

SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – April 28, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, April 28, 2021, at 5:30 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

Present and participating remotely were:

Jeanne Downs, Chair
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair
Kim Reichelt
Chris Ryan
Kathie Steinberg

Also participating remotely:

Arthur Unobskey
Superintendent

Parry Graham
Assistant Superintendent

Richard Whitehead
Director of Student Services

Susan Bottan
Director of Finance & Operations

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 5:33 p.m. WayCAM recorded the meeting and it was livestreamed via ZOOM. The meeting was conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 health pandemic and according to the revised open meeting law that allows remote participation. A roll call was taken:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

1. Comments and Written Statements from the Public:

Jeff Sklar made a public comment about school councils, particularly the high school, as a follow-up to his April 14th public comment. He referred to the DESE website regarding the school council mission statement. He noted that a WayCAM video was not available for the last three or four meetings and the link was posted after the meetings took place. In Mr. Sklar's opinion, school councils have only adapted to the minimum requirements of the law, and the lack of advertising of the meetings is not according to the mission statement.

Jeanne commented that she received positive feedback about the students coming back to school all-in. She described how the Wayland staff prepared for the high and middle students' return on April 27 and thanked everyone for their efforts.

2. COVID-19 Response:

(a) Grades K-12 All-In Update, including Distancing Protocols:

Arthur provided an update of all students returning all-in as of April 27, including the staff's ongoing work. Although teachers were a bit apprehensive of this shift, it has been a positive experience for the most part. At all levels, some students are struggling socially with more known behavioral issues at the elementary level. Some of the challenges include dealing with students' anxiety, arrivals and dismissals, and working out the logistics and protocols for end-of-year events. Arthur will report at the next meeting about the WHS graduation plans.

The Commissioner of Education will provide some guidance by mid-May for the fall re-opening and in early July there could be a more specific planning document provided to all districts.

Arthur reported that DESE has changed the close contact guideline. Currently and up to the present time, if within six feet more than 15 minutes with a student who is positive for COVID, the student(s) are close contacts. Going forward, for students who are in the classroom or on the bus and are between three and six feet of a student who is

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positive, they will be a close contact but will not have to quarantine. They will be contacted and given instructions. The district will continue to quarantine students if they are at recess and they are within six feet for fifteen minutes and if they are within three feet in the classroom or on the bus for fifteen minutes. Students who are fully vaccinated are exempt from quarantine. A discussion ensued in the event that the Binaxnow test was possibly used to mitigate quarantine for students. Arthur cited instances in which students were quarantined due to being close contacts outside at recess, adding that with the exception of a possible in-school transmission in the fall, there hasn't been any documentation of in-school transmission since then.

In terms of WRAP movement for high and middle school students, Parry reported that 4 middle school students moved into WRAP and 7 moved from WRAP to in-person. Seven high school students moved into WRAP and 18 students moved out of WRAP to in-person.

Following the Special Education update, Arthur referred to upcoming outdoor end-of-the-year school events that will look entirely different this year. He asked parents for their patience and suggested that the events should have a focus on the students and limited parent participation due to COVID protocols and at the recommendation of the Health Department.

(b) Discussion of Class Size Implications:

Arthur will keep the School Committee updated on students, particularly kindergartners, who were enrolled in private school this year but may return to the Wayland Public Schools in the fall. Susan explained the projection model/process for first grade, as first grade is a bit unpredictable in terms of the number of class sections.

(c) Special Education Update:

Richard provided an update on the progression of the elementary schools being all-in. The special education staff is prepared and eager to have the middle and high school students back and will address any issues that arise. In terms of space capacity issues, there is more of a challenge at the elementary schools.

Because the Wednesday schedule changed, Ellen asked how the schedule has been adapted in terms of the number of required hours for students who have IEP's and if those families will or have received a communication. Richard responded and described the process the special education staff did in this regard, adding that disruption has been minimized and he is not concerned about the delivery of services through the end of the school year. Richard recommended that parents who have individual concerns contact their liaison.

(d) Transportation Update:

Susan reported that there are about 120 seats open on the middle school busses, and families can register online or contact Melissa Ricci. About 940 registrations were recorded for next year and the registration process will end at the end of the week. Ridership has been budgeted at 1,100 and 1,200 riders.

(e) Remote and Hybrid Learning Progress Committee (RHLPC) and COVID Learning and Safety Team Update:

RHLPC:

There was no RHLPC update.

COVID Learning and Safety Team:

At its weekly COVID Learning and Safety Team meeting, the members discussed upcoming filter changes for the school ventilation systems and re-orders for summer replacements. Other topics included cutting back on surface cleaning and replacing loaner desks with permanent desks. Susan updated the School Committee on the process to replace the loaner desks in which W.B. Mason will incur additional fees and moving expenses. A discussion followed.

(f) Surveillance Testing Update:

The district is entering into stage two of the pooled testing on Friday with about 1,500 students and 225 staff participating. This includes students who participate in extra-curricular activities and athletics. MEDEX is now the nursing provider and the service will be funded by the state. Arthur elaborated on the process. Refunds will be sent to families within the next few months.

(g) Discussion of Summer Programming Plans:

Parry updated the summer programming related to elementary math and reading, the fee-based Spanish Immersion Enrichment Program, music camps, and programs for Boston resident students. Staffing is needed for the elementary math and reading program, a Director has been identified for the additional elementary program, and a Director is

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needed for the program for rising 9th and 10th graders. The Middle School summer program has not been determined yet. Most of the summer programming will be funded by the ESSER Grant which is forthcoming. Parry is working with Dr. Easy regarding the summer programs.

- (h) Next Steps:
Next steps were covered in the previous discussions.

3. Financial Matters:

- (a) FY21 Financial Update:

Susan reported that all financial obligations will be met within the FY21 budget appropriation. She continues to review encumbrances and recalibrate projections and there is a possibility that the finances will break even. However, if there are available funds at the end of the fiscal year, Susan will recommend an allocation of funds as a SPED tuition prepayment for next year. She continues to work on payroll, retro payments, the balloon payment and contractual bargaining agreements. Susan will report at a future meeting of the status of the substitute teacher account and longevity payments, as the projections could change for the better. She explained the process by which she made projections for these two accounts.

- (b) Bus Contract and Bus Parking Update:

Jeanne reported that members of the Economic Development Committee have expressed interest in being involved in the town-wide effort to come up with a short-term and long-term solution for parking the school busses.

The Town Administrator's office through its procurement role will administer a bid for a new bus contract. This year's contract ends on June 18, and transportation for summer programming the following week is a concern. A discussion ensued regarding the imminent transportation timeline and the possible need for a short-term bus contract and a bus driver to drive the town-owned bus.

Louise Miller will be invited to attend the May 5th meeting to address both the bus contract and bus parking.

- (c) Food Services Update:

The Director of Food Services Cheryl Judd has provided a free breakfast and lunch to all students regardless of income status according to the Universal and Free Meals Act, which is partially funded by the Federal and state governments. This program is being extended through next year. Government reimbursement is not enough to sustain the food services budget, as the year began with a \$306,000 budget and will end with about \$60,000. Susan referred to the 2016 Edvocate assessment of the food service program. The report pointed out four of the most effective practices to sustain a program, such as increase participation, particularly at the secondary schools, keep personnel costs lower through efficient staffing schedules and lower benefits costs, use as many free commodities in menu planning, and generate sales through a la carte offerings. Susan noted this year's operations in terms of the higher costs of running this year's program resulting in lower revenues and higher expenses. To avoid a future deficit, Cheryl Judd is working on a plan moving forward into next year. Cheryl was praised for her ongoing efforts to run a food service program that was rated #1 by Niche for the past two years.

A discussion ensued in terms of the need for kitchen equipment and current and future OPEB payments given that the financial obligation to make these payments may not be possible due to decreasing revenue.

- (d) Director of Finance and Operations Search Update, including Finalist Interview Schedule:

First round interviews are complete and finalists were identified for the position of Director of Finance and Operations. The School Committee discussed the logistics of the posted School Committee meetings for Thursday and Friday at which finalists will be interviewed by the Committee. It also discussed potential topics for questions to be asked by Committee members, such as collaboration, communication, and creativity and flexibility in finding funds unexpectedly. Other discussions included Dr. Easy's recommendation and process following the School Committee's interviews and the possibility of conducting a public survey.

- (e) Update on Capital Project Scheduling:

Kathie noted that the Finance Subcommittee has had many discussions regarding outstanding capital projects, including those that are proposed for this year and during the summer. Arthur and Susan are working with Louise Miller and Ben Keefe to coordinate project scheduling. Given that Town Meeting is in May, the accepted bids could be presented then with the actual costs of the projects.

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Susan provided an update and status of scheduling capital projects, bids, and project management services, as well as a spreadsheet for the School Committee’s review. Some project funds were appropriated last year and some will depend on Town Meeting approval in May. It is possible that some projects could begin earlier than this summer, such as retiling Loker classrooms, pantry renovation at Happy Hollow, cooling unit restoration at Happy Hollow, and elementary school storage systems. It was recommended by the Town Administrator Louise Miller that the bidding process and scheduling wait until after Town Meeting. Susan recommended that a project manager oversee this process to ensure that these projects are scheduled and completed. A discussion ensued in this regard. Louise Miller will be invited to the next meeting to discuss this matter.

- (f) Review of Information for Town Meeting:
The School Committee discussed what budget information will be provided to the public at Town Meeting. Given the outside venue, it was suggested that handouts are given out to those attendees.

4. Administrative Matters:

- (a) Discussion of April 26, 2021 Letter to Attorney General from George Harris:
The School Committee discussed the most recent OML complaint filed by George Harris, his follow-up letter to the Attorney General, and the possibility of inviting him to a School Committee meeting to review the open meeting law and what a “cure” is to an OML violation. Jeanne spoke to the issues in Mr. Harris’ follow-up letter noting the reason the minutes in question had been updated twice and the Committee’s review of those updated minutes. Mr. Harris will be invited to a future meeting.
- (b) Discussion of Youth Advisory Committee and Permanent Municipal Building Committee Appointments:
As School Committee appointments to the Youth Advisory Committee, the terms for Malcolm Astley and Pam Cerne will end at the of June. Jeanne will reach out to them regarding about possible re-appointments. In addition, Michael Hoyle may need to be re-appointed to the Permanent Municipal Building Committee for the Loker roof project.
- (c) Review Committee Meeting Schedule:
The School Committee discussed the possibility of having its meetings in person at the Town Building in the Council of Aging space, although the public would not be able to attend in person. Because the School Committee would have to wear masks and the public would not be able to attend, the members felt it was better to continue with virtual meetings unmasked.

The next meeting is May 5 and the School Choice Hearing is on May 12. The next May meeting will be the 26th.

Jeanne read the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1993 which mandates participation in “School Choice” unless a school district opts out: “ ...Effective September 1994, every city town, or regional school district is required to enroll non-resident students under the choice program, unless the school committee votes prior to June 1 not to participate. The section of the law states in part, “...this obligation to enroll non-resident students shall not apply to a district for a school year in which its school committee, prior to June 1, after a public hearing, adopts a resolution withdrawing from said obligation, for the school year beginning the following September. Any such resolution with said reasons shall be filed with the Department of Education, provided however, that said department shall have no Power to review any such decision by a school committee...”

5. Consent Agenda:

- (a) Approval of Minutes: April 7, 2021

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Chris Ryan, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

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6. **Matters not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair:**

None.

7. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter executive session at 8:05 p.m. for purposes of (a) discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wayland Teachers Association (WTA), as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3) as discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; (b) reviewing executive session minutes for possible declassification as listed on the agenda, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22; (c) discussing strategy with respect to negotiations with non-union personnel with Director of Finance and Operations, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(2), as discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; and (d) approval of the following executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: April 7, 2021. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

The School Committee will be joined by Arthur Unobskey, Superintendent of Schools, Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

The School Committee will adjourn in executive session and will not reconvene in open session.

8. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 8:59 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. State Education Mandates – Partially or Unfunded Requirements
3. Capital Accounts Financial Summary
4. Facilities-Related Summer Projects and Priorities
5. Letter to AGO from George Harris
6. Minutes of April 7, 2021
7. Executive Session Motion