

Wellfleet School Committee
Wellfleet Town Hall Virtual Meeting
June 9, 2020

Present for the Committee: Jan Plaue, Jill Putnam, Betsy Pontius, Martha Gordon, and Mort Inger

Present for the Administration: Superintendent Tom Conrad, Giovanna Venditti, Director of Finances and Principal Mary Beth Rodman

Call to Order – Chair Pontius called the meeting to order at 4:37 p.m.

Agenda Changes - None

Chair's Report – Chair Pontius shared reflections on the racial protests that included the following quote from MASC: “As school leaders, we must look to those policies, practices and procedures that often unintentionally produce inequitable outcomes for children at risk and adopt strong anti-racism policy statements locally to show our commitment to identify, challenge and change values, structures and behaviors that can create systemic racism.”

Superintendent Conrad indicated he participated in the protest march in Orleans as he felt it was very important for Nauset students and the community. He stated this is an important time in the history of the country. It is time for people to stand up and say enough is enough.

Member's Report – Martha Gordon shared her thoughts regarding the protest in Wellfleet that was very moving and supported by police.

Jill Putnam recognized that it was Mort's last meeting on the board. She thanked him for all his years of service and dedication. Jan Plaue expressed her thoughts indicating it was a privilege having served with Mort for over twenty years. She stated it has been an honor working with him as he enhanced and loved the school in every way possible.

Citizens Speak – None

**Priority Business –
Administrators' Reports
Principal's Report**

Principal Rodman indicated she has included School Committee members in her weekly updates. A few additions since her last report: One seat has been filled for Kindergarten in the School Choice Program. The child lives in Eastham but attended the Montessori School in Wellfleet. The parent wants the child to move along with his current friends to Kindergarten. She also reported that the Wellfleet Audubon has put together numerous remote learning lessons for students. Keith Gauley is working with Principals to get grant money from the ESSER FUND (Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund) to support students and address the COVID 19 impact. (summer learning opportunities and remote technology needs) She created a remote learning parent survey with the help of Keith Gauley that was sent to parents through Parent Square. This is due back on June 19th and presently she has 20 responses.

Martha Gordon indicated the Strategic Plan Subcommittee would be interested in looking at the survey to see the questions and responses, when available.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Conrad thanked Mort Inger for his service to the children and staff at Wellfleet Elementary School, noting he is a classic individual who spent time making learning opportunities for Wellfleet students and for students throughout the District. He indicated Mort will remain on the Negotiating Subcommittee.

He reported that negotiations have started with the Region and Brewster custodians. They are about to begin negotiations with the educational assistants and secretaries. He indicated that he has weekly meetings with the Union leadership and Carol Forgione, HR Director. They are reviewing all the complicated pieces to remote learning, contracts and personnel issues.

He received a letter from Tom Scott who is the head of the Superintendent's Association indicating there is a tremendous amount of misinformation about the opening of school. There is a document that just came down about supplies and safety expectations for students coming back. It also referenced a summer school program. It talked about 10 students in the summer program as a maximum number. Some people think that is the set up for the fall and that is not the case. He indicated the week of June 15th the Commissioner of Education will give a directive, not a recommendation, about going back to school in the fall. If the directive is not followed, they will be looking at the funding the District is receiving. The Commissioner is working with various groups to see what makes sense going forward. He is waiting to hear and will put the Task Force in place for reopening. Parents are concerned about students going back to school, wearing masks, and staying in one room. He indicated they could go into July before hearing anything about fall plans. He met with Union leaders and they discussed contracts that need to be issued but he is concerned about assigning students to teachers. The Union agreed if the contracts are issued, they will just indicate that it is a teaching position and not where or what the teacher is teaching. He believes some parents will keep their children out of school and they will assign staff as needed.

Administration is looking at remote learning in Prek-5 and 6-12, what worked well and what needs improvement. He indicated if the District moves forward with remote learning that it must do better. As soon as he hears anything from the Commissioner of Education, he will email School Committee members. He is looking at guidelines for the summer school program. The Superintendent is also concerned about employees who will not come back to work for health reasons. This will be a tremendous challenge. He also indicated that students will need transportation but if bus drivers don't return, that too will be a problem for the entire system.

He is moving forward with a letter to staff regarding stipends for the last third of the year. If you did not work, there will be no stipend. If you worked partially, there will be partial payment. If you worked the full third of the year in a club or activity, the full stipend will be awarded. This was negotiated with the Union.

The Superintendent indicated they are working on a number of possibilities that will enhance our ability for remote learning. He indicated that Barbara Lavoine, Director of Technology, is retiring in June. He questioned how technology will be handled in the future. He also shared that the Wellfleet Finance Committee is concerned about the budget and hopes the schools can help the town a little bit. He indicated Dan Hoort stated every department will have to cut their budget. Revenues in the towns will be impacted this summer.

He indicated he meets weekly with Cape Superintendents and there is discussion that Chapter 70 money and Transportation could be cut by 10%. Looking ahead a year, the Superintendents think this could be devastating if federal dollars dry up. He reiterated there are challenges ahead and the committees must work together and pay attention to what is happening around us.

Bus Parking at WES in the Summer

Chair Pontius indicated that she wrote a statement regarding the bus parking at WES this summer and the school committee consensus not to pursue this at this time. The Committee agreed that nothing else needs to be done at this time.

FY20 Budget

Giovanna Venditti indicated the balance was \$70,005. She reported that there was Circuit Breaker funds that need to be spent in FY20. There is also money in the fuel account that has not been unencumbered. She reviewed line items with significant movement.

She also indicated that money from the CARES funds given to each town will help with cafeteria staff summer salaries.

Spending Plan

Principal Rodman presented the spending plan. She indicated that \$32,400 can go back to the town. Motion: On a motion by Jan Plaue, seconded by Martha Gordon it was voted unanimously, by roll call vote to approve the spending plan in the amount of \$62,074 from FY20 budget to go toward the FY21 budget. (\$94,474 - 32,400 = \$62,074) On a roll call the vote was as follows: Mort Inger - yea, Martha Gordon - yea, Jan Plaue - yea, Jill Putnam - yea, and Chair Pontius - yea

Jill Putnam expressed her concerns about the early childhood programs opening, classrooms with more than ten students. She is concerned because there are so many unknowns at this time. She agrees with giving money back to the town but she is feeling insecure about the future. Principal Rodman indicated that she is fairly confident that with ESSIR Grant and CARES Grant, WES will be fine.

FY21 Budget

Giovanna Venditti indicated that right now the directive from the state is that we have a 1/12 budget in the towns and the region. She will be following the towns' guidelines as to the amount of funds available for the month until town meetings take place. Principal Rodman clarified that the 1/12 budget is based on the FY20 budget.

School Committee Vacancy

The Superintendent indicated that he received word from MASC for guidance relative to what school committee members can and cannot do relative to filling a vacant seat on the board. The first piece is that everyone who serves on a board, outside of a meeting as a citizen, can do whatever they want relative to recruiting a candidate. However, when you are doing the business of the committee, you must refrain from discussion relative to candidates or recruitment.

Summer Schedule - The schedule was distributed. Summer meetings will take place virtually at 9:00 a.m. on the designated date.

Reports and Information

Cape Cod Collaborative - Jill Putnam reported that she attended a Zoom meeting on May 18 where they voted a 2% increase for staff. The Collaborative does not have a Union. There were three graduating seniors from the alternative High School and a parade was held to celebrate these students. She reported that the Plymouth Public Schools would like to join the Collaborative. They can be an adjunct member. Their District would not have a representative on the board, no voting privileges but could have programs. The ASLP, Leadership program will not happen in the traditional way this year with students going to Mass Maritime. They are looking into some sort of virtual or on line classes to offer this in a different way. The Collaborative did seek out paycheck protection plan. Legal Counsel reviewed this and it was determined they would move forward. They are surveying families about remote learning, what is working and what did not work. With Star and Way Point there are many stresses and challenges for students and parents. They are looking into more professional development in the area of remote learning. She reported there is a new Program Coordinator for Way Point, Kara Peterson.

PTA - no report

Strategic Plan - no report

Substance Abuse/Mental Health Task Force - no report

Policy Subcommittee - no report

Wellness Committee -no report

Future Agenda Items -

Directive from Commissioner – Superintendent Conrad plans to send the information to the boards throughout the district as soon as he hears anything.

It was suggested that the agenda in the summer be limited to things that the committee really needs to know about with regards to the opening of school in September.

Approval of Minutes -

On a motion by Mort Inger seconded by Jan Plaue, it was voted by roll call, 5 yeas to approve the minutes of May 12, 2020 as amended.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mort Inger, seconded by Jan Plaue, it was voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:49 p.m.

Submitted by
Ann M. Tefft

Included in the packet: FY20 financials, Spending Plan and minutes.