

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – December 14, 2022

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, December 14, 2022, at 6:00 P.M. at Wayland High School Lecture Hall, South Building 2nd Floor.

Present:

Chris Ryan, Chair
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair
Jeanne Downs
Erin Gibbons
Jessica Polizzotti

Also present:

Dr. Omar Easy
Superintendent

Parry Graham
Assistant Superintendent

Tom Lafleur
Director of Finance & Operations

Also:

Dr. Barbara Cataldo, Director of Special Education
Dr. Allyson Mizoguchi, WHS Principal

1. Welcome & Call to Order:

Chair Chris Ryan convened the regular session at 6:04 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded by WayCAM. School Committee members shared their thoughts and school news since the last meeting regarding the Spanish Immersion Program, the Loker and Happy Hollow 4th grade strings and band concert, and the Middle and High Schools chorus concert. The members all commented on these amazing programs. As a swim coach at the community pool, Jeanne noted that the new kids on the swim team speak about school in a very positive way.

2. Public Comment:

Chris Ryan read a public comment from Craig Gruber, 108 Sears Road, expressing his concerns about a teacher who left mid-year because, in his opinion, the teacher was targeted by the current administration. Mr. Gruber urged the School Committee to fulfill its mandate regarding this matter and work with the current administration.

As a member of and in solidarity with WTA, John Berry read a public statement regarding a twelve-year veteran High School teacher who recently left the Wayland Public Schools and cited the Superintendent's approach to leadership as the reason. Mr. Berry added that there have been other teachers who left Wayland, and teachers and building administrators should be heard and should be supported.

Kim Reichelt, Coolidge Road, commented that part of being a great district is about change, and the only way to improve is to try new things. New ideas can come from all over, and it would be a mistake to believe that the district is doing everything right or in the best way. If there is resistance when something new is introduced, then it is almost impossible to move forward. It would not be good to stagnate, but to embrace and welcome changes in order to stay amongst the top school districts.

Alexia Obar, 18 Dean Road, supported and agreed with the previous public comment by Kim Reichelt. Change is great most of the time, and agrees with the changes already made in the district. Ms. Obar noted that there have been many problems over the years, and they are now being solved. She referred to the Middle School's "Monday Morning Minute" and praised the school newsletter as being informative with new information and being available in different languages.

Jess Polizzotti read a public comment from parents and students who asked to remain anonymous. She was asked to read this statement if the topic of teachers leaving the district within Mr. Berry's statement was brought up. The parents asked the School Committee to look into inappropriate targeting and mistreatment of a staff member, which is contradictory to the values of the school system. They have received several consistent reports from their children about this unacceptable behavior within the school. They express their support for this staff member who, in their

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opinion, is an excellent educator and has fostered the joy of learning for their children. Some students also shared their experiences of witnessing the mistreatment of this staff member by another staff member.

3. **Special Matter:**

3.1 *Superintendent's FY24 Budget Presentation:*

Dr. Easy thanked his administration for their collaboration in developing the proposed FY24 budget. The four district goals within the School Improvement Plans are essentially the drivers of the FY24 budget. There are three budget drivers: 1) per pupil expenditures, 2) teachers' salaries, and 3) Special Education. As of FY21, Wayland's per pupil expenditures were ranked eleven amongst peer communities.

The total cost of athletics is \$902,854, but less user fees, the proposed FY24 athletic budget is \$622,854, which is an increase over the FY23 budget of \$80,560.

As explained by Dr. Easy, class enrollment will drive the hiring of new staff, such as an elementary EL teacher (1.0 FTE), an increase to PE (0.1 FTE), an increase to a reading specialist (0.2 FTE), an increase to a Special Education leader position (0.1 FTE), and an additional 1.0 FTE Special Education at Loker. It is expected that there will be an increase of students coming into the sixth grade in the fall of 2023. Therefore, the following staffing at the Middle School is being requested: English teacher (0.4 FTE), Social Studies teacher (0.6 FTE), Science Teacher (0.6 FTE), and a World Language teacher (0.6 FTE). Dr. Easy answered questions regarding FY24 enrollment and the possible benefits packages related to these positions. In terms of teachers' salaries, Wayland was fourth amongst its peer districts in FY21.

In terms of Special Education and according to M.G.L. Chapter 7, Section 22N, the Operational Services Division is required to submit an "estimated rate of inflation for social service programs" to the Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance by October 1 of each year and is required also to notify the State's superintendents of the estimated rate of inflation so they can plan for the Special Education budgets. The private school tuition rates will increase by 14% in FY24 and will significantly and negatively impact all district school budgets. In comparison, the tuition rates increased 2% annually over the last 13 years. A discussion ensued in this regard.

The FY23 approved Special Education budget was in the amount of \$3,618,949. However, this number has been exceeded in FY23 and is projected that these same services in FY24 will cost \$5,361,886 which is an increase of 48% or \$1,742,937. Dr. Easy explained further the cost of out-of-district tuition and transportation. The School Committee asked questions in this regard.

The Children's Way (TCW) preschool is now the sixth school in Wayland, has five integrated classrooms and includes children who have special needs. TCW's revolving account reflected \$550,000 collected from fees to cover the cost of staff and supplies which came very close to this total amount. Due to necessary certifications for three TCW teachers, the salary increase would be \$180,895.

Dr. Easy presented the past financial history of Full Day Kindergarten which is fee-based. In FY24, \$457,772 would be collected in fees amongst the three elementary schools. However, this amount would be added to the FY24 operating budget if Full Day Kindergarten was not fee-based.

The FY23 level service budget was \$47,160,774, and the proposed level service increase for FY24 is \$2,836,712 which is a 6% increase from FY23 bringing the total to \$50,001,482. The proposed FY24 budget does not include COLAs.

Elementary improvement needs include a 0.4 FTE library teacher, 0.2 FTE, technology teacher, and 2.0 FTE building substitute to service all three schools. The following are requests from each building principal. Loker School: 1.0 FTE math interventionist, 4.0 FTEs for Spanish Immersion teaching assistants for Grades 2 to 5, and a 0.5 FTE reading specialist. Dr. Easy responded to a question about whether other Grades 2 to 5 have teacher assistants; they do not. Happy Hollow School: 1.0 FTE math interventionist and a 0.5 FTE EL teacher which is enrollment driven. Claypit Hill School: 0.2 FTE reading specialist and a 0.5 FTE EL teacher both based on enrollment.

The Middle School is requesting a 1.0 FTE educational team leader and 2.0 additional FTEs due to the increase in enrollment in sixth grade. Finally, the High School is requesting a 1.0 FTE school psychologist, 0.2 FTE Innovation Pathways, 0.2 FTE Social Studies teacher, and a 0.4 FTE business teacher.

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Based on all of the schools' needs, the additional amount in the budget would be \$682,448, which is 1.36% above the proposed need above level service budget, but a total of 7.36% above the entire level service budget. Historically, there is always a list of unmet needs that don't make the budget as many are deferred. Dr. Easy presented the unmet needs beginning in FY20. Tom Lafleur described how the budget was built from a zero-based budget. Dr. Easy reported that he and Tom Lafleur meet weekly with the Interim Town Administrator and the town's Finance Director.

Jeanne noted that Athletics, The Children's Way and Full Day Kindergarten are the biggest budget drivers. Chris thanked the administrators and the Finance Subcommittee for a collaborative budget process.

4. Superintendent's Update:

4.1 *Individual Learning Center (ILC) Update:*

Dr. Barbara Cataldo commented that the Individual Learning Center is designed to meet the needs of eight children diagnosed on the Autism spectrum, who have significant needs. Some cannot be in a general academic setting the entire school day. The program strives to build on students' strengths and progress, addressing their areas of need, while at the same time enhancing their abilities to be as independent as possible. Dr. Cataldo described the program and the services and the instruction that is provided. This program strives to build on the students' strengths and progress and addresses their areas of need based on each Individualized Education Program.

Currently, the staff in the ILC consists of two teachers, four teacher assistants, one Speech Language Pathologist, one physical therapist, one occupational therapist, and one adaptive physical education teacher. Dr. Cataldo described the current status of this program in terms of additional staffing, and the School Committee asked questions in this regard and a discussion ensued.

Dr. Cataldo described what is next for the ILC Program, such as preparing for the summer Extended School Year Program, provide training in Foundations, student access to Bridges Math Curriculum, provide access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, students participating more in the general education classroom, and provide training for the teacher assistants. A discussion ensued.

Chris Ryan left the meeting at 7:34 p.m.; returned at 7:36 p.m.

4.2 *Approval of WHS Wayland Student Press Network Trip to California in April 2023:*

Dr. Allyson Mizoguchi presented this 2023 trip to the School Committee. About 30 students will travel to San Francisco for the yearly journalism convention/conference. Brian Keaney and Mary Barber will accompany the students. While there, the students will participate in writing contests and must participate in certain activities.

Upon a motion duly made Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the WSPN trip as proposed.

Erin Gibbons left the meeting at 7:39 p.m.; returned at 7:41 p.m.

5. Administrative Matters:

5.1 *Discussion of Re-visiting a Schedule of Administrator-Teacher-Facilitator Meetings:*

Chris reminded the School Committee that last spring, he, Jeanne and a facilitator met with a group of administrators and teachers to discuss concerns and other matters. Chris proposed continuing those meetings and asked the School Committee for its input in this regard. Ellen referred to a morale issue among staff based on a survey conducted by the WTA. The Committee agreed to move forward with these meetings, and if they are not open to the public, transparency could be a concern. Chris will follow up with the Committee at a future meeting.

5.2 *Review of FY23 Superintendent Goals and Standards:*

At the last School Committee meeting, the members asked Dr. Easy to revisit Goal #3 which is a new goal. Dr. Easy made some changes to that goal, such as adding "mutual accountability and collaboration" and as reviewed by the Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee. Dr. Easy described further changes. A discussion ensued about what is being addressed or not being addressed in the goal, such as improving the polarization in the district, as suggested by Ellen. Dr. Easy asked for suggestions about how to address this issue in his goals. The School Committee will revisit this topic at the next meeting.

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6. **Financial Matters:**

6.1 *Special Education Stabilization Fund Update:*

Jeanne had a conversation with the Finance Committee liaison from last year about the SPED Stabilization Fund and the Article for funding which is due by mid-January.

6.2 *Review of Budget Calendar (after budget presentation):*

The School Committee reviewed the budget development calendar in terms of presentations around the budget. Some presentations were moved to a different date. A discussion ensued about past community presentations prior to Town Meeting and if the School Committee would follow a similar process this year. Additionally, there will not be a School Committee Budget Hearing because of the Town Manager Act.

7. **Consent Agenda:**

7.1 Donation to the Water Warriors Program (\$500)

7.2 Accounts Payables Warrant:

Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated December 14, 2022, in the amount of \$360,454.11.

7.3 Approval of Minutes: November 10, 2022

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco and seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda.

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

None.

9. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 8:05 p.m. for the purposes of (a) discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wayland Food Service Workers, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; (b) 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 a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; (c) discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wayland Educational Secretaries Association (WESA), as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; and (d) pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(1), a discussion of open meeting law complaints against School Committee filed on November 16, 2022 by Kimberly Sklar Reichelt and December 6, 2022 by George Harris and Kimberly Sklar Reichelt. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Chris Ryan, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs	X	
Erin Gibbons	X	
Jess Polizzotti	X	

The School Committee will be joined by Dr. Omar Easy, Superintendent, Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, Tom LaFleur, Director of Finance & Operations, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

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

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jess Polizzotti, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:25 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Chris Ryan, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs	X	
Erin Gibbons	X	
Jess Polizzotti	X	

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Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Omar Easy, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Observers:

Refer to the sign-in sheet.

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Model UN Overnight Field Trip
3. Draft of the Superintendent's Goals and Rubric
4. FY24 Budget Development Calendar
5. Accounts Payables Warrants
6. Water Warriors Donation
7. Minutes of November 10, 2022
8. Executive Session Motion