

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – April 12, 2023

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, April 12, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. at Wayland High School Lecture Hall, South Building 2nd Floor.

Present:

Chris Ryan, Chair (arrived at 6:06 p.m.)
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair
Jeanne Downs
Erin Gibbons
Jessica Polizzotti

Also present:

Parry Graham
Acting Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent

Tom Lafleur

Director of Finance & Operations

1. Welcome & Call to Order:

Vice Chair Ellen Grieco convened the regular session at 6:05 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded by WayCAM.

Jeanne Downs shared her recent community related experience after public comment. School Committee members and the Select Board were invited to attend a celebratory event at the Islamic Center of Boston at which she learned about the Muslim culture and Ramadan.

2. Public Comment:

Karen Kelly, 90 Old Connecticut Path, thanked the School Committee for moving the process forward to hire an acting superintendent next year and do what is best for the school community, as it is very important to start the new school year with stable leadership in the Central Office.

Chris arrived at 6:07 p.m.

Corey MacGregor, 295 Concord Road, is excited to hear that there are five experienced candidates for the acting superintendent position. She is grateful for the countless hours given by the School Committee with a sense of urgency to move the district forward. Ms. MacGregor condemned the vitriol and condemning attacks spoken at the previous meeting. She thanked the School Committee for moving the district forward to seek solutions and work together to heal.

Nancy Stone, 70 Bow Street, is an English teacher at Lincoln-Sudbury, her son graduated from Wayland High School, and her daughter is currently a student. She thanked the School Committee for its commitment to the students, while facing attacks from some members of the community. Ms. Stone referred to a public comment made at the last meeting in which the commenter said that everyone should focus on what truly matters to best serve the needs of the students. It is essential to unite with the School Committee regarding its decision on the acting superintendent. Finally, Ms. Stone commented that it's important to see what is ahead rather than look back, as there is so much good in the dedicated staff and in the unique creative kids who need us to fight for them.

Barrett Brontas, 27 Bow Road, expressed support for the entire School Committee, the individuals on the School Committee who have given their time and experience for the good of the Town, the students, and the process as it will take the district forward despite the significant challenges. Ms. Brontas commented that without leadership there isn't a stable environment that can retain and recruit talent. By focusing on the kids, the new school year can begin in a positive environment and, most importantly, learning will occur in a stable functioning environment. She called for everyone to work together and support each other moving forward.

Jess Polizzotti, Indian Road, spoke on behalf of herself, as she was elected to serve the community to the best of her ability and without a personal agenda. It was difficult to hear the public comments at the last meeting, as it represents the tension in the community and the divide that exists. Ms. Polizzotti shares the feelings about DEI, fiscal accountability, and the need for transparency, all topics voiced at that meeting. She also noted that the district is at a pivotal point whereby the School Committee will decide on the next leader to begin on July 1, and she is uncomfortable with the process up to now; thus, she understands how the community feels as they put faith in the School Committee. Given

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that there has not been finality or transparency regarding Dr. Easy's situation, she again understands the frustration felt by others. Although details cannot be shared, she believes that the Committee can move forward responsibly. Ms. Polizzotti believes that it is important to have a plan if paying two superintendents next year, but she was told by the Director of Finance and Operations that the funding is not there unless there are cuts to the budget which is unknown at this time. Finally, Ms. Polizzotti does not want this situation to impact the students' education.

Robin Sklar, Brooks Road, thanked Jess Polizzotti for her words to begin the journey toward transparency, as the community deserves it. She has been a strong supporter of the Wayland Public Schools since 1995.

3. **Acting Superintendent Update:**

3.1 *Discussion and Possible Approval of the Wayland High School Football Preseason Trip to Camp Caribou, Winslow, Maine:*

Scott Parseghian presented this trip, in its 17th year, to Camp Caribou which is owned by a Wayland family. The Wayland football team attends with players from Wellesley and Weston high schools. The experience is about team bonding, as well as football, through various planned activities. About 80 Wayland students, including some 8th graders, and 8 staff members will make the trip as well as WHS alumni.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the trip to Camp Caribou as presented.

3.2 *Loker Last Day of School:*

Loker School missed a day of school in early February due to a flood caused by a boiler issue. Students must attend school 180 days, so the school year for Loker School will be extended by one day. The current last day of school for students is Thursday, June 15, which is a super early release day. However, Loker students will have a full day of school on June 15 and will be dismissed at the usual time. Loker's last day of school will be Friday, June 16, with a super early release for students with WTA staff working a full day. WESA staff work a full day on June 15 and June 16, however, the principals will maintain discretion for WESA staff during that time. The Loker BASE program will operate a full day on June 15 and a half day on June 16.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve Parry's plan for the last day for Loker School.

3.3 *Leadership Hiring Updates:*

Happy Hollow Principal: Four finalists have been interviewed, and Parry will review the feedback from staff and parents and conduct reference checks. He hopes to have a decision the third week of April.

Interim Assistant Superintendent: Three finalists have been named and there will be entire days during which they will meet different stakeholders and tour the district. Parry would like to include the named Acting Superintendent in the decision making for this position, as well as for the Interim Director of Student Services.

Assistant Director of Student Services: There will be an announcement soon in terms of the person chosen.

Interim Director of Student Services: This process is just beginning, and a search committee has been formed.

4. **Financial Matters:**

4.1 *Discussion and Vote to Approve the FY23 Grants:*

- METCO 318 Supplemental Special Education Grant (\$38,866)

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Gibbons, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the FY23 grants related to METCO 318 Supplemental Special Education Grant in the amount of \$38,866.

- 140 (Title IIA) Grant Increase (\$281) \$30,169) new total (approved at last meeting)

4.2 *Finance Subcommittee Update Including Planning for Next Year:*

The Finance Subcommittee will meet next week to discuss a transition, as Tom Lafleur will leave as of June 30 and Jeanne Downs will be stepping down from the School Committee. In addition, the subcommittee will meet with the Finance Committee's chair and vice chair regarding the budget process for next year.

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- 4.3 *PMBC Update – Loker Roof Project:*
This agenda item was passed over.

5. **Administrative Matters:**

- 5.1 *Discussion and Review of FY24 Budget Booklet:*

Jeanne and Erin are working on the budget booklet and it will be posted on the website before Town Meeting.

- 5.2 *Approval of the Release with Redactions the Following Executive Session Minutes:*

When the executive session minutes are approved for declassification during executive session, the School Committee needs to announce in open session at the next meeting that the declassification took place and then approve the declassified minutes, some with redactions as the law allows.

Jeanne announced that the following executive session minutes were approved to be released, some with redactions: April 27, 2015, August 21, 2017, January 12, 2022, January 19, 2022, January 24, 2022, January 26, 2022, February 9, 2022, February 16, 2022, March 16, 2022, March 30, 2022, April 13, 2022, April 27, 2022, May 11, 2022, May 25, 2022, June 8, 2022, June 22, 2022, July 20, 2022, August 24, 2022, and September 7, 2022.

6. **Policy Matters (out of order):**

- 6.1 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Policy KDBA – Accessibility and Return of Tests:*

Policy KDBA would be a new policy added to the Policy Manual. The School Committee reviewed the draft policy provided by the Policy Subcommittee which codifies the existing practice at the High School and all other schools.

The School Committee discussed the recommendation from the Task Force which was not to develop a policy in this regard, although there was not unanimous consensus. However, the Policy Subcommittee, as well as Dr. Easy, felt it is best for the students at this time by simplifying access to materials and would provide continuity and equity given there will be new leadership moving forward. Jess and Erin provided some information leading up to this recommendation by the Subcommittee. Further discussion followed. Mid-terms, finals, AP exams, or anything copyrighted are exempt. The School Committee would like further information from Ms. Crowell regarding the Task Force's recommendation.

Jess Polizzotti moved to approve Policy KDBA – Accessibility and Return of Student Answers, Student Work and Test Questions – to be put out for public comment. A discussion ensued about the process.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted (3-0-2) (Jeanne and Chris abstained) to approve the language of Policy KDBA as presented by the Policy Subcommittee to be put out for public comment for a 30-day period and be re-reviewed at the end of that period.

- 6.2 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Policy IIB – Class Size (Addition of The Children's Way):*

This policy is being revised to add The Children's Way as the sixth school in Wayland to a class size of fifteen.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the language and put out for public comment Policy IIB as presented.

7. **Consent Agenda (out of order):**

- 7.1 Approval of Accounts Payables Warrants

- Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated April 12, 2023, in the amount of \$759,279.29

- 7.2 Approval of Minutes: March 29, 2023

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda.

8. **Matters Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair (out of order):**

None.

There was a short break, as the School Committee was ahead of schedule.

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9. Interview with Acting Superintendent Candidate – Dr. Midge Connolly:

Dr. Connolly introduced herself, is the current Superintendent in the Weston Public Schools and has worked in Weston for eight years during which she also served at the Director of Student Services. She has been in education for thirty years. The School Committee asked several questions of Dr. Connolly.

Dr. Connolly acknowledged that educational jobs have changed post-COVID and shared how she would work with the administrators, staff and families, given the overall climate here in recent years. Dr. Connolly described the role of the Superintendent, much like a manager and CEO, as being responsible to ensure that the district runs smoothly, to support every student and their achievements as they should be in the center of all decisions. She would be a visible presence and as an advocate, she will support the administration and, in turn, the teachers so they have the necessary resources, including Professional Development. She needs to be aware of the finances and described her budgetary experiences and responsibilities, as well as her accountability to ensure equity and Professional Development so that the district has what it needs. Dr. Connolly believes that relationships are critical, particularly with the School Committee as well with Town leadership.

Dr. Connolly noted that there have been many leadership changes in many communities and acknowledged the many changes that have occurred since COVID, including the changes in Wayland over the past few months. She would develop an Entry Plan to build trust, improve morale, and support autonomy. Dr. Connolly would listen, understand, and gather information from multiple stakeholders in a comprehensive way via coffees, forums, surveys, and small group meetings. The information would be shared for the purpose of moving forward while celebrating all the wonderful things going on in the Wayland schools. However, during the first year, she does not see herself as a change agent.

Dr. Connolly described her previous role as the Director of Student Services in Weston and the programs she created, including a Grades 2 to 12 language-based program with appropriately trained staff. It took eight years to develop this program. She also created and described those programs to address the mental health issues of students, particularly at the secondary level. Special education families and students, as well as teachers, felt supported in the safe environment that was created. Dr. Connolly recommended school partnerships to address special education issues in a collaborative way.

Dr. Connolly described her work and her staff's work around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for all students, including the summer programming. She also described a challenging situation, her approach and the result of the issue around developing and rolling out a standards-based grading program for the secondary schools resulting in an unsuccessful implementation. Dr. Connolly shared her experiences with capital projects, but has not been a part of the MSBA process.

Dr. Connolly believes that school safety is paramount and implemented a Safety Team in Weston in collaboration with the Police and Fire Departments. She described the safety measures, such as installing more cameras, locking all doors, using swipe cards, providing ALICE training for staff, adding that there are two school resource officers.

Finally, Dr. Connolly noted her passion and fulfillment over the years in education, particularly in building relationships with the administrators and teachers so that students and families have what they need. She asked the School Committee what can be and is being celebrated in Wayland and what the School Committee is looking for in the next Acting Superintendent.

10. Interview with Acting Superintendent Candidate – Dr. David Fleishman:

Dr. Fleishman has been a Superintendent for eighteen years and was the Superintendent for twelve years in the Newton Public Schools. He left education for an opportunity to become the CEO of a non-profit organization that focused on workforce development and adult education, particularly for immigrants and refugees. However, he missed education, the challenge of the work, and the sense of community; thus, made the decision to return to education.

Dr. Fleishman takes pride in supporting the adults, which school districts need more than ever now, particularly in Wayland. Part of his role as Acting Superintendent would be to prepare the district for a new and permanent Superintendent. In his view, the Superintendent has three major responsibilities. As the educational leader of the school district together with a team of people, they make sure that the district is heading down the correct path in terms of instructional strategies and curriculum, provides sound professional development, addresses issues around DEI, and thinks about reasonable goals. As the manager of the district, superintendents think about developing the budget, focusing on personnel practices, evaluating and supporting the staff in a meaningful way, and making sure that the schools operate in an effective and efficient way. Finally, the third part of the job is supporting the community internally and externally and finding ways to heal and bring the joy back in education. Dr. Fleishman described the differences in

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supporting both the internal and external communities.

Dr. Fleishman is a listener who asks many questions about people’s experiences and perspectives which is a way to come to a sense of understanding and is a strategy to “listen to win”. He described how he would structure the listening with the new administrative leaders, the principals, the WTA leadership and the teachers. The Central Office needs to have a cohesive leadership team to support those in the schools. Dr. Fleishman would also partner with community organizations to discuss and face the issues in Wayland.

Dr. Fleishman believes that if a district has excellent general education, it must have excellent special education. The students should always have what they need, particularly if the right systems and structures are in place. Reading and math support is important as well. It has been a challenge for him in the past to find the special education leaders to make the changes that he recommends, as special education students and families need to feel supported. Dr. Fleishman’s goal is to keep special education students in district whenever possible.

Dr. Fleishman is one who prepares ahead of time and does his research, and he values and practices building trusting relationships. As an experienced Superintendent, he would welcome the opportunity and described other objectives if he were appointed as the Acting Superintendent. Dr. Fleishman believes in autonomy with accountability and explained how he would support and collaborate with teachers.

Dr. Fleishman described his experiences and actions around diversity, equity and inclusion for all students. Adults, including parents, should be equipped to talk about race with the students in an open and honest way, particularly white adults. He may ask the adults to write a racial biography in terms of their own experiences. Dr. Fleishman also described how he dealt with extremely difficult situations and/or challenges, his approach, and the result. One situation had to do with school buildings that were not in the best of shape and receiving input from all those involved is the best approach. Dr. Fleishman can admit, even though difficult, when he has made a mistake.

Dr. Fleishman related his budget experiences and, in his opinion, the five pillars of a school budget, while trying to maintain morale in the district. Fine arts, class size, student services, school facilities and technology, and all that is supported in the classroom are those five pillars. He also has MSBA experience as a superintendent, but had a team who assisted in the process. In terms of school safety, Dr. Fleishman believes it is important to have the right procedures in place and to have trusting relationships with the police with not only leadership, but with students and staff at the secondary level. School safety drills are important as well in terms of preparation.

Finally, Dr. Fleishman asked the School Committee members what was important to them in terms of priorities.

11. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 9:23 p.m. for the purposes of (a) discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wayland Teachers Association (WTA), Wayland Educational Secretaries Association (WESA), Custodians and Food Service, 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; (b) reviewing and declassifying executive session minutes as listed, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: October 4, 2022, November 9, 2022, October 12, 2022, November 30, 2022, October 25, 2022, December 14, 2022, October 26, 2022; (c) approving executive session minutes, pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §22: December 15, 2021, December 22, 2021, January 5, 2022, January 18, 2023 #1, January 25, 2023, February 8, 2023, March 29, 2023; and (d) reviewing the response to the March 30, 2023 and April 3, 2023 Open Meeting Law complaints filed by George Harris, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(1), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the position of the School Committee.

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Chris Ryan, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs	X	
Erin Gibbons	X	
Jess Polizzotti	X	

The School Committee will be joined by Parry Graham, Acting Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

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The School Committee will adjourn in Executive Session and will not reconvene in open session.

12. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jess Polizzotti, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 10:21 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Chris Ryan, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs	X	
Erin Gibbons	X	
Jess Polizzotti	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Parry Graham, Clerk/Acting Superintendent
Wayland School Committee

Observers:

See attached sign-in sheets.

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. WHS Trip Request to Camp Caribou, Winslow, Maine
3. Policy KDBA – Accessibility and Return of Student Answers, Student Work and Test Questions
4. Policy IIB – Class Size
5. Interview Questions
6. Resumes for Midge Connolly and David Fleishman
7. Accounts Payables Warrant
8. Minutes of March 29, 2023
9. Executive Session Motion