

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Special Meeting – June 17, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, June 17, 2020, at 12:10 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

Present and participating remotely were:

Jeanne Downs, Chair
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair
Nate Buffum
Kim Reichelt
Kathie Steinberg
Chris Ryan (Non-voting member-elect)

Also participating remotely:

Arthur Unobskey
Superintendent

Parry Graham
Assistant Superintendent

Richard Whitehead
Director of Student Services

Susan Bottan
Director of Finance & Operations

Also:

Leisha Simon, Director of Technology & Accountability
Lea Anderson, Board of Selectmen

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 12:12 p.m. The meeting was recorded by WayCAM and 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	absent	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	
Chris Ryan	X	

1. Comments & Written Statements from the Public:

Jeanne read a public comment from Bill Cossart in which he refers to the June 10 meeting discussion about the GPA. He is disheartened by some of the comments that were made and does not support the decision made, as he believes that GPA's are important. He offered an analogy to present the other side of this discussion. Mr. Cossart also asked for the emails from the school districts who applauded Wayland High School's decision.

Jeanne read a public comment from Orla Daunt in which she expressed thanks for the School Committee's willingness to listen to parents' and students' concerns regarding the GPA approach for this year. Ms. Daunt adds that students should not enter the college application process with less than the grades they earned, as it could affect the acceptance decision by the colleges. Based on all information and the two potential solutions that evolved from a two-hour virtual chat with Kim Reichelt and Jeanne Downs, decisions should be made in terms of what is best for the students.

Jeanne read a public comment from Linda Hines in which she asked for a reconsideration of the GPA issue given that the college application process next fall will be very different. She added that the juniors should be given full credit for the work they did this school year since they were under the impression that it would be counted. Ms. Hines noted that colleges sort applications by GPAs and some merit scholarships are awarded based on GPAs. Many of our students have raised their voices in many ways and they should be heard because they matter the most.

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Jeanne read a public comment from Joanne Schmidt, library teacher and high school representative to the WTA E-board. Ms. Schmidt noted that 220 signatures were collected as a formal petition regarding contract negotiations. The petitioners asked the School Committee to respect the WTA members' hard work this past spring and to move forward with a fair contract now, as they do not want to begin the next school year without a contract.

Ellen arrived at 12:23 p.m.

Remmi Shaw, 7 Autumn Lane, is a junior at Wayland High School and only learned about the GPA decision very recently. This decision has implications for every student; they should be helped and not hurt by this decision. In her opinion, it is not possible to gauge the third quarter based on the first half of the year because many students do not do as well in the first and second quarter and the third quarter was not complete before entering remote learning. Remmi suggested that four different GPAs be calculated; she explained the four options. She conveyed her conversations with her teachers, all of whom agreed with her assessment of this situation.

Kim read a public comment from an anonymous writer. He/she thanked the WHS leadership for bringing a new GPA proposal to the School Committee, although there is still room for improvement. The writer feels that it would be beneficial for the students to have a choice to include the work they did in Q3 allowing credit for the work done prior to the pandemic and the students who didn't do the work would be held harmless. He/she conveyed the experience of his/her son who is a junior this year as his college process thus far. The writer also expressed disappointment with the remarks made at the June 10 meeting.

Kim read a public comment from Iliana Nunn asking that the GPA decision is reconsidered. She believes that Q3 grades and the mid-term grade should be counted toward the GPA, but appreciates the decision to include Q1 and Q2 grades, adding that there is more work to be done. Ms. Nunn believes that much stress has been added to the students' emotional wellbeing given the difficult time in their lives for many personal reasons. This decision could have a financial impact during their college years, given that merit scholarships are based on the GPA.

Jeff Sklar, Brooks Road, commented that it is being reported that 66 colleges are dropping SAT/ACT requirements for college students solely on the basis of whether or not an adequate GPA is submitted and more colleges are being added to the list. He believes that the students' work should be counted for the year. Mr. Sklar referred to the GPA petition that contains 600 names, adding that this petition does matter and believes it was discounted at the last meeting. The decision should reflect what is best for students.

Jeanne clarified the comment regarding the number of signatures on the petition, adding that the comment about the bus transportation petition was not made to discount this current petition.

Arthur addressed the so-called misconception about the mid-term and its weight toward the grading. The semester is being counted as half of the full year in the GPA conversation. Thus, the mid-term is being counted in the normal percentage of the calculation which is 20% of the semester grade. Kim added that it is not known how the colleges will calculate the GPA.

2. Discuss COVID-19 Response:

- Presentation and Discussion of Proposed Fall 2020 Plan for District, including Teaching & Learning and Operational Aspects:

Arthur thanked the teachers for their hard work and efforts during the remote learning period, which has been a focus for the planning and solutions in the fall. He also thanked the School Committee for all of their input in this process, as well as the Administrative Council and particularly Parry and Susan as they facilitated the Teaching and Learning and Operations Groups.

Arthur reviewed the process and forecasted planning for the fall reopening of schools with the information that is known now. A blueprint of the reopening plan will be provided to the School Committee in mid-August. Arthur acknowledged that reopening in the fall will be challenging, but noted that everyone is looking forward to seeing the students again and appreciates the community's support.

The guiding principles and the vision for 2020-2021 have not changed in terms of academic progress, elevating achievement, emotional well-being, deepening social-emotional learning, equity, and health and safety, but there has been a shift in many ways. Due to the loss in learning during the remote learning process, there will be a focus on academic progress. There will also be an elevated focus on the students' social emotional well-being and equitable

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access, especially for those students who struggled during the remote learning process for one reason or another, and for all students to ensure their success. Clear protocols around health and safety will be communicated to families and staff and will be aligned with and implemented per state guidelines.

Arthur reviewed what teaching and learning will look like in the fall in terms of knowing the students well and knowing their needs before returning by reviewing the educational gaps, engaging the students on a deeper level while in school, and to effectively personalize the feedback in an effort to know that the process is working. DESE has not provided their guidance for the fall yet, but expectations are that a hybrid model will be suggested/mandated.

From the information gathered from the State and through parent and teacher surveys, the Teaching & Learning and Operations Groups began the shared collaborative planning process in May with a focus on the Hybrid Model with cascading questions about the in-school capacity at one time, student rotation in school and at home, scheduling of in-school days, the amount of curriculum covered, and the logistics of recess. Although the groups landed on, but with flexibility, 50% of students in at once and one week on and one week off, it was realized that “live” teachers could not be the “remote” teachers at the same time. Some activities and subject areas could be better if taught in-school, while others could be taught remotely. In terms of scheduling, elementary, middle, and high school will need different approaches. In addition, students in specialized programs and kindergarten students may need to be in school on a more consistent level.

Parry noted that the T & L group preferred the AAXBB model, but it was also important to follow other districts given staff and family childcare issues. Next steps will continue with building-based and Central Office leadership, summer work and professional development, understanding what was lost in the spring and what it will mean in the fall, building effective assessments to determine where students are in the fall, planning for the August elementary math/reading program, and collecting qualitative feedback from families.

The Operations Team, comprised of many professionals broken into four sub-groups, worked toward the goal and purpose of creating a safe learning environment for all students and staff members by answering specific questions once state guidance is received. They include health screening protocols, how to keep buildings clean day to day, the safe transport of students to and from school, and the assurance of social distancing. Susan reviewed the decisions made in these four categories in terms of Federal and State and Town of Wayland standards, flexible allocation of staff duties and building spaces, training on health and safety protocols for staff and students, and bus transportation based on half of the registrations received. Susan explained the seating capacity on the busses and the next steps that will be taken in areas, such as compliance to protocols and training for staff.

There will be four tasks embarked upon during the summer: 1) develop the hybrid model using what has been learned in-person and remotely; 2) develop common approaches for staff professional development that will most effectively meet the needs of students and develop school structures to ensure success; 3) develop and communicate protocols, space, and compliance; and 4) integrate community input. The team will keep the School Committee comprised of this work as it progresses.

The School Committee posed questions regarding transportation and the ability to withdraw registrations by families, decisions around financial constraints, inviting parental involvement, creating a cohort model at the secondary level, grading in the fall, siblings attending school at the same time, professional development focus on technology, and the structure of remote learning. In addition, the School Committee asked about the length of the school day, teachers' concern regarding health and safety, the possibility of team teaching, and scheduling extra-curricular activities and sports. A discussion ensued in terms of the School Committee's role in this planning, particularly regarding policy implications and benchmarking.

- Discussion of Response to Possible State Mandates:
This topic was addressed in earlier discussions.
- Phase 2 Remote Learning:
 - Update of Implementation:
This topic was addressed in previous discussions.

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- Discussion of Current and Future Feedback Process:
 This topic was addressed in previous discussions.
- Next Steps:
 This topic was addressed in previous discussions.

3. **Financial Matters:**

- Loker Roof Update:
 This ballot issue passed at the polls – 1670 vs. 615 – and was approved with exempt debt funding. If the project is approved at the Annual Town Meeting, construction will begin during the summer of 2021.
- Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Technology Lease:
 Leisha Simon noted that the technology resources for staff and students have been a silver lining during the remote learning period. There will be personalized professional development offerings for the staff during the summer for which she provided the link on the website.

Leisha asked for School Committee approval for a three-year technology lease that is necessary for the teacher assistants, adding that this is not a new request. Approval is also needed for budgeted iPads for all K-1 students, as it is important for all students during this time to have 1:1 devices.

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Nate Buffum, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the lease as presented. A roll call vote was taken:

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

- Discussion of Financial Reporting During Remote Meeting Period including:
 - FY21 1/12th Budget and Approval Process:
 Since there has been no Annual Town Meeting, FY21 funds have not been appropriated. In the meantime, the Department of Revenue (DOR) and the Division of Local Services has asked all municipalities in this situation to operate on a one-twelfth budget based on level funding in the FY20 school year. Actual FY20 school expenditures during the months of July, August and September were reviewed and contractual obligations, such as steps and lanes, enrollment driven expenditures, SPED mandated expenditures, and any anticipated contractual obligations in regard to utilities and transportation contracts were added. Upon adding that incremental per month projected cost, a month-by-month school department budget was delivered to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) by way of Louise Miller and Brian Keveny, voted on by the BOS, and submitted to the DOR. The months break down as follows: July (\$522,465), August (\$2,386,891), and September (\$3,604,688). Susan noted that as of this meeting, the DOR has not been in contact with the Town. She added that this one-twelfth budget was also voted and approved by the School Committee and the Finance Committee. A discussion ensued about future obligations that could affect and increase this one-twelfth budget. Budget discussions will be added to future agendas.
 - State (and Federal) Programs for COVID-19 Related Expenses:
 Susan updated the School Committee on the two categories of relief funding from a Federal Grant for the Town of Wayland and the public schools which is up to \$1.2M to cover COVID-driven expenses from March through June 30 and from July 1 through December 31, 2020. The school department expenses related to COVID include food products to prepare and deliver lunches to families, cleaning and disinfecting the buildings, and some technology purchases and supplies. After review by the State, it will reimburse up 75% of the submitted expenditures to the Town and will be reflected in the free cash account. As requested by the Town Administrator, Susan will submit a projected estimate for expenditures from July 1 through December 31 once school reopens. Susan added that the School Department received \$55,073 in relief funding and can be used throughout FY21. These funds will be used for remote learning, staff professional development and staff curriculum work this summer in preparation to reopen the schools.

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Kathie noted that there is a resolution moving throughout school districts in which the State will be asked to give every school district a full reimbursement for necessary expenses due to COVID-19 in order to follow state mandates. School districts are being asked to have a formal vote to approve this resolution.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to support the resolution for reimbursement of COVID related expenses. A roll call vote was taken:

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

Although Chris Ryan is a non-voting member at this time, he does support the resolution.

- Quarter 3 School Budget and Encumbrances:
 Kathie informed the School Committee that there were questions about the encumbrances in the Q3 budget in the amount of \$2.2M and what they were related to. Quarter 3 comparisons for F17, FY18, FY19, and FY20 were provided by Susan, and the summaries indicate that the FY20 encumbrances were less than FY19. The encumbrances exist because, although the buildings are closed, the students and staff have been fully engaged in remote learning according to state law, as well as continuing expenses related to operations and facilities. Thus, the staff has continued to be paid. Some savings is reflected in utilities and transportation. In terms of professional development, this is an ongoing contractual obligation and teachers must be reimbursed.
- Communication of School Finances to Other Boards and Committees during COVID-19 Emergency:
 This agenda item was passed over.

4. Administrative/Procedural Matters:

- Discussion of Superintendent Search Process including Review of Search Firms and Discussion of Timeline:
 Jeanne has reached out six search firms and received three proposals thus far. This discussion will be added to the next meeting agenda.
- Discussion of Possible Community Outreach Opportunities:
 Kim noted her interest in continuing to have weekly “Zoom” coffees, as well as possibly creating a Facebook page in an effort to reach out to the community. Kim provided the School Committee with a list of other School Committee Facebook pages from around the State which comply with the Open Meeting Laws. Kim described the purposes of the coffees and a Facebook page. A discussion ensued about the public’s perception in terms of the purpose and the dissemination of information. As a parent and participant in the first coffee, Chris Ryan shared his thoughts in this regard. The School Committee will continue this discussion at its next meeting, including the jurisdiction of the School Committee.
- Discussion of Committee Appointments to Wayland Housing Authority, Audit Committee and The Education Cooperation:
 Chris DiBona is the School Committee appointee on the Wayland Housing Partnership. Her term ends in June and she would like to continue in this capacity. The School Committee is in agreement for Jeanne to put Chris DiBona’s name forward to the Board of Selectmen.

Chris Ryan will continue as the School Committee liaison to the Audit Committee for now, and Jeanne will continue as the The Education Cooperative (TEC) liaison.

5. Consent Agenda:

- Approval of Accounts Payables and Payroll Warrants:
 - Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated June 17, 2020, in the amount of \$953,788.48
 - Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated June 17, 2020, in the amount of \$334,893.87
 - Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Student Activities Warrant, dated June 17, 2020, in the amount of \$45,202.44

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- Approval of a Happy Hollow PTO Gift in the Amount of \$1,505.00:
- Approval of Minutes: May 27, 2020 and June 3, 2020

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) 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	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

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

Jeanne addressed her attendance at the coffee held by Kim after which the School Committee received an email the next morning. Jeanne read her response to the questions that came up during the coffee regarding reopening the discussion of the GPA and concluded that she would not recommend to reopen the discussion and to move forward as there are many decisions needing to be made for the fall reopening. Jeanne then opened it up to the Committee as to whether they wanted to reopen the GPA discussion. A discussion ensued in this regard and the Committee agreed that it should move on. Kathie was satisfied with the original proposal, adding that she did review a considerable of information and spoke to the WHS staff, particularly about the Q3 grade. Kim added that the decision could have been more informed given that some information was not available and could have been useful in voting. Ellen feels that the School Committee should not question the teachers' grading assessment process. Nate agreed to move on. Chris feels that it might be worth exploring the SEI and SEL effect on the students related to this issue.

Arthur left the meeting at 2:54 p.m.

7. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 3:00 p.m. for the 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 a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; and b) discussing strategy with respect to and in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(2) (non-union personnel are listed on the agenda), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; and c) approving the following Executive Session Minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 22: June 3, 2020. The School Committee will not come back into open session, but will adjourn in Executive Session. 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	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

The School Committee will be joined by Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, Diane Marobella, recording secretary, and Chris Ryan, School Committee Member-Elect.

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

8. **Adjournment from Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn at 3:49 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	
Nate Buffum	absent	

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Kim Reichelt	X
Kathie Steinberg	X

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Technology Lease Documents
3. FY21 July to October Budget
4. Q3 Summary FY17 to FY20
5. FY20 Q3 Q & A's
6. Summary of COVID State Relief Funding
7. SC Resolution re: COVID State Relief Funding
8. MASC Document re: Key Decisions for the School Committee re: Superintendent Search
9. Accounts Payables Warrants
10. Minutes of May 27, 2020 and June 3, 2020
11. Executive Session Motion