

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Special Meeting – July 10, 2020

.A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Friday, July 10, 2020, at 9:00 A.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

*Present and participating remotely were:*

Jeanne Downs, Chair  
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair  
Kim Reichelt  
Kathie Steinberg  
Chris Ryan (Non-voting member-elect)

*Also participating remotely:*

Arthur Unobskey  
Superintendent

Parry Graham  
Assistant Superintendent

Richard Whitehead  
Director of Student Services

*Also:*

Dr. Marni Roitfarb Canterbury

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 9:06 a.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.

**1. Consent Agenda (taken out of order):**

- Approval of Accounts Payables Warrants:
  - Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant in the amount of \$733,737.63
  - Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Student Activities Warrant in the amount of \$5,249.00

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously 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	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

Jeanne announced that Chris Ryan will become a voting member of the School Committee on July 15.

Arthur thanked the teachers and parents for attending the virtual listening sessions on July 9. There will be more sessions scheduled moving forward and the participant maximum will be increased to more than 500. Arthur commented on the timeline for the three models (hybrid, all-in, remote) being developed for the fall as directed by the Commissioner of Education. The all-in plan was recommended and acknowledged that there are concerns by staff and parents to return to the buildings. Arthur recommended that the process continue for few more weeks until the beginning of August so that concerns and questions can be addressed.

**2. Comments & Written Statements from the Public:**

Sejal Srinivisan, 35 Covered Bridge Lane, thanked everyone for the work that has done to address the reopening of school. She inquired about the hybrid model, as she is surprised at the amount of curriculum coverage which is similar to the remote model. Ms. Srinivisan feels that coverage should be improved upon, given that the teachers will be seeing the students in person some of the time. She is also concerned about the time the teachers will be spending to revise their lesson plans; thus, she recommended a “divide and conquer” approach by grouping teachers together in smaller groups by curriculum areas in the interest of time to prepare for the school year.

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Jeanne read a public comment from Gina Dallin, 76 Glezen Lane. Ms. Dallin understands the need to have three models to reopen in place, but with the assurance that the kids have the best education possible. She does not agree with reducing course leveling in music, art or gym, as kids need these outlets more than ever, and it could affect GPA's and the importance of getting into schools and receiving scholarships. Ms. Dallin commented that our amazing music and art teachers could develop musical and artistic programs that the kids could easily focus on at home. Finally, now more than ever Wayland needs to keep the amazing educators thinking outside the box to ensure all kids can move forward during this time.

Brian Babineau, 9 Goodman Lane, thanked the administrators for their commitment to the community. Out of the three options being considered for the fall return, Mr. Babineau feels that the all-in person model has the lowest probability of being safely implemented by the start of school. Given the nearly \$1M of costs to prepare the HVAC systems, technology, hygiene materials, and hiring additional staff to clean, he believes that most of the preparations cannot be accomplished in eight weeks and provided an example of replacing a slide at Happy Hollow which took almost a year. Mr. Babineau encouraged the School Committee to consider the hybrid model given it has the highest probability of being implemented, to commit to some online learning for students, and to take time to educate staff on all the possibilities of hybrid learning.

Jeanne read a public comment from Stacey Reed, 7<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher at Wayland Middle School. As a reminder of an old business adage and given a nearly impossible situation that we are in, schools can reopen safely, we can have childcare provided by the schools, or we can have more "curriculum coverage," but we can't have all three. Safety must be the only priority for our teachers, many of whom are at risk, in the midst of an ever-changing pandemic. The teachers will continue their efforts to go above and beyond to provide engaging remote experiences and quick feedback to the students. Ms. Reed commented on her own compromised health history and if she got the virus, she could not quarantine from her wife who also has significant health conditions, as their living space is limited. Ms. Reed lists several of her concerns while in school, such as the 3 ft. social distancing that is being recommended, constant reminders to students to follow protocols, the risk of after-school help and clubs, ventilation issues in many areas, and cleaning protocols. Although Ms. Reed's preference is the remote model, she acknowledges that the hybrid model will maintain a minimum of six feet, and could be a compromise if all needs are addressed.

Jeanne read a public comment from Kristin Murphy, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at Claypit Hill School. Ms. Murphy feels that if there is a return to school in the fall, the necessary protocols for physical safety cannot guarantee that curriculum will be covered or learned and it may not produce much improvement in students' social emotional health. Everyone will be wearing masks, smaller cohorts will be in place, and social distancing will prevent a sense of friendship and connection. Ms. Murphy also acknowledges that if teachers are expected to fully return to school, many will not have the ability to interact with their children and spouses who are at high risk and, for some, cannot care for elderly relatives. She also pointed out that because regular school maintenance was not always addressed, the town must now find a way to fund and replace aging air handlers and address concerns about bathroom safety before returning to the buildings.

Jeanne read a public comment from Jen Socha, reading specialist at Claypit Hill School. Ms. Socha comments that if teachers and students must return to school, she supports the hybrid model, but only if all ventilation issues are addressed and fixed before the start of school. Smaller class sizes is safer and more curriculum can be covered in a week-in, week-off schedule. Also, if the district has to transition to an all-remote model, it will be easier for everyone. Ms. Socha advocated for a rather quick decision in terms of the model so that childcare issues can be resolved by families. However, Ms. Socha feels that being in school full-time or part-time puts everyone's lives at risk, including their families at home. She would like the parents to know how very concerned the staff is about returning to school in person.

Namrata Trehan, 27 William Way, is new to town and her daughter attends the Middle School. Given school starts less than two months away, a lot of work is required to reopen schools safely and she feels this may be almost impossible. She noted that cases of COVID are rising, and there is a good chance that the school year will start remotely first, move to a hybrid model, and then possibly the all-in model in the spring. Ms. Trehan feels that the teachers should have time to work on a remote learning plan.

Jeff Sklar, Brooks Road, is a parent of two teachers and the concerns that teachers are raising are very real. Risks are real for teachers and safety should be paramount and the first concern. Mr. Sklar commented that the community's input should be gathered before honing in on a starting position or a preference of any given model. Because many past decisions were made without community input, he congratulated the School Committee and administrators for doing so during this reopening process.

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Jeanne read a public comment from Kori Rogers, a Happy Hollow teacher, began by expressing her thanks and appreciation to the School Committee and the administrative team for their tireless efforts to ensure a safe return for the entire community. Although she wants more than ever to return to the classroom with her students, Ms. Rogers has concerns regarding the recommendation of 3 foot vs. 6 foot social distancing and students should not be expected to maintain a 3 foot distance while seated. She also feels that there is not ample time to address the long-standing issues of failing and poor ventilation adequately in the aging buildings, given that proper ventilation is crucial in mitigating the transmission of COVID-19. She invited the School Committee to have a meeting in her classroom to experience first-hand the concerns she is raising and to visualize a typical day for students and teachers.

**3. COVID-19 Response:**

- Continued Discussion of State Guidance and Fall 2020 Reopening Plan for District, including Teaching and Learning and Operational Aspects, Feedback and Next Steps:

The School Committee agreed that its decision to choose a reopening model should be delayed while the process continues with a focus on immediate issues, such as the ventilation issues.

Dr. Marni Roitfarb Canterbury is a board-certified pediatrician in a private practice and is also an epidemiologist with an emphasis on infectious diseases. Dr. Roitfarb Canterbury will interpret the guidance put out by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and DESE to assist the School Committee in making an informed decision about reopening school. The AAP looked at health risks for children and adults while balancing a return to school vs. not returning to school. The loss of services and supports can push children beyond what living through a trauma would be. According to McLean Hospital's child psychiatry department, there has been an increase in PTSD and mental health disorders in children given that they do not have the mental health supports while in school and these could not be replicated remotely. Some examples include more suicide attempts, more substance abuse in teens, family child abuse resulting in more hospitalizations, and food instability. Based on the data presented in aggregate, these issues also face the Wayland community.

Based on webinars and talking to colleagues, there has been much debate regarding a vaccine for COVID-19. Dr. Roitfarb Canterbury shared what she learned in this regard, adding that this virus will be around for a very long time, possibly a year or two, even if a vaccine is developed. There are two different risk groups in the school buildings. The adults are at a higher risk for getting the virus and can spread it more easily. If a positive case arose in a classroom, it would be the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's decision and the Wayland Board of Health would consider the guidance in terms of who would quarantine for two weeks. It is also important to consider the AAP and DESE guidance regarding droplet transmission and the benefits of the sum total of all mitigating strategies, such as mask wearing, social distancing, hand hygiene, and improving ventilation.

Based on data, Dr. Roitfarb Canterbury compared the different types of masks in terms of protection for both the mask wearer and others, noting that the FDA tested surgical mask can filter out greater than 99% of respiratory particles even on the assumption that there is no physical distance. Some cloth masks are not recommended and an N-95 mask is for those in high-risk groups. Face shields are also considered good protection.

In terms of 3 feet vs. 6 feet of social distancing, the AAP and DESE distinguished their research from lab settings to real situations, particularly in the classroom. The guidance recommends that masked adults maintain a 6 foot distance from others, while masked children can be kept 3 feet apart. Data shows that balancing the low risk of transmission for children at 3 feet, it is worthwhile to get kids back into school based on the increase of mental health issues.

Because ventilation issues can be compared to many hospitals and medical buildings, the guidelines from the AAP and DESE do not expect or anticipate changes to ventilation, as it may not be possible in schools in general and may not be realistic. In terms of transmission in standard school buildings, Dr. Roitfarb Canterbury elaborated further on children's low rate of susceptibility, adding that the guidance suggests that adults should stay six feet apart from students whenever possible in classrooms as well as from other adults in breakrooms and bathrooms.

In terms of the priorities of maintaining safety while COVID is still prevalent if everyone goes back to school, it is Dr. Roitfarb Canterbury's opinion that knowledge and education about safety is the highest priority. It is important to have trust, consistency, a supportive culture in place, and a unified message regarding expectations of safety protocols among adults and students, particularly in the elementary schools. She is optimistic that there will be a high rate of mask wearing in the Wayland schools. Spacing in a classroom is more important than the number of students in a room assuming that masks are being worn. In addition, current data put out by AAP and CDC does

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not show that the virus is significantly transmitted through ventilation systems; therefore, the numbers in a building would not significantly affect infection risk. Furthermore, it has been shown in laboratory studies that the virus could be in air borne particles; however, the question remains about how this aerosol transmission is spread and to what percentage. Current data shows that a small percentage of surface transmission is possible, particularly if hands touch the areas on the face or the face mask after touching surfaces.

The School Committee discussed those topics/priorities that need to be addressed going forward, such as questions and the responses posted during the Learning Sessions and continuing the process of discussing the three school models, the pressing challenges, and the approval timeline for a chosen model. Committee members will also submit questions to the administrators. It was suggested that individual Learning Sessions are offered to parents at the different levels (elementary, middle school, high school), as well as a specific outreach to Boston families and a continuation of staff meetings. The MASC training will be postponed and will be discussed again at the next meeting in terms of the date, the topics, and the format.

**4 Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn at 11:13 a.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	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk  
Wayland School Committee

***Corresponding Documentation:***

1. Agenda
2. Accounts Payables Warrants