

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
July 15, 2020
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM. Those present included Chair Linda Chow, Vice Chair Melissa Martin, Secretary Sharon Gray, members Jim Roberti and Catherine Mirick; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Joan Dabrowski; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; WHS Principal Jamie Chisum, WMS Principal Mark Ito; Fiske Principal Rachel McGregor; Department Head of Nursing Linda Corridan; and Student Advisory representatives Rachel White and Ian Lei.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Maria Popova, parent of a WHS senior, is in favor having students return to school in the fall. Her son has an IEP and his disability makes it difficult for him to learn on line. She acknowledged the educators and assistants who have provided excellent support for her son over the years, and believes the only way this support can continue is through in-school learning. If there is a need for remote learning in the fall, she expects her son will require significant additional support from WPS.

Judy Walsh, WPS parent, asked that the Administration ensures consideration of all scenarios, especially those with two working parents in the household.

Betsy Komjathy, 35 Radcliffe Road, urged the Committee to prioritize its work to address systemic racism and social justice in the Wellesley Public Schools, referring to the topics at the July 7th Committee meeting. She suggested the creation of a group comprised of parents, teachers, students and other community members to review Committee policies on these topics. In addition, Ms. Komjathy addressed the training and professional development of the Committee members in racial equity issues and urged them to pursue such work. She urged the Committee to be public in its role by defining actions that are being taken and what the accountability measurements will be.

Courtney Carter, parent of incoming kindergartener and rising first grader, expressed her concern with remote learning and the challenges of getting young learners to focus on work online. She urged the Committee to make every effort to get children back to school in the fall. If it is not possible to get students back into the school buildings, she suggests that there be additional 1:1 time with a teacher or teaching assistant for the youngest learners. In addition, she suggested it is important to send home materials such as worksheets and books.

Julia Blake, parent of 7th and 9th graders, feels that it is possible for teachers to safely educate students in school buildings with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). She indicated there are a number of parents willing to raise and donate funds to purchase PPE or plexiglass dividers for teachers to keep them safe while teaching.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Lussier reported he joined the Board of Health meeting earlier in the day regarding the possibility of an **in-person graduation ceremony** for the Class of 2020 on July 31st. This idea had been previously discussed as another way for students to connect at the end of the year, based on the status of the trajectory of the pandemic. The students' proposal was brought to Board of Health for consideration. After some discussion, while the Board of Health is sympathetic to the students' situation this year relative to graduation, it does not believe a large gathering, even with restrictions, should occur and recommended against holding such an event.

STUDENT ADVISORY

Mr. Lei reported he and Ms. White are working on a **website** to provide School Committee meeting access to WHS students so they can follow along discussions relative to reopening and other matters of interest. Ms. White informed the Committee that she appreciated the opportunity to participate in the **student focus group** for reopening and thought it went really well.

HUNNEWELL SCHEMATIC DESIGN

After a brief discussion, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to endorse and approve the Hunnewell School schematic design as presented at the July 7, 2020 meeting.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING UPDATE

Family/Educator Survey Results

Dr. Dabrowski and Dr. Anne Beauchamp, PreK-12 Coordinator for Curriculum, Assessment & Accountability, reviewed the responses of both the family and educator surveys which were recently completed. The timeframe and participation rate for each survey were reviewed, noting that there were 2,754 parent/family responses and 733 educator responses.

Families survey results were reviewed: For learning model options, families would enroll in full in-person and hybrid modes at similar rates; families preferred a within-the-week hybrid over a by-the-week hybrid model. At every grade level, 1 in 6 families had a medical need for full remote learning. Results of after school care, transportation and meals in school categories were also provided.

Educator survey results were reviewed: Regarding returning to school, 2 in 3 educators can return in person, with 1 in 4 requiring child care. With regard to concerns about returning in person, 3 in 5 teachers expressed concern, with safety protocols being a factor for nearly half the educators who said they would return to work in person. In a

full remote model, educators overwhelmingly rated synchronous experiences as most valuable. In a hybrid model, educators felt similarly about the by-the-week and within-week hybrid models. With regard to needs and concerns, educators rated remote learning aspects and anti-racism education as professional development needs and increased technical support. The majority of educators had high levels of personal concerns about this fall, but also indicated they have a colleague they can count on for support if needed. Dr. Dabrowski noted an important theme in the educator survey relative to their commitment to their work and desire to return to school work, even with the uncertainty that comes with this new normal.

Planning/Decision Timeline

Next steps and timeline were reviewed, including providing an overview to DESE of the WPS SY20-21 Reopening Plans on July 31st; the final draft of the District three models presented to School Committee on August 6; submission of the final draft of the WPS SY20-21 Reopening Plans is due to DESE on August 10th; and sharing the WPS Reopening Plan with the community on August 13th.

Key Planning Consideration: 3 ft vs 6 ft Social Distancing Guidelines

Dr. Lussier discussed that when the DESE released its initial guidance for school reopening, they advised that although a 6-foot social distance was preferable, the World Health Organization believes a 3-foot minimum could be used in school planning and has been used overseas. The DESE asked each district to explore the feasibility of employing this 3-foot standard in assessing the full return of all students to school in the fall.

After an analysis of the potential use of a 3-foot minimum social distancing standard in planning for school reopening in the fall, it is the unanimous recommendation of the Administrative Team, that the School Committee adopt 6 feet as the minimum standard for social distancing for school reopening in the fall. Dr. Lussier noted that this standard will result in the WPS opening in a hybrid model of teaching and learning for SY2020-21, with only one half of the students attending school in person on any given day. The Administration also believes this is appropriate based on their desire to ensure a safe environment for students and staff as schools are reopening in a phased approach.

Ms. Chow reported she attended the Board of Health meeting earlier in the day where this issue was discussed, and the Board of Health voted unanimously to support the 6-foot minimum recommendation.

The Committee is also in agreement with the 6-foot guideline for social distancing, while recognizing that this is a fluid situation that is continually evolving, and adjustments will be needed keeping in mind the health, safety and educational concerns of staff and students. The Committee also recognized the Board of Health for their thoughtful deliberation on this topic.

Ms. Grape of the Board of Health informed the Committee that they will also be working on a recommendation regarding guidelines for when there is a positive test result by a staff member, student, or student family member.

After a discussion, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to support planning with a 6-foot minimum standard for social distancing for the initial reopening.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Dr. Lussier thanked the Committee for the vote, indicating the decision will help inform the specific steps that the team is now able to focus on relative to what a hybrid reopening model will look like, with the focus on having students in school every week on a staggered day schedule.

The Committee recognized Dr. Lussier and his team for all the thoughtful work to date on this important issue.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:27 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session under Massachusetts G.L. c 30A, §21(A), exemption #3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wellesley Educators Association because, as Chair, she declared that to discuss this in Open Session would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee; and to invite into the Executive Session Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendents Cindy Mahr and Joan Dabrowski, Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov, and Director of Human Resources Gayle McCracken; and to not return to Open Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Gray
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

WPS Initial Return to School Survey Results July 2020
SMMA Hunnewell Schematic Design Approval Letter