

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – February 14, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. at the Wayland Town Building

Present:

Erin Gibbons, Chair
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair
Ellen Grieco
Erin Mueller
Christina Rodrigo

Also present:

David Fleishman
Acting Superintendent

Betsy Gavron
Interim Assistant Superintendent

Susan Bottan
Director of Finance & Operations

Debbie Dixson
Interim Director of Student Services

Also:

Scott Parseghian, Wellness Department Coordinator
Jenny Flynn, Health Education Specialist

1. Welcome & Call to Order:

Chair Erin Gibbons called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded by WayCAM.

Erin Gibbons shared that her Happy Hollow children enjoyed listening to METCO Director La Toya Rivers read a book to the K-5 children in a school gathering.

Jeanne Downs announced that the Anti-Racism Resolution banners are done and will be distributed to be hung in each school including Central Office.

2. Public Comment:

David Bernstein came before the School Committee because he has submitted a warrant article to establish an Athletic Field Planning Committee. This committee would develop a multi-year plan to fix the 27 fields in Wayland over a period of about 8 to 10 years. Mr. Bernstein commented that of the 27 usable fields, the schools own 15. However, many are not usable for different reasons; he described. Since the DPW does not have the staff to maintain the fields, many fields are in poor condition, and the playing hours are lower than was anticipated because over the last 20 years they were not maintained properly. Mr. Bernstein reported that the five-year capital plan does not contain funds to improve the fields, and there is no plan to fix the fields, adding that this matter is very complicated. He urged the School Committee to debate, dissect, and discuss the article.

Christine McKenna-Lok is excited that there be funding for a full-time diversity director. In an effort to get a more diversified group of candidates to run for School Committee, she suggested that the School Committee change the meeting format to a hybrid meeting. Of the 27 boards in Wayland, 19 offer a hybrid format or are entirely remote. Twelve boards begin at 7:00 p.m. or later and a few start at 6:30 p.m. For many, 6:00 p.m. is difficult and, as a result, possible School Committee candidates are limited. Ms. McKenna-Lok suggested that the School Committee add a non-voting member from METCO to the Committee, as well as a non-voting student representative. She also asked the members to be more transparent about their length of service when elections are imminent.

As part of public comment, Ellen Grieco and Jeanne Downs announced that they will not be running for School Committee this year.

3. Acting Superintendent Update:

3.1 District Goal Update – Elementary Health Initiative (Grades 4 and 5):

David introduced this health initiative which is a district goal this year. Recently, updated health and wellness standards which are reflected in the health initiative for 4th and 5th graders were published in the Boston Globe for which Scott Parseghian was involved at the state level. Scott acknowledged the support and funding by the Wayland Public Schools Foundation to launch the 2023-2024 pilot year of elementary health education.

The DESE health curriculum is guided by the National Health Education Standards, as well as the Massachusetts Health and Physical Education Frameworks and CASEL Frameworks. Some of the DESE Framework priorities and considerations include the importance of comprehensive health and physical education and presents skills and learning outcomes that are “comprehensive, inclusive, medically accurate, and developmentally and age-appropriate.” Physical education is recognized as contributing to a student’s overall health and well-being. The Frameworks highlights necessary skills and content that will promote mental health and wellness, as well as giving students a better understanding so they can identify and seek help for themselves or others.

Scott and the Wellness Department are proposing that the health initiative is district wide K-12 as the state standards suggest; it is currently for Grades 4 to 12. The focus is on skills such as, but not limited to, decision-making, problem solving, self-management, the ability to set goals, self-advocacy and health promotion. The district will hone in on healthy relationships, physical health and hygiene, nutrition and balanced eating, all of which include sub-categories.

Jenny Flynn highlighted the 4th and 5th grades elementary health education for this school year. Students receive 12 forty-minute lessons. The 5th grade began in the fall and went to mid-January and 4th grade began its lessons in late January. When time permits, Jenny has lunch with the students which gives them an opportunity to initiate a discussion or ask questions about what they are learning about their health. There was a fall open house presentation and principals have hosted parent coffees, as well as the possibility of a schedule workshop for parents of 4th and 5th graders. The hope is to have a full final draft of this year’s pilot by the end of this school year. Jenny reviewed the strengths of this year’s pilot, such as being intent to encourage and provide skill building opportunities to strengthen a student’s communication with caregivers; she described further. Reinforcing communication skills for students will likely result in academic success and reduce harmful risky behaviors. They are also less likely to experience unbearable impacts of physical or mental health and being a victim of bullying. This data is from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Jenny reviewed anonymous student and caregiver survey results. All those students who participated in the survey could name a caring and trusted adult, with parent or guardian the most named response and a teacher following closely behind. About three-quarters of the caregivers said that their child had brought up and discussed health class topics with them. Staff members involved in the programming were surveyed to identify the areas that needed more growth, such as scheduling, greater collaboration with classroom teachers, a more deliberate interface of social emotional learning lessons, an increase from 12 to 16 lessons at 50 minutes each, and more communication with caregivers. Lastly, they want to expand the curriculum to other grade levels as well as partnering with school psychologists around social emotional learning and the personal safety curriculum. A discussion followed the presentation.

3.2 Announcement and Plan for Hate Crimes Prevention Grant:

David announced that the district was awarded an Anti-Hate Crime Prevention Act Grant in the amount of \$50,000. David, Betsy and Caroline Han worked together in this effort, and the grant will support student programming, professional development for adults, and a review of policies and protocols needed to address this topic; David described next steps. The district will collaborate with other districts, particularly one that was awarded the grant last year. More information will be provided at future meetings.

3.3 Administrator Search Update:

David reported that four administrative searches are being conducted simultaneously. The Claypit Hill principal search was reopened as there were no candidates that stood out based on feedback from the interview committee. The search for Assistant Superintendent is on the same timeline as the Claypit Hill principal search. The searches for the Middle School principal and Director of Student Services will both be completed in mid-March.

On January 31, David and other district superintendents, as well as La Toya Rivers and other METCO Directors, met with state legislative leaders to discuss the value of METCO and to discourage the level-funding of the METCO budget, which is ultimately a cut to the budget. David cited the benefits and the positive impact to METCO students

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in the program according to research, such as higher SAT's, higher MCAS scores, the high percentage of college attendees/graduates, and their employment earnings after college (research done for ages 25-35); David explained. David also acknowledged and thanked Wayland's newest legislative representative David Linsky who is also the co-chair of the METCO Caucus.

4. **Administrative Matters:**

4.1 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve the 7th & 8th Grade Music Trip:*

This music trip is a day-long annual trip. Betsy Gavron has been on some of these trips and noted that this is a wonderful opportunity for students; she described. After all of the performances, the day ends with a fun trip to Canobie Lake Park.

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Mueller, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 7th and 8th grade music trip on Thursday, June 6, 2024 as presented.

4.2 *Wayland Public Schools Foundation Mid-Year Update Report:*

This agenda item was passed over until the February 28th meeting.

4.3 *Discussion regarding Petitioner's Article to Establish Athletic Field Planning Committee:*

As noted by Erin Gibbons, Finance Committee member Brian O'Herlihy is preparing a write-up for the petitioner's article to establish an athletic field planning committee. He provided questions and some thoughts for the School Committee to consider when they provide pro and con comments as they relate to the article. Erin suggested that two School Committee work together to write the pro and con comments which needs to be done this week. A discussion ensued in this regard, including the list of stakeholders and the responsible parties who maintain the fields. The main issue is that there is no money or resources to maintain the fields, and the goal is to provide high-quality fields and playing time and access to the athletes. In general, the School Committee agrees that the proposal to establish an athletic field planning committee is a good idea; thus, Jeanne and Erin Gibbons will work together to provide some pro and con comments.

5. **Financial Matters:**

5.1 *Special Town Meeting Post-Status Update: WTA and WESA Retroactive Pay:*

As a result of special town meeting in the fall, the town voted to transfer \$1.189M from the Town Salary Reserve to the School Department to issue retro pay and wage increases to WTA and WESA staff/members. Susan reported that the first half of this process is complete, and the second phase will begin February 22 for WESA and March 7 for WTA. The School Committee thanked Susan and all the school and town staff who were involved in this process for the great effort and the time spent on this task. Susan acknowledged that our finance office staff, payroll staff, our new HR staff, and town colleagues all contributed to this team effort.

5.2 *Review of FY24 2nd Quarter Results:*

This agenda item was passed over until the February 28th meeting.

5.3 *Update on FY25 Operating and Capital Budgets:*

Susan reported that according to the Town's Finance Director, the Finance Committee approved the capital budget but the publication has not been produced as of now. The schools' capital projects were approved in the amount of \$1.1M, and they added two capital projects, such as expanding the middle school boiler project by \$60,000 and adding the middle school fire sensor replacement for next summer. The Finance Committee is expected to vote on the operating budget by the end of February, and the warrant should be sent out for publication on March 11. Susan noted that she has responded to about fifty questions regarding the budget, most of which came from the Finance Committee.

5.4 *Discussion regarding FY25 Budget Hearing Date:*

The School Committee agreed to hold the Budget Hearing on March 27 when the budget is finalized.

6. **Consent Agenda:**

6.1 Approval of Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants:

- Wayland Public Schools Warrant, dated January 31, 2024, in the amount of \$392,000.84

6.2 Approval of Minutes: January 10, 2024, January 17, 2024

Christina recommended some revisions to both sets of minutes.

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Upon a motion duly moved by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Christina Rodrigo, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda with the changes as noted.

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

None.

9. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Gibbons, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 7:34 p.m. for the purposes of (a) approving executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: January 10, 2024 with the intent to withhold said minutes; (b) discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with custodians, pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3); (c) discussing strategy with respect to central office administrative non-union personnel (Assistant Superintendent and Director of Student Services), pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(2); and (d) discussing strategy with respect to the following litigation matters where an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the School Committee: Easy v. Wayland Public Schools, et al (MCAD Complaint, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3). A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Erin Gibbons, Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Erin Mueller	X	
Christina Rodrigo	X	

The School Committee will be joined by David Fleishman, Superintendent, Susan Botton, Director of Finance & Operations, Suzanne Kenny, HR Consultant, 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 made by Erin Gibbons, seconded by Erin Mueller, the Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Gibbons, Chair
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Elementary Health Initiative Presentation
3. WMS Gr. 7 and 8 Music Trip Proposal
4. Petitioners' Article to Establish an Athletic Field Planning Committee
5. FY25 Budget Questions and Answers
6. Payroll & Accounts Payables Warrants
7. Minutes of January 10, 2024
8. Minutes of January 17, 2024
9. Executive Session Motion