

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – December 14, 2020

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Monday, December 14, 2020, at 5:00 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

Also:

Allyson Mizoguchi, Principal, Wayland High School
Betsy Gavron, Principal, Wayland Middle School
Tricia O'Reilly, Principal, Happy Hollow Elementary School
Christie Harvey, Principal, Claypit Hill Elementary School
Brian Jones, Principal, Loker Elementary School
Heath Rollins, Athletic Director
Leisha Simon, Director of Technology and Digital Learning
Steve Correia, Chair Finance Committee
Carol Martin, Finance Committee
Christine Roberts, Finance Committee
Pam Roman, Finance Committee
Bill Steinberg, Finance Committee
Adam Gutbezahl, Finance Committee
Kelly Lappin, Finance Committee
Ben Keefe, Public Buildings Director

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 5:02 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. Superintendent Search:

- Update on Process and Search Committee:

Ellen updated the School Committee regarding the search process. Eight candidates were identified to be interviewed by the Superintendent Search Screening Committee and six were interviewed with the remaining two taking place tomorrow evening. The School Committee discussed how many finalists the Committee wants to interview. The consensus among members was four or five finalists. Jeanne reviewed the process from the search in 2017.

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2. **Comments and Written Statements from the Public:**

Jeanne read a public comment from Caitlin Golden, a Claypit Hill Kindergarten teacher, asking what the end goal is in bringing Kindergarten students in person four days a week – to provide more support for the community or to increase the curriculum for the students. Ms. Golden is all for providing more support, but it would be impossible to provide more curriculum, given that teachers are not able to teach everything now under the constraints and safety procedures in place. She notes that she and others do not feel safe under the hybrid model, and there is a difference in feeling safe and being safe.

Jeanne read a public comment from Kristin Suga Heres, 20 Grove Street, in which she expressed her dissatisfaction with the last minute switch to the cohort schedule during the week of December 21. Ms. Heres suggested that Cohort A students attend in person on 12/23 in order to mitigate the potential losses from December 16 through January 3. She supports getting in as many kids back to school as frequently as possible, particularly for students in K-3.

Jeanne read a public comment from Jessica Polizzotti, a Happy Hollow parent. She asked that an excerpt from one of her student's portfolio be read during public comment. This student is a good student and loves to be in school, not alone in front of a computer three days a week. There is a social emotional impact given the lack of in person time and it is ruining the passion for learning for some. Ms. Polizzotti asked the School Committee to put this generation of learner's needs first and find a way to bring them back to school five days a week.

Jeanne read a public comment from Deb Russo, a Kindergarten teacher at Happy Hollow School, in which she asked the School Committee to reconsider bringing Kindergarten students into the schools four days a week. She described the school days during the warmer weather until the outside tents came down for the winter, adding that being inside all of the time even six feet apart will increase exposure if there are more students in the classroom because Kindergartners require more attention. Even as the BOH weighs in on the decision, Ms. Russo believes it is a risk to everyone's health and safety when possible testing and a vaccine is very close for the Wayland Public Schools.

Jeanne read a public comment from Kelly Bradford, a Wayland community health nurse. She expresses her deep concern about the possibility of moving more students to in-person learning at the end of January. As a nurse, a mother, and a frontline worker during the pandemic, Ms. Bradford and the entire group of community health nurses have worked days, nights and weekends without additional compensation and with added stress to commit to conduct contact tracing for which they had additional training. She described her summer work in the Math and Literacy Program that served as a model to open the schools safely in October in the hybrid mode. Ms. Bradford added that she, the other nurses, and other school staff advocate, educate, and work tirelessly to protect the students Wayland. She shared some insight into a typical day, adding that every staff member puts his/her own lives on the line. She urged the School Committee to think deeply and choose wisely, as she believes there is only one right choice.

Amy Schoeff, 20 Mall Drive, is the active case manager for the Wayland Health Department and is monitoring positive COVID cases every day in the community and in the schools since March. Although she disagrees, she noted that some would consider the number of positive cases in Wayland is within reasonable limits and the spread of COVID does not happen in the schools. Based on the hybrid model, the social distance of six feet, and the low number of cases, she urged the School Committee to keep the schools as they are, as she is concerned the change could result in increased exposure to students and staff and less time in school due the possibility of quarantine. Up to now, the infected person(s) was not in school during the infectious period and resulted in no close contacts. The current model is working and, again, Ms. Schoeff asked the School Committee to delay the proposed changes to the schedule.

Jeanne acknowledged the School Committee's deep concern for everyone's health and safety. She thanked all of the community/school nurses for their dedication and hard work during this difficult time.

3. **Presentation of the FY22 Superintendent's Recommended Budget:**

Arthur thanked the community/school nurses and teachers for their dedication and commitment during this challenging time.

When preparing the proposed FY22 budget, the administrators focused on the School Committee's budget goal, which is "To fully support the academic and social/emotional growth of our students, while respecting the fiscal restraints facing Wayland residents and needs of other Town departments." Also taken into account is the core belief that students thrive when their resilience stems from emotional well-being and the skills resulting from a challenging academic experience as well as the support and nurture they receive in challenging times. Arthur reviewed this year's three district target goals that focus on maximizing students' academic growth, need of students of color, and the prioritization of fostering a

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compassionate and nurturing learning environment due to the emotional toll on students and staff, adding that the proposed budget will support these goals.

The total of the FY22 proposed budget is \$44,933,295, which is an increase of \$1,574,150 or 3.62% over the FY21 budget. The increase is a result of contractual obligations, enrollment/mandated-driven staffing, and sustaining innovation to keep the district moving forward. In addition, there are non-personnel increases, such as utilities, SPED tuition and transportation, General Ed transportation, and technology needs. Arthur explained further and addressed the current leaves of absences, staffing in general in the personnel budget and the transportation costs for FY22. Arthur noted that the Town Administrator asked the School Department to create a budget for level funding (0% increase), level services (including mandated-driven costs), and level services plus the sustaining innovation initiative.

Arthur explained the differences between a level funded and a level services budget, noting that the level funded budget has a 0% increase over the FY21 budget, but there could be reductions in staffing (14-17 people) and non-personnel items, which is a decrease of \$1,574,150. The level funded budget could result in significant changes, including larger class sizes based on staffing. The level services budget would meet contractual obligations, enrollment/mandate-driven staffing, and non-personnel expenses, which is an increase over the FY21 budget of \$1,138,684.

Arthur and the school principals spoke about the level services budget with sustaining innovations (\$435,466) to support the success of students both academically, socially, and emotionally. Included in sustaining innovations in Tier 1 is a 0.5 FTE assistant principal each for Loker and Happy Hollow, an additional 0.3 FTE assistant principal at Claypit Hill, and a clinical social worker at the High School. Additional guidance support at two elementary schools, and support for elementary technology needs is in Tier 2 of the sustaining innovation piece of the level services budget. The principals expressed the need for these sustaining innovations, particularly given the challenges they have encountered during this school year.

To support the WHS clinical social worker budget item, Betsy Gavron spoke to the importance of the work that the Middle School clinical social worker has accomplished and what it has meant to the Middle School community and is there for those students who experience social and emotional challenges. It would create a partnership between the Middle School and High School as those students move on. Allyson Mizoguchi stressed the need for a 1.0 FTE clinical social worker at the High School who would offer in-house clinical support immediately, prevent a crisis, offer support groups, and offer outreach to families. There is an increase in the students' mental health needs given the pandemic and the current social environment. Richard Whitehead expressed his support for the principals' requests, adding that there will be a mental health crisis over the next couple of years. If the students' mental health is not supported, they cannot achieve academic success.

Leisha Simon advocated for additional instructional technology support for the district at a cost of \$52,800. She noted the pre-pandemic technology needs vs. the technology needs since last March. Currently, two computer technicians service over 3,000 devices and the bigger need is additional support for teachers to integrate the software applications and the creative work that is done in the classroom. This position is a combination of what the instructional specialists do as well as an added hardware technician for the devices.

A discussion ensued and questions were asked about the role of the additional .5 FTE for Loker and Happy Hollow assistant principal position, the FTE for the WHS clinical social worker, the budget tiers, and the second district goal for students of color in terms of additional support. Arthur reviewed the district's unmet needs that include, but not limited to, a 1.0 FTE behavior specialist (possible funding through a grant), permanent subs, a .20 FTE Spanish Immersion Coordinator, a WHS intervention specialist, a WMS math boost increase, two Spanish Immersion teacher assistants, and the funding of full day kindergarten. The entire list of unmet needs totals just over \$1M.

Also included in the budget is a supplemental section of an FY22 COVID contingency budget if the district must continue in the hybrid mode. It estimates potential personnel increases of approximately \$689,200 and any expenditures associated with staff. Susan Bottan detailed this supplemental piece of the budget, including estimated transportation savings. If the all-in mode was in effect in September with three feet of social distancing in the classrooms, six feet in the lunchrooms, and maintaining 23 students per bus, the total costs for Grades 1 to 12 is \$1,046,557. Susan detailed the yearly costs for the all-in mode, such as PPE, furniture, transportation, storage, custodial and moving costs. Funding this all-in mode is not known at this time. However, Susan noted that Wayland could receive another allocation of funding related to COVID in the amount of \$67,000. The FinCom asked about the continuation of WRAP and staffing in the hybrid mode and the need for an additional 18 FTE's.

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The Finance Committee left the meeting at 6:51 p.m.

Jeanne explained the budget process moving forward.

4. Financial Matters:

(a) Review and Discussion of Q1 Financial Summary:
Passed over.

(b) **Review of Capital Requests and Five-Year Capital Plan:**

At its recent meeting, the Finance Subcommittee reviewed the recommended capital budget put forth and recommended by the Town Administrator and at which time the Finance Subcommittee noted areas for which it would seek clarification. Kathie identified the areas, such as the funding for the exempt projects, the voice lift, two fire alarm panels, the egress doors at Loker, and the summer flooring schedule. In addition, Kathie explained other projects that would be postponed due to lack of funding and prioritizations, such as roof top projects and ventilation. A discussion ensued. Finally, Kathie noted those items that were not included in the capital plan, such as walk-in refrigerators, custodial equipment, and a 71-passenger bus. Jeanne asked for clarification on the deferment of athletic fields until 2025; Ben Keefe responded. Ellen asked how the capital requests interact with the budget requests and about the prioritization process given past budget deferrals. Susan noted that in the level services budget, there is a return of the .5 writing center and .2 study hall coverage. The funds for these were shifted to support the hybrid model. A discussion followed in this regard. Kathie informed Ben of those items that need clarification.

The School Committee will submit a capital budget to the Finance Committee by December 21.

5. COVID-19 Response (out of order):

(a) Update on Winter Sports:

Athletic Director Heath Rollins described the soft entry plan for ice hockey, swimming, Nordic skiing, and basketball, adding that students and parents were anxious for winter sports under controlled situations. The EEA (Governor's Council together with the COVID-19 Task Force) reviewed the Governor's guidelines and made some changes, such as no spectators at indoor games. Teams were organized, and the focus is on safety, emotional health and physical conditioning with the goal of having possible competitions in early January.

6. Superintendent Update:

(a) Hybrid Mode Update:

Arthur shared his visits to the schools and the exciting and creative lessons taking place in the classroom, adding that teachers are working very hard in the classrooms and remotely.

7. COVID-19 Response (continued):

(a) Discussion and Review of Planning for Remainder of School Year, including Additional Kindergarten In-Person Days, All-In Model, Reallocated Resources, Financial Implications and Possible Vote:

As a follow-up to the last meeting, Arthur, in his presentation, answered those questions put forth by the School Committee. They include the potential augmented synchronous program for elementary students, potential space constraints with five feet of social distancing in current rooms for a four-day kindergarten model, the BOH's recommendation regarding physical distancing for kindergartners, and the current status of the ventilation systems.

Arthur recommended, if approved by the School Committee, that kindergartners come back to school after February vacation (February 22). He explained the reasons for this recommendation.

Based on feedback from teachers and school-based administrators, Parry described what the augmented synchronous program would look like, which in grades 1 to 5 would add an additional 2.5 to 3 hours of synchronous instruction across the three remote days each week allowing for flexibility with different patterns at different grade levels. Special education and intervention schedules will require some revising. The cost for K-5 is \$238,000 in the hybrid mode encompasses one FTE for two grade levels per school through the end of the school year. The School Committee posed questions to Parry and Arthur regarding the predicted costs as well as how this process would not add to a teacher's workload. Ellen suggested an online summer program for students who may need extra support.

Arthur addressed possible space constraints in current classrooms with five feet of distance. He pointed out the restrictions at the three elementary schools and noted that some classrooms may need to move to the library for instance. The Board of Health supports and put forth a statement about the recommendation regarding five feet of

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distance. Jeanne read the statement. However, they will revisit this recommendation in terms of their support if in-school transmission becomes an issue, particularly at the elementary level. Kim noted there was a positive case in Kindergarten after the vote was taken, but was not an in-school transmission. Ben Keefe addressed the ongoing study of the schools' ventilation systems to determine the amount of outside air coming into the classrooms. The elementary schools are designed to have 20 people per room, and he is still working to measure the CO2 and air particles. Jeanne added that according to Louise Miller, pre-COVID occupancy is based on fire codes, but during COVID there are ventilation guidelines. A discussion ensued, and Arthur noted the class sizes for Kindergarten, including at least three adults but there may be more adults.

Arthur presented additional options: 1A (Kindergarten in four days a week with six feet of distance) and 1B (Kindergarten in four days a week with five feet of distance). He reviewed the approach and logistics for each option and the costs. A solution is being discussed for the Loker Spanish Immersion class. Option 1A will cost \$241,500 for possible facilities work, increased storage, sinks, creation of new sections that includes staff and supplies. The elementary principals support Option 1A, and although they and the kindergarten teachers have some concerns, they do believe that four days a week would be beneficial for the students but question the ultimate goal. School Committee members also expressed their concerns about this proposal, including disruption of cohorts and the costs given that there would be about four months remaining in the school year.

Option 1B will cost about \$114,900 for moving one classroom at Loker, one extra classroom at Claypit, facilities work, storage, materials, and staff and supplies for WRAP. There is more of a concern among the principals and staff to plan for five feet of distance whereby most classes would exceed 20 including adults.

Arthur reviewed the possible reallocation of funding to fund one of these proposals if approved by the School Committee. A discussion followed about the reallocations and possible additional funding from the State. Arthur recommends Option 1A with the possibility of moving into Option 2 (augmented synchronous learning) for 1st and 2nd grades (\$68,000) if grant money becomes available in the amount of \$47,004.

The School Committee will continue this discussion at another meeting given the length of this meeting.

(b) Surveillance Testing Program Update and Possible Vote to Approve Fee:

Ellen informed the School Committee that the staff survey has resulted in a positive response for the testing program, but the WTA has requested to extend the survey one more day. The School Committee was in agreement to extend the survey 24 hours. There is hope that the fundraising for testing can begin soon, but without an RFP, the fee would be estimated, as the fees must be directly tied to the costs associated with testing. Susan recommended starting the fundraising process and hold off the vote for the fee.

The School Committee reviewed the language in the proposed fundraising letters being done by fundraising organizations. The School Committee discussed the fundraising process and the possibility of not raising enough funds. The testing cost will be estimated with an additional amount to cover the contact tracing costs. The donated funds will cover the testing for families in need who self-identify and staff. Testing prioritization was discussed in the event that not enough funds were collected. The School Committee reviewed a spreadsheet regarding Testing Costs and Fundraising Needs prepared by Sejal Srinivisan.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to establish a criteria for financial assistance for the COVID testing program and that people self-identify as persons in need of financial assistance for this program only. 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	

A website is currently under construction for the COVID-19 Surveillance Testing for the Wayland Public Schools.

(c) Health Data Collection Letter:
Passed over.

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- (d) Special Education Update:
Passed over.
- (e) Ongoing Review Groups: Remote and Hybrid Learning Progress Committee and COVID Learning and Safety Committee:
Passed over.
- (f) Transportation Update:
Passed over.
- (g) Ventilation Update:
Passed over.
- (h) Next Steps:
Passed over.

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

As put forth by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee discussed families testing if they have traveled over the holiday break. The Massachusetts travel guidelines allow those who have traveled to get tested up to 72 hours before they return. Kathie expressed her concerns about the travel risks and testing, noting that some schools, such as Ashland, are requiring families to quarantine for five days once returning from travel, get a test and wait for the results before returning to school.

Arthur added that this may result in many staff being absent the first week of January. A discussion ensued about air travel vs. those who drive to their destination. Kim noted that there have been 48 cases since Thanksgiving. Arthur will incorporate stronger language/recommendations regarding travel in his holiday letter.

9. **Executive Session:**

Passed over.

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:49 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	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Public Comments
3. FY22 Capital Appropriation Requests
4. FY22-26 Five-Year Capital Plan by Location, Project and Priority
5. BOS Draft Memo for Five-Year CIP Recommendations
6. Email from Town Administrator re: BOH vote for Kindergarten proposal and Five feet of Distance
7. School Committee Meeting Schedule
8. Executive Session Motion