

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Session/Budget Work Session – January 16, 2014

A Regular Session of the Wayland School Committee was held on Thursday, January 16, 2014, at 7:00 P.M. in the School Committee Room of the Wayland Town Building.

Present:

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

Also:

Paul Stein
Superintendent of Schools

Brad Crozier

Assistant Superintendent

Marlene Dodyk

Director of Student Services

Geoff MacDonald

Business Administrator

Also:

Chris DiBona

Barb Fletcher convened the Regular Session at 7:07 p.m. and announced that WayCAM is taping the meeting.

1. **Executive Session #1:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the School Committee voted (5-0) to enter into Executive Session per M.G.L. 30A, §21(a)(1) to discuss charges and/or possible discipline against a public employee. The School Committee will reconvene in Open Session to conduct other matters as noted on the agenda. 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	X	
Donna Bouchard	X	

The School Committee reconvened in Open Session at 7:54 p.m.

2. **Special Matters**

(a) Continued Discussion of Next Steps related to METCO Account:

This agenda item was passed over as a result of the discussion in Executive Session.

(b) Consideration of Appointment of Chris DiBona as School Committee Representative to the Housing Partnership:

Barb noted that the purpose of the Housing Partnership is to study the need of affordable housing in Wayland and to recommend procedures for the implementation of Wayland's affordable housing policy. There are representatives from various Boards and Committees and their responsibilities are, but not limited to, to act as the Town's initial contact with developers for proposed affordable housing projects and to initiate action intended to create affordable housing projects. This appointment of the School Committee representative to the Housing Partnership is for the remainder of an unexpired term and ends June 30, 2014.

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Chris DiBona described her experience related to affordable housing, including working 11 yrs for a company that developed affordable housing. Chris is also involved in Habitat projects and feels that she has something to contribute to affordable housing. She has lived in Wayland her entire life.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to appoint Chris DiBona as the School Committee representative to the Housing Partnership.

3. **Comments from the Public:**

Sam Potter commented on the elementary reconfiguration in terms of acting now and not postponing the decision for another year. He believes the delay would affect property values, as the report is a very public document. He commented that it is now public knowledge that there is an issue at Happy Hollow, and, if not addressed immediately, there will be a negative impact on property values for the next 12 to 14 months, due to the level of uncertainty with prospective home buyers. He hopes the School Committee will take this information into consideration and move forward during this fiscal year.

Jennifer Dennis asked the School Committee to support and implement Dr. Stein's recommendation. She commented there are a lot of issues, but for the long-term it is the right decision to move forward now for the sake of the children.

Tom Sciacca commented that if the decision of the reconfiguration were deferred for another year, it would allow the Committee to look at all the proposals and decide the direction in which to go, especially for the long term. In Tom's opinion, once a decision is made, nothing else can be done in this area for a very long time. He believes that there are other ways in which to approach these issues, such as new research and new knowledge in early childhood development that would contribute to a more fundamental difference. In terms of property values, Tom commented that it appears that the property values in his neighborhood are very close to those trends on a national level.

Pam Cerne asked if the elementary reconfiguration was to be removed from the FY15 budget, could it be put back later. Barb explained the process going forward, including the Finance Committee's decision to include the Superintendent's recommendation in the budget. The School Committee would have until just before the town warrants goes to print to decide how they will move forward with their decision.

4. **Financial Matters:**

(a) Budget Work Session

- Vote to Approve the FY15 CIP for the Loker Security Upgrades:

Barb updated the Committee about her conversation with the Finance Committee for the FY15 capital requests at which time the Finance Committee recommended that this CIP be included in the FY15 capital requests.

Upon a motion duly made by Beth Butler, seconded by Donna Bouchard, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Loker CIP security upgrades capital requests for FY15 in the amount of \$45,000.

- Continued Discussion regarding the FY15 Budget:

The School Committee reviewed and discussed a draft budget document regarding total benefits costs for employees. Questions were raised about retirement benefits for teachers vs. other employees, if retirees contribute to OPEB, and the percentage of retirement contributions for employees.

The School Committee reviewed and discussed a Budget to Actual Analysis, which takes the FY15 budget and compares it with the prior five-year actuals and a projected number for FY14. Barb noted that the actuals are reviewed in three different ways – the current year expended, the “gap” expended from the prior year, and a modified accrual. Also taken into account are the charges that were transferred into the revolving accounts. Also discussed was the amount that is returned to the town at year end and how the total is determined.

The Committee reviewed the Peer Comparison of Fees, which does not reflect the recommended increase in high school sports.

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Barb explained that the FinCom Guidelines represent an increase of \$1,700,269 over the FY14 appropriation. The total proposed increase above the FinCom Guideline is \$342,000.

Barb updated the School Committee on the proposed increase in health benefit costs for employees in FY15. According to John Senchyshyn, the increase is unknown because rates have not been set; thus, the Town is using an 8% increase right now. Barb noted the total increase for employees, as well as the incremental increase. Increases for benefit packages for new staff, especially Student Services, were discussed including benefits and personnel costs for the elementary reconfiguration should it go forward.

Barb noted the total cost of capital improvements related to the reconfiguration proposal that would not be incurred without a vote to move ahead with the proposal. They are the Loker kitchen & café renovation and HH café and art room renovation for a total of \$411,000. In terms of the total cost of capital improvements for FY15 only, Barb commented that FinCom has not decided, at this point, which capital requests to recommend.

Paul commented that after the budget is created and recommended by him, items appear that are not known prior. There was an unanticipated increase in the number of staff who chose to take the retirement incentive/option that totals \$54,770, which will need to be confirmed that it falls within the FinCom guideline. Other unanticipated items total about \$15,000. A discussion followed in terms of whether these new costs could be absorbed to avoid an increase in the budget.

The School Committee discussed potential changes in the budget and if there was an interest to increase revenues and reduce costs. Malcolm asked for more clarification regarding a new position in the Business Office. He also suggested that if the reconfiguration does not move forward, he would like to consider an Assistant Principal at Claypit Hill. Geoff elaborated on the need for an additional person in his office, which would be a .7 for financial assistance and a .3 as a transportation coordinator.

Ellen stressed the importance of addressing the elementary reconfiguration this year, as it is a very relevant educational issue. She updated the School Committee on the most recent meeting of the Task Force and its disappointment in the way that the reconfiguration and the budget are being considered. Ellen offered suggestions to change the budget to accommodate the reconfiguration.

Aside from making a decision on the reconfiguration model, Beth suggested that the School Committee vote to appropriate the money in the budget for the reconfiguration even before a vote is taken on the recommended model. Barb noted her discussions with the FinCom, whereby the School Committee could vote for an operating budget, with the reconfiguration amount to be determined. The FinCom would then present the total amount needed for the reconfiguration to the community, which would allow the School Committee more time to discuss this initiative.

Beth Butler said she would make a motion that the elementary reconfiguration be done in 2014, also taking into consideration one of the three recommended models. Ellen said she would second the motion, and to include the \$594,000, unless it has to be modified later.

The recommended models and costs associated with each model were discussed and whether the Committee had enough time and citizen input before Town Meeting to carefully vet their decision. Ellen noted that, in her opinion, after a very long and very careful process by the Task Force, many of the questions regarding the reconfiguration have been answered in the final report, with the exception of the location of the buffer zones. Ellen advocated that the 2-3-4 model will produce a better environment for educating the students, given the limitations of the system and the demographics of Wayland. Again, Malcolm noted his concerns regarding the initiatives that are not supported by the budget, for example world languages and FDK, and would possibly consider the least expensive reconfiguration model to allow implementation of some of the “wanted” initiatives.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to include in the budget being presented to the Finance Committee the funding for

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the Superintendent's recommended elementary school reconfiguration without determining the model of reconfiguration, but that the Committee include the amount of money that is built into the Superintendent's recommendation of \$594,000, beginning in September 2014.

A further discussion continued regarding what the Committee's vote means going forward in terms of the reconfiguration and Town Meeting.

School fees were discussed, including transportation and athletics. Because Wayland's transportation fees are lower than most of the peer towns, Ellen recommended an increase in transportation fees, which could ultimately generate revenue. As noted, 24% of the cost of transportation is covered by bus fees.

Also discussed was the possibility of adding student activity fees. Given the nature of student activities, Paul commented that charging student activity fees could impact participation at the High School and Middle School. The School Committee will vote on fees at the January 21st meeting.

Paul and Geoff addressed the functions of a data analyst in the business office and how it would impact the teaching and learning of the students. Paul commented that the volume of questions and concerns from the public and School Committee members regarding financial matters pulls the Central Office administrators away from the daily operation of the educational programs. The financial operation and the monitoring of the financial operation are also impacted at the building level, as well as the number of bus issues that need to be addressed. Some technological and training issues could be a function of this position; other options were suggested, such as using an outside source. They also discussed this position in terms of benefits and the possibility of the school department sharing the town's new data analyst.

Ellen left the meeting at 9:52 p.m.; returned at 9:53 p.m.

Given the increases in the FY15 budget, the consensus of the School Committee was not to include a new business office position. However, they would like to learn more about the cost and functions of the position for future consideration.

A discussion ensued about the budgeting and steps of new teacher positions. Paul commented that Masters +7 is the average step for new hires. However, decisions are made on an individual basis, depending on the skills and education of the person being considered. In response to a suggestion by Donna to achieve savings in the budget, Paul explained the hiring process and, if there is a savings, where it would be allocated, especially depending on the need. Sometimes it is put towards the SPED prepay. Positions are not added without School Committee approval, and it was also noted that personnel funds cannot be used for non-personnel expenses. Paul explained how the SPED prepay is calculated in terms of the overall budget and from the areas in which prepay might be funded, keeping in mind that it changes from year to year.

Donna proposed eliminating the SPED prepay for FY16 and, during FY15, conducting a SPED review of peer communities in order to find savings to make up for the loss of the SPED prepay in FY16. Paul and Barb expressed concerns about the risk associated with this approach and the cost needed to conduct such a review, given student confidentiality matters.

Another discussion ensued regarding the instructional technology position at the High School and if there were ways to reduce the budget in order to keep this position as part of the 1:1 initiative. Donna offered some suggestions to reallocate some line items in the budget. Barb commented that because the funds in the budget have been specifically allocated and prioritized by each school, funds can be raised outside of the recommended budget, such as an increase in transportation fees. In an effort to clarify and compare the roles of the technology staff at the elementary schools vs. the high school, Brad commented that the elementary technology teachers spend more time teaching students, whereas the technology staff at the High School has more time to teach other teachers. Thus, this is not an FTE comparison. Raising bus fees was discussed as a way to fund the position at the High School.

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Beth left the meeting at 10:36 p.m.; returned at 10:37 p.m.

Ellen recommended raising the bus fee to \$100, taking into consideration the impact on the number of bus riders due to the elementary reconfiguration.

- Vote to Recommend FY15 Budget to Finance Committee, excluding Elementary School Reconfiguration:
From tonight's discussions, Barb noted two potential changes/additions to the budget – corrections in retirements (\$69,875) and the instructional technology specialist (\$50,000). Thus, the Maintenance of Effort budget would increase from \$34,746,527 to \$34,866,402. In addition, adding \$594,645 for the elementary reconfiguration brings the total to \$35,461,047, which could be reduced if fees are increased.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Donna Bouchard, the School Committee voted (3-0-2) (Beth and Malcolm voted no because they could not support adding \$50,000 for the technology position) to recommend a budget of \$35,461,047 to the Finance Committee.

- Review Draft Presentation to the Finance Committee:
The School Committee reviewed the draft presentation for content. It was suggested that information regarding the elementary reconfiguration be included, as well as the background of the work done by the Task Force. Also suggested was to include a “ballpark” cost analysis of the 2-3-4 model compared to the 3-3-3 model. Paul commented that both would be in the same “ballpark”, but it could be less depending on some of the variables.

Donna asked that a discussion regarding student to staff ratio be put on a future agenda.

5. **Consent Agenda:**

(a) Acceptance of Gifts

- A donation to Wayland METCO from Mary and John Antes of Wayland in the amount of \$1,000.00.
- A donation to Wayland METCO from Megan McInerney and Michael Falvey of Wayland in the amount of \$250.00.

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

6. **Comments from the Public:**

Alexia Obar thanked the School Committee for their thoughtful comments and their decision to include the elementary reconfiguration in the budget. As a member of the Elementary Building Use Task Force, she believes that the reconfiguration should be the first priority for this year. Alexia also agreed with some of the ideas in the budget, the Chrome Books at the Middle School, and the increase in bus fees. The Committee thanked Alexia for her service on the Task Force.

The School Committee discussed the meeting schedule and topics for February 3rd and added February 6th and February 10th as placeholders on the calendar. Also discussed was to invite the Elementary Building Task Force to a meeting.

7. **Executive Session #2:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 10:25 p.m., as permitted under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §21(a)(1) to discuss a response to an Open Meeting Law complaint filed by George Harris on January 8, 2014 regarding Executive Session minutes. The School Committee will reconvene in Regular Session for adjournment purposes only. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

8. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Beth Butler, seconded by Donna Bouchard, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the Regular Session at 11:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Stein, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Observers:

Alexia Obar, Wayland
Sam Potter, Wayland
Pam Cerne, Wayland
Jennifer Davis, Wayland
Tom Sciacca, Wayland

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Letter from Chris DiBona re: Appointment to Housing Partnership
2. FY09 – FY15 Budget to Actual Analysis
3. Fee Comparison of Peer Towns
4. CIP re: Loker School Security Upgrades
5. Draft Presentation to FinCom
6. School 5-year Capital Plan