

# MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Special Meeting – July 31, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Friday, July 31, 2020, at 9:00 A.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

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 9:05 a.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>Present</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:**

Jake Montweiler, MS curriculum leader. Mr. Montweiler read a statement on behalf of the leadership team in which they urged the School Committee to vote for an all-remote start to the school year. Given everything that teachers do, their goal is to help young people grow as well as push the boundaries in their respective departments. They ask themselves what it means to be a good teacher, what constitutes an effective lesson, and what defines an equitable and participatory classroom. Teachers engage in these fundamental questions best when they feel safe, supported, and seen, adding that all of their work in the classroom rests on physical emotion and safety for children and adults. Anything but a remote start will place everyone at an incredible and often inequitable risk and largely without instructional benefit. Mr. Montweiler added that the spring was “crisis” learning that was driven by the State with restrictions. The fall remote plans are robust and individualized, and they will provide synchronous online instruction. This is the best way to support academically, socially and emotionally. The teachers look forward to returning to the buildings when it is safe.

Jeanne read a public comment from Tom Sciacca, a member of the Energy and Climate Committee, and speaking for himself about school ventilation. Many years ago, much of the Middle School HVAC system was replaced. However, the system did not save as much energy as expected because many of the ventilations fans that were replaced with new, more efficient models were not actually working. Mr. Sciacca stated that a working fan, no matter how efficient, uses more energy than a non-working fan, but it was not realized at the time. Mr. Sciacca suggested that the elementary school systems could be similarly compromised and should be thoroughly checked out.

Jessica Villatoro, a MS SPED teacher, advocated for a remote start to the school year so that everyone stays safe. She added that the buildings would not be closed forever. There are too many unknowns at this time and safety should be the only factor in the School Committee’s decision.

Jeanne read a public comment from Deirdre Bergeron, 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher at Happy Hollow. She comments that we are not living under normal circumstances and a return to in-person schooling now will not feel normal. School will not be as it was pre-COVID, and the differences will be extreme due to social distancing and loss of learning because significant time will be spent following all of the new procedures for health and safety. Ms. Bergeron referred to last spring as “crisis teaching” for many reasons and the lack of training for teachers. With adequate planning and training for teachers, remote learning can be high quality and could leave safe space for those students who need to be in school in person. She believes that if and when students and teachers return to school in the fall, the district will resume remote learning at some

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Special Meeting – July 31, 2020

point in the winter. Ms. Bergeron asked the School Committee to consider starting the year all-remote with a plan to phase in as buildings are ready and as the State meets certain benchmarks for re-opening the State. Allowing the experienced and committed Wayland teachers time to plan and develop programs will result in robust academic learning.

Jackie Johnson, a SPED teacher assistant at Claypit Hill commented that in recent presentations to the School Committee, the most amount of time for teaching and learning for students occurs in the all-remote model, and this should be the focus. She believes that the district should plan for the hybrid model in the near future, but that is not the way to start.

Jeanne read a public comment from Kori Rogers, WTA President and Happy Hollow teacher. On behalf of the WTA, Ms. Rogers stated that the WTA is committed to excellence in education and the members are eager to be with the students in the buildings. However, during the pandemic, it is not safe to return to in-person instruction at this time as noted by many professionals until the virus is under control. In addition, Ms. Rogers, comments that a New York Times article indicates that new research has shown children may carry Coronavirus at high levels. She noted that the WTA has voted to endorse the MTA's Public School Reopening Proposals to DESE. Therefore, the WTA urged the School Committee to vote for a phased-in approach to reopening schools, starting with remote instruction, so that time is taken to address the repairs to the building ventilation systems. Finally, Ms. Rogers thanked the School Committee for its thoughtful deliberations on this life-and-death matter.

Larissa Paccione, 78 Highland Circle, is the parent of an incoming first grader. She believes that the School Committee should listen to the pediatricians who say it is safe to bring elementary children back to the school buildings. As two parents who work from home, it will be a struggle for her child to succeed in the remote and hybrid models and it will affect her child's and other children's future. Ms. Paccione asked the School Committee to consider the impact to families, as hiring tutors or sending children to private school is very expensive.

Abby Haber, Moore Road, has two children at Claypit Hill School and commented that teachers are the lynch pin of our educational system. She supports the teachers and their concerns about safety in the buildings, and she urged the School Committee to consider the teachers' views in the decision. We rely on the teachers, and they need to feel and safe in any model. Ms. Haber thanked the School Committee, administrators and teachers for everything in support of the families.

Kathie Steinberg thanked the community, teachers, and parents and those who have reached out to the School Committee. The articulations, comments, and suggestions have influenced her thinking regarding this matter. The community is fortunate to have many resources to help with this decision, such as information from the scientific community and information from people who have knowledge about building systems. Kathie appreciates the commitment towards working through the health and safety for staff and students, as well as the education for all students. She added that we are in this together and a collaborative effort is important to move forward successfully.

Ellen Grieco echoed Kathie's remarks and thanked the administrators, building level administrators, staff, and teachers for all of their hard work over the past twelve weeks. She referred to Jake Montweiler's and Jackie Johnson's public comments, and recognizes that everyone is trying to do their best to come up with multiple models given the difficulty, uncertainty and length of time to reach a decision. Everyone's efforts has made the School Committee's job easier.

**2. COVID-19 Response:**

- Continued Discussion of Three Models for Return to School in Fall 2020 (Remote, Hybrid, All-In), including State Guidance, Community and Staff Feedback, Outstanding Questions, and Teaching and Learning and Operational Aspects:

Arthur thanked all those who have contributed to this process, and he appreciates everyone's patience and thoughtfulness in this regard.

Presented to the School Committee at its last meeting by Parry Graham, Allyson Mizoguchi, and Betsy Gavron were three models – all-in, hybrid, and all remote. Arthur presented another possibility to reopen schools – a staged hybrid model. Arthur requested that the School Committee remove the all-in model from its deliberations.

Arthur suggested three steps to make the most of the complex model work, such as develop the remote teaching in the strongest possible way, then apply to hybrid (60% remote), and strengthen the hybrid model. For a hybrid in-person model in the fall, there are health and safety protocols that would be in place that include ventilation work, cleaning, 6 feet of social distancing, hand hygiene, and appropriate PPE. Taking the ten-day teacher planning days into consideration and as recommended by DESE, school would begin on September 14 and continue for 170 total school days.

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Special Meeting – July 31, 2020

The proposal suggests that Grades K-3 and special education students with higher service delivery needs would attend on September 14 in the hybrid model and Grades 4-12 would begin remotely. September and October would work on and develop in-person experiences so that students can build relationships with their teachers, while the teachers deepen the effectiveness of the remote tools. Finally, Grades 4-12 could move to the hybrid model on November 2. Arthur noted the challenges in the staged hybrid model.

The School Committee members stated their thought process in this regard and a discussion followed. Kathie noted that the Committee's decisions are driven by COVID statistics in the community and with the assistance of the Board of Health, adding that more and better information will be available in the fall. She supports the remote model. For Ellen, the issue of transitioning to different models may be difficult for students, parents, and staff and which model will provide the most amount of instruction time is one to consider during this process, which appears to be the remote model at this time. Although Kim advocates for an all-remote model given the significant health concerns and its priority, she suggested the possibility of bringing K-3 students into the schools when there is a testing protocol in place. Chris is concerned about safety, adding that the staged hybrid would address the K-3 students' development for life-long learning and meeting the needs of special education students. He asked if families could opt in for a fully remote model if the district went into a hybrid or staged hybrid model, what support would teachers receive to prepare for remote learning, and what are the impacts to students applying to college? Arthur and Parry addressed these questions, particularly professional development opportunities in many areas.

*Parry left the meeting at 10:00 a.m.*

Jeanne appreciates the staged hybrid plan, as the face-to-face instruction for K-3 students in the buildings is so important. It is Jeanne's opinion that if the district starts all remotely, it may be a while before there is a transition into the hybrid model for many reasons. Ellen noted that many issues need to be revisited, such as ventilation, and raised the possibility of having teachers teach from the classrooms if in a remote model as well as outdoor activities for small groups of children in the afternoon. Kim agreed and added that much can be learned from other districts with the possibility of transitioning in the future. Before moving to an in-person model, Kathie feels that everyone must develop confidence and trust in terms of safety, given uncertainty and mixed messaging from many sources. Chris added that an eight-week period could be helpful in gathering data.

The School Committee agreed to remove the all-in model from the reopening possibilities.

Arthur described the ten-day planning for teachers as provided by DESE and the impact to the start date of school and the calendar as well as the holiday schedule. September 14 is the proposed first day of school. A discussion ensued about curriculum coverage in a remote model that will be significantly different from the spring model in terms of realistic and sustainable expectations for teachers, students, and families. Arthur confirmed that teachers are confident in their ability to cover the most amount of curriculum as possible in a remote model. He explained and added that there are plans and structures in place to address many challenges, particularly in the remote model. The goal is to have a full school day that will include rigorous study and homework for students with the expectation of pre-COVID progress. A discussion ensued about the possibility of a report to the School Committee in terms of summer work as it relates to expectations for the teachers' fall planning in preparation for curriculum delivery and coverage during the school year. It is important to understand and realize the financial implications in terms of prioritizations and planning moving forward.

*Parry rejoined the meeting at 11:00 a.m.*

Ellen suggested that a committee is formed to address curriculum loss once the School Committee chooses a model. Arthur added that when a model is known, there will be time to address the challenges to make it all work. The majority of the School Committee would like to postpone its decision to Monday, August 3. The hope is to have more information before Monday regarding testing protocols, teachers returning to the buildings to teach remotely, objective monitoring and review of curriculum coverage, model transitions, challenges and staffing for K-2 students, and possible outdoor non-academic activities for all students on school grounds later in the day. Arthur reminded the School Committee that his reopening report is due to DESE on August 10. Discussion continued.

- Possible Vote on Model to Implement for Fall 2020:  
This agenda item was passed over.

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Special Meeting – July 31, 2020

- Next Steps:  
The previous discussions addressed the next steps.

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

This agenda item was passed over.

4. **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 11:33 a.m. for the purpose 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.

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. 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	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

5. **Adjournment from Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 12:17 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