that much will depend on the trajectory of the vaccine rollout and further guidance from the state. It is possible masks will still be required next year. He added that Commissioner Riley has stated that he plans to bring forward for approval a proposal to fully open with no distancing requirements.

There was a vaccination clinic held at Wellesley High School May 25th, which went well. Over 400 young people, including WPS students and Wellesley residents received their first dose. Another clinic will be held June 15th. He offered his thanks to the Nursing Department and Pelmed Pharmacy.

Dr. Lussier also offered his thanks to everyone who participated in the METCO Boston Bridges Initiative event on Saturday, May 22nd and noted his appreciation for those who coordinated the program at Millennial Park in West Roxbury. He added they received critical feedback from students, which is always appreciated.

Finally, he noted that graduation will be Friday, June 4th. There will be 389 graduates. He added there will be a very special graduate, Cosmo Uttero, who left WHS to enroll in World War II and never received his diploma. He is currently 92 years old and living in Florida. He will watch the graduation ceremony from his home to hear his name called to receive his diploma.

#### **STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT**

Ms. White noted this week is the last week for seniors. She offered her congratulations to them and their families.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Declaration of Surplus Library Books - Fiske School

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

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**

#### **WEF ANNUAL UPDATE**

Liz Larsen, Jenn Fallon, Megan LeBlanc, Amy Hernandez joined the Committee.

Ms. Larsen stated it was this time last year that WEF agreed they would do anything necessary to help the District get through the pandemic and were ready to be unconventional and innovative. They helped fund the viral testing program with an initial investment of \$250,000. With this program in place, the District was able to maximize in person learning, get kids in school, and help reduce anxiety for students and parents. Of note, the program was subsequently used as a basis for implementation of a statewide program and was also the basis for a \$10 billion program from the Biden administration. Overall, WEF contributed \$600,000 for the testing program, which is its largest endowment ever.

Ms. Fallon highlighted other programs and events such as the annual spelling bee and chair ceremony. While knowing the experiences would not be the same as in the past, the spelling bee was done virtually with 36 teams and the chair ceremony took place outside at a private residence to honor ten members of WPS who had been in the District for 25 years. She also discussed that WEF had thus far funded almost \$50,000 in grants with another \$28,000 pending. Ms. Larsen added that the current year's donations total 40% of the last five years' donations and hopes that everything that happened this year helped build goodwill in the community and get the WEF name out there, which she hopes will lead to future funding. She added their endowment remains strong.

Ms. Fallon stated WEF will miss outgoing co-president Ms. Larsen. She introduced next year's co-presidents, Megan LeBlanc and Amy Hernandez. Ms. Larsen stated she is going to miss being part of WEF but knows it will be in very good hands.

On behalf of the Committee, Ms. Chow thanked WEF for all their hard work and generosity. Dr. Lussier added WEF has always been an incredible partner in supporting district initiatives and teacher creativity and grants.

### **FY22 ENROLLMENT PLANNING**

Dr. Lussier began by reminding the Committee and the community that the budget was built on the assumption of a full return in the fall with no pandemic restrictions and thus budgeted for 107 elementary sections. While there are still several variables and unknowns, the Commissioner's recent recommendation for full return with no social distancing requirements gives confidence moving forward. Currently there are six sections that have been budgeted for that could be consolidated: Bates grades 1 and 2, Hunnewell grades K and 1, and Sprague grades K and 1. At Upham, though class sizes are low, each grade has two sections. He added it was important to note that enrollment continues to shift and there are still school assignments to be made due to open enrollment, children of staff, etc.

Discussion amongst the Committee focused on the small class sizes at Upham. Ms. Eizenberg stated she was happy there were two sections at each grade level but had questions about the size of the classes. She inquired if there had been thought to closing sections at other schools before reaching the top end of guideline, particularly at Bates and Sprague as Upham students will eventually be redistributed to those schools when Upham closes, in order to steer enrollment to Upham to increase the health of sections. Ms. Mirick and Ms. Chow commented they could see the merits of the idea but were hesitant as it may be disruptive for families. Ms. Martin noted the Committee has made a full commitment to having two sections throughout Upham, though it is yet unclear how best to operationalize it.

After further discussion, the consensus of the Committee was to allow the reductions to 101 sections; a formal vote was not needed. It was also concluded that further discussion regarding ways to increase enrollment at Upham would be needed after allowing time for discussion within the community. Ms. Chow asked that children of staff be added to the numbers for the next time it is discussed. Additionally, Ms. Eizenberg will draft a proposal and will share it with the Committee before the next meeting.

### **POLICIES ACAB (HARASSMENT); JBA (STUDENT TO STUDENT HARASSMENT); JFABD (EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN HOMELESS SITUATIONS); JF (ADMISSION OF STUDENTS TO THE WELLESLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS); LBC (APPROVAL OF NEW PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN TOWN OF WELLESLEY - NEW)**

Ms. Mirick summarized the policies being voted on as belonging to three groups. In the first, policy ACAB has been updated to include Title IX language. For policy JBA, the recommendation is to delete the policy because its language is included in ACAB. The second set of policy revisions include legal reference changes to policy JF and replacing the current policy JFABD with the MASC model policy, which includes a number of updates regarding transportation and school of origin. Finally, LBC is a new policy regarding approval of new private schools in Wellesley while LBCE-1 and LBCE-2 are a worksheet and checklist to help evaluate new schools, the latter two of which Ms. Mirick advocated not becoming policy, as they are more procedure.

Ms. Mirick moved to adopt the proposed changes for policies ACAB, JF, JFABD, to accept new policy LBC, and to delete policy JBA.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY****PICKLEBALL AT SPRAGUE TENNIS COURTS**

Ms. Chow explained the Committee has been asked to support the painting of lines for pickleball on the tennis courts at Sprague, which was discussed at the previous meeting. Ms. Mirick thanked members of the community who emailed and spoke on the subject. Additionally she requested the Recreation Department continue looking at other places as well and that they consider revamping the tennis courts behind Bates.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve painting pickleball lines on the Sprague tennis courts.

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****END-OF-YEAR GOALS REPORTS - DISTRICT AND SUPERINTENDENT**

Dr. Lussier began by explaining that the goals for this year were directed toward facing challenges brought by the pandemic in getting the District up and running this and preparing for uncertainty. He highlighted several achieved goals, including developing a reopening plan and establishing a MOA with WEA. There was robust professional development focused on health and safety training and protocols, districtwide training in social-emotional wellness, cultural responsiveness, and DE&I. The District developed a viral testing program in which it conducted baseline testing and weekly surveillance testing, which was the first of its kind in the state. DE&I work continued and worked to expand its reach into curriculum, teaching, and gave agency and voice to students. He noted it was work everyone can lean into and can lead to understanding and a sense of belonging. The District is proceeding with critical school facilities projects and Dr. Lussier acknowledged their colleagues at FMD as exceptional partners helping to navigate these complicated projects. Finally, he noted, a budget for FY22 was built and passed amid many challenges.

He stated there was an internal planning session for next year held the previous week. He stated that in many ways next year is going to be a recovery year and it will be important not to jump right back into a set of initiatives.

**FACILITIES PROJECTS****Hunnewell Project**

Ms. Mirick stated they went to ZBA for a second hearing the previous week. There are a few more questions being worked through and information gathering to work towards site approval. At its recent meeting the Select Board agreed to commit 25 parking spaces in the Cameron Street lot for Hunnewell use.

She sought input from the Committee regarding the solar panel array that will be built on top of the school. She noted a budget of \$1.2 million has been carried along the way as a stand-in for the cost of putting the panels on the roof. In working on early schematic design, the question is whether the panels are designed to meet up to the budgeted figure or to design for however many panels can fit on the roof, which may be more or less than the budgeted dollar amount. Ms. Martin added her understanding was that going back after the fact to add panels later could cause complications and that her initial takeaway was that the intent was to have as many as would be appropriate and that the \$1.2 million was a placeholder to account for that. Ms. Mirick

added that PBC was still working on a budget to bring before Town Meeting.

Ms. Mirick left the meeting at 8:55 pm.

### **Hardy Project**

Ms. Martin stated there will be updates to the [wellesleyhhu.org](http://wellesleyhhu.org) website, including an FAQ. There is a "Meetings" tab, which contains presentations that have come before PBC on both Hardy and Hunnewell projects.

There will be a community update. Information regarding registering for it should be going out in the coming days. On June 3rd there will be a joint meeting with PBC and Select Board focused on the presentation of the overall project scope and budget. It will be posted as a School Committee meeting so all members may attend.

She stated that after debt exclusion in December, a committee will be formed with appropriate representation from boards and departments as well as neighbors and abutters to work through ideas and possibilities for the Upham site.

Finally she noted there will be an abutters meeting June 1st for which people can pre-register. It will mainly consist of the project team providing an update and fielding feedback and questions.

### **CONTRACT RENEWALS FOR ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF FINANCE & OPERATIONS AND DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES**

Dr. Lussier stated he was delighted to bring renewals forward for Cindy Mahr and Sarah Orlov. He noted they were exceptional individuals who bring so much to the work with so much expertise. He respectfully asked for approval to move forward with contract renewals. Ms. Mahr's is a three-year contract and Ms. Orlov's is her third and final one-year contract before becoming eligible for a three-year contract.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve a three-year contract for Cindy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations, and a one-year contract for Sarah Orlov, Director of Student Services.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

### **APPOINTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENT TO ACCEPT COLLABORATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Dr. Lussier explained this was an item that requires School Committee approval each year. WPS is a member district of Accept Collaborative, of which there are approximately 13 member districts. The Superintendent is a district's designee to serve on the collaborative's Board of Directors. They meet monthly. He was asking for his appointment for the SY 2021-22 year.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to appoint Superintendent of Schools David Lussier as the Wellesley School Committee's representative to the Accept Collaborative Board of Directors for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

**ADJOURNMENT**

At approximately 9:10 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

**MOTION CARRIED 4-0**

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Mirick  
Secretary

**Documents and Exhibits Used:**

Declaration of Surplus - WHS library books  
WEF report to School Committee  
SY 20-21 EOY District Goals  
Personal Employment Contract, Mahr, C.  
Personal Employment Contract, Orlov, S.  
HHU Draft FAQ