

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Special Meeting – September 2, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, September 2, 2020, at 1:00 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:

Christie Harvey, Principal, Claypit Hill School
Tricia O'Reilly, Principal, Happy Hollow
Brian Jones, Principal, Loker School

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 1:03 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	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

1. Superintendent Search:

- Follow up to Preliminary Meeting, including Discussion of Focus Groups, Search Committee, and Leadership Profile:
The makeup of the Search Committee will possibly include 4 administrators, 3 teachers, 2 support staff, 3 community members, and 4 parents, including a Boston parent. The School Committee was not involved with the Search Committee during the last search. Jeanne reviewed the application review process, meeting format, which is subject to the Open Meeting Law, and the time commitment of the Search Committee members. After reviewing 8 – 10 semi-finalists, the Search Committee will recommend 4 finalists to the School Committee.

Future Management Systems will hold 6 virtual focus groups – teachers, support staff, administrators, parents (by level). The School Committee will have 3 more focus groups made up of student, community, and town/staff volunteers. Future Management Systems will train a member to run the focus groups. The focus groups contribute to the development of the leadership profile.

2. Consent Agenda:

- Approval of Minutes: July 29, 2020

Upon a motion duly made by Kim Reichelt, seconded by Chris Ryan, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the minutes of July 29, 2020. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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<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. **Administrative and Procedural Matters (taken out of order):**

- School Committee Meeting Schedule:

The School Committee reviewed the draft meeting schedule for the remainder of the year. On September 16, meetings will be posted for 5:00 p.m. and must end at 9:30 p.m. The goal is to hold bi-weekly meetings beginning sometime in October.

The administrators joined the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

Jeanne commented that she participated virtually from Claypit Hill School to welcome staff back on August 27 to begin the school year.

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

Jeanne read a public comment from David Howe, 35 Peck Avenue. Based on an announcement by the State, schools can request a state-sponsored mobile testing unit if there is an identified potential cluster of COVID-19 and it is likely that transmission has occurred within a school. Mr. Howe feels that there must be a timely COVID-19 testing and tracing program in place for the schools, and he provided some guidance on turn-around time and other critical metrics for testing and tracing. Mr. Howe urged the Board of Health to coordinate an effort to assess, minimize and monitor testing and tracing turn-around times for the in-school community.

Jeanne read a public comment from Bakul W. of Davelin Road in which she commented about the various claims around the culture of abuse in the schools posted on social media. She also asked about past Title IX protocols and processes during the years of 2010 - 2020, including whether or not a safe space was available for the accusers to share their experiences. Bakul addressed the district's lack of response to *bipoc.wayland* and the lack of racial education in Wayland, adding that there are many factors that cannot be controlled in this type of situation, but the district can control what is taught in the schools.

Jeanne read a public comment from Tonya Cunningham, a Claypit third grade parent. She was surprised and disappointed by the elimination of one third grade section and the increase in class size to 25 students per class at Claypit Hill. Her concerns include going over the class size policy guideline of 23 students in grades 2 and 3, limited interaction between the teacher and students during the remote/hybrid model, and the lack of discussion and/or School Committee vote regarding this change. Ms. Cunningham asked about the lack of space for new students or those who choose to leave WRAP in January and the protocols regarding social distancing. She asked if there additional resources to assist the teachers and children to compensate for this change.

Jeanne read a public comment from Maureen Barnowski regarding her concern about the large 2nd grade classes of 26 students Happy Hollow, although she is a Claypit Hill parent. She supports the Happy Hollow families in this situation, particularly those comments made in an email from Jessica Polizzotti. It not only exceeds class size guidelines, but creates an inequitable learning environment given the class sizes at Loker and Claypit Hill.

Jeanne read a public comment from Kristin Oseychik in which she asked the School Committee to vote to waive or prorate the FDK fee to reflect the amount of time students will be in person, but particularly for the Spanish Immersion families. The Spanish Immersion families do not have the option to move to a traditional non-fee based program during the remote session. She realizes that the budget is strained due to FDK switching to traditional and notes the inequity and lack of fairness of these decisions. Ms. Oseychik noted that a full day remote program for kindergartners is not viable at this age level. She suggested some in-person learning for the Spanish Immersion students on a rotating schedule, and noted that Brookline Public Schools has adjusted the scheduling for the kindergarten students.

Arthur responded to the public about the "Dear Wayland" posts. The staff was informed of this site, and they forwarded the posts and their concerns to the administrators. Arthur shared some of the students' concerns, such as not knowing to whom to report their experiences. As expressed in his email to families, the staff has a desire to hear students and respond

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to them at all times while acknowledging that there is work to be done in this regard. The administrators are discussing the next steps in this situation that includes an open channel for students to communicate so the district can respond in a timely manner, as well as adjusting the curriculum around this issue. The district will also work with the parents and the community in this regard. As Title IX coordinator, Richard Whitehead will continue to follow procedures guided by school counsel and according to the Title IX statute. Finally, Arthur noted this matter is mostly confidential making it difficult to respond to some questions, and attain and build credibility in the district.

Ellen added that a priority of this matter should be the safety of the students and making them feel safe and comfortable enough to come forward. Kathie commented that although an individual has a very negative impact from the experience because of another individual, the manner in which it was intended may have been perceived in a different manner. The School Committee is available to assist in this effort.

5. COVID-19 Response:

- Discussion with Elementary Schools about Fall Reopening Plans:
Elementary principals Christie Harvey, Tricia O'Reilly, and Brian Jones informed the School Committee about their fall reopening plans. Brian Jones and the Loker staff are back and working toward reopening with two major themes in mind – engagement and community. Christie Harvey and the Claypit Hill staff are working in unity and collaboratively via virtual PLC meetings and professional development trainings to plan for reopening. Christie noted that her staff is not back in the building because they still have concerns about the ventilation. Tricia O'Reilly and the Happy Hollow staff have re-energized to the level of collegiality pre-COVID virtually post-COVID. She added that the entire elementary staff did an incredible amount of work and collaboration virtually over the summer months, adding that her teachers are not back in the building as well.

There are plans to bring students in to outdoor orientations next week, and the logistics are being discussed. There are discussions around the interest of bringing smaller groups of students into school during the first five weeks of remote learning, but the goal is to be consistent and equitable across the three elementary schools, which involves coordination and providing transportation. Tricia added that it is important to make sure that the same opportunities are offered and are accessible to all families and students.

Christie described the ventilation and space issues at Claypit Hill, as well as the teachers' questions and concerns. Thirteen spaces are not ready for groups of people, but are ready for use by one or two teachers. The mislabeling of rooms and the lack of reference to some rooms in the ventilation report is a concern. A discussion ensued in this regard, including the ongoing work in terms of testing and balancing and the air flow issue. Arthur and Christie will work together to address specific rooms and the documentation necessary to put the teachers' minds at ease.

Arthur addressed the issue of equity for WRAP students and the impact to class sizes due to WRAP. Some classes are above the class size guidelines. He described the reorganization and reduction of class sections across the three elementary schools, as there are over 100 students in WRAP. Most of the reduced sections occurred at Claypit Hill with one at Happy Hollow, and during the hybrid model the classes will have half the students at any given time. Parry described the plan for WRAP students as WRAP teachers and principals are working to address many issues. Also addressed was the possible status of elementary class sizes at the end of the semester or if there is a return to an all-in model. There are many unknowns at this time; however, regardless of what happens this year, students will be back in their home schools next year. Chris asked about the inequity of the workload for some teachers given the larger class sizes and a discussion resulted about staffing and a possible school option for families to alleviate larger class sizes.

The principals added that tents have Wifi and will be used for the orientations, outdoor meetings, lunch periods, staff gatherings, and outdoor instruction and experiences.

- WRAP Update:
Parry added to the previous discussion about WRAP. Teachers are replaced when they take a leave of absence, and the class sizes are not large because teaching positions were reduced; thus the same number of teachers are still at all the grade levels. The larger class sizes are a result of redistributing students due to WRAP. Arthur addressed structure of WRAP at the Middle School and High School noting that the number of students in WRAP are smaller than at the elementary schools.
- Special Education Update:

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Richard commented that the biggest focus during the in-person services for the next five weeks is to familiarize the students to being back together and put them in small groups with their teachers, as they may not know some of the special education teachers. Parents will receive their child's individual plans in about a week.

- Discussion of Extracurricular Activities for 2020-2021 and Possible Vote to Approve for 2020-2021 School Year: Non-sports extracurricular activities range from band, orchestra, drama, and clubs. The programs would be outdoors but some could be indoors and remote as well. A discussion ensued about consulting the Board of Health in terms of the guidelines and the process. Arthur will work with the principals and the Board of Health to develop a proposal around scheduling after-school activities.
- Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Full Day Kindergarten Fee Structure for 2020-2021 School Year: The School Committee reviewed with Susan Bottan the FDK document that shows three scenarios to address the financial implications of reducing the tuition from \$2,700 to \$2,300 due to lower enrollment in the program because of remote learning during the first five weeks of school. Since the last meeting discussion, registrations have dropped from 150 to 138 resulting in fewer sections. If families could pay a pro-rated amount, there could be an increase in registrations. The collection of tuition was delayed for now; however, the goal is to have tuition paid in full before March 2021. The Spanish Immersion program is full day and is not considered part-time based on the curriculum. A discussion ensued in terms of the financial impact to the budget and the possibility of surveying kindergarten families before the School Committee reaches a decision.

Jeanne Downs moved that the School Committee reduce the tuition for Full-Day Kindergarten to \$2,300 for all full-day kindergarten students. There was no second.

The discussion continued, including the salary commitment for Kindergarten teachers and the possibility of bringing kindergarten students into the buildings for in-person instruction before October 19.

- Discussion of Formation of Curriculum Progress Committee: This agenda item was passed over.
- Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Testing Resolution: This agenda item was passed over.
- Review of Upcoming Communications and Listening Sessions: This agenda item was passed over.
- Updates: Reopening Criteria, Ventilation, Testing, Health and Safety:
Reopening Criteria:
The Board of Health is developing a list of criteria in a more readable version to reopen schools in the hybrid and all-in model and will present at their next meeting. Jeanne and Kathie also asked the Board of Health for a recommendation by October 5 before opening in the hybrid mode on October 19. Jeanne will post a meeting for Wednesday, September 9, so Committee members can attend the Board of Health meeting.

Ventilation was updated during the elementary discussion.

Testing Advisory Group:

During a meeting with the Board of Selectmen, Louise Miller, Julia Junghanns, Kim Reichelt, Arthur and others, they discussed the goals and approaches of a testing program for staff and students. Arthur and Julia Junghanns will explore a pool testing possibility that the Town of Natick is considering. A discussion ensued about the objectives of a testing program in Wayland, such as creating a safe and comfortable environment, the types of tests that are available and the cost.

Health and Safety:

There are no updates at this time.

Technology Support:

Ellen raised the issue of staff's concerns about the insufficient technology support between September 14 and October 19. There may be a need for more resources this should be a priority. Parry noted that there will be a

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need at the elementary level, as the technology specialists teach classes to students and provide staff support in the buildings and may not have the bandwidth to support families as they did during the spring months. This issue presents budget implications.

- Next Steps:
This agenda item was covered in previous discussions.

6. **Policy Matters:**

- Policy EBC:
Kim will consult with school counsel about this policy.
- Pandemic Policy Updates:
This agenda item was passed over.

7. **Financial Matters:**

- Review of and Possible Vote to Close Inactive Student Activity Accounts:
During the spring audit, the auditor identified seven student activities that were inactive for more than three years at Claypit Hill School, the Middle School, and the High School. These accounts will be closed and the funds will be moved to the “tripships” account at Claypit Hill and the Middle School. At the High School, the funds will be moved to “field trips” to provide financial assistance to those students in need.

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to close the accounts and move the money as presented. 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	

- Discussion and Review of COVID Related Finances:
Included in this discussion is the School Committee approved FY21 budget and the Finance Committee’s vote to reduce the school’s budget by \$150,000. The administrative leadership has identified ways to make up for the reduced funds and to be more in line with the FinCom’s voted budget. The budget is faced with a utilities shortfall of \$160,000 so that the ventilation units can be run two hours prior to opening schools and two hours after schools close. The district hired student supervisors and WRAP teachers who are funded through December with COVID relief funding. If these positions are necessary past January 1, the salaries will be covered by the operating budget. Substitute teacher costs will exceed the budget by about \$100,000 as well as the full day kindergarten shortfall. All shortfalls total about \$591,000 and could be higher depending on the FDK tuition and enrollment.

Susan noted the ways in which the district could pay for the unanticipated expenses that included pre-purchases, staffing exchanges, non-personnel budget reductions, and unidentified savings in athletics and other program areas. Transportation costs are not determined at this time. In order to close the gap, all non-personnel items were reviewed, but may also have to identify ways to save within the personnel budget. A discussion ensued in terms of additional COVID relief funding, the logistics of an earlier hybrid FDK program, and the possibility of advocating at Town Meeting for the reduction in the operating budget of \$150,000.

- Preparation for Annual Town Meeting – FY21 Budget:
The Committee discussed putting together a motion to increase the budget by an undetermined amount to cover COVID expenses. The shortfall could change depending on staffing exchange, the transportation bid and meeting the legal requirement for transporting students.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to put a budget amendment together to cover the amount of additional expenses the schools will incur in connection with the COVID emergency. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

8. **Administrative and Procedural Matters (continued):**

- School Council Meeting Agendas and Minutes:
This agenda item was passed over.

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

The School Committee asked the administrators what the expectations were for Wednesdays during the remote period. The elementary schools will follow the pre-COVID early release Wednesdays. Parry confirmed the middle school and high school schedules on Wednesdays, adding that Super Wednesdays are still on the calendar.

10. **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 4:56 p.m. for the purposes of 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 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	

Arthur left the meeting at 4:57 p.m.

11. **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 5:54 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	

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Public Comments

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3. FY21 Budget Status and Summary
4. Full-Day Kindergarten FY21 Tuition
5. FY2020 Inactive Student Activity Accounts
6. Ventilation Update Spreadsheet
7. Policy EBCFA – Face Masks
8. Minutes of July 29, 2020
9. Executive Session Motion