

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
June 7, 2022  
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Those present included Chair Catherine Mirick, Vice Chair Linda Chow, Secretary Leda Eizenberg, members Melissa Martin and Craig Mack; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Sandy Trach; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; and Student Advisory representatives Sofia Dobado, Jeremy Lee, Evelyn Harrison, and Abraham Budson-McQuilken.

Ms. Mirick announced that the meeting is being held remotely and recorded by local media and broadcast live by Wellesley Media.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no speakers.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW ADMINISTRATORS**

Dr. Lussier introduced new colleagues who joined the meeting and who will be joining WPS to replace staff who are either moving on in their careers or retiring after long careers. He acknowledged the incredible work of Ms. Visco in managing the searches.

Dr. Kathleen Bernklow is the incoming Director of Student Services. Dr. Bernklow has served as the Director of Student Services in Medway since 2011.

Megan Bounit is the incoming Director of Technology. Ms. Bounit is currently the Director of Academic Technology and Library Services for the Prospect Hill Academy Charter School in Cambridge.

Dr. Jorge Allen will serve as the Interim Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Dr. Allen has already been part of the WPS team as the Director of English Language Learners and he currently serves on the Town of Wellesley Freedom Team.

Jordan Hoffman will be the incoming Schofield Elementary School Principal. Ms. Hoffman has been the Principal of the Johnson Elementary School in Natick since 2016.

Dr. Hanna Tolla is the incoming PreK-12 Coordinator for Curriculum, Assessment & Accountability. Most recently she served in Andover as the Director of Data and Accountability and in Windham, New Hampshire as Director of Assessment and Accountability.

Diane Zinck will serve as the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. Ms. Zinck has spent the last nine years as the Wellesley High School Principal's Secretary. She has served the Wellesley community in a variety of supporting positions spanning 25 years.

Dr. Bernklow, Ms. Bounit, Dr. Allen, Ms. Hoffman, Dr. Tolla, and Ms. Zinck each shared their excitement to join the WPS community in their new roles.

Dr. Lussier added there will be further introductions at the following meeting, as some new colleagues were unable to attend this meeting.

**SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

Dr. Lussier offered the following recognitions:

From Bates Principal Toni Jolley: Thank you to Lauren Moore and Samantha Juliano, Bates parents and Bates Auction Co-chairs, for a very successful Bates auction on Saturday. It was a wonderful time for all. We appreciate your creativity, commitment and hard work to support Bates.

From Visual Arts Director Thom Carter: Congratulations to WHS Ceramics teacher Amie Larson and her 14 Ceramic Intensive students on their show and sale at the Gorse Mills Studio in Needham. Our own Ben Mirick has work on display!

From WHS Assistant Principal Drew Kelton: Congratulations and good luck to WPS alum Michael Thorbjornsen, who prevailed in an 8-person playoff at the 36-hole U.S. Open Final Qualifier on Monday at Old Oaks Country Club and Century Country Club in New York. More than a dozen Massachusetts players attempted to qualify across four different locations on Monday, including Georgia, Ohio and Oregon.

### **SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Ms. Chow stated the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) met June 2 and discussed the Hunnewell Track & Field lighting proposal. Ms. Chow was able to join the meeting and provide responses to questions. As there were still outstanding questions, NRC plans to vote on the proposal at their next meeting on June 16.

Mr. Mack acknowledged the Civics projects students have been doing, noting students have been reaching out to Committee members about their ideas and proposals. Some ideas have included half-day Wednesdays all year round and parking plans outside of WHS. He also wanted to celebrate recent WHS graduates.

### **STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT**

Ms. Harrison stated that the elected student representatives for the 2022-23 year will be Ms. Harrison, Ms. Dobado, Ms. Wang, and newly elected representative Armita Hamrah, who joined the meeting. She welcomed Ms. Hamrah.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Surplus Material Memos: Fiske library books; Production Center paper cutter; WPS Technology equipment.

Trip Approval: Camp Caribou August 2022

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

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **WELLESLEY EDUCATION FOUNDATION (WEF) ANNUAL UPDATE**

WEF President Amy Hernandez and WEF 2022-23 Co-President Elizabeth Shlala joined the Committee. Ms. Hernandez offered a review of the community events, engagement, and fundraising that took place in the 2021-22 school year.

Highlights of this year's events include ongoing traditions such as the 32nd Annual Spelling Bee, the Chair Ceremony, honoring 12 staff members who have worked for WPS for 25 years, and the return of the "Rockin' the Firehouse" community event. Additionally, WEF held a discussion on facilitating social recovery with Dr. Elizabeth Englander, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC). This was held via Zoom and was open to the public.

This year, WEF awarded over \$224,000 to staff through 18 grants. These grants supported professional development, equipment, and high priority areas for the district and the grants reached and impacted all students. Grants were awarded in the areas of theater/arts, social emotional learning, ELA, professional development, STEM, and athletics. Ms. Hernandez highlighted that over the past ten years, WEF has awarded almost \$2,800,000 to WPS.

Looking ahead, the 2022-23 year for WEF will focus on rebuilding post pandemic and creating a sense of community and commitment. Joining the board will be new Vice Presidents Johanna Cahoon and Ilana Nissenbaum along with nine additional new members, for a total of 34 board members. While continuing with the WEF traditions of the Spelling Bee, Chair Ceremony, and other events, they will also be sponsoring speaker events and will look to collaborate with the District to help them achieve their goals.

The Committee and Dr. Lussier thanked WEF for their continued generous support of the District and its students.

### **SWING SPACE UPDATE**

Dr. Lussier offered updates on the plans for the internal swing space that will allow construction on the new Hunnewell building to begin at the close of school. He also announced that a Farewell to Hunnewell Open House will be held Wednesday, June 15 from 5:00-7:00 pm. This will offer an opportunity for Hunnewell alumni and community members to visit the school one last time to get pictures and walk the halls.

On Saturday, June 11, staff will begin packing classrooms to be discarded, stored, or moved to one of the four host schools. He offered huge thanks to Ms. Mahr for coordinating the efforts and to Mike Santangelo and the custodians for making it all work.

Ms. Martin offered her appreciation to everyone involved in the project for the tremendous amount of work involving complicated logistics. In particular, she highlighted the efforts of Ms. Mahr for managing the details; Dr. Lussier for his leadership; elementary principals for working together; staff collaborating with colleagues and welcoming colleagues; teachers at Hunnewell who are packing and moving three times in two years, adding principal Ellen Quirk has gone above and beyond; Joe Hutton for coordinating technology; FMD and the custodians; and Laura Ball for providing assistance. She also thanked the project team, particularly Compass Project Management, and the Permanent Building Committee (PBC). Ms. Mirick added her thanks to all Hunnewell families, whose lives will be disrupted for the next few years, while Ms. Eizenberg thanked parents and PTO members for helping with the packing.

Dr. Lussier shared the final design of the One Wellesley t-shirts. They will be printed for all elementary students and elementary staff and will be distributed in the fall.

### **DEBRIEF OF TOWN MEETING/PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Ms. Mirick introduced the topic by stating that schools were a major focus of discussion at Annual Town Meeting this spring, particularly with Article 44 brought forward by citizen petition. This article recommended that academic excellence should take priority over everything else and all funding should be towards that goal. While the article did not pass, it did raise important conversations. She stated the Committee aimed to think about the broader issues behind the article and the discussions it engendered. She opened the discussion to the Committee for members to share their reactions and thoughts.

Ms. Eizenberg addressed the re-affirmation of the WPS core values, mission, and vision as voted on by the Committee at its April 11 meeting. She noted the importance of both standing behind all the District's core values and believing that academic excellence has a strong place. She noted she has heard feedback from the community that they sometimes feel that when they bring forward concerns, they are not heard. She added the Committee should assess how they can solicit feedback from the community and incorporate it.

Mr. Mack reiterated that the Committee did hear the message regarding the need for more and better communication. He noted that often the Committee may think they have communicated a matter effectively but feedback has shown it is not resonating and communicating out to the community is a challenge the Committee will continue to work on. He added it was important for the public to know that all input and feedback is taken in, processed, and taking into consideration along with other pieces of information and he emphasized that just because an idea or feedback is not implemented or followed up on, does not mean it was not heard.

Ms. Chow reflected on the challenges the pandemic has placed on the District's ability to communicate and what it communicates about. She noted items such as the strategic plan, a published annual report, and work around the District's Profile of a Graduate have been put on hold and that those were historically areas in which the community was heavily engaged with surveys and focus group discussions. She noted there have been missed opportunities of late to engage and communicate the District's programs and priorities. As attention now turns to the upcoming strategic planning, she noted this will be a great opportunity to re-engage the community.

Ms. Mirick noted that often the work that is shared with the public highlights non-academic areas more than academic and that could be an area of improvement in communication. She and the Committee then discussed the importance of striking a balance to be sure a high-pressure environment is not created.

Ms. Martin stated a survey or other data-gathering means would be helpful to determine what the community would like to learn more about, what they are worried, concerned, or excited about. She added feedback she has received is an interest in understanding how the District thinks about rigor and what it looks like, noting that conversations about rankings get to the heart of a concern a number of people have, asking if the District is doing enough in three main areas of AP classes and exams, MCAS, and enrichment work. She agreed with the need to achieve balance and to communicate the importance of educating the whole child, adding the social emotional aspect of educating students cannot be overemphasized.

Mr. Budson-McQuilken stated there was a desire from some students to have more AP classes. He added he does not think students know that if they take Honors English throughout high school, they will be prepared to take the AP exam and that could be communicated better. Ms. Harrison added there has been an increase in students self-studying for AP exams outside of school.

Ms. Mirick stated the discussion was a good place to begin the work and she appreciated all the feedback received.

**DISCUSSION OF POLICIES: ADF AND ADF-R - WELLNESS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES; AC - NON-DISCRIMINATION AND ACAB - HARASSMENT**

Ms. Chow stated she and Ms. Eizenberg met on a few occasions with Ms. Orlov, Dr. Lussier, and Ms. Mahr to focus on two sets of policies surrounding wellness and nondiscrimination.

Ms. Orlov stated the School Committee has a wellness policy as well as wellness policy implementation guidelines. The School Wellness Advisory Committee (SWAC) is tasked with reviewing and implementing the policy and guidelines every three years. SWAC assessed the wellness policy using a tool that the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends, as much of policy is focused around the school lunch program. She added the District has to comply with various regulations regarding the national school lunch program because it offers free and reduced lunch to students. She then presented recommended revisions to the policy, adding there were no major changes suggested, rather some minor updates.

The Committee discussed the recommendations and Ms. Martin also suggested updating language referencing gender throughout the policy to be more inclusive.

Regarding the nondiscrimination policies, Ms. Eizenberg stated Attorney Amy Rogers had sent new language that was clear and straightforward. The nondiscrimination policy expanded to include harassment and retaliation and the recommended changes are consistent with statutory changes.

The Committee discussed the recommendations and will vote on the policies at the following meeting.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF ES IS HELD, THEN NO ADJOURNMENT SECTION IS NEEDED)**

At 8:16 pm, Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session under G.C. c.30A, §21(A), exemption # 3 - Strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wellesley Educators Association; and exemption #2 – Strategy with respect to non-union salaries because, as Chair, she declared that to discuss this in Open Session would have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Committee, and to invite into the Executive Session Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendents Cindy Mahr and Sandra Trach, Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov, and Meghan Jop, and to not return to Open Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Leda Eizenberg

Secretary

**Documents and Exhibits Used:**

WEF Annual Update SC Presentation

Policy AC Nondiscrimination current 6.7.22

Policy AC Nondiscrimination suggested changes 6.7.22

Policy ADF Wellness Policy suggested changes 6.7.22

Policy ADF-R current 6.7.22