

Wellfleet School Committee  
Wellfleet Town Hall Virtual Meeting  
August 11, 2020

Present for the Committee: Jan Plaue, Jill Putnam, Betsy Pontius, Martha Gordon, and Laura Baghetti

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 9:07 a.m.

**Agenda Changes** – None

**Chair's Report** – Chair Pontius read the following statement into the record:

*As Chair, it is my goal to lead this committee in the decision making processes regarding school policy and budgets. At no time in my experience as a member, has this duty loomed so large. As we negotiate our way along this ever changing landscape of information, guidance, and emotion I will attempt to steady our course.*

*I would like to impress upon us at the outset of this meeting the importance of 2 critical areas of information. 1. Community spread data- not only in Wellfleet but Barnstable County as well. Understanding our risk levels will help us as we move forward in making the decisions that affect our students and staff members. 2. Feedback from our community. We need to keep at the forefront of our minds what Wellfleet families are voicing. Our decisions may be based on a majority of voices, but our task is far greater. We will continue to engage with families who have specific concerns so that we can provide safe and solid educational opportunities for all.*

*These are trying times. I would like to publicly recognize Mary Beth Rodman, Ann Tefft, and all involved in managing and providing the forums. Setting an exemplar for communication, emails full of questions and concerns were answered on both Saturday and Sunday of this past weekend. I could not let their efforts go unnoticed.*

*Our agenda includes opportunities for Citizens and Members to speak. We also, have priority business to attend to. In order to allow each person to speak, I will be facilitating our 2 minute time limit. All ideas, concerns and questions will be recorded, but not necessarily discussed during this time. I thank you for your patience with this process. I will work hard to lead us through these difficult times.*

**Member's Speak** – Jill Putnam mentioned the letter that members received from Kindergarten teachers in Eastham, Wellfleet and Orleans that spoke to their concerns and suggestions for the upcoming year.

Martha Gordon thanked the Administration for making so many efforts to be in touch with stakeholders and families. She indicated that she read the letter from Kindergarten Teachers about a way to look at the reopening of Kindergarten this year that makes sense for that special age group. She hopes Administration will respond and take it under consideration.

Laura Baghetti thanked everyone and acknowledged the time that Administration is putting into plans. She indicated that feedback she received from parents is they like the hybrid option for elementary school. She fully understood that 82% of the families want in-person learning but are thinking about changing. The other concern of parents is the outdoor classrooms, who will be teaching the remote learning classroom and will it impact teachers.

Jan Plaue stated that in view of the fact that the Task Force is working so very hard and responded with the data they received from parents, she felt all these minor changes are really off point. She further

stated that the committee admires respects and has confidence in the Administration. At a certain point you can't have everything nailed down.

### **Citizens Speak – None**

Ryan Curley wondered about internet access for some families. He would like to know the plan that is in place to make sure that families without adequate internet access are served.

Principal Rodman indicated that it is the schools responsibility to make sure that families have connectivity. The school triaged this in the spring. At this point, all families have connectivity.

### **Priority Business – Administrators' Reports**

#### **Principal's Report**

Principal Rodman reported that the playground structure is being taken down by the Department of Public Works. She further reported that a three year old child came to the playground, walking up the wooden walkway, a 2x4 buckled and the child fell through hitting his chin. The Dad called the Fire Department. The child had an upper lip injury and they provided first aid. There was no need to transport. The area was sealed off by Paul McHugh, Head Custodian at WES. Police are monitoring the playground. She thanked everyone for their response. She also reported that they have purchased ten, 10' x 20' canopy tents that will provide outdoor classrooms. These tents can fit six people underneath. They will be able to work collaboratively and schedule outdoor classrooms. She reported that Fred McGee of the Finance Committee called and invited her to a meeting. He indicated that the playground project needed to be postponed and it was removed from the Capital. She indicated they received \$25,000 for technology needs through the Cares Act and Technology grants. She shared the staff survey results for WES. 29 staff members responded and the top five concerns are: safety, cleaning, class size, training and PPE. She reported that 31 staff members in the district have medical conditions and are working with the HR Director. 81% of the parents responded to the survey in favor of in-person learning.

Kindergarten – 10 in person

Grade 1 – 10 in person

Grade 2 – 12 in person, 1 remote

Grade 3 – 12 in person, 1 in hybrid

Grade 4 – 16 in person, 1 hybrid

Grade 5 – 9 in person

The parents identified what went well and what needs to change in remote instruction. They would like more 1-1 instruction, continue with small groups, a consistent schedule, active teaching and student engagement. Other things they are considering for the coming school year include making sure siblings are scheduled together, consider grouping by bus, if schools go hybrid, how to keep small groups.

Wellfleet and Eastham have a small group. Could those groups go every day?

She also reported that the school choice student withdrew their application and will register in Eastham. Principal Rodman indicated that one new family has registered.

#### **Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Conrad thanked Principal Rodman for all her work in helping get kids back to school. He reported that Question and Answer sessions have been scheduled for parents. He indicated that the survey results were in with 800 responding to the second survey so far and 1,300 responded to the first survey. In reviewing the data they did not see a drop off in students interested in coming back into schools. He indicated that distancing was an issue with staff and parents with the 3-6' from the

Commissioner of Education. He asked Principals to see what 6' distancing would look like in the classrooms. He is also looking at ventilation in the schools as well as the cleaning and disinfection protocols. The District has secured PPE for our custodians and we are looking to have consistent protocols across the district. He shared that there is less clutter in the classroom and rooms will look much different when they open in the fall. The Custodians are thinking they will have plenty of time to disinfect door knobs, bathrooms, etc. They are working on a spray system for disinfecting. He will make available to parents the products they are using. He indicated the Task Force has been meeting and has done a fantastic job. Mary Ellen Reed, Nurse Coordinator, is taking part in discussions about what we are doing if a child or staff member does get sick and will have health procedures and protocols in place. These will be posted on the website when they become available. He also indicated that the staff will be trained on all of this during the first days of school that were given from the Commissioner for staff training. He reported that they have had good news in the hiring of new teachers in the district with robust pools of candidates to choose from for each position.

He indicated that bus transportation is a concern. They have to make sure they have enough seats on the bus for students who need to be transported. They are moving forward with the state guidelines requiring assigned seats, masks and large stickers identifying where a student may sit. They will board the bus back to front. They are asking families if they can drive to do so. He indicated that only 1 bus driver is not coming back in the district.

Martha Gordon asked who would monitor students on the bus. The Superintendent indicated that he is not sure there will be monitors on the bus but he would like to have a volunteer on the bus at the beginning of the school year to get organized and train students. This is not finalized yet.

Laura Baghetti inquired about the after school program. The Superintendent told the committee that he wants to lock the buildings down. This will be a change for parents. He knows childcare is a real issue for many parents and he is looking at this going forward.

Principal Rodman indicated she has received no guidelines from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education yet. She cannot mingle cohorts of students. Jill Putnam shared a lot of programs have fully successfully opened with people coming not coming in and out but meeting at the door.

Chair Pontius indicated if at any time a school committee letter to DESE to relax any accountability measures that may unintentionally add stress to teachers and students lives she would be happy to write one. Martha Gordon indicated she would be happy to help write that letter. Jill Putnam suggested that MASC would be good to have a letter come from them with collective voices.

### **Montessori School**

Beth Forester addressed the committee about following the district regulations and following the EEC licensure regulation. She wanted to know if they have children who want to come five days and you are doing a three day program that they can have children the five days. Chair Pontius indicated that the committee voted 3 -2 to submit the in person plan for in person learning five days per week. Martha Gordon stated that WES needs to open in the tightest way possible. If things change and they need to move to hybrid or remote, it would make sense to ask Montessori to follow since they are in the same small community Principal Rodman agreed indicating they are trying to be consistent in the elementary schools. Beth Forester indicated that they will follow the school calendar. She also inquired about an

outdoor shade sail for their playground. Aftering hearing WES is getting tents, she will get a tent as well. She would like to add Rubbermaid shelving for the outside in the playground area secured to the fence following EEC guidelines. She is trying to get outside and entice families to come back. Principal Rodman will forward the company's name and canopy that WES ordered. Tents are 10 x 12 feet and can fit 6 people with distancing, 5 with the teacher.

### **FY21 Budget**

Giovanna Venditti explained the 1/12 budget to the committee. She indicated that because Wellfleet has not had town meeting, they do not have an approved budget. They are using the 1/12 budget which is between the state and the town to come up with a figure which cannot be exceeded on a monthly basis. Giovanna Venditti indicated she is monitoring this closely and are within the parameters. If you exceed the amount allotted, you must request a waiver. Once the town has town meeting and the budget is voted, everything will go back to normal. Giovanna Venditti indicated that Chapter 70 funding will be level funded at the FY20 levels. Jan Plaue asked if they will need more money. The Superintendent is hopeful we can get volunteer monitors at the beginning of the school year for the buses as he does not want to spend money on bus monitors. He will make a plea to parents to understand the busing situation. He indicated they are at 65% capacity on the buses.

### **Policies for a First Reading**

Wearing masks during physical education and the quality and types of masks to be worn was discussed.

On a motion by Jill Putnam, seconded by Martha Gordon, it was voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve the policies for a first reading. On a roll call the vote was as follows: Laura Baghetti, - yes, Jill Putnam - yes, Jan Plaue - yes, Marth Gordon - yes and Chair Pontius - yes

### **Summer Parking Update**

Martha Gordon reported that she called the town and the Wellfleet Police who knew nothing about any agreement between the police and First Student Bus Company to be parking at the school. The Police did not think there was a reason for buses to be parked at the school and will ask them to move if they see them parked there. Someone from the town is looking into this and will get back to Martha Gordon. She just wanted the committee to know there was no agreement between First Student and the town. (These are parking spots across from the school building) Jill Putnam thanked Martha Gordon for bringing this to the attention of the committee. She also indicated that they need to have their position and information for next summer so the school does not miss the opportunity to make some money. Jane Plaue thought the property in question was town property and not school property. She was referencing the parking map that was part of the original contract. Chair Pontius indicated that the school committee was trying to partner with the town. She indicated that if buses park there it is problematic for people playing on the ballfield. She appreciated Martha Gordon looking into this. She would like to resume negotiations when appropriate.

### **Reports and Information**

**Cape Cod Collaborative** - Jill Putnam reported that the board met on august 5<sup>th</sup> and reviewed reports. The Cape Cod Collaborative had an in-person summer school and it was reported that everything went very well. Students were wearing masks for ½ day. Cape Cod collaborative will be doing in-person learning and will start later after professional development days for teachers. The Leaders Program did not take place this past summer but there is a big interest in having courses once a week, students already selected. If that went well, kids will meet at Mass. Maritime and will have a closing ceremony and perhaps an overnight. Way Point lease has been extended to December 2021. The Collaborative is

working with districts on transportation. They are developing plans and supporting safety, rigorous training in cleaning and disinfecting and health and wellness checks with the drivers. There will be a virtual training for teachers – Modern Teacher. 450 staff across the Cape will take advantage of the program whether hybrid or remote. The program is competency based, individual learning with groups.

**PTA – no report**

**Strategic Plan – no report**

**Substance Abuse/Mental Health Task Force –** Martha Gordon reported that they have received a letter from the new Director of Student Services, Mary Buchanan, and she is eager to continue the work of the subcommittee.

**Policy Subcommittee –** Chair Pontius indicated that the committee met to review the polies and need to meet with the Director of Technology about making progress on the Staff Technology Use Policy.

**Wellness Committee –no report**

**Future Agenda Items –**

Discuss strategy for town meeting.

Survey Results

Chair Pontius stated as a committee we are trying to serve the community of Wellfleet as best we can. She wanted the committee to be clear in their message and she encouraged people to speak out at the forums. She indicated Wellfleet can work with their families who are not happy or with whatever approach we are taking to work together. She applauded the committee for being thoughtful and having very respectful discourse that makes the committee stronger. Martha Gordon asked if they should speak out and take care of the staff as well as the parents. The superintendent indicated that the safety of the teachers is paramount. He is looking at a testing program for the teachers and is working with a physician from Cape Cod Hospital.

**Approval of Minutes –**

On a motion by Martha Gordon, seconded by Jan Plaue, it was voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve the minutes of July 14, 2020 as amended. On a roll call the vote was as follows: Martha Gordon – yea, Jill Putnam – yea, Laura Baghetti – yea, Jan Plaue – yea and Betsy Pontius – yea

**Adjournment**

On a motion by Jan Plaue, seconded by Martha Gordon, it was voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:37 a.m.

Submitted by, Ann M. Tefft