

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Special Meeting – August 3, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Monday, August 3, 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

Richard Whitehead
Director of Student Services

Susan Bottan
Director of Finance & Operations

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:

Jeanne read a public comment from Andrea Gellerstein, a special education teacher at Claypit Hill School. Ms. Gellerstein referred to the inequity and risks regarding a proposed staged hybrid reopening for K-3 students that includes special education students. She proposed a fifth option – a phased hybrid for all students and teachers in which everyone would work remotely while the administration addressed the ventilation problem in the schools. This time would also allow an allocation of funds at Town Meeting for a new HVAC system at Claypit Hill and provide an examination of COVID transmission rates in the area. Ms. Gellerstein agrees that remote teaching would provide the most curriculum coverage.

Jeanne read a public comment from David Howe, 35 Peck Avenue. While the district is in the planning process for the upcoming year, Mr. Howe noted that the governing principles are the safety of students and their families, and teachers and staff and academics. He believes that children develop socially and emotionally in and out of school, adding that the SEL component of any in-school model now could be more stressful than nurturing. Finally, Mr. Howe supports the start of the year in the remote model that gives Wayland full control over the decision of when to make the transition to an in-person model.

Jeanne read a public comment from Amanda Major, a recently hired educator in Wayland. She is concerned about returning to an in-person model safely as well as the inequity of a staged hybrid model for students and teachers. Ms. Major supports an all-remote model, adding that she is confident that with proper teaching and support, K-3 students should be able to access a virtual model.

Jeanne read a public comment from Kristin Murphy in which she states that teachers were not invited to join the virtual discussions about a reopening model. In terms of teachers having trust in the safety of the school buildings, she referred to a resident's comment about the malfunction of the Middle School HVAC fans for years, even though teachers were assured that buildings would be safely maintained. Ms. Murphy believes that teachers cannot return safely to the buildings

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until the ventilation issues are corrected and PPE and testing issues are addressed, particularly if a teacher is in the same room with another staff member.

Jeanne read a public comment from Rich Peck, 20 Loblolly Lane, understands the difficult process at hand. Based on the recommendation of the American Association of Pediatrics, Mr. Peck would opt for the hybrid model while acknowledging that he has limited conviction in this choice. However, if the year began remotely, he urged the School Committee, administrators, teachers and parents to work together to safely create some in-person, outdoor, small group learning experiences for the students with their teachers and peers to supplement the remote model, especially if it is likely that this model could be in place for some time based on COVID data. Recognizing limited resources, Mr. Peck suggested donations to PTO/WPSF, etc. to support any initiatives in this regard.

Jeanne read a public comment from Mary Kowalski, a special education teacher assistant. Ms. Kowalski spoke to the successful accomplishments during the spring remote period for special education students. Being in person requires a close proximity to students to be able to provide support for students, adding that it would be almost impossible given social distancing and masks and face shields. She agrees that students benefit most in school, and she experienced this during the summer academic program. However, she is concerned about the health and safety of students, staff, and the community and urged the School Committee to vote for a remote learning plan.

Jeanne read a public comment from Sharon Burke, 16 Highland Circle, about those essential personnel who have been working because they must do so during this pandemic despite the risks. They are doctors, nurses, grocery workers, delivery workers, and realtors, etc. Ms. Burke added that wearing masks and hand hygiene is effective in preventing the spread of the virus. She was not pleased with the spring remote model for her 10th grader and advocates for more creative solutions to provide more engagement for students with their teachers in person, such as setting up outdoor classrooms for the first few weeks in a hybrid model. However, if an all-remote model is chosen, she asked the School Committee to consider the possibility of teachers teaching from the classrooms full time.

Jeanne read a public comment from Caitlin Golden, Kindergarten teacher at Claypit Hill School in which she described a typical day for a Kindergarten class pre-COVID. In a hybrid model and social distancing and mask protocols, Ms. Golden cannot hug or comfort a student when they are sad, hurt or scared or get close enough to give them extra support with a visible smile. Nor can students interact with their classmates, which is how they learn best. In an all-remote model, Ms. Golden does not support teachers in the classrooms and feels that their safety and their lives are not important. She asked the School Committee to consider the safest option including the one that provides the most instruction.

Jeanne read a public comment from Eileen McManus, Claypit Hill guidance counselor and the parent of a high school student. Ms. McManus expressed her non-support of the staged hybrid model because it is not equitable for teachers and students, it has an inconsistent and illogical approach to safety, and it does not ensure a developmentally appropriate approach to teaching and learning. Teachers will be put in a position to choose to follow safety protocols and social distancing or to meet all the needs of their students while putting everyone at risk. Ms. Golden supports the remote model, as it will serve the community best for the sake of safety, equity and learning.

Jeanne read a public comment from Niki Duffy, Kindergarten teacher at Claypit Hill School who would like to welcome her incoming class in person in a joyful and developmentally appropriate way, but she cannot given the conditions of the COVID pandemic. Ms. Duffy feels that it is better to begin the school year remotely as it will be consistent and predictable from the start and will provide the time to make the school buildings safer. Social distancing will be impossible to follow in some situations, such as a child falling on the playground and needs assistance. Because of the excellent professional development opportunities, Ms. Duffy is confident that teachers can provide a dynamic and meaningful experience for students in a remote model.

Jeanne read a public comment from Peter Galalis, a WHS English teacher. Mr. Galalis states that safety should be the number one concern and responsibility of the Wayland Public Schools despite remarks made at a recent School Committee meeting. He named all of the safety protocols in place, such as ALICE drills, fire drills, the use of Epi-pens, and 51A mandatory reporting, adding that being safe from COVID is no different and safety should be always come before curriculum.

Jeanne read a public comment from Peter Curran, a WMS teacher in which he support a fully remote learning model for the fall of 2020. Mr. Curran is not confident that any type of in-person model will provide a safe environment regardless of safety protocols in place. He does not support bringing teachers into the classrooms and it should be optional as the purpose of a remote model is to limit spread by limiting exposure and would put teachers in an unsafe and unnecessary

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position. Mr. Curran referred to the creative teaching that took place in the spring, and he has used time during summer break to log into a webinar and research resources. He is confident that the upcoming year be as successful as possible due to the dedication of his colleagues across the district to plan robust, engaging remote-learning experiences.

Kori Rogers, as WTA President made a public comment on behalf of the WTA. Ms. Rogers asked the School Committee to consider the results of the WTA Return to School Survey #2 as they deliberate. Teachers selected from the remaining options, including the two introduced at the July 31 meeting – “Staged Hybrid” (9%) and “Students-Only Remote” (3%) where teachers instruct remotely from their classrooms. In addition, Ms. Rogers stated the results of the first survey in which there was 84% participation. She referred to pandemic news related to virus infections at a summer camp and in a school that reopened as well as new evidence that suggests young children spread COVID-19 more efficiently than adults. Ms. Rogers noted that cases are rising in Massachusetts. Based on this information, the WTA stands by its original recommendation of a phased-in reopening with a full-remote start and that specific metrics are established for deciding when and how to move to a hybrid model and finally to an all-in person model.

Deirdre Bergeron, Amy Pohl and Carrie Dermeikis submitted public comments, but due to the time constraints, they were not read during the meeting. They are posted on the School Committee website at www.wayland.k12.ma.us/school_committee/school_committee_agendas_minutes/2020-2021_school_year.

Arthur and Parry joined the meeting from the Middle School because there are three different programs going on: Annual Math and Reading Summer Program with 100 rising 1st through 5th grade students (10 students in a classroom with 2 adults) and a Spanish Immersion program for 20 rising first and second graders with the same ratio as aforementioned. In addition, WHS science teacher Jay Chandler is facilitating an A/P prep course for two different groups of ten students this week and next week. Parry described the programs, the health and safety protocols and the process that were in place for students and staff.

2. **Matters not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair (taken out of order):**

Jeanne announced that members of the PMBC, Eric Sheffels and Brian Chase, are assisting the School Committee regarding ventilation issues and it requires the approval of the Board of Selectmen.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Chris Ryan, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to ask the Board of Selectmen to appoint the PMBC members to assist the School Committee in evaluating and performing any corrections to our ventilation systems to make it safe during the COVID times. 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	

3. **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:

On behalf of the School Committee, Jeanne commented that the Committee appreciates the input from everyone during this very difficult decision making process. The School Committee is listening to all of the different views and wants to do what is best for everyone involved.

Arthur reported on reopening models in other school districts similar to Wayland that include Needham, Concord, Ashland, Weston, Dover-Sherborn, Westwood and Lincoln. Six districts are considering a version of the hybrid model in a variety of ways, and one district will implement the all-in model. However, most have not voted its model yet. The start date for these districts ranged from September 8 to September 14. However, one district wants to start on September 16, which will need DESE approval.

Each School Committee member expressed his/her thoughts before the Committee took a formal vote about a school learning model on opening day.

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Kim commented that two basic questions must be answered first: 1) What is the likelihood that COVID will be in the schools before opening? 2) Assuming someone enters a building with COVID, will the precautions taken be enough to keep it from spreading? Wayland's statistics are consistent with the State statistics. She explained her findings, some of which is conflicting, and noted that there is a 99% chance that one student will be infected on the first day of school and children do transmit the virus. Cases are not likely to decrease given many variables, such as college students returning to the Boston area. There are unanswered questions and it is not certain if the cases that will occur can be contained. Many schools are reopening across the country and much can be learned once they are open. Kim supports an all-remote model until it is safe to bring students and staff into the buildings. However, she also supports outside opportunities for students to meet in person in a safe and strategic way.

Kathie wants to balance the risks associated with being in school and balance the risks of not being in school. The risks differ depending on the populations. For some, it is a risk not being in school and there are risks in the community due to virus transmission. She has focused on the medical science and data, and it is important to understand what the community wants and that is not the same for everyone. The Committee should focus on the public health data while pondering a decision for the entire community. Kathie supports starting remotely for students, develop in-person outdoor opportunities to build relationships, and then move towards a hybrid model to the extent that public data supports this move. Since people are working in the Town Building and some staff have returned to the schools, she believes that the buildings are safe and is comfortable asking teachers to return to the buildings but not utilizing the spaces that do not have proper ventilation and cleaning protocols.

Chris commented that it is important to be ready and able to pivot through various plans. People move to Wayland for the excellent schools, and we must do all we can to help all our students. He understands all teachers' perspectives and values all the constituents, but there must be collaboration in doing the best to develop the most robust and best plans for everyone. Chris noted that school is a safety net for many kids and, if their needs are not met, many can suffer in various ways. It was established that the remote model offers more instructional time; however, that does not mean that there is more learning for all students. Many districts are considering a hybrid model, and Wayland must do and try its best over the next few weeks leading into the first day of school. Chris believes that the year should start with some level of in-person contact, which can be an advantage and help the pivot to other models. Outdoor time and safety protocols must be maximized. Chris supports planning for an intense hybrid model to start the year with an intense focus over the next few weeks to develop remote teaching and curriculum will help if a pivot/transition is necessary through various models.

Ellen agrees in substance with everything said thus far. She is focusing more on the long-term picture, as there may not be a safe zone from the virus and there will not be routine testing given the political situation. Looking out one year, there is a possibility that we could have a vaccine next year, thus, we need to balance everything, including how the safety concerns are handled while providing a robust curriculum. Ellen supports the remote model together with a monitoring system in place regarding curriculum progression, as some students find it difficult to engage in this type of setting even when the teachers work as hard as they do. There should be a focus on how to construct the remote model with the potential of transitioning to a hybrid model with the same expectation of curriculum absorption. Ellen also supports in-school opportunities for certain groups of students for reasons already mentioned.

Jeanne believes that there is real value in face-to-face between students and teachers. There is a very good possibility that if the year starts remote, it could stay in a remote model for a while. What will it take to make people feel safe in the buildings, as the fears are real? Jeanne is aware that families and staff are reintegrating back into their lives in different ways, such as sending kids to Wayland summer camps and Wayland summer school programs. She is also aware that there is a lot of conflicting information about the virus. Ideally, Jeanne would advocate for a K-12 hybrid model and implemented with all health and safety protocols in place. If an all-remote model is the Committee's choice, she agrees with other members about bringing in groups of students for outdoor in-person opportunities that includes addressing the needs of special education students as outlined by Richard Whitehead.

A discussion followed about the different options on the table, including the proposed language in the drafted motion. Arthur and Parry addressed the challenges in scheduling if pivoting from a remote model to a hybrid model for K-3 students after three weeks or early October with the goal of bringing all other students in around the beginning of Q2. Secondary schools could have significantly different schedules at the beginning of Q2, but the principals would need time to prepare. There would be an impact to elementary schedules if transitioning after 2 or 3 weeks. Parry described what is necessary for a smooth transition for elementary grade levels. Arthur responded to the possibility of making the decision for K-3 students in mid-August noting that the sooner a decision, more planning is possible. However, two weeks of remote learning for K-3 students can be very challenging and is easier if everyone is on the same

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schedule. Addressing technology issues within the ten-day planning schedule is also necessary.

The School Committee discussed the metrics/standards needed in determining the move from remote to hybrid according to science, public health data, the Wayland Board of Health, and a focus on safety protocols as guided by the levels of concerns among different groups. There is a concern about disrupting the process when moving too quickly from one model to the next model, especially after the first two weeks of school. Chris advocated for more time to shift between models with all K-12 students and repeated that, even though the remote model provides more instructional time, not all students learn at the same pace or level.

- Possible Vote on Model to Implement for Fall 2020:

The School Committee reviewed the draft motion and made some edits regarding the school start date, the metrics that will determine moving into a hybrid model, limited in-person activities and other logistics. A discussion ensued about the possible requirement of asking teachers to teach remotely from the classrooms that includes the equity and access issues for students and staff. Arthur noted that, in some cases, some teachers share classrooms but at a different time and could result in a space issue. Susan confirmed that the space issue is being addressed for two people to share a classroom during the hybrid model.

If voting for an all-remote start, conditions are noted in the motion, such as having teachers in the classrooms, delivering instruction for special education students in accordance with the law, enhancing the development and implementation of ongoing mechanisms to measure student learning and assess student progress, and the Committee's ability for a review of the curriculum progression. Other suggestions in the motion include accelerating the hybrid model for K-3 students based on data, returning graded work/tests to students, and providing some in-person outdoor opportunities.

Richard addressed the section in the motion in which the district will provide strong academic, social and emotional supports for special education students, noting that the end result will be the level of support by the district for those students when they begin to struggle. Student evaluations must be done in person and this process is behind due to the school closure in the spring, and services must be delivered fully according to student IEP's on the first day of school according to IDEA at the Federal level. There are clear state guidelines stressing as much as possible in-person instruction, including those K-12 students in specialized programs, and it is important and necessary to have staff in the buildings to work with and test these students safely. Although the School Committee is agreeing to provide safe working conditions, the members support Richard to do what is necessary to comply with the delivery of mandated services moving forward. A discussion ensued regarding those families who may ask for a fully remote model vs. an in-person model.

Arthur raised the issue of the potential technology challenges if all teachers are in the buildings at the same time, as well as the equity issue for teachers if teachers have a choice to teach from their homes or in their school buildings. A change was made to the motion in this regard. Arthur will look into the possibilities of addressing the technology issues, particularly for the elementary schools.

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Wayland Public Schools "Return to School Fall 2020" motion as outlined on the attached document. A roll call vote was taken:

The vote was suspended until Ellen returns in person to the meeting. The vote and roll call resumed.

<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	

- Next Steps:

Jeanne raised the issue of sending a joint statement by the School Committee and the administration to the community regarding this vote. Jeanne and Arthur will work together and Arthur will send the draft to the Committee members for their review.

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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 12:53 p.m. for the purpose of (a) discussing strategy with respect to litigation, Mabel Reid-Wallace v. Wayland Public Schools et al, MCAD Complaint, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the litigating 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; and (c) approving the following executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: July 8, 2020.

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 Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 2:11 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