

SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – May 12, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, May 12, 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 (arrived at 6:29 p.m.)
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:

Colleen Wornowick, SEPAC Co-Chair
Anne-Louise Klaus, SEPAC Co-Chair

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 5:32 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	absent	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

1. Special Matters:

- (a) Conduct School Choice Hearing and Vote to Adopt a Resolution to Participate or Withdraw from School Choice for the 2021-2022 School Year:

Chair Jeanne Downs opened the School Choice Hearing at 5:32 p.m. and announced that the School Committee conducts this hearing each year prior to June 1. The School Committee has made the decision in past years not to participate in School Choice.

The School Committee had a discussion about what it means to be a School Choice district in terms of the school budget if the district accepts general education and special education students. It was noted that no surrounding districts participate in School Choice, and the districts lose the flexibility to manage enrollment.

Public comment was open to the public, but no comments were received. The following resolution was read by the Chair.

Resolution on School Choice

Whereas the Education Reform Act of 1993 requires the enrollment of non-resident students under the School Choice provision unless the Committee votes by June 1 not to participate, and

Whereas the School Choice provision takes money away from the sending district and awards it to the receiving district, and

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Whereas Wayland's per pupil expenditure is greater than the maximum allowable reimbursement, which means Wayland taxpayers would subsidize each choice student, and

Whereas once Wayland accepts a pupil, it must keep the pupil through graduation even though Wayland's demographic situation might change considerably, and

Whereas it is possible that a number of students could return to their sending districts or otherwise leave Wayland, thus creating a potential income loss, now hereby be it

Resolved that the Wayland School Committee respectfully declines to participate in the choice program with the provision that should surrounding school districts subsequently and prior to June 1 decide to accept the provisions of School Choice, the Wayland School Committee reserves the right to do likewise in order to protect its fiduciary interest in this matter.

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the resolution as outlined by the Chair. 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	absent	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to close the School Choice Hearing at 5:47 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	absent	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

2. Comments and Written Statements from the Public:

Alexia Obar asked the School Committee to look into the transcript fee that families pay by check, is deposited by the Town of Wayland, and is being used to purchase Naviance as well as a second standard for testing.

Arthur and Susan responded to Ms. Obar's public comment. The \$5.00 fee covers the process, software, and time spent by the guidance counselor and administrative assistant to produce a student's college application file and mail to the colleges/universities to which the student applies. The Town collects the fee which is deposited into a miscellaneous revenue fund which then flows into free cash and becomes part of the funding for the school department's expenses.

Jeanne read a public comment from Tony Boschetto in which he again asked the School Committee to reconsider mandated pooled testing for any and all students participating in in-person extracurricular activities after school. In addition, Mr. Boschetto would like the School Committee to consider modifying its policy to consider the use of a "Positive IgG Covid 19 Antibody" as appropriate for exemption in further testing. Mr. Boschetto writes that the CDC Guidance specifically states that a positive IgG serologic test in a person never vaccinated indicates prior natural infection and, as such, this test is exactly the same conclusion as anyone who tested positive with PCR testing in the last 90 days. Mr. Boschetto provided further guidance from the CDC.

Caroline Owen asked the School Committee to reconsider its vote of April 14 regarding mandated pooled testing for high school students who participate in after-school extracurricular activities. Many families are asking that the policy allows families to opt out without penalty, as this policy is not equitable and is a violation of students' rights. Ms. Owen noted that two members of the BOH do not think the testing should be mandatory. In addition, the data does not support this decision; she explained further.

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Kathie Steinberg was thanked by all for her dedication and commitment to the School Committee, the town, the schools, and the students of the Wayland Public Schools.

3. **COVID-19 Response:**

(a) Grades K-12 All-In Update:

Arthur commented that school is feeling more familiar for students for the most part. He informed the School Committee that the administrators will present to the School Committee on May 26 and June 9 about what they have learned over the past year and why it might be important to change the status quo moving forward.

(b) Update of Class Size Implications:

Arthur reported that in the fall of 2020, some Kindergartners did not start with the Wayland Public Schools and will enter first grade in September 2021. This will have an impact on the first grade classes at Happy Hollow whereby the classes could go over the guideline limit of 20 students per class which could result in hiring more teaching assistants. A third grade class at Loker could exceed the guideline limit of 23 by 2 students.

Susan added that Dr. McKibben will report on the updated census data and refine Wayland's forecasts when the census data becomes available.

(c) Special Education Update:

Richard reported that the special education staff are holding IEP meetings and engaging in final professional development. The staff had a well-attended webinar for parents of rising 5th graders and will have one for rising 8th graders the following evening. The Extended School Year planning is well underway.

(d) 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:

Jeanne reported that this team met today and discussed ventilation and testing for CO2 levels in a few random classrooms at each school. Another topic of discussion was reducing the amount of cleaning in the school buildings. The Director of the Health Department asked what is being done now and what will be done moving forward.

4. **Special Matters (continued):**

(a) Discussion with SEPAC (Special Education Advisory Parent Council) Chairs regarding Special Education:

Richard introduced Colleen Wornowick and Anne-Louise Klaus and described their working relationship and briefly the ongoing work and support by SEPAC on behalf of the special education students and staff.

Since its inception a year and a half ago, SEPAC has accomplished many things and will continue to do so. In its annual review, DESE characterized Wayland as a strong SEPAC district. SEPAC consists of nine board members and is funded through a mini-grant from Harvard Pilgrim, PTO, and parents. Ms. Wornowick described the work they have done this past year, including presentations, outreach to district families, the placement of ten designated school liaisons at each school, and collaboration with other SEPACs. Parent groups have been established for specific disabilities. SEPAC supports the changes for next year at The Children's Way and the social skills support for high school students.

SEPAC conducted its first survey for which there was 30% participation and the majority of responses were from families whose children are on IEPs.

Ellen arrived at 6:29 p.m.

The purpose of the survey was to cover topics pre-COVID and during COVID in terms of experiences and satisfaction with the services provided by the Students Services Department. The results were shared with the SEPAC membership and Richard Whitehead. The baseline satisfaction of families is good. However, families at Wayland High School were less satisfied with services pre-COVID and Happy Hollow Families were less satisfied with services both pre-COVID and during COVID. Ms. Klaus elaborated on the responses, adding that some out-of-district families participated as well. Ms. Klaus reviewed a chart that reported parents' satisfaction with program characteristics by school. Areas in which parents' rated high included Pegasus accommodations, convenient meeting times, professional and timely communication, clarity of service grid, and critical questions are welcomed. Rated on the low

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side were adjustment of homework, summer communication, accessibility to extracurricular activities, and substitutes not following IEP/504s. In general, the survey was successful and will continue moving forward.

As SEPAC looks ahead, mental health is a concern, particularly at the upper elementary levels as well as the uncertainty of mental health resources in the higher grades. SEPAC recommends a better collaboration between general education and special education in the secondary grades, as it would benefit the district greatly in terms of support and transitions of students. Ms. Klaus explained ways in which collaboration is necessary in order to be consistent across all grade levels and to help families feel more supported.

The School Committee asked questions about homework adjustment for students, other districts' surveys and programs in terms of comparison, and language-based classrooms and programming. Richard explained language-based classrooms and programming and how it may be addressed going forward, and Ms. Klaus added that co-taught classrooms may be an option in the future. A discussion ensued in response to the questions posed by the School Committee.

Ellen Grieco volunteered to be the School Committee liaison to SEPAC.

5. COVID-19 Response (continued):

(a) Transportation Update:

Susan noted that many additional students were accommodated to ride on the existing busses for the remainder of the year, and there are many students who are either walking or riding their bikes.

(b) Surveillance Testing Update, including Current Enrollment in Program:

Arthur reported that about 60% of the student population and 215 teaching staff were tested last Friday. There were no positive tests, but one test was invalid which means there wasn't enough material gathered in the pool; Arthur explained. This resulted in 214 negative pools out of 215 total pools.

As noted by Ruth Mori, RN of the Health Department, she believed there was an in-building transmission a week before this last testing in which one school student was positive. The Health Department is looking further into this instance. Arthur described this ongoing matter, as it is unclear that the transmission occurred within the high school.

Jeanne reported on the recent BOH meeting in which Jeanne, Kim and Arthur attended and pooled testing was discussed including the mandate for in-person extracurricular activities put in place by School Committee. The BOH supports pooled testing; however is 3-2 in their support for mandating testing for in-person extracurricular activities. The BOH will consult with town and school counsel about this matter.

In response to earlier public comment regarding the use of antibody tests and the request for School Committee to change its vote, a discussion ensued and each School Committee expressed their thoughts on each topic. Kim and Arthur presented research and information in this regard. The School Committee members agreed to continue with pooled testing as it is currently. A response will come from Arthur as advised by school counsel and will be forwarded to Caroline Owen's attorney as requested in her public comment.

(c) Discussion of Summer Programming Plans:

Parry reported on the status of summer programming, including its funding which in large part will come from ESSER funding. Since it is not cost efficient to maintain two summer elementary programs, capacity will be added to the August elementary program.

In terms of the middle school program, the hope is to have an academic component with emphasis on social emotional learning and the arts with a focus on rising 5th, 6th, 7th grade students who were mainly in the WRAP for most of the school year. Rising 9th graders will participate in the high school programming, but who were not necessarily WRAP students.

Transportation will be provided for Boston families as described in the students' IEPs, and Dr. Laing is also researching Boston-based opportunities. Susan added that there may be additional funding for summer programming of up to \$100,000.

Susan reported on the status of bidding for summer transportation which is being handled by Assistant Town Administrator John Bugbee.

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

5. **Administrative Matters:**

- (a) Superintendent Transition Update:
Arthur updated the School Committee regarding his meetings with Dr. Easy, adding that Dr. Easy's relationship building is progressing.
- (b) Discussion and Review of Open Meeting Law (OML) Follow-Up Response to George Harris's Letter of May 7, 2021:
The School Committee reviewed the draft response prepared by Jeanne in response to the Attorney General based on the two letters sent by George Harris to the AG as a follow-up to his January OML complaint. Jeanne will send the letter as drafted.
- (c) Review of OML Determinations:
Kim reviewed the OML determinations put out by the Attorney General in other districts. There have been six determinations since May 5 in which 3 were violations and 3 were not violations. She elaborated on her research regarding the violations and non-violations.
- (d) Review and Possible Approval of 2022-2023 School Calendar:
The WTA E-Board reviewed this calendar and it requested that the Middle School not be used as a polling place and be moved elsewhere. The E-Board suggested that if the location cannot be changed, then voting should take place on non-school days or have remote days. In addition, the E-Board asked that the last student day of school is an early release day with no lunch. A discussion ensued in this regard. There will be consultation with the Board of Selectmen about changing the location of the voting.

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the calendar with a change to the last day of school as being an early release day before lunch and contingent on following up with the town to address the voting day and discuss alternative locations for voting. 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	

6. **Financial Matters:**

- (a) Review of Information for Town Meeting:
The School Committee reviewed the statements, topics and information that Jeanne will present at Town Meeting. There will not be a handout regarding COVID expenses but they will be mentioned in the comments. The capital budget will be presented separately from the operating budget. Information to be included in the comments include COVID expenses not affecting taxpayers and the challenges in the operating budget that will affect the level of services. Jeanne will make the necessary revisions to the statement and information.
- (b) Update on Capital Project Scheduling:
The Finance Subcommittee met with Louise Miller and Ben Keefe to review and prioritize summer projects. There is a concern by school administrators that if bids are not prepared by May 24, the projects may not get done by summer's end and before the start of school. Support and resources were offered by the School Department, but the Town's concerned that the facilities' schedule could get disrupted causing some of the tasks to be incomplete. The first step is to develop specifications and put bids out for the projects. Arthur stressed the importance of the projects being completed before the end of August.

Susan updated the School Committee in that prior to this meeting, Ben Keefe authorized Susan to take on six of the capital projects, five of which she would work with TBA Architects to define the specifications for the Town Manager's office, as John Bugbee will develop the bids. The sixth project, the PA system in the schools, Susan will work with Leisha Simon. In some cases, specifications were prepared for some of the projects resulting in a quicker process

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to prepare the bids. The fire alarm systems and school chair lifts still need to be acted upon in terms of bids.

7. **Consent Agenda:**

(a) Approval of Minutes: April 28, 2021 and April 30 2021:

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Chris Ryan, 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	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

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

Kathie raised the matter of the school bus contract, as it has been delayed until the bus parking issue can be resolved. She highlighted the history of five years ago when a school bus parking location was being discussed in School Committee meetings. At that time, four or five parcels were identified out of about forty. Kathie elaborated on this process during which TEC was the consultant for the project. Last fall a Visioning Committee was formed to identify two parcels, the old South landfall on Route 20 as well as the Mass DOT parcel in Sudbury which is no longer an option. It could take two years to prepare the old South landfall on Route 20, thus a temporary solution is recommended.

A discussion ensued and concerns were raised about not having busses for the fall since the bidding process has been delayed. Chris and Jeanne will reach out to the Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen regarding the bus bid. The possibility of purchasing electric busses in the future was also discussed. Susan described the procurement process for which she is certified.

An emergency motion was duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to authorize Jeanne and Chris to convey to the Town Administrator the School Committee's request that a bid be put out immediately for the bus contract within the next week and that the bid also include an option for parking the busses for a year with the service that responds to the bid. Or if they don't have time, the School Committee asks that they delegate the authority to the Director of Finance and Operations to do the bidding process. 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	

9. **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 8:42 p.m. for purposes of (a) discussing strategy in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel, incoming 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; (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 discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; (c) reviewing executive session minutes for possible declassification as listed on the agenda, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22; and (d) approval of the following executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: April 28, 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	

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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.

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:32 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. School Choice Resolution
4. OML Complaint 1-22-21
5. Exhibits 3-25-21 (OML Complaint)
6. Letters to AGO from Mr. Harris
7. Draft Response Letter to AGO re: OML Complaint
8. School Calendar 2022-2023
9. Draft Remarks for Town Meeting
10. Elementary Enrollment by Class/Grade
11. Minutes of April 28, 2021
12. Executive Session Motion