

Approved Nov. 17, 2021

**Advisory Committee Meeting  
Zoom Video Conference  
Wednesday, November 10, 2021, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Neal Goins, Shawn Baker, Jake Erhard, Jenn Fallon, John Lanza, Corinne Monahan, Doug Smith, Susan Clapham, Al Ferrer, Wendy Paul, Madison Riley, Patti Quigley. Absent: Pete Pedersen, Jeff Levitan

Neal Goins called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and introduced members of Advisory in attendance.

**Citizen Speak**

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

**Board of Health Presentation**

Shep Cohen, Chair, Board of Health (BOH); Marcia Testa Simonson, Vice Chair, BOH; Linda Grape, BOH; Lenny Izzo, Director, Department of Health were present.

An overview of the Department of Health and Board of Health and an overview of the FY23 BOH draft budget were provided.

**Questions/Comments**

- What is the fiscal status of FY21 and was there any turnback?
  - There will be turnback for several reasons - federal and state funds were received to support COVID expenses and efforts and there was a later hiring to fill positions. There were volunteer hours that went into contact tracing. The BOH seeks as much money from grants for supplies and equipment and then BOH turns back money but we never know what we are getting in soft money. The senior social worker position was approved before COVID and was the result of an inter-departmental task force study. It was also determined that a full-time nurse and nursing supervisor was needed. Prior to that the BOH relied on per diem nurses and social workers.
- A question was asked about the expansion of the office.
  - This is an on-going project and the Health Department is working with FMD. But it is preliminary at this point and the cost is unknown. There is an immediate need to add office space and a long term need to build out. It is hoped that the additional space will be in the Warren Building and the Health Department is working with Recreation to find space.
- Why did the professional staff increase almost double and from 2019 to 2023 and does the BOH have any partnerships with hospitals for the use of nurses and services?
  - Yes, from FY19 to FY23 professional staff costs did increase and the full-time social worker accounted for much of that increase. The Health Department has partnerships with hospitals but hospitals provide medical help and not public health. Hospitals have different functions. There are several points of contact with hospitals including participation in a Newton Wellesley Hospital (NWH) community benefits committee consisting of local directors of health. If the Health Department needs something from a hospital, they are ready to advise and assist. The Health Department has a close working relationship with the hospitals. The number of social workers came out of the mental health report completed a few years ago. Outside of COVID, mental health and social work challenges are the highest needs in public health. And these continue to be a challenge. There is an increase in addiction and mental health issues. The plan to recruit

and hire was made pre-COVID. The licensed social worker was hired and helps all departments.

- How engaged is the health department in solving the PFAS/water issue?
  - At this point there are no answers. The Health Department is working with the DPW director and will be meeting with DPW on this topic and studying potential solutions.
- Wellesley's results on COVID are better than other neighborhoods towns, how does Wellesley's approach compare to other towns?
  - It is in the way the health department has been run and has resources. Many communities have had to rely on contact tracing from the state, Wellesley managed its own contact tracing. Wellesley takes on an educational role. Communication and outreach to the public were also factors. Support from other departments and the community was a differentiator in Wellesley success with COVID.
- A comment was made that from the organizational chart the Health Department is connected with the police department for the social worker. Is there a connection with the senior center and the high school on social services and what is that relationship?
  - Human Relation services provides a social worker in the high school. There are outreach workers in the high school and middle school and elementary schools. These social workers work closely with the Health Department as does the senior center social worker. The Health Department works with the entire community. There are weekly social worker meetings and the housing authority is also involved. This allows all the social workers to learn from each other as cases are often connected.
- The Board of Health was asked to provide information on the following:
  - FY21 – what is the total turnback and how much of this turnback is due to grants and other monies?
  - FY22 – what is the outlook for the end of the year?
  - FY23 – can the normal salary increases shown in the preliminary budget be confirmed?
  - FY23 – although the bottom-line budget has increased 50% over the past 5 years and this was a necessary increase for services that were needed, is it expected that there will be a flattening of the budget going forward?
  - PFAS – what is the context of the problem solving?

It was felt that the turn back will be 10 to 25% and it was felt that the health department budget will increase modestly going forward.

### **School Committee Presentation**

Catherine Mirick, Chair, School Committee; Linda Chow, Vice Chair, School Committee; David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools; Cyndy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Wellesley Public Schools; Kathleen Dooley, Director of Technology; Wellesley Public Schools; Sandra Trach, Assistant Superintendent, Teaching and Learning, Wellesley Public Schools; Sarah Orlov, Director of Student Services, Wellesley Public Schools were present.

The school budget process and the school department organization were presented and reviewed. The WPS program and the budget orientation were presented. The budget development elements include guidelines, student enrollment, personnel projections, and contracted services. The cash capital, revenue sources and the COVID-19 response were reviewed.

### **Questions/Comments**

- Will there be a budget for DE&I initiatives?
  - Equity work is completed across the organization and lives in the professional development budget. This work continues to be a focus area and the work is owned by

everyone. Resources and investments are being made for DE&I now and will be in the future, including in the FY23 strategic plan.

- An observation was made on budget guidelines and the salary chart that 54 percent of teachers are at Step 16 and a quick calculation shows about 30 percent hold PhDs which are at a higher salary level. Is this unique to Wellesley or is this common in educational institutions? Do we have very little turnover and will there be retirements?
  - The level of turnover is typical of suburban communities where turnover is far lower than in urban schools. Like other suburban communities, Wellesley tends to have high retention and has teachers with relatively higher levels of education. It is common that teachers increase their level of education over time. It is hard to know and predict when people will retire. Ideally the District has people along the spectrum of experience. In terms of new hires, the average hire is at Masters Step 8. However, occasionally there are positions that are hard to staff, particularly at the secondary level in a specialized area. Overall, if the District has the ability to bring on a more qualified teacher, then we will go above the Masters Step 8 because we want teachers with high qualifications. The District wants to make investments in people early in their career and help them grow. Diversity is also a goal with hiring and staffing.
- Is there some correlation that exists between enrollment and costs over last two years? Specifically, where enrollment is down and costs are up, where do things flatten out? Given negative enrollment projections, what can we expect from the budget process?
  - It is not a linear relationship. The tipping point is based on class size guidelines as to when we can contract. Classroom reductions are reductions of teachers. Much of the new staffing is not around teaching but around assistants to support IEP programs. However, the District is always looking for efficiency. For example, the District made the unpopular decisions to close grade levels and reassign students to nearby schools with excess capacity. Doing so kept the District from inequities in class sizes between schools. Actual staffing is based on numbers that initially come from assumptions. That said, as get close to spring, we get a better sense of the actual number of students. The District will not hire teachers if the enrollment numbers do not support it.
- Teacher commitments are made in advance of good enrollment information. Staff were projected based on back to normal enrollment levels last year. But the actual numbers show a continued reduction compared to projections from the prior year.
  - Projections going forward are based on the experience of two COVID years. The model was adjusted based on COVID changes and the District could be potentially understaffed if future enrollment increases.
  - Anticipated needs for positions based on projected enrollment are not filled. Hiring is based on actual enrollment. This is for hiring new staff. There is a spring deadline to notify existing teachers of reductions. These are contractual dates. The District is not using modified projections this year but is using projections that have been adequate in the past. Additional changes that may or may not occur as result of the pandemic are not known at this time.
- Did turnback result by not staffing those six positions?
  - The District is only two months into the year. FY21 turn back was over \$3 million for services not needed or positions not filled due to COVID.
- What is the rough percentage of students on an IEP?
  - It is about 16 to 17 percent.
- How many non-resident students are there and do they pay tuition?
  - Non-resident students consist of Boston resident students who do not pay tuition, students of staff who do not pay tuition and a small number of students from other districts who

pay tuition to attend specialized program. The District currently has two students in this category and the tuition varies by program and services for the student.

- Does the District see an increase in the trend in the number of general education teachers dropping and special ed teachers and paraprofessionals increasing?
  - It is hard to tell. However, we would rather have students in-District as it is less expensive than sending them to out-of-district of programs.
- The IEP program seems to be growing and there are more students with IEPs. How do we compare with other districts and are people moving here because of IEP opportunities?
  - The percentage of students on IEP has remained stable. Wellesley's percentage is less than the State and less than several districts. Wellesley's 16-17 percent of students on IEPs is not a high number compared to other districts.
- The benchmarking data on enrollment shows Wellesley has a higher drop in enrollment than several surrounding communities. Has the District talked to other towns and to see what they are doing?
  - The enrollment drop is primarily at the elementary level. There is a lot of uncertainty with kids in elementary schools – we don't know if we are building new schools or not. Some may be related to the COVID drop and then looking at uncertainty of next 2 years while we build new schools.
- How is FY22 budget situation so far?
  - An adjusted budget look was provided to the School Committee and at this point a \$500,000 turnback is being projected – noting, however, it is only November. It is difficult to fill positions and there has been discussion about the challenges of filling positions.
- For FY23, is there anything the Schools are ready to share in terms of the 2.75 percent guidelines, cash capital, and the strategic investment program.
  - There are a few things. There is access to significant federal resources and grants that could provide flexibility across multiple years. The District wants to balance the grant dollars with the strategic vision for when the dollars go away and what happens in the future. The District will finalize the strategic plan going forward and some work will require investments. For example, over time there has been a reliance on student fees and this has an impact on public education opportunities for all students. From an equity lens, the District would like to reduce fees as much as possible and create many opportunities and activities for students. The District sees what is happening around opportunities for students in the science, technology and engineering field. There is a view that some of the high school experience should be happening outside of WHS with students doing internships. We would like to continue to reinvent our programs to better calibrate experiences students will need to be successful in the work force.
- A comment was made that it would be helpful to understand how the enrollment decline is being managed and why costs do not correlate with enrollment declines. It would be helpful to identify costs that go away and why other costs do not change.
- A comment was made that there needs to be a way to track DE&I and how the resources are being managed to make an impact. Advisory would like to understand what resources are being put towards DE&I and how this is being managed going forward. This not only impacts the school population but also impacts the community.
- A question was asked if there would be resources within the budget to support and address the COVID recovery and the epidemic of mental health.
  - There will be additional investments in this area in FY23. Students are impacted both socially and emotionally.
- A comment was made that sustained funding in the mental health area will be needed.

## **Minutes Approval/Liaison Reports/Administrative Items**

### **Liaison Reports**

*Select Board/Patti Quigley* – potential items for ATM were discussed at the recent Select Board meeting including changes to two alcohol related bylaws; bylaws connected with vacant store fronts; a change in CAC under which employees will report to the Executive Director. Other potential bylaw changes are administrative changes for bylaw efficiencies.

*Library/Corinne Monahan* – provided a recap of the recent library meeting. Fifteen hundred people attended the library reopening event on Saturday.

*Recreation/Wendy Paul* – Recreation voted unanimously to approve changes to the Playing Fields Task Force (PFTF) membership to include additional groups. Consideration was given to changing the name of PFTF. There was a discussion over tennis court utilization. It increased during the pandemic and work is being done around the use of tennis courts by non-residents and for pay for play situations. As a result, there may be a potential change to the bylaw. Recreation’s budget will be coming in within guideline. Other potential Recreation requests at ATM will be a joint purchase of a van with the Youth Commission and the purchase of AEDs to have on playing fields. The Fall programming enrollment for Recreation programs has increased. Morses Pond was also discussed, including planning for Summer 2022.

*FMD/Madison* – FMD presenting next Monday to the Select Board. It is important for Advisory members to listen to the presentation. A copy of FMD’s presentation was requested.

*Schools/Jenn Fallon* – the Climate Action Committee made a presentation at last night’s School Committee meeting. A midyear budget update and FY23 budget guidelines were also discussed at the recent meeting. There was a lengthy presentation on MCAS results. School Committee also discussed the memorandum of understanding with WEF.

### **Minutes Approval**

Jenn Fallon made and Wendy Paul seconded a motion to approve the October 27, 2021 minutes

### **Roll Call Vote**

Jennifer Fallon – yes  
John Lanza – yes  
Corinne Monahan - yes  
Patti Quigley – yes  
Tom Cunningham – yes  
Jake Erhard – yes  
Jeff Levitan - absent  
Doug Smith – yes  
Susan Clapham - yes  
Al Ferrer - yes  
Wendy Paul – yes  
Pete Pedersen - absent  
Madison Riley – yes  
Shawn Baker – yes

**October 27, 2021 minutes were approved, 12 to 0**

### **Administrative Items**

- Upcoming presentations – try to get presentations by Monday. Remind presenters to adhere to Advisory’s template for areas to cover. Upcoming presentations include:
  - CAC 11/17

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- Planning – it was noted there are several anticipated Planning articles for ATM. It was commented that it would be useful Planning come in in December to give a preview of expected articles and a later meeting to update Advisory on the Warrant articles.
- MLP is expected to present on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjourn**

Al Ferrer made and Corinne Monahan seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Roll call vote**

Jennifer Fallon – yes  
John Lanza – yes  
Corinne Monahan - yes  
Patti Quigley – yes  
Tom Cunningham – yes  
Jake Erhard – yes  
Jeff Levitan - absent  
Doug Smith – yes  
Susan Clapham - yes  
Al Ferrer - yes  
Wendy Paul - yes  
Pete Pedersen - absent  
Madison Riley – yes  
Shawn Baker – yes

Meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m., 12 to 0.

**Documents Reviewed** <https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1329>

- Board of Health Presentation to Advisory
- Wellesley Public School Presentation to Advisory
- WPS 2021-2022 October 1 Enrollment Report 11.2.21
- Draft Advisory Minutes - 10/27/21