

# MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Special Session – October 28, 2013

A Special Session of the Wayland School Committee was held on Monday, October 28, 2013, at 7:00 P.M. in Boston Police Headquarters, 1 Schroeder Plaza, Boston.

Present were:

Barb Fletcher, Chair  
Beth Butler, Vice Chair  
Malcolm Astley  
Donna Bouchard

Absent:

Ellen Grieco

Also:

Paul Stein  
Superintendent of Schools

Brad Crozier

Assistant Superintendent

Also:

Leadership for Equity Team: Heather Pineault, Betsy Gavron, George Benzie, Brian Jones, Debbie Bearse, Jim Lee, John Ritchie, Karyn Saxon, Tricia O'Reilly, Paul Stein, Mabel Reid-Wallace

After refreshments and social conversation, Chair Barb Fletcher convened the Special Session at 7:18 P.M. Mabel Reid Wallace introduced the School Committee, administrators, METCO staff, and PTO Presidents.

Barb spoke on behalf of the School Committee and recognized the parents who have attended the last two School Committee meetings to show their support for METCO. She stated that the School Committee does value and fully supports the METCO program.

## 1. **Special Matters**

(a) Refreshments and Social Conversation

(b) Conduct Community Building Activity:

On behalf of the Leadership for Equity team (LFE), Jim Lee welcomed parents and staff to the first of four planned meetings with the Boston parents. Everyone was given a penny and they were asked to look at the year on the penny. After gathering into groups of six, each group shared an important event or experience that took place within that year.

(c) Presentation by Dr. Stein of FY14 District Goals:

Paul Stein presented the FY14 district goals, stating that they will provide focus for the faculty and continuity from year to year. He commented that they are multi-year goals, but change yearly in terms of emphasis. Paul reviewed the progress points thus far of each goal.

**Health – Goal 1:** This school year, the emphasis is on healthy relationships. The progress points of this goal are Open Circle, Michele Garcia Winner's Social Thinking, Middle School partnership with Voices against Violence during Wellness Week, RAD, REACH Program, redesign of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades wellness curriculum, increased PE time for sophomores, and enhanced guidelines for concussion tracking and treatment.

**Evaluation – Goal 2:** The emphasis this year will be in the area of implementing the new state mandated Educator Evaluation Framework and District Determined Measures, which ties teacher performance with student performance. The progress points are the training of the entire faculty on the key aspects of the new system, a Pilot Program conducted by 7 administrators and 26 volunteer teachers, and strong collaborative work between the WTA and the administration.

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**Achievement Gap – Goal 3:** The emphasis this year will be data analyses and culturally relevant curriculum. The progress points related to this goal are a new data-driven computerized tool to track student growth over time, faculty workshops and a book group, parent meetings in Boston, METCO Men's Mentoring Group, and to employ RTI to address achievement gaps.

**RTI (Response to Intervention) – Goal 4:** The school year emphasis this year will be individually based on need by schools, which may include common assessments, RTI blocks, differentiation of instruction, data driven instruction, Common Core alignment, coaching and intervention strategies. This goal's progress points include the training of 150 staff members in RTI, an increase in the use of common assessments, Professional Learning Communities, the introduction of RTI blocks in the middle and elementary schools, the use of intervention programs.

**Technology – Goal 5:** This goal's emphases are in the areas of personalized learning, on-line tools for learning, digital citizenship, and the enhancement of the 1:1 initiative.

Paul also discussed the ongoing, Central Office driven goals, which include (1) the continuation of the work of the Elementary Building Use Task Force addressing grade configuration of the elementary schools, and (2) the improvement of the fiscal operations within the schools, with respect to efficiency, transparency and accountability.

Finally, Paul commented that everyone is proud of the Wayland schools and the accomplishments thus far; however there are still challenges ahead.

Questions posed to Paul were in regard to the elementary redistricting timeline and the implications, if any, for the Boston parents, the student to teacher ratio and RTI.

(d) Discussion with Boston Families:

Barb shared some of the background information regarding the Powers & Sullivan Report to clear up any misunderstanding of how the report was done and why it was done. Barb also commented on the equity and fairness of the report, stating that it is not and never has been just about METCO. She also informed the parents that she has asked Jim Powers for an explanation in terms of the difference between the METCO accounts and the school accounts. Barb closed her comments saying that the School Committee values the METCO program and would like to move on to focus on the issues related to education and the work related to the goals.

Ms. McClaren commented that she felt the report was written in such a way that hurt Ms. Reid-Wallace in terms of the money she spent and the payments she made to her credit card. She also referred to the section in the report that refers to a METCO student receiving a laptop and money, but failed to mention that this student received several awards that year. She praised Mabel for helping her son graduate and get into college, as well as helping her son who is a sophomore.

A parent asked about the real issue – money that was spent or the lack of documentation to back up the purchases. Barb responded that the issue is the use of public funds to pay the credit card and insufficient documentation to prove the purchases made were for the METCO program.

A parent commented that the correct procedures were not provided to the staff for the years in question. She praised Mabel (and Jean Maguire) for keeping the METCO program alive for the students, as Mabel has set an example; she is gifted, talented, and wise. She also noted that the student who was mentioned in the report deserved the awards and the credit she received.

Malcolm Astley responded that each School Committee member has their own opinions, as her performance is not questioned and many have an admiration for what she has done for the program. He noted that the issue revolves around accounting procedures or the lack of during the previous administration, but all has been corrected since and look towards a resolution soon.

A parent commented that this report targeted the METCO program and did not appreciate the way the report was written, as it blemishes Mabel's reputation and the program. She noted that Mabel has dedicated most of

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her life to METCO and all of the METCO parents are in agreement that this situation is petty and ludicrous. She asked why the administration in place at the time was not being held accountable.

A parent asked about the difference between using checks made out to cash and the process used by Mabel. Barb responded that the accounts have been closed and new policies and regulations have been put in place. The public wants to regain trust by having proof that the money was spent for school purposes.

A parent commented that what Mabel has done for her and her family goes beyond the ability to produce receipts.

A parent wanted to know what will happen if the records are not produced in time. She went on to say that Mabel is not at fault, since proper record keeping was not in place. Mabel's integrity has been slandered, as her emotional, physical and spiritual well-being has been taken away. Despite all this, Mabel has guided, loved and has done her best for all the kids in the program and asked the Committee to give Mabel the respect she deserves. The parent felt that the time and money spent to find a paper trail could have been better spent toward education. Barb responded that in terms of the outcome if records are not produced will be a Committee decision going forward.

A parent is concerned that Mabel has been prejudged in the media and asked how all this information was given to the media. Barb responded that meetings are televised and therefore public; reporters also attend meetings.

A METCO high school student commented that Mabel is an angel and has supported her since third grade. She asked if the amount of money spent on the report was worth it, and she had questions regarding the years being looked into. Barb responded to her questions and Beth noted that \$20,000 over a period of five years is being questioned.

Adrian Bryan acknowledged everyone in the room and presented Mabel with a plaque, thanking her for 13 years of dedicated service to the METCO program.

A parent asked about the pending accounts and asked the Committee if they will recant the damage done when Mabel is exonerated. Barb responded that the will Committee discuss at the appropriate time.

A parent noted his disappointment in the report and wanted to know why it took so long to do the audit, as most companies perform audits every six months. Barb responded that this situation was brought to the Committee's attention at the end of 2011 by a group of citizens, who initiated the audit for the years 2006-2011. She identified the two phases in the process and stated that because everything must be done publicly and in line with many rules and regulations, the process was slowed down.

A parent commented that the METCO program has different needs, e.g. children come to school hungry and they are fed. She asked the Committee to come up with a way to fix Mabel's tarnished reputation, as what she has done for the students and the program is amazing. She also noted that Wayland's program is the first to offer a mentoring program.

A parent commented that Jim Powers had no knowledge of who Mabel is and what she has done for the program; he just works with numbers. However, Jim Toomey did speak to Mabel's character and stated that there were no rules to follow.

A parent stated that she does have receipts for the times Mabel helped her family and asked if the Committee wanted them. Barb suggested that she speak to Mabel regarding these receipts.

Mabel Reid-Wallace stated that respectfully she has helped many families in the room, as her intent was to keep their dignity intact. Mabel said that she was trying to build something up, not tear it down, and she did so because it was the right thing to do.

A parent commented that Mabel goes above and beyond the necessary needs of the children, e.g. providing food for those students who don't have any and picking up a child because he/she can't get to the bus stop.

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Barb noted that there are accounts set up for reimbursements.

A parent recited a Jamaican saying that referred to Mabel and the METCO program. She commented that based on what she has heard, Mabel's reputation has been ruined. She is thankful for Mabel and her staff.

A first time parent to the METCO program commented that since rules are in place, everyone should just move forward.

A parent asked the Committee why Mabel wasn't asked to produce documentation before the audit took place. Malcolm responded that the Committee is not concerned with Mabel's performance and there has been no accusation of embezzlement; however, the School Committee wanted to remain independent of the audit.

Mark Lidell, WHS METCO coordinator, since 2007, commented that all bus monitors were paid in cash until two years ago, and records are not available. He asked when the report was available to the public and if the public posting of the report could have been delayed until the documentation was produced. The Committee replied no.

Barb asked the audience to send further comments to the Committee via email.

Paul commented that despite this painful situation, the School Committee and administrators have a tremendous appreciation for what Mabel has done and will continue to do for the program. Paul committed to getting Wayland through this situation.

A parent asked about the next meeting, when a decision will be made, and if Mabel's job was at risk. Barb responded that the School Committee would like to have a decision by the end of December; however, she can't comment on her job, as it is a personnel matter and the Superintendent's responsibility.

Jean Maguire, the Director of the METCO program statewide since 1973, commented that Mabel is the best Director she has worked with in all her years. She commented on the METCO budget and the need for a better accounting system. She asked the School Committee to resolve this situation in a respectful way and to move forward.

The comment session ended at 9:55 p.m.

### 2. **Procedural/Administrative Matters**

#### (a) Prioritization of Outstanding Follow-up Items:

Barb distributed a list of outstanding follow-up items and asked the Committee members to prioritize five of the items. They will discuss at a future meeting.

#### (b) Review of Minutes to be Amended:

- June 8, 2009
- June 15, 2009
- June 22, 2009
- July 27, 2009
- August 31, 2009
- September 21, 2009
- September 29, 2009
- October 13, 2009
- November 9, 2009
- November 18, 2009

The School Committee reviewed the above-mentioned minutes in response to an Open Meeting Law Complaint. Beth reviewed the WayCAM tapes, and she confirmed that an official roll call vote was not taken, nor was there a specific reason given to enter into Executive Session.

Upon a motion duly made by Donna Bouchard, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the Regular Session minutes listed on the agenda, as amended.

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3. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Beth Butler, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to enter Executive Session at 10:10 p.m., as permitted under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to Collective Bargaining for school unions (WTA, WESA, Custodial and Food Service) and to reconvene in Regular Session for adjournment purposes only, as such a discussion in open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee and Executive Session is necessary to protect the bargaining position of the School Committee and to review and approve Executive Session minutes as listed on agenda for possible declassification, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30(a) Section 22. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Barb Fletcher, Chair	X	
Beth Butler, Vice Chair	X	
Malcolm Astley	X	
Ellen Grieco (absent)		
Donna Bouchard	X	

Barb noted that Ellen Grieco provided a remote participation form due to geographic reasons. Barb called Ellen at 10:12 p.m.

4. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Donna Bouchard, seconded by Beth Butler, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the Regular Session at 11:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Stein, Clerk  
Wayland School Committee

Observers:  
See attached list

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Follow-up Status Report
2. Regular Session Minutes as listed on agenda
3. Executive Session Minutes as listed on agenda