

# MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 29, 2023

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, March 29, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. at Wayland High School Lecture Hall, South Building 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.

*Present:*

Chris Ryan, Chair  
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:**

Chair Chris Ryan convened the regular session at 6:02 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded by WayCAM.

School Committee members shared their recent school related experiences about the Middle School musical, The Descendants, and the Wayland Public Schools Foundation Spelling Bee that included participation in Spanish for some students.

**2. Public Comment:**

John Pierce referred to the recent Boston Globe article about Wayland Public Schools with a reference of the harassment and bullying of a high school teacher that was witnessed by some students. Mr. Pierce commented that School Committee policy was clearly violated in this regard. The teacher looked for assistance by many of his colleagues, but was unsuccessful until the Superintendent raised his concerns at an administrative meeting because after an internal investigation, it was determined by Human Resources that a hostile environment had been created and did not rise to the level of discrimination. Mr. Pierce spoke about the formal and independent investigation into the administrative meeting after complaints by the administration, adding that there were no findings as a result.

Jeff Sklar also spoke about the Boston Globe article and the cost of the investigation as a result of an October administrative council meeting. He said there was no report given and months have passed, adding that the School Committee should share the report with citizens of Wayland. Mr. Sklar referred to the four Open Meeting Law violations brought against the School Committee. Finally, Mr. Sklar noted that when Dr. Easy came to Wayland, he came at a time when there were several issues within the district.

**3. Special Matter:**

**3.1 Discussion and Possible Vote to Appoint the Interim Director of Finance & Operations:**

Parry Graham opened the discussion and noted that the position for the Interim Director of Finance & Operations was posted on March 17 and there is much competition for this position. An extremely qualified candidate reached out to Dr. Graham directly and he convened an interview committee who met with this person that included Jeanne Downs and Erin Gibbons. Dr. Graham recommended that the School Committee consider Susan Bottan for this position, as she worked in Wayland for 7 years, three of which they worked together. He also recommended that Ms. Bottan is hired permanently and not as an interim, given her relationship with Wayland and her years of experience and qualifications.

Jess Polizzotti asked some logistical questions about the hiring process, the number of applications, and the number of candidates interviewed according to School Committee policy. Parry replied that there was a total of three applicants, but Ms. Bottan was the only one interviewed given her excellent qualifications. Members spoke about their positive interactions with Ms. Bottan and her qualifications and abilities.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to authorize Parry as Acting Superintendent to enter into contract negotiations with Susan Bottan for the Director of Finance and Operations position.

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3.2 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Appoint the Acting Superintendent:*

Chris Ryan addressed the School Committee about a plan to hire an Acting Superintendent as of July 1. Recently, Dr. Midge Connolly, the current Weston Superintendent reached out to Chris about this position as she is leaving Weston. He and Erin Gibbons met with her as a result of her interest. Chris provided a summary of Dr. Connolly’s degrees, background and career in education over the past thirty years that includes extensive experience in Special Education and Curriculum. Chris noted her skills in communication, observation, collaboration and organization, adding that he believes she can assist in helping the district to heal.

Erin Gibbons shared her thoughts and take away from the meeting with Dr. Connolly, adding that her calming and soothing nature was apparent during the meeting and would be a good fit for Wayland based on their conversation, her leadership approach, and qualifications.

Jess Polizzotti addressed the process and plan to appoint an Acting Superintendent, the timeline, the financial impact if paying two superintendents simultaneously, and the potential status of Dr. Easy. Also, three of the five School Committee members have not met Dr. Connolly. Jess advocated that the community should have input, including a full committee interview for more than one candidate. Chris addressed the issue of why Dr. Connolly is leaving Weston as the Superintendent after eight years. A discussion ensued about a potential plan to move forward in this regard. Chris noted that several districts are looking for Interim Superintendents and he feels that the Committee should move quickly as the district does need a Superintendent, and the process does not have to be the same when hiring an interim position.

Parry reviewed the status, process, and timeline of the positions that have been posted. Some are still in the interview and preliminary stages, such as the Happy Hollow principal, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Interim Director of Student Services, and Assistant Director of Student Services. The Interim Middle School Principal and the Director of Finance and Operations have been hired. Parry brought up the possibility of the appointed Acting Superintendent being involved in the hiring processes. Further discussion ensued about having Dr. Connolly attend a School Committee meeting and, again, the process.

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Gibbons, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted (4-1) to move forward in the conversation with Dr. Connolly with respect to the Acting Superintendent position in our district and that the School Committee work out a way for her to meet all the members of the Committee and that the School Committee delegates two members to further the conversation with contract negotiations that will all have to come back to the Committee to be approved. 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

Jess would like to leave the part of the contract negotiations out of the motion until after the entire Committee has met Dr. Connolly. A discussion ensued about the time crunch, given Dr. Connolly is considering other options.

Upon a motion duly made by Jess Polizzotti, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted (1-4) to amend Erin’s motion to strike “to continue with negotiations” at this time. 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	

The School Committee went back to the original motion made by Erin Gibbons for a vote.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted (4-1) to delegate Chris Ryan and Erin Gibbons. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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<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

Jeanne confirmed that Chris and Erin will inform Dr. Connolly that the School Committee would like to pursue her interest in the position and before a signed agreement is in place, the entire Committee will meet her and the Committee will move forward with checking references. Ellen added that she would like to speak to those who have worked with Dr. Connolly in Weston.

Jess clarified that she voted no because Chris will not be on the School Committee next year.

*Erin left the meeting at 7:04 p.m.; returned at 7:06 p.m.*

**4. Acting Superintendent Update:**

**4.1 Discussion and Vote to Approve the 2023 Submission of the Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority Core Program:**

Tom Lafleur informed the School Committee that it is necessary for them to revote the Statement of Interest as some of the language was omitted from the first vote. Tom added that the Select Board will vote as well at its April 10 meeting.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to Resolve: Having convened in an open meeting on March 2023, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated April 2023 for the Claypit Hill Elementary School located at 40 Adams Lane, Wayland, MA 01778 which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future:

#2 Elimination of existing severe overcrowding,

#4 Prevention of severe overcrowding expected from increased enrollments,

#5 Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roof, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility;

and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Wayland to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

**5. Financial Matters:**

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

- Innovation Pathway Planning Grant (\$25,000)
- Financial Literacy Planning & Implementation Grant (\$15,000)
- Teacher Diversification Grant (\$7,923)
- METCO 318 Supplemental Special Education Grant (\$38,866)

This agenda item was passed over until April 12.

**5.2 Discussion and Vote to Approve Adjustments to the FY23 Entitlement Grants:**

- 240 (IDEA) Grant Increase (\$3,162) (\$711,310 new total)
- 262 (Early Childhood) Grant Increase (\$54) (\$14,030 new total)
- 305 (Title I) Grant Increase (\$86) (\$60,175 new total)
- 140 (Title IIA) Grant Increase (\$281) (\$30,169 new total)

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Per Tom Lafleur, the first installment for these grants was received based on last year's October 1 enrollment submission. He asked the School Committee to approve the increases and the final totals. Tom recited the increases for each grant as well as the totals.

Upon a motion by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the adjustments to the FY23 Entitlement Grants, 240 IDEA Grant, 262 Early Childhood Grant, 305 Title I Grant, and 140 Title IIA as presented.

### 6. Administrative Matters:

#### 6.1 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Appoint a School Committee Member to be the Liaison to the Route 20 South Landfill Visioning Committee:*

Chris informed the School Committee that the Route 20 South Landfill Visioning Committee is meeting soon to discuss potential plans to land on Route 20 and former School Committee member Kim Reichelt was the Committee's liaison. Erin Gibbons volunteered to be the liaison to the Route 20 South Landfill Visioning Committee.

Upon a motion duly made by Jess Polizzotti, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to appoint Erin Gibbons as the School Committee liaison to the Route 20 South Landfill Visioning Committee.

#### 6.2 *Discussion and Update of Wayland Board Member for TEC (The Education Collaborative):*

The School Committee reviewed the proposed FY24 budget for TEC of about \$11M which is an increase of 8.3 percent. TEC services 95 students and the member district total is the same, and Wayland's cost is \$11,887 per year depending on the number of students from Wayland resulting in tuition rate savings of about 26 to 30% compared to out-of-district placements. Jeanne highlighted the benefits of a TEC district membership. The TEC budget will be voted on May 12, and since Jeanne is stepping down from the School Committee right after Town Meeting, it is necessary to appoint a temporary TEC Board member. Jess volunteered to attend the May 12 TEC meeting.

#### 6.3 *Discussion regarding Letter from ACCEPT Collaborative:*

The School Committee reviewed the letter from the ACCEPT Collaborative in which they did not accept Wayland as a member district at this time. However, the district was invited to apply again at a later time. A discussion ensued in this regard.

### 7. Policy Matters:

#### 7.1 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Policy KDBA – Accessibility and Return of Tests:*

This agenda item was passed over.

#### 7.2 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Policy KF – Community Use of School Facilities:*

This agenda item was passed over.

#### 7.3 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Policy BDFA and BDFA-E – School Councils and School Councils Procedures:*

This agenda item was passed over.

#### 7.4 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Edits to Wayland Policy Manual to Reflect Changes Made by MASC:*

A discussion ensued around how to present the changes/edits from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees regarding the Policy Manual to the School Committee for its review at a future meeting.

#### 7.5 *Discussion regarding Suggested Policies to be Reviewed at Upcoming Policy Subcommittee Meetings:*

Jess Polizzotti asked the School Committee to suggest policies that they would like reviewed. Chris suggested the Class Size Policy, and a discussion ensued regarding projected enrollment reporting for planning purposes.

### 8. Consent Agenda:

8.1 Robotics Donation (\$1,000)

8.2 Approval of Accounts Payables Warrants (No warrant presented)

8.3 Approval of Minutes: February 8, 2023, March 15, 2023

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Jeanne will send her edits to the March 15 minutes to Diane.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda without the accounts payables warrant and with the edits to the March 15, 2023 minutes.

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

None.

10. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 7:31 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: March 30, 2022, June 8, 2022, June 22, 2022, July 20, 2022, August 24, 2022, and September 7, 2022; (c) approving executive session minutes, pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §22: March 15, 2022; and (d) reviewing the response to the March 8, 2023 Open Meeting Law complaint 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.

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

11. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jess Polizzotti, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 8:55 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. Resume for Susan Bottan
3. MSBA School Committee Motion

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4. Draft MSBA Statement of Interest
5. Proposed FY24 Budget for TEC
6. ACCEPT Collaborative Letter
7. WHS Robotics Donation
8. Accounts Payables Warrant
9. Minutes of February 8, 2023
10. Minutes of March 15, 2023
11. Executive Session Motion