

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – February 10, 2020

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Monday, February 10, 2020, at 7:00 P.M. in the School Committee Room of the Wayland Town Building.

Present were:

- Jeanne Downs, Chair
- Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair
- Nate Buffum
- Kim Reichelt
- Kathie Steinberg

Also:

- Arthur Unobskey
- Superintendent

- Parry Graham
- Assistant Superintendent

- Susan Bottan
- Director of Finance & Operations

Also:

- Louise Miller, Town Administrator
- Brian Keveny, Finance Director
- Board of Selectmen
- Personnel Board
- Finance Committee

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session in the School Committee Room at 7:00 p.m.; the meeting was recorded by WayCAM.

1. Executive Session #1:

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to convene in Executive Session #1 at 7:01 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy with the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, and Personnel Board with respect to collective bargaining with the Wayland Teachers Association (WTA); Wayland Educational Secretaries Association (WESA); the Massachusetts Laborers District Council Laborers International Union of North America, AFL-CIO on behalf of Public Employees Local Union 1116 Custodians and Maintenance; Wayland Food Service Association; the New England Police Benevolent Association (NEPBA)/Wayland Police Officers Union (WPOU) Local 176; International Association of Firefighters, AFL-CIO Local 178; the Wayland Library Staff Association MFT, AFT, AFL-CIO; Wayland DPW Association, Teamsters Local 170; Local 690 Wayland-1 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME 690 Wayland-1); Local 690 Wayland-2 American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME 690-2), 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. 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	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

The School Committee will be joined by Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, Personnel Board, Arthur Unobskey, Superintendent of Schools, Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, Diane Marobella, Recording Secretary, Louise Miller, Town Administrator, Elizabeth Doucette, Assistant Town Administrator, Brian Keveny, Finance Director, Kathleen Buckley, HR Manager and Susan Bottan, Director of Finance and Operations.

Susan Bottan did not attend this Executive Session.

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The School Committee will reconvene in open session at 7:44 p.m. to conduct regular matters as noted on the meeting notice.

2. Comments & Written Statements from the Public:

Jeff Baron and his family are grateful that Wayland High School has been a place where high levels of learning take place. However, he does not support the decision to not return the math tests to the students and feels that there is a disconnection and divide in the community. Mr. Baron quoted an article from Stanford University, adding that there is no research out there that shows this program is working. He noted that there has been no communication describing this process and asked if the administration would share some analyses with the community. Mr. Baron wonders if the students are benefitting from this process/policy.

Lisa Flathers sent her public comment to Jeanne regarding the math assessment process. Jeanne read this statement which noted that Ms. Flathers is frustrated by the unspoken and unwritten policy of not returning math tests to students. In her statement, she described her experience with the school administration.

Jinglei Whitehouse presented to the School Committee a returned math test that showed the student's answers without the questions. She commented that students learn and study in different ways, and they should not be limited access to their work, as it puts them at a disadvantage. Ms. Whitehouse asked if other districts are engaged in this same policy and, if so, is it successful.

Corey Spaulding, a Framingham resident, is attending this meeting on behalf of her child. She proceeded to say that her child was excluded from attending Framingham schools, was transferred to the Natick schools and was excluded from Natick as well. As Ms. Spaulding claimed to have uncovered fraud in both school systems, she explained further why this happened to her child. She asked the School Committee when Policy DIF will be approved. Jeanne will let her know about Policy DIF.

Alexia Obar does not support the non-return of math tests. She added that the students were not asked how they feel about this policy. Ms. Obar feels that there isn't a lot of support by the administration and that students should feel safe with stating their opinions.

3. Educational Matters:

(a) Update on High School Math Assessment Process:

Barbara Coughlin acknowledged the concerns regarding students' difficulty in preparing for mid-year exams without their assessments. She has not seen any obvious differences from last year to this year in terms of grades and student performance. Students were asked what they would need in order to study and be prepared for tests and surveys were also sent to students asking for their feedback. Students are provided with review packets and supplemental materials so they can study for unit tests and exams; however, this occurs mostly for students who are in honors level classes and some college level classes. Barbara monitors how teachers interact with students and their teaching practices.

In response to questions from the School Committee, Barbara added that practices are followed through from course to course and at different levels. She is also receiving positive feedback from the students.

Ellen left the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Kim raised the concern that she's been hearing from a lot of parents (as well as the parents who commented in public comment) that this practice is a problem for many students. She was concerned about increased use of multiple choice tests, more assessments being withheld across more classes than had been described would be the case back in the spring. Kim had provided a list of data requests (including grades and drop-downs), but none of that data was presented or provided, even though it did seem to be available. She was also concerned that students and parents had not been told that their rights to get back tests, and that even when they had asked to get them back, some were being simply told no, rather than being told the process that has been defined for them to go through. That process has never been communicated. Students and parents have indicated that they are uncomfortable voicing their concerns, and Kim read as an example a communication from one such parent, detailing their specific concerns with the practice, but that they would wait until their student had graduated before they bring them to the school themselves.

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Allyson Mizoguchi commented that they are looking at this practice through a very critical lens and has heard all the comments made this evening. They are looking for more opportunities to make the relationships between students and teachers flourish in the classroom and described the teacher/student collaborative environment in one math class and in the academic center. Arthur reflected on his experience in this math class to which Allyson was referring.

A discussion ensued in terms of the lack of communication between staff, parents and students. The School Committee members' opinions differed and some suggested that the professionals should be trusted to work on making improvements in this process. Barbara described the process in place to reach the ultimate goal of focusing on student learning and student performance from year to year, such as looking at course averages, student movement from level to level, enrollment at different levels year to year, mid-term and final exam performances, and having conversations with students. If some students are apprehensive about coming forward with their concerns to their teachers, the staff promotes and teaches them to advocate for themselves and reach out to their guidance counselor or any other adult in the school, including Barbara.

Parry pointed out that Nashoba Regional has said that since 1993 math mid-years and finals do not go home, but some teachers may retain tests. Oakmont sends everything home and Groton-Dunstable sends nothing home. Barbara noted that this process is at the teachers' discretion in Wellesley, Natick, Needham and Acton, but Kim indicated that residents who have spoken with math departments heads at all the nearby and peer schools have said that they do return their regular assessments.

Allyson asked for patience, as they are trying to be mindful about the way students are learning and what students are receiving from staff, such as guidance by teachers toward additional resources and to places where they can be more supported independently or with others. Allyson stressed that she considers this to be a thoughtful practice and mechanism in place that will continue to strengthen and grow.

The takeaways are a lack of communication, the potential survey of students, and the need of a discussion about requesting data to review.

- (b) Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve FY21 Super Wednesdays (9/30/20; 11/18/20; 1/6/21; and 2/10/21):
Parry proposed four Super Wednesdays in order to conduct professional development for staff. These days are earlier releases than a typical Wednesday. Parry explained why these four dates were chosen in terms of the school calendar and given the events at each school.

Kathie suggested making these days family days whereby students would not receive homework. Arthur will follow up with this suggestion.

Upon a motion duly made by Nate Buffum, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the FY21 Super Wednesdays of September 30, 2020, November 18, 2020, January 6, 2021, and February 10, 2021.

- (c) Superintendent's Report:
- *The Buzz:*
Arthur appeared on The Buzz and talked about the recent demographic study which has helped in budget planning in terms of capital expenses in preparation of increased enrollment at the Claypit and Loker schools.

There will be an Inservice for all staff as a continuation of the work related to diversity and equity on February 12. In that regard, Parry, Tony Laing, and Caroline Han traveled to Atlanta to attend a job fair in hopes of recruiting and building relationships with minority teacher candidates. They will travel to North Carolina in March and possibly New York City as well. Parry elaborated on the trip to Atlanta.

- *Social Emotional Learning Update:*
Richard Whitehead updated the School Committee on the progress being made in the social emotional learning initiative under the universal standards of the CASEL core competencies. The district is providing the professional development and tools by grade levels by which principals can make informed decisions in terms of how they want to approach social emotional learning.

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The partnership continues with McLean Hospital after three visits at the final Super Wednesday to study K-2 student anxiety in the schools, how the anxiety manifests itself, and what can be done to alleviate this for the students. The five principals thought about the certain target areas on which they would like to study and focus. For instance, the Middle School focused on behavioral issues and the High School looked at anxiety in students as did the elementary principals for K-5 students. To put this into perspective, it is reported that nationwide, 2% of elementary students struggle with anxiety, 8% in middle school, and about 16% in high school. The McLean partnership may resume in FY21.

Richard described the use of Panorama Education in surveying staff in terms of their understanding of SEL and survey students in 9th grade and grades 3-5 to provide a look at how the students see themselves in terms of SEL. Given the age differences, two different surveys are used.

Ellen returned to the meeting at 9:16 p.m.

Other ways of managing social emotional learning includes the sensory pathways at the elementary schools for students and staff training regarding the zones of regulations across four “color” zones, which teaches kids about self-regulation and self-control. Principals also work within the schools with SEL committees. Going forward, Richard will work with staff to review a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan after the February break. Richard has submitted a proposal to the Wayland Public Schools Foundation to support a .4 FTE SEL coach and explained how this coach would support the teachers in SEL practices. Finally, DESE has developed a grant regarding mental health in schools, for which Richard will be applying.

4. Financial Matters:

(a) Review of District Fees and Possible Vote to Approve the Fees:

The School Committee reviewed and discussed the district fees, as well as possible increases for the high school student parking fee, athletic fees and the transportation fee. As a point of interest, athletic fees mostly cover the cost of coaches’ stipends which have not increased in six years. Not wanting to raise transportation fees, Kathie also noted the possibilities of changing bus transportation as it currently exists; she explained. School families pay about \$2,000 per year for fees, which is why the School Committee does not recommend raising fees at this time.

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted (3-0-2) (Nate and Ellen abstained) to maintain the fees for FY21 as presented tonight.

(b) Continued Discussion of FY2021 Budget, including Budget Drivers, Assumptions, Fees and Funding Sources, and Requests for Information and Review of Response to Finance Committee:

Jeanne informed the School Committee that even though the School Committee voted its budget with no reductions, the Finance Committee did vote its draft budget to cut \$150,000 from the FY21 school operating budget. As a result, Arthur and the administrators reluctantly put together a list of items that will have a significant impact on the schools. They include:

- \$45,000 in hardware leases resulting in no laptops for TA’s and no automation of student accounts
- \$51,000 in maintenance resulting in a less than adequate replacement of furniture and there will be no custodial equipment replacement
- \$13,577 reducing a .5 FTE Loker Spanish Immersion Interventionist to a .3 FTE
- \$10,000 resulting in a 20% capacity reduction in a HR administrative assistant position
- \$16,971 reducing an Anatomy and Physiology section which will limit the number of students who can take this popular and important elective
- \$8,452 reducing curriculum and instructional materials
- \$5,000 reducing ClearGov which will limit ClearGov data gathering

These proposed reductions will affect morale and effectiveness in buildings across the district. Jeanne suggested that the School Committee had three options: 1) retain the budget as voted with no reductions with a possible amendment on Town Meeting floor; 2) make the reductions; or 3) make a compromise to reduce the budget.

This discussion was paused and will continue in Executive Session.

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(c) Update on Elementary School Playgrounds Warrant Article:

Kathie updated the School Committee regarding the warrant article for the Happy Hollow and Claypit Hill playgrounds as drafted by the Recreation Department. CPA funds have been approved for the surface and some equipment. Although there is no current design at this time, the Recreation Department hopes to have the design and bid process begin as soon as possible so that work can start this summer. There has been some concern regarding the materials being proposed at Happy Hollow for the surface of the playgrounds, as they will be rubber based which is compliant for students with disabilities. The preference by some parents is cork surfaces, but they are not available in the United States and would have to be approved at the state level if considered.

(d) Discussion and Review of Budget Booklet and Budget Hearing Presentation:

Jeanne updated the budget booklet with some changes and asked Committee members what should be included in the budget presentation for the budget hearing. A discussion ensued, and the School Committee provided its recommendations.

(e) Review and Possible Approval of Invoices for the Athletic Fields and Stadium Project:

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the invoices presented tonight on the athletic fields and stadium project.

(f) High School Master Athletic Plan:

- Project Update

As updated by Arthur, the power to the press box and the roofing to the rest rooms are almost completed, and the black top is lined for the tennis courts for the spring season. The tennis courts topcoat will be completed at the end of the school year.

5. **Administrative/Procedural Matters:**

(a) Discussion regarding the Mary Johnson Travelship Award Ceremony:

The School Committee discussed this annual event in anticipation that a School Committee member can attend on March 12.

(b) Review and Discussion of any Outstanding Document and/or Minutes Requests:

Jeanne commented that there have been several public records requests from a resident of Framingham. Jeanne is working with Kevin Bresnihan in terms of a response.

(b) Review and Discussion of any Outstanding Open Meeting Law Matters:

None.

(c) Discussion of School Committee Communications and Information for the Buzz:

Kim sent an update last week and will send an update of this meeting.

6. **Consent Agenda:**

(a) Approval of Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants:

- Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated February 10, 2020, in the amount of \$424,643.83
- Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Student Activities Warrant, dated February 10, 2020, in the amount of \$9,199.98
- Wayland Public Schools Payroll Warrant, dated February 12, 2020, in the amount of \$1,537,761.29
- Wayland Public Schools Payroll Warrant, dated January 29, 2020, in the amount of \$1,536,733.52

(b) Approval of Minutes:

- January 13, 2020
- January 16, 2020
- February 3, 2020

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Nate Buffum, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Consent Agenda.

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

None.

8. **Executive Session #2:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter executive session #2 at 10:07 p.m. for 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 discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; discussing strategy with respect to litigation with the Wayland Teachers Association (WTA) before the Department of Labor Relations as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3), as discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the School Committee; approving the following executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: January 13, 2020, January 16, 2020, and February 3, 2020; and discussing strategy with respect to and in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel, the Superintendent, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(2). 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	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

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 reconvene in open session to complete the items on the agenda.

Arthur Unobskey, Parry Graham and Diane Marobella left the meeting at 10:44 p.m.

9. **Continued Discussion of FY2021 Budget, including Budget Drivers, Assumptions, Fees and Funding Sources, and Requests for Information and Review of Response to Finance Committee:**

Jeanne noted that at the upcoming Budget Hearing, the Committee will present the original voted budget with the unmet needs, including the Finance Committee reductions.

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Nate Buffum, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 11:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Observers:

Kori Rogers, WTA
Corey Spaulding, Framingham
Jeff Baron, Wayland
Lisa Flathers, Wayland
Jean Whitehouse, Wayland
Alexia Obar, Wayland

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda & Backup Information
2. Memo re: Math Assessment Return Policy (Kim Reichelt)
3. User Fee History

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4. List of Possible Reductions to FY21 Budget totaling \$150,000
5. Invoices for Athletic Project
6. Warrant Article for Phase 3 of the HS Athletic Complex Renovation
7. Draft FY21 Budget Booklet
8. Regular Session Minutes of January 13, 2020
9. Regular Session Minutes of January 16, 2020
10. Regular Session Minutes of February 3, 2020
11. Executive Session Motion