

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
August 10, 2021
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 Jim Roberti; Superintendent David Lussier, Assistant Superintendent Sandy Trach; Assistant Superintendent Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; Director of Nursing Ashley Hulme; and Student Advisory representative Rachel White.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Cavallerano extended his thanks to the School Committee and those working to take a refreshing view of the track and field. He stated he was on the Wellesley Youth Commission and is an announcer for the football program as well as having three children who are multisport student athletes. He added sports create opportunities for families and the community to celebrate together and he appreciates the School Committee working with the Playing Fields Task Force (PFTF).

Christopher Spagnuolo, of Paine St., has two children in WPS. He joined to thank the School Committee and PFTF for their hard work. He stated it was uplifting when sports kicked in last year but there is something missing in not having the ability to have night games. He is sure all the issues can be resolved to allow for installing lights.

Ling Wang, of Maurice Rd. thanked the Committee and WPS staff for all they did last year. She urged consideration to require masks and whatever level of distancing is possible as schools reopen. She added masks are particularly important at the elementary level, since those students cannot yet be vaccinated and that the middle school may be more challenging since some are and some are not. She asked what the timeline was for announcing policies.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Martin offered a brief update on the Hardy project. She stated the project is moving forward this month to the MSBA board meeting on August 25. Currently underway are additional site circulation studies to look further with the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) and traffic consultants at what would happen if there were two access points instead of three. PBC will be discussing the results of the additional traffic study over their next few meetings.

Ms. Mirick stated the Mobility Committee is moving forward with their Sustainable Mobility Plan. She added they should have public information about it in the next few weeks.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Lussier began by stating he was excited to welcome new members to the team. Sandy Trach, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning, wasted no time digging in. Monica Visco joined as Director of Human Resources and brought a tremendous amount of expertise. Ashley Hulme, the District's new Nursing Director, is getting up to speed and is actively involved.

He noted the middle school is an active construction site. He added timing is a real challenge, particularly in the cafeteria. The work will likely be finished by the start of school, though it is likely another week will be needed for inspections, etc. It may be necessary to rethink the food schedule for the first week and Ms. Mahr and Whitson's are coordinating.

Finally he noted that the start of school was rapidly approaching with students beginning Wednesday, September 1. All staff return Monday, August 30 with new staff reporting the week before.

STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

Ms. White had nothing to report.

CONSENT AGENDA

Meeting Minutes 7/1/2021

Declaration of Surplus - Schofield

NE Medical Billing invoice WELLEQ42020 (\$314.39)

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

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Meeting Minutes 7/20/2021, 7/22/2021

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

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

MOTION CARRIED 4-0 WITH 1 ABSTENTION

START OF SCHOOL COVID GUIDANCE

Dr. Lussier began by summarizing current guidance. Nationally, guidance is coming from the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), both of which encourage anyone eligible to be vaccinated. The CDC is also recommending universal indoor masking by everyone in schools regardless of vaccination status. Most recent state guidance through the Department of Public Health (DPH) and DESE aligns with CDC and AAP in some ways. Their recommendation is for all students K through grade 6 who are not eligible for a vaccine to wear masks when indoors with few exceptions. For grades 7-12, the State guidance is that unvaccinated staff and students wear masks when indoors. There is no recommendation for masks outdoors. DESE and DPH noted that their guidance could change over time and they could issue supplementary guidance by the end of the month.

Ms. Hulme presented current data regarding the vaccination status of students. She noted that less than 5% of 6th grade students were 12 years old, so they were not included in the numbers. She stated that as of August 4, 82% of vaccine-eligible students had received at least one shot and she was confident that number had increased in the past week. Dr. Lussier added that at the end of the past school year, through self reporting, 88% of staff had been vaccinated.

Dr. Lussier then discussed the evolving model of what the return to school will look like. The plan is for a full return of in person learning with no remote or hybrid option and staff and

students are returning full time in school on a regular schedule. There has been no guidance thus far to dissuade that. He stated the largest remaining question is around masks. Almost exactly 50% of the students are not eligible to be vaccinated. It would be assumed that everyone at the elementary level would need masks to follow current guidance. Additionally, Dr. Ito at WMS is concerned about trying to manage having some students not eligible and how to enforce or understand who is vaccinated. The clear preference would be to implement one approach with fidelity throughout all three grades. There is a universal recommendation that any student taking district transportation on buses or vans should be masked. In all schools there will continue to be assigned seating where possible to help with contact tracing; encouraging frequent hand washing and sanitizing; frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces; and continuing to educate on the importance of staying home if anyone is not feeling well or has symptoms.

Dr. Lussier and Ms. Hulme then discussed topics requiring additional research, including having a medical waiting room in the health offices, which the District will continue to utilize where possible. Ms. Hulme stated there would be upcoming meetings regarding a “test and stay” option, which would utilize rapid testing for symptomatic students. For close contacts who are asymptomatic, instead of sending them home, they would be tested every day for five days and if they continued to test negative, they could remain at school. Vaccinated staff and students would be exempt from quarantining as long as they were asymptomatic. Dr. Lussier added there was no plan for wide scale asymptomatic surveillance testing like last year.

The Committee discussed pros and cons of masking including benefits to those students who cannot be vaccinated and those in higher risk categories and difficulties masking presents for students with hearing difficulties. The Committee was appreciative of the way our teens have stepped up over the last 18 months to socially distance, learn remotely and finally get vaccinated in very high numbers. Some on the Committee questioned whether it made sense to ask them to continue masking even though they were not masking outside of school and the vaccination rates of both eligible students and staff are so high. It was also discussed that this is a case where our WPS core value of Commitment to Community applies. After discussion amongst the Committee, Ms. Mirick stated there will be a Board of Health meeting August 11 at noon to receive further advice and/or guidance before the Committee will need to vote on August 24.

HUNNEWELL TRACK & FIELD PROJECTS UPDATE

Jay McHale, of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission (NRC) joined the Committee.

Ms. Chow stated she, Mr. Roberti, and Mr. McHale had a chance to speak to the Department of Public Works (DPW) and Town Counsel who were doing a lot of work behind the scenes. As an update to the various projects, she noted they were putting together a set of FAQs that will be posted on the web page and will make sure the rest of the content is current. From a bathroom standpoint, engineering firm Weston & Sampson stated 10 stalls should be sufficient to meet requirements. For the team rooms, they are waiting on estimates from Vanguard and waiting on Weston & Sampson to advise where they should be located. They are working towards understanding the impact and minimizing and mitigating impact on natural resources. She stated the NRC is rightfully concerned about the impact on the neighborhood. To that end they are working on a survey of the neighborhood that they will leave open likely for three weeks due to it being vacation season. She noted the hopeful result of the survey is to establish neighborhood representatives to move forward getting a process in place, such as a lighting usage policy.

The Committee engaged in a brief discussion around a tentative timeline and the Committee's role in the process.

HUNNEWELL SCHOOL 90% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENT ESTIMATE

Jeff D'Amico from Compass Project Management joined the Committee.

Ms. Mirick stated the Committee last received a presentation about Hunnewell in June. Since then, the scope of the project has not changed; however, the construction market has changed somewhat.

Mr. D'Amico stated that at the end of August, the project will be at 100% design. On August 25 there will be a comprehensive presentation to Advisory on both Hardy and Hunnewell projects and they anticipate a public hearing around the third week of September. They are currently tightening the overall scope and budget and continue to reduce and fine tune the scope. The last estimate placed the project \$800,000 below the construction budget developed during feasibility in 2019. Since then, however, market pricing has jumped dramatically: first lumber, then drywall, then steel, with steel having the most dramatic spike. As a result, with no change in scope, the cost has jumped \$2,100,000 due to market conditions. He added firm numbers will come in at the end of September or beginning of October.

The Committee thanked Mr. D'Amico for his presentation and explanation.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 8:30 pm, Ms. Mirick entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Leda Eizenberg
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

NE Medical Billing invoice
Surplus Material Memo - Schofield furniture and risers
Hunnewell Track & Field Project Update 8.10.21
Hunnewell Presentation to SC 8.10.21