

**Wellesley Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
August 25, 2020
Remote Online Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 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; Athletic Director John Brown, 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

Elliot Kovacs, WHS senior, shared his thoughts on how to negate the risk of COVID-19 at the schools including the implementation of a thermal camera temperature screening system at the main entrance of each school and mandating mask standards for use in schools.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Martin informed the Committee of several meetings added to the School Committee calendar including joint meetings with the PBC regarding the **Middle School Building Systems Project** on September 24 and October 15th. This provides both the PBC and the School Committee an opportunity to address any questions they may have prior to presentation at the October 26th Special Town Meeting.

Ms. Chow thanked Dr. Curry for getting Wellesley admitted to the **Culturally Responsive Practices Leadership Academy** sponsored by DESE. Ms. Chow and Mr. Roberti participated in a kickoff session of the Academy on August 17th. She believes participation in this Academy will help the WPS leadership team work on a strategic plan that addresses racial equity and culturally responsive practices.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes Approval: August 13 and 19, 2020 Open Session

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

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

ELECTION OF SECRETARY

After a brief discussion, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to elect Catherine Mirick as the Secretary for the School Committee, effective immediately.

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

SCHOOL REOPENING UPDATE

Ms. Chow acknowledged the commitment and work of the leadership and reopening teams in creating a very thoughtful plan that was voted on August 13th. She also recognized the faculty and staff, as well community partners including the group of citizens in the scientific and medical fields that is proposing an added layer of protection for keeping students and faculty safe through a baseline and subsequent COVID testing programs. Ms. Chow also acknowledged the Wellesley Education Foundation that is working to raise funds to help finance such a program.

Dr. Lussier acknowledged the Committee members for their high level support as well as day to day engagement, and overall commitment to WPS and its students.

Dr. Lussier provided several updates around reopening plans including facilities work, collaboration with the WEA around bargaining, athletics, and the new state mandate requiring students to receive a flu vaccine this year. He discussed that key to reopening planning is the surveying of parents to determine their intent to return to either the hybrid or the Remote Learning School (RLS) model. He reported there are still some families who have not completed the survey, and urged them to do so as soon as possible. Currently, there are just over 500 students who have opted in to the RLS. Parents can join the RLS at any time but are asked to commit to a semester. Students may enter the RLS at any point as necessary. The Administrative team, led by Dr. Dabrowski, is working to build the RLS with a dedicated principal and staff.

Dr. Lussier indicated his team is also working to obtain the staff's intent to return. Some have medical issues that preclude them from joining in person or family members who are susceptible, or for child care reasons. He noted the critical need to know teacher and student return status in order to move forward and implement a successful reopening plan.

The steps taken to assuage fears and anxieties from faculty, staff and parents regarding the reopening were reviewed including extensive personal safety protocols such as mask use, handwashing, social distancing, as well as discussions around indoor air quality and filtration. The FMD has determined that it is possible to upgrade to MERV-13 filters in all WPS school building systems, however, the challenge is production and distribution of these filters which currently have a delivery timeline that varies from a few weeks to 8 to 10 weeks.

Dr. Lussier then provided an update on tents for outdoor learning spaces, for lunch time use, and mask breaks. The model being considered is a structure that can be used year-round. He is confident that the tents will be delivered and installed in a timely manner.

Work around viral testing was addressed, with three strands being reviewed: baseline testing for students and staff, symptomatic testing which is already in place, and the third strand is ongoing proactive surveillance testing with all staff tested weekly and a smaller group of students tested each week. Financing for this work remains challenging, however WEF has created a fundraising campaign to make this testing happen.

Dr. Lussier acknowledged that there are currently a number of 'moving parts' that makes it challenging to make ensure reopening in a safe and timely manner. Based on the factors mentioned above, he believes the reopening timeline will need to be revised. He reviewed the proposed amendments, which were presented to the Wellesley Educators Association on August 24. The changes to Phase 1 include providing teachers with the option of returning either remotely or in person from August 31 to September 4th; the week of September 8 through 11th begins the transition for teachers to be in-person, on-sight, for preparation and reacclimating to the building, as well as reviewing health and safety training. Phase 2 provides that on September 14th and 15th, teachers will reach out to students individually or small groups; September 16th is the first day of school for all students, which will begin remotely for all students – those in the RLS model as well as both hybrid cohorts. Phase 3, the week of September 21st will continue with all remote learning and proposed baseline testing will occur this week. Phase 4 starts the in-person transition for Cohorts A and B on October 1st and 2nd respectively. There are still concerns whether there will be adequate staff available to successfully reopen, but he believes that with the changes being proposed, it provides the best chance to have the largest number of staff return.

Ms. Mahr reviewed the status of the WPS budget, use of state funding for COVID-related purchases, and transportation refunds.

Ms. Corridan reviewed the flu vaccine state mandate, noting there are medical and religious exceptions to the mandate, but the flu vaccine will be included in subsequent years as a requirement to attend school. She noted the mandate is currently for students only, but she will work to encourage staff to take the flu vaccine as has been the practice in previous years.

Committee members asked questions regarding the tents and whether they will be heated; MERV filters; types of masks being required; status of the WPS budget and staffing needs to cover the RLS.

Athletic Director John Brown provided an overview of the status of athletics for the 2020-21 school year, with Fall 1 sports proposed to start on September 18th and end on November 30th. This includes 'moderate risk' sports with modifications: boys and girls soccer and cross country; girls field hockey and swimming/diving; and boys golf. High risk sports such as football, girls volleyball and cheerleading will not be held in the fall, however, a possible 'Fall II' season may occur from February to April 2021 that would include these sports. There are no WMS athletics scheduled for the fall.

Mr. Brown reviewed safety considerations in place including coaches training, locker room restrictions, and assigned seating on buses. Participation of spectators at events is being discussed with the Health Department.

DISCUSSION/VOTE 2020-21 WPS ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Action was deferred pending further revisions to the calendar.

APPROVAL OF FOOD SERVICES AGREEMENT

Ms. Mahr provided an overview of the status of the proposed 5-year contract with Whitsons Culinary Group, noting the Committee voted to allow WPS to enter into contract negotiations with Whitsons which were completed in the spring. She stated that although the term of the contract is for five years, the Committee is approving a one-year contract with the option to renew for the next four years. Ms. Mahr reviewed the contract process, terms and conditions. Recognizing that 2020-21 will be very different than other years, staff will continue to monitor sales and performance, and will bring any concerns to the Committee as they arise.

After a brief discussion and clarifying questions, Ms. Chow entertained a motion to approve the food service agreement as presented.

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

HHU UPDATE

Hardy/Upham

Ms. Chow removed herself from the meeting at 8:02 pm and returned at 8:31 pm

Ms. Gray provided an overview of recent SBC meeting including a review of the comparative cost estimates for the final 3 options of Hardy Renovation/Addition, Hardy new and Upham new, ranging in total project costs of \$73.4 million to \$79.7 million.

Ms. Gray also reviewed discussed the 26 criteria that will be considered by the SBC for the feasibility study, which include building size, educational programming, swing space, construction and total project costs, and sustainability of each option.

Ms. Gray provided information on upcoming events:

September 3 and 10: SBC meetings

September 17th: Third Community Forum

September 24th: SBC slated to make its recommendation on the preferred site.

Subsequent to the September 24th meeting, the SBC will meet jointly with the School Committee and Board of Selectmen to present the preferred option for their

consideration and approval. She noted that all three boards must agree on the recommended preferred option in order to submit it to the MSBA.

Committee members asked questions on process and how the community will be kept apprised of upcoming actions

SC POLICY UPDATES

Policies BDB, BEDD, BEDG

Ms. Chow reviewed the proposed changes that the School Policy Subcommittee is recommending be made to the following policies:

BDB - School Committee Officers

BEDD – Rules of Order

BEDG – Minutes

General (Interim) Policy on COVID-Related Issues

Ms. Mirick reviewed the proposed general interim policy on CoVID related issues. She indicated the policy is based on one developed by the MASC that has been tailored to meet Wellesley's needs. She noted this is an interim policy which can be rescinded once the state of emergency has been lifted.

The drafts will be posted on the District website for community review. Action on the policies will be slated for the next meeting.

WHEN TO RETURN TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS

The Committee discussed the possibility of returning to in-person meetings. It was noted that Town Hall is currently still closed for public use, so it is not an option. Holding meetings in school buildings was also considered, however there are logistical challenges with cleaning protocols, health and safety concerns, and Wellesley Media may not have the capability to stream live. The main library is also a consideration for live streaming meetings. It was noted that the Committee must ensure it is preserving public access and that community members are able to see, hear and participate in meetings properly, while observing appropriate social distancing mandates and safety protocols. It was suggested that perhaps the Committee could start meeting in person around the same time as students are returning to the school buildings.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:02 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:** Mr. Roberti; **ROLL CALL:** Ms. Mirick – Yes; Ms. Gray – Yes; Ms. Chow – Yes; Ms. Martin – Yes.; Mr. Roberti - Yes

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Mirick
Secretary

Documents and Exhibits Used:

WPS Reopening Plan 8/24/20

2020-21 WPS Academic Calendar 8/10/20 revisions

Whitsons Food Service Contract

DESE Letter of Approval of Food Service contract

Draft Policies:

BDB - School Committee Officers

BEDD – Rules of Order

BEDG – Minutes

EBC Supplement General Interim Policy – Covid-19 Related