

**Wellesley Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting  
August 13, 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 and Cynthia Mahr; Director of Student Services Sarah Orlov; WHS Principal Jamie Chisum, WMS Principal Mark Ito; Fiske Principal Rachel McGregor, Sprague Principal Leigh Petrowski; Department Head of Nursing Linda Corridan; 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**

Stephanie Albertson, WPS parent of 2 students, thanked the Committee for its hard work on the reopening. She is interested in seeing the details of the reopening plan for both the hybrid and remote learning models. She also wondered how the district will address cases where there are more students who choose hybrid than teachers willing or able to come to school in person, and if there is a high number of students who opt for remote learning, whether there is a third party that can handle the high volume.

Jamie Bicesare, WPS parent of 3<sup>rd</sup> grader with an IEP, expressed concern with remote learning for students who are in need of additional help. She feels in-person learning is critical for those students and asked what the options will be for students requiring extra assistance if the district opts for the remote learning model.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Mr. Roberti reported that he and Ms. Chow participated in a panel discussion in the final segment of **Wake Up Wellesley**. The panel was comprised of two School Committee members as well as Dr. Lussier, Dr. Dabrowski, Dr. Chisum, Dr. Ito, and Schofield and Upham Principals Gerardo Martinez and Jeff Dees, respectively. There were questions and good dialogue during the segment. Mr. Roberti also reported that Committee members joined a webinar last night hosted by the Newton Free Library with **Ibram Kendi** as the guest speaker. Dr. Kendi is the author of the book *“How To Be AntiRacist”*. The webinar included a conversation with Dr. Kendi and then a discussion about racism and antiracism in Newton.

Ms. Mirick reported a meeting of the **Policy Subcommittee** was held last week where some updates from last spring were finalized, but with the majority of time was spent on Covid-related issues and protocols, with the desire to have these policies in place prior to reopening schools. They are reviewing sample policies provided by the Mass Association of School Committees and working to customize them for Wellesley.

Ms. Gray reported the next School Building Committee meeting is Thursday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, starting at 5:30 pm.

Ms. Chow welcomed the opportunity to be part of the final segment of **Wake Up Wellesley** on Monday night. She noted that the Committee's **Antiracism Resolution** is posted on the front page of its website, and will be sent to relevant state agencies, including the Governor. Ms. Chow reported she and Ms. Martin held an **office hour** this morning where the discussion focused on school reopening.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Lussier thanked **Yasmine Jaffier-Williams** (WHS Class of 2020) and **Julia Jordahi-Henry** (WHS Class of 2019), the organizers of Wake Up Wellesley livestream session, for the opportunity to participate in the recent panel discussion concerning racism at WHS. He also reported that late today DESE provided its **guidance for fall athletics** late today.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of Gift Acceptances.

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

### **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

The Committee acknowledged the generosity of all those who continue to donate to the Wellesley Public Schools.

### **SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING**

Ms. Chow informed the community that since last week's presentation on the reopening plan, more work has been done to prepare for the reopening of schools, so prior to the Committee voting on the reopening model, the Administration will provide additional information regarding metrics to be used to determine whether it is safe to open schools how to determine when to relax or restrict the standards and schedules, and its recommended model. She reported Committee members and School administrators have met with the Board of Health to discuss the development of metrics and the possibility of forming a working group with representatives to further address metrics.

Dr. Lussier noted that during all the planning that has occurred over the past several months, there has been the unanswered question from the state on how to determine when to move among the various scenarios that the districts have been asked to plan for the fall, what is on the 'dashboard' in terms of measures that will be considered and what are the thresholds within those measures that would inform practice. For example, when to move from hybrid to full remote or trigger the return of all students.

Dr. Lussier reviewed the color-coded map of the state that will be updated weekly based on the average daily number of cases over a 2-week period. The DESE is using this map to crosswalk it with action steps around reopening models for the fall and help inform local decisions on what the triggers should be. Since Wellesley is currently at

the green level, which reflects average daily cases of 4 or less, DESE is recommending full time in-person learning or a hybrid model if there are extenuating circumstances.

### **Metrics**

Ms. Chow reported that as WPS and Health representatives met to discuss reopening metrics, the Governor was announcing the metrics that should be used in towns for fall reopening of schools.

Dr. Lussier reviewed the new color-coded metric to be used to inform decisions on how to open schools. In addition to these metrics Dr. Lussier feels additional metrics are needed in order to make informed decisions, including positivity rates in Wellesley and surrounding towns. Wellesley remains exceptionally low with a positivity rate of .73 percent. More conversation is needed on how broadly these measures should be considered within the county and the state.

Ms. Gray indicated that the Committee, along with the Board of Health, are looking at a number of different factors including positivity rate, monitoring cases in surrounding towns and in the towns where WPS staff lives. In addition, there was discussion around setting thresholds for making decisions to pivot between the models.

### **Testing**

The Committee was joined by Dr. Jesse Boehm of the Broad Institute, who is a Wellesley resident and the spouse of a WPS faculty member, to provide an update on a proposed pilot program for COVID testing in the schools that was presented at last week's meeting. He reviewed the various forms of testing programs that are being considered and the relative cost of each, including testing all students and staff at the start of school, testing symptomatic individuals, and also the possibility of surveillance testing of asymptomatic individuals. He noted that at present four towns have joined Wellesley in a possible collaboration, as they work through a number of financial and operational challenges to make this happen.

Questions were asked on how testing would be managed operationally, how much the testing would cost, how it would be financed, would the program be mandatory for staff and students, the duration of the pilot program, and next steps. Dr. Boehm expects to have more information in the coming week relative to the feasibility of a pilot program and how fundraising can be handled.

### **Recommended Reopening Model**

Dr. Lussier provided an update on refinements made to the plan as presented last week relative to air quality/ventilation, cleaning/disinfection, use of the National Weather Service on Heat Index to determine 'heat days', clarification of the school calendar, specifically regarding the use of the Wednesday half days, more specifics on remote learning school, the use of tents, and details on parent forums and surveys that will be upcoming next week.

The Director of Facilities Management Joe McDonough reviewed the qualifications of the individuals in his department, the recent HVAC investments in school facilities, the status of ventilation in schools and recommendations for improvements, current

ventilation investigations, and the processes used for cleaning and disinfection of buildings.

Dr. Lussier discussed considerations for high heat and humidity days by using the National Weather Service Heat Index to determine where and how to teach and learn on high heat and humidity days. If it is deemed too hot to sit in classrooms on a hot day, the district would call a 'heat day', similar to a snow day, and would transition to a remote learning day.

Dr. Lussier then reviewed the revised calendar that addresses the challenge of holidays and repurposing the Wednesday half days as the in-school makeup day for each cohort during a holiday week that affects in-school teaching.

Dr. Dabrowski reviewed the status of remote learning school (RLS). She asked for the community's patience as the district works through a complex part of the reopening plan for those students who are unable to return to the school buildings. This community of K-12 online learners will have a dedicated teaching staff who will support them while the students are in a full remote learning space. She reviewed the RLS format which will be predominantly synchronous (live) learning, with some asynchronous (prerecorded, web-based) and self-directed offline learning. She explained that parents can opt in to RLS at any time if their situation deems it necessary, however, the district is requesting a semester commitment from those who need to learn remotely. The administration is mindful of the impact on students that results from moving from one model to the other, and want to avoid as much disruption as possible to the students' learning pattern.

Dr. Dabrowski reiterated that the State has been clear that every day, whether in a hybrid or remote learning model, counts as a student's learning day towards the required 170 school days. Participation and attendance are required whether a student is in school or learning remotely. In addition, feedback and grades will be provided for remote academic work, and there will be clear communication on student schedules.

Dr. Dabrowski reviewed the RLS model for both elementary and secondary grades, noting that at the K-5 level, students will be taught by WPS educators for core academics and most specialist classes. At the 6-12 level, for core academics and some electives, Dr. Dabrowski indicated they will try as best they can to ensure that WPS educators and curriculum are used. Once there is a better sense of who the students are that will be using the RLS option, they can better plan to try to have WPS educators and curriculum provided, noting much of the RLS option is dependent on student enrollment as well as teacher availability. Once it is known which students will be using RLS, the student's schedule can be reviewed and every effort will be made to meet the needs of these students with in-house staff. She asked for patience and flexibility until the student information is compiled and reviewed for next steps.

Ms. Mahr addressed the various options for tents, including the rental of regular large tents, as well as the purchase of permanent canopies with fabric and metal coverings. The cost of each option was reviewed, which ranges from \$200,000 to \$1 million including installation of the canopies. These tents will be used for some outdoor learning, mask breaks and lunch periods.

With regard to transportation, Ms. Mahr reported that a survey will be going out to all those who have signed up for transportation to confirm they wish to continue this service or inform the district that their children will be learning remotely in the fall. For all those opting into RLS, refunds will be issued.

Dr. Lussier then reviewed upcoming work including sending out a parent survey to confirm in which learning model they will be enrolling their child(ren). The responses are due back by August 21<sup>st</sup>. Recognizing that some parents want additional information regarding the models before making a decision, the district will be hosting four (one for each level) live zoom webinars next week to address questions and concerns.

Dr. Lussier acknowledged the numerous emails received either strongly in favor of returning to in-person learning or strongly in favor of learning in a remote model. He hopes the community can appreciate the anxiety of educators who are trying to balance their desire to do the right thing and be there for the students, with all the unknowns about the virus. He expressed his appreciation of the WPS educators' commitment to their students, and indicated that WPS remains fully committed to exploring new options to ensure the safety of staff and students and also work towards a safe full time return to school.

Each Committee member shared their thoughts and perspectives regarding the reopening models, including a review of the extensive process used in developing the recommendation. Members thanked the entire Administrative team as well as all WPS staff members who were involved in the herculean task of developing these models, while addressing the many questions and concerns articulated by community members through emails, surveys and forums. The Committee also expressed its deep appreciation to all the professionals continuously working in support of the WPS students.

Ms. Chow reported that earlier in the day, the Board of Health discussed and voted to support and approved the WPS Reopening Plan.

Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the reopening of schools in a hybrid learning model as recommended by the Administration, contingent upon the development, in partnership with the Board of Health, of a set of metrics, that will help guide the reopening as well as ongoing decision making.

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

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

#### **RETURNING TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS**

Discussion was deferred to a future meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At approximately 7:15 pm, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to adjourn.

**MOVED:** Ms. Martin; **SECONDED:** Mr. Roberti; **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 Reopening Plan Draft Report 8-13-20

WPS Reopening Plan Presentation 8-13-20