

**WOBURN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL REMOTE MEETING
5.14.20**

A Remote Special Meeting of the Woburn School Committee was held on May 14, 2020, beginning at 7:30 pm.

There was a moment of silence for Ms. Maria Pereira and Ms. Dorothy Pelletier. Chairperson Crowley took a moment of reflection for those in our community who may be suffering due to the CoronaVirus.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-Present, Ms. Cormier-Present, Mr. Kisiel-Present, Mr. Lipsett-Present, Mr. Mulrenan-Present, Dr. Wells-Present, Chairperson Crowley-Present

Chairperson Crowley began by stating this is a public meeting convened under the new law that allows a public entity to conduct a meeting that waives the rules that normally requires a quorum in person. We are conducting this meeting remotely under the authority of the Governor's Emergency Order issued on March 10, 2020.

**REPORTS/ PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT & STAFF
UPDATES FROM THE WOBURN MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL**

Dr. Crowley thanked everyone who works for the Woburn Public Schools and turned it over to Principal Callanan.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM PRINCIPAL JESSICA CALLANAN

World Language had 28 students earn the Seal of Biliteracy. This is a new program from the Department of Education. The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given by a school, school district or county office of education in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. The Seal of Biliteracy takes the form of a gold seal that appears on the transcript or diploma of the graduating senior and is a statement of accomplishment for future employers and for college admissions. This was due to hard work in the World Language department led by Ms. Katherine Escobar.

The Science & Technology Curriculum Coordinator Ms. Kim Gustenhoven has brought in \$170,000.00 in grants. This evening Ms. Gustenhoven called Principal Callanan to let her know that she got the \$100,000.00 Cummings Foundation Grant; this is the first year Woburn has been given this grant.

Woburn High was recently granted from the Dept. of Education two innovation pathways designations. We were one of 29 high schools in the state to be given two pathways. Ours are environmental and life science with a focus on biotechnology and the second one is in engineering and manufacturing.

Valedictorian Kiera Walsh will be showcased on CBS featuring a list of all Massachusetts Valedictorians.

Another one of our students earned a \$40,000 scholarship to the college board called an opportunity scholarship. Her name is Natalia Arcos Rivera, and she worked with Caterina Seinz. 89 students were notified that they are being inducted into the NHS.

There is a committee of teachers, and they took the essays that every student wrote. Since we have been out of school they have gone from house to house. The students were notified but the ceremony will take place in the Fall.

Ms. Patrissi and Mr. Maguire have been the heart and soul behind the Tanner Closet. They have collected over \$6,000.00 in donations to the Tanner Closet. This has been a great community effort. Gift cards have been given out to families.

Woburn Memorial High School was named second year in a row as a top high school in the country by the US World News & Report.

This year we went to online course selection, endless hours of work from everybody involved. The IT department has been supportive. This was intended for this year, however given our current situation it was essential. Parents and students have been amazing, this is in motion.

Ms. Callanan presented her Graduation proposal.

She worked in conjunction with her administrative team, our facilities department and the police department. She has met many times with the advisors and officers of the senior class to pull together a plan to honor graduation on June 7th. We would have a graduation parade where we would start in the parking lot of the Woburn cinema. The police would support us; 3 iterations, over 300 students. One graduate per car with immediate family. Administrative Team members would be at the cinema to set the drivers up. They would drive through a pathway which has been planned out by Dave Dunkley and Damien Ruggeri. They would go through the circle and come in on Salem Street and wrap around the building. In the front of the building their names would be read, and they will be given a sleeve of their diploma. The Woburn Public Media Center will record student speeches, administration speeches and a Capella band ahead of time and put this all together in a video to be given to the graduating seniors for free.

Community members could be along the parade route. School property would be for staff only and everyone will be wearing masks. She feels time wise this is something we can handle, the police say they can handle this.

Senior events this year are not traditional. Parents have taken on several community initiatives. Ms. Callanan is humbled by the support of the Woburn Community.

Ms. Callanan, advisors, admin team and many parents feel it is important to have an event that includes the most students for closure. Prom for now has been rescheduled for early August if

possible. If it is not possible it will be moved for a later date for the 1st reunion. The students are missing their teachers.

Chairperson Crowley congratulated Ms. Callanan for being recognized as a top school, and she congratulated Keira and Natalia on their amazing accomplishments at WMHS.

Dr. Wells is concerned for anybody that is feeling ill to make sure you ask them certain questions and to work with the nursing staff.

Mr. Lipsett thanked Principal Callanan for all of her work. It is a way within the confines of the situation it is a way to have graduation.

He has a concern around students who may not have access to cars. How to include those students.

Ms. Callanan has discussed this. She would release the plan, survey families and find out if they have obstacles.

Ms. Cormier asked about the 28 World Language kids receiving medals and does this pertain to the EL students.

Ms. Callanan said yes this was extended to the EL students as well. This was advertised to them as well as World Language students. There were 2 EL students who took the test.

Ms. Chisholm asked about the classes for next year that were chosen. Would the classes she put in the budget be affected.

Ms. Callanan said potentially but this is something they run to every year. We know that if there is a decision to be made about a position not being there next year that would have to be shifted.

Ms. Chisholm asked about the difficulty kids are having taking the AP online tests.

Ms. Callanan said it has affected our students; there were problems with browsers and problems with uploading. This did not just happen in Woburn, it is across the country. When you save the test, it does not save their work. It quickly prompted them to take a retest.

Mr. Mulrenan wanted to comment on the logistics of the graduation plan. To move 300 people and to try to get the parents on board to follow the rules he feels will be difficult. He wants to make sure the police department is onboard. He has seen a lot of people not wanting to go by the rules. Going around the rotary on a Sunday afternoon they will need a shift of police officers. He agrees you have to have something. He would like to see it toned down. WPMC needs to be tweaked. Mr. Mulrenan suggested getting together with Chief Rufo.

Ms. Callanan said she spoke directly with Chief Rufo on the phone. He did say he is able to support this. She will go back to him again to see the cost. She is open to suggestions.

Mr. Mulrenan said it is the logistics, getting onto Main St. the public has to be six feet apart. The responsibility of all that. He doesn't see people following the rules right now.

There is a concern for the health and safety of all involved. He would like to wait for a confirmation from Chief Rufo.

Dr. Crowley said they did go through city hall and the chief of police.

He does understand the concern for social distancing. People should be used to it at this point.

Ms. Callanan pointed out there is some time sensitivity with this plan.

Mr. Mulrenan is not comfortable with this plan as it is; he is worried about following the social distancing rules. Possibly go up Salem Street only and stay away from the center.

Chairperson Crowley wanted to clarify that they did meet with the Mayor on this.

Ms. Chisholm said our kids need something special, it was brought up with the Chief, if he had concerns he would have brought them up. We hire police for the graduation anyway. Our kids deserve this. She appreciates the time Ms. Callanan and her staff have put in to make this as special as we can for these kids.

Mr. Kisiel feels this is something the whole community is going to stand behind. It is a great opportunity to give these kids something.

A motion was made to endorse the Graduation Plan for June 7, 2020.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-yes, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes Chairperson Crowley-yes

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Discussion on the budget.

Chairperson Crowley did say they met with the Mayor this morning. They were guided to continue their work to try to limit our spending as much as possible.

Dr. Crowley began by saying he asked Mr. Elia what the roll over budget from 2020-2021 would be. The answer is 3.7% if we were to just roll over current staffing.

We have staff/lane increases that contribute 1.2% to our annual budget. We have contractual increases of 2% with the majority of our unions. Our transportation costs go up annually.

Dr. Crowley asked Mr. Elia not to put any new positions in the roll over percentage. It also does not include any out of district tuition or transportation costs. Dr. Crowley wanted to contextualize this conversation. Dr. Crowley said he doesn't know what the state budget will be, we are being told it might not happen until August. One of the significant questions we have is our Chapter 70, we don't know how much money we are going to be getting from the state. At a meeting with Mayor Galvin this morning Dr. Crowley was told the state budget shortfall is estimated to be 2.2 billion dollars for this year and the city shortfall is estimated to be between 5 and 10 million dollars for this year. What that leads to are questions on reimbursements for state or federal programming. This creates a very difficult situation in which to budget. For FY21 our special education increase is 2.2% and that does include our out of district placements and our out of district transportation. We have students who are mandated by IEPs, and we are also now guided by new federal requirements due to the closure to make sure that testing is done for all of our special education students. We as a city and as a community, this is not special education vs

regular education, we are all in this together. Dr. Crowley wanted to demonstrate the two pockets and that they merged together at the 5.9%. Dr. Crowley said he is well aware the committee directed them to get to a 4.0% budget. He went on to explain the process and where we will head. Since our last meeting, we have reduced the number of new positions in the budget. There are no new positions in this budget. There is one ACT on the Federal level, it is called CARES ACT Funding and Woburn looks to receive \$500,000 from the federal government. This predicated on the Title I formula, we applied and 80% of your Title I is supposed to be received and this money has great flexibility in how it is spent. We reduced the SpEd Consulting by approx. \$37,000 because if we hire our own BCBA the offset is there. Our late busses have a reduction of \$45,500. When we create a budget we hire at Masters +5 so when we hire we have a number. We have reduced that to Masters +2, this will be any positions filled by new people and will be a reduction of \$91,509. In sum since the last meeting where the budget was 8.462% we have reduced \$944,000.

On the horizon we need to be ready to prepare for all types of scenarios. If and when we do come back, sanitization and safety for all students and staff. That being said we also have to prepare if we are not returning. What does our enhanced remote learning infrastructure look like? Our students right now are not 1:1 and it's posing many challenges and equity issues across the city. Dr. Crowley talked briefly about FY 22. If the economy opens the anticipated revenue as we head into FY 22 both at the state and city level no one believes it will be exactly where we left off. We also need to be cognizant of addressing our special education programmatic needs. When we keep sending students out of district, it costs a lot of money. We need to build our own programs to keep our students in house and with their peers. Moving forward Dr. Crowley talked about a couple items more specifically. Dr. Crowley shared an idea of an Early Retirement Incentive as a mechanism to perhaps encourage people that are of service time the ability to retire at the end of this year. This is for all WPS employees, that they meet the minimum requirement per their contract, and they would receive a one time payment of 10% of this year's base salary. Certainly not an ideal way for anybody to end their career but given the uncertain financial situation and given the uncertain return to school we thought it would be a good idea to at least offer this to the people that have dedicated so many years of service to the Woburn Public Schools. Dr. Crowley anticipates and will continue to collaborate with all Unions to look at ways to potentially save jobs. We've worked with the school and district leadership, and we are continuing to look at FY 21 non-essential budget items such as stipends etc. We are looking at maintenance costs and see if we need to do without for a year. Dr. Crowley knows that ultimately the school committee wants the school district to get to or below a 4% and this is going to require a reduction in force. You don't save money on pencils, you save money on people and this is going to be tough. This morning Dr. Crowley was talking with Mr. Elia and up over 20 people would have to be RIF'ed or reduced out of our ranks. On the heels of Principal Callanans presentation tonight it is really hard to imagine all the progress we have been making going away. Dr. Crowley does not know exactly where it is going to come

from. He did not want to put panic if he didn't have to or create anxiety in an already anxious time. But the time has come and Dr. Crowley understands that. We need to have serious conversations with our unions, with each other about what the priorities are to get to a number that the budget can pass. Dr. Crowley thanked the school committee for their thoughtfulness and their patience. Dr. Crowley knows the 5.9% budget the Mr. Elia sent to the committee is high and there are many conversations that need to happen in a short amount of time to get to a budget that will be acceptable to both the school committee, the city council and the mayor. People matter and Dr. Crowley wants to be respectful of everybody in the process, and we need to keep in mind kids. As we go through the process of creating a budget in these uncertain times, kids are going to be the priority as we make some difficult decisions within the next few days. The mayor knows where we are and the difficult decisions to come.

Dr. Wells asked Dr. Crowley why our budget is at 5.8% and other districts are 2.5%.

Dr. Crowley said some cities and towns have a stabilization fund to offset the out of district cost Woburn does not. Some have a revolving account and this varies by communities.

Dr. Wells said one of the items that wasn't touched at all was athletics.

Mr. Elia has a list of items that they could cut from Mr. Duran and those will be on the board.

Dr. Wells asked about the bus contract; what if we have virtual school for the first half of the year and there is no need for buses. We might want to take this into account for contracts.

Mr. Elia said if you have school and you have a bus contract, the issue that we keep on hearing is you won't have 3 kids to a seat, you may only have one kid to a seat and how many more buses will you need.

Dr. Wells is talking to a lot of parents, they are not going to risk putting their kids on a bus.

Dr. Crowley said they have talked about that scenario. We have 19 buses right now and how many buses do we need. It is complicated.

Dr. Wells asked that administration come to the school committee with the budget and let the school committee deal with it as they have to.

Mr. Lipsett asked about the legally mandated positions, and they are all in the 5.9% budget. He knows the BCBA is in the budget but what about the 1:1 nurses, the Pre-K teacher. Are those in the current budget and if not how can we justify that given the legal mandates.

Mr. Elia said they are not in that 5.9%. He was asked to do a budget without any new positions. If the administration agrees these positions need to be put back in then we have to look at other areas to cut.

Mrs. Chisholm asked what is the number we need to get to. If we get to a 4%, will the mayor support that.

Mr. Elia said the mayor has not given them a number. The 3.5 they were working off of because that is what he has given them the last couple of years. Basically the school committee asked us to get to a 4%.

Ms. Chisholm appreciates the hard work that is being done. We need direct direction from the mayor, what is it 3% or 3.5%? Frustrations will mount. She hates that everybody is up in the air. It might be worse than we expect, we really need to get to a number.

Chairperson Crowley said a 4% is devastating to the district. She told the mayor without any guidance we have to go by past funding practices so that is the 4%.

Our guidance was to create a 4% budget because Dr. Wells made a motion to get to 4% and that is generally what Woburn Public Schools receives in a budget increase.

Ms. Chisholm said that 4% is what we would receive in normal circumstances. We are in the worst economy ever. Past practices aren't going to float anymore.

Mr. Kisiel said we have a 5.9% budget.

Chairperson Crowley said a 5.9% budget is level funded. We are in bad shape and there will be RIF'ing.

Mr. Kisiel asked if we have what a 4% will look like.

Mr. Elia said no, they have not asked Principals what they could do without.

Dr. Crowley is asking the school committee for approval to put out the Early Retirement Incentive.

Mr. Lipsett said we have contractual class size limits in our teacher contracts.

Is there room within our class size limits to riff and how do we manage that?

Dr. Crowley stated that is why we can't do this overnight. We need to be thoughtful. We need to look at maintenance, secretaries, paraprofessionals, and teachers. We have to take a broad perspective at where we are looking. The last place he wants to cut is in the classroom.

Mr. Elia is receiving many requests for the budget and is trying to keep up with all of them.

Chairperson Crowley commented there is a forecast for some severe budget cuts. We worked really hard but a 5.9% budget is a difficult task. We still need some work to do.

Chairperson Crowley pointed out to the Mayor that perhaps some cities and towns have their SpEd on the city side. We are different from other cities in that regard.

Mr. Mulrenan said if Dr. Crowley needs until May 21st to work on things, he is ok with that. If the Mayor is going to give us a little leeway, take the leeway.

Chairperson Crowley thanked the administration for their hard work.

Dr. Crowley asked the school committee if they felt comfortable with him pushing out the Early Retirement Incentive.

Dr. Wells asked Dr. Crowley for some more details.

Dr. Crowley responded by saying in essence the way the contracts read any teacher with 20 years of experience or over would be eligible to take this early retirement option and receive 10% of their base salary and retire at the end of this year. Paraprofessionals per contract would need 15 years, custodians would need 10 years, secretaries would need 15 years and be 55 years of age, administrators and nurses would need 20 years.

Mr. Lipsett has a concern if we are talking of 20 years of service he wants to make sure we aren't offering people to take short term gain over long term security.

Dr. Wells made a motion to allow the administration to proceed forward with the proposal for early retirement increment.

Mrs. Chisholm on the motion wants to make sure the date is changed from May 31, 2020.

Dr. Crowley said it was revised this morning.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-abstained, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-abstained, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes

Motion passed 5-0. Two abstained.

Dr. Crowley will send out the offer of the Early Retirement Incentive and update the committee.

Chairperson Crowley asked Mr. Elia for an update on the school lunch.

Mr. Elia needs to increase the cost of school lunches based on the calculation from the state.

Mr. Elia proposed doing \$3.50 across the board based on the fact that this would cover the school department for the upcoming school year and the following two years. Members of the committee were concerned about the price increase being too steep. Mr. Elia went back and would recommend charging \$3.00 for elementary, \$3.25 for middle school and \$3.25 for high school.

That being said you would probably have to increase prices again next year.

Currently, the prices are \$2.25 elementary, \$2.50 middle school and \$2.75 at the high school.

Dr. Wells made a motion to accept Mr. Elia's proposal to increase school lunches to the staggered lunch fee, beginning of the upcoming school year.

Motion was seconded.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-no, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-yes, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes

Motion passes 6-1.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Student Services & Achievement

Ms. Cormier said they met on 5.7.20 at 9:00 AM via ZOOM.

Ms. Ryan expressed concern about the implementation of an increase in tuition for Preschool in January 2021 as some parents may opt to leave the program at that time. Ms. Ryan said that surrounding towns are charging more for Preschool.

Mr. Elia wishes to remind parents that preschool tuition is tax-deductible “dollar for dollar”. PRE Registration took place in early March, with the registration link to be posted in the near future.

ACE program development work continues.

William James interface expects to be very busy when everything reopens. 4 referrals to date
ELPAC meeting: next meeting May 18th (changed from May 11th).

Training for team chairs: Alan Bloom will be offering a 5-week series, teaching components of IEP and how to write them consistently, as well as 504 plans. All principals will be attending, so they can chair meetings if needed.

SEPAC: next meeting Wednesday 05/13/20 at 6:30pm.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The next school committee meeting will be May 21, 2020 at 7:30 PM.

Chairperson Crowley reminded the committee the Mayor was somewhat flexible with the budget submission.

Dr. Wells asked if there had been any discussion of the old Wyman. If we were to relinquish and sell it to the city that could be used as revenue.

Chairperson Crowley said maybe the administration can look into this for our next SC meeting.

Ms. Cormier made a motion to enter into the executive session.

Motion was seconded.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Chisholm-abstained, Ms. Cormier-yes, Mr. Kisiel-yes, Mr. Lipsett-abstained, Mr. Mulrenan-yes, Dr. Wells-yes, Chairperson Crowley-yes

Motion passes 5-2-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

For the purpose of strategy for negotiation in collective bargaining.

No votes were taken in the executive session.

A motion was made to end the executive session and enter back into regular session.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

Executive session ended at 9:36 PM

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 5-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean MacLeod

Jean MacLeod

Recording Secretary