

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Special Meeting – April 23, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Thursday, April 23, 2020, at 12:45 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

Present and participating remotely were:

Jeanne Downs, Chair
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair
Nate Buffum
Kim Reichelt
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:

Patricia Keefe, Director of Wayland School Community Programs
Katy Merrell, Director of The Children's Way

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 12:47 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.

Jeanne read the message that the School Committee sent to administrators, teachers, and staff for the benefit of those who may have not seen it.

1. Discuss COVID-19 Response:

- Discussion of Potential Reimbursement of Fee-Based Program Fees, including BASE, TCW, and FDK and Possible Vote to Approve Reimbursements:

Full-Day Kindergarten:

The School Committee reviewed a summary slide and the detailed information that informs the slide regarding these fee-based programs. Susan informed the School Committee that the district is using the guidance from DESE, together with the WTA Memorandum of Agreement, that outlines 3 to 3.5 hours of instruction per day for students is equal to a full day of instruction. Susan proposed that FDK families be reimbursed \$450 or 45% of the fee paid based on the account balance at the end of June which she estimates to be \$80,000. Savings in this account are generated from the role of the TA's, custodians, utilities and other expenses that are not incurred during this time.

A discussion ensued about the possibility of reimbursing FDK families more, although a full day of instruction is being provided based on DESE's guidelines and is equivalent to what the full-day students receive. More information may be needed before a decision about a reimbursement is made if summer programming is possibly offered for current full-day kindergartners via this revolving account. This decision will be postponed as agreed to by four out of five members of the School Committee. Kim disagreed, arguing that FDK families were not getting the extra service that they were paying for - that they were paying for school beyond a half-day and they are not getting more than a half day, and that therefore they should be reimbursed..

The Children's Way:

Given that school is closed through June, TCW staff have doubled their efforts in providing services to its families synchronously and asynchronously and closely aligning with the full day of instruction of 3.5 hours. Katy shared

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what a day of remote learning involves from the teachers' and families' perspectives, adding that repetition is extremely important for preschool aged children and gave an example of one day of learning. Activities include, but are not limited to, videos of songs, videos of teachers reading, and the activity of creating a spring backpack. Classroom circle times take place as well as yoga related exercises and craft time.

A discussion ensued regarding the reimbursement for TCW families, and Katy explained how she formulated the calculations in this regard for a total of \$38,070. The School Committee reviewed the informational financial spreadsheets. Katy noted the program shortfall moving into FY21. Katy responded to a question regarding fall invoices and described the process in place for now.

In addition to the remote learning Katy previously described, staff is also sharing resources for children's independent learning and enrichment activities on the redesigned TCW website, such as scholastic resources, PBS Kids programming, and videos.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Nate Buffum, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to reimburse the applicable families of The Children's Way the \$38,070 as presented to 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	

BASE:

The School Committee reviewed the BASE reimbursement fee spreadsheet with Pat Keefe, including information about possible furloughs and the costs associated to the Town of Wayland based on eight weeks of furloughs. Susan added that there is questionable consideration of whether towns would be eligible for funds through the CARES Act; confirmation could come today. A discussion ensued in this regard. Susan shared new information received during the meeting in that the town would be responsible for half of a \$600 Federal stimulus payment for furloughed/unemployed staff.

Since weekly staff hours vary, Pat set up work-at-home expectations based on their hours and what their jobs would entail. Pat shared what the BASE site-based staff and site coordinators are working on to build upon programming when school resumes and the fall. The site-based staff participates in curriculum development for families, professional development, articles and webinars, planning for activity calendars, and curriculum resource research. The staff also meets twice monthly in virtual staff meetings. In addition to the work that site-based staff does, site coordinators communicate with staff and families.

A decision regarding furloughing employees will be postponed until next week due to the new information received within the last few hours.

2. Comments and Written Statements from the Public (taken out of order):

Jeanne read a public comment sent in by Chris Ryan of Rice Spring Road. Mr. Ryan noted that not-for-profit organizations are eligible for current Federal stimulus loans and wondered if The Children's Way could benefit. He referenced the BASE revolving fund account balance and asked the School Committee to consider using a portion of the funds for capital projects or other related building purposes. Mr. Ryan also commented on the online learning that he and his children are experiencing which, in his opinion, does not mirror what existed prior to the shutdown, and if, as the year progresses, online learning would improve and resemble what nearby peer towns are providing. He is supportive of the research that Kim and Ellen will possibly pursue to further develop remote learning strategies.

Kathie clarified the use of revenue funds in terms operational costs and specifics to the programs, and, according to the DOR, funds cannot not be used for capital projects.

No phone calls were received.

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3. COVID-19 Response (continued):

- Discussion of School Closure and Remote Learning Phase 2, including Status and Feedback of Remote Learning and Benchmarking:

Monday, April 13, began Phase Two of remote learning for students. Arthur updated the School Committee regarding the Governor's announcement to keep Massachusetts schools closed for the remainder of the school year, and noted that the Commissioner of Education will provide more guidance tomorrow regarding power standards or essential standards of learning on which students would focus during the next eight weeks. Coming back to school in the fall will be very different from the normal experience of school being in session; however, this plan is not clear at this time. Arthur shared some of the thought process that the Administrative Council will discuss moving forward in terms of summer opportunities for students and the opening of school in the fall.

Arthur addressed the issue of benchmarking in terms of gathering comparison data from other districts. He noted that the district's goals in this regard should be identified, as well as deciding what kind of comparison information to record. Arthur suggested reaching out to Weston, Wellesley, Lincoln, and Lincoln-Sudbury regarding their synchronous and asynchronous learning, what is working for these districts, and to include in the comparison data what is being planned for the summer programs and the fall openings. Kathie noted that given standards and practices are being developed as remote learning progresses, the purpose of this collaborative process should be to expand the district's understanding and to research best practices and models. Ellen suggested expanding this process to include families' and staff's perspectives and reactions during this time. A discussion ensued in terms of which questions to ask and what information might be helpful to inform the benchmarking process, including the financial status, moving forward. There are ongoing concerns for students who may lose continued academic interest, engagement, and learning habits, particularly during the summer and moving into the fall.

Arthur shared his thoughts regarding this benchmarking process with other districts, adding that Phase Two is in its early stages and this could process could take longer than anticipated. He suggested that questions could be developed by the Administrative Council which would be shared with the Committee at the first meeting in May. Arthur noted the complications that could arise around summer learning, such as building access. The School Committee suggested several ideas in moving forward, such as a district partnership in regard to summer programs which could also help to defray costs in each district, members reach out to the principals in their liaison schools for feedback, and to invite principals and teachers to meetings to talk about their experiences during this shutdown. Arthur will facilitate and invite principals and teachers to School Committee meetings as a way to inform the Committee about their remote learning experiences. Arthur will update the School Committee at its next meeting regarding transcripts.

- School Budget Update, including Expenditures and Cost Savings Due to School Closure:
Susan updated the School Committee on the operating budget for which she projects a year-end balance of about \$550,000. Given the unknowns for next year related to students' needs, facilities needs, and summer programming needs, Susan would like to open funding for next year in order to pre-purchase supplies, materials and equipment, as well as set aside Circuit Breaker funds and to increase the SPED prepayment. The 3rd quarter will close at the end of next week, and the FY21 budget moving forward is uncertain at this time until such time that the town receives some guidance from the state.
- Discussion of Long-Term Planning for Schools:
This topic was addressed in previous discussions.
- Next Steps:
This topic was addressed in previous discussions.

4. Discussion of Policy JH – Student Absences and Excuses:

This policy has been out for public comment on the website and no comments have been received. A discussion ensued in terms of the timing to approve the policy and whether approval should be postponed until Principal Mizoguchi has reviewed the policy. Also, given the COVID-19 pandemic issues, there are other matters related to student absences that may need to be considered when school reopens. Policy approval will be postponed to another meeting.

5. Consent Agenda:

- Approval of Minutes: March 27, 2020 and April 2, 2020

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

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

Richard commented that the Special Education Department is facing many challenges, and there is a good plan moving forward for the remainder of the school year during this closure. Arthur assured teachers that any discussions during this meeting related to family surveys has no reflection on the work they are providing to their students; Ellen agreed.

Jeanne encouraged the public to contact the School Committee members, Dr. Unobskey, or building principals about any issues they would like to discuss.

Nate thanked those non-School Committee members who attended this meeting during April vacation week. Kathie thanked Mary Antes for her time and interest in the meetings.

7. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 3:06 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	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. BASE Fee Reimbursement Summary
3. BASE Fund Balance Summary
4. FDK Fee Reimbursement Summary
5. FDK Fund Balance Summary
6. TCW Fee Reimbursement Summary
7. TCW Fund Balance Summary
8. FY2020 Financial Summary Projected Year-End Balances
9. FY2020 Non-Personnel Financial Summary Projected Year-End Balances
10. FY2020 Personnel Financial Summary Projected Year-End Balances
11. Policy JH – Students Absences and Excuses
12. Draft Remote Learning Survey
13. Emailed Public Comment (1)
14. Special Session Minutes of March 27, 2020
15. Special Session Minutes of April 2, 2020