

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – November 18, 2020

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, November 18, 2020, at 4:30 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

*Present and participating remotely were:*

Jeanne Downs, Chair  
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair  
Kim Reichelt  
Chris Ryan (arrived at 4:34 p.m.)  
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:*

Lyle Kirtman, Future Management Systems

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 4:32 p.m. WayCAM recorded the meeting and it was livestreamed via ZOOM. The meeting was conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 health pandemic and according to the revised open meeting law that allows remote participation. A roll call was taken:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	absent	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

## 1. Superintendent Search:

- Review of Leadership Profile:  
The School Committee discussed the Leadership Profile and all agreed that the profile was very comprehensive and would not need any changes.
- Discussion with Future Management Systems regarding Recruitment and Process:  
Lyle Kirtman shared the recruitment process for the Wayland Superintendent Search that resulted in a large pool of 35 candidates. He also explained his efforts to reach out to diverse candidates. After speaking to the Director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Wayland's candidate pool exceeds the state-wide applicant pool statistics in terms of women and candidates of color. Mr. Kirtman also noted that many potential candidates are not willing to relocate due to the pandemic and most candidates of color are focusing on diverse urban districts and not communities like Wayland. Mr. Kirtman described the rating process by the Search Committee.

A discussion ensued about whether or not to continue to move forward with the search process following the current timeline. The School Committee agreed to move forward because extending the process would send the wrong message and would likely not change the pool of candidates. The recruitment/application process will remain open for a while longer.

## 2. Consent Agenda (out of order):

- Approval of Minutes: October 21, 2020, November 4, 2020, November 9, 2020  
The School Committee passed over the November 9<sup>th</sup> minutes.

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Upon a motion duly made by Kim Reichelt, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda without the November 9, 2020 minutes. 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	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

*Arthur, Parry, Richard and Susan arrived to the meeting at 5:01 p.m.*

Jeanne acknowledged the efforts of so many school and town staff, town officials and committees, and Weston & Sampson and the project manager whose work contributed towards the completion of the high school athletic complex.

### 3. **Comments and Written Statements from the Public:**

Stephanie Bergeron, 9 Snake Brook Road, has a 7<sup>th</sup> grader and a 5<sup>th</sup> grader and Kindergartner at Loker School. As a Kindergarten teacher in a nearby district where children attend school in-person four days a week, she and her husband support bringing Wayland Kindergartners into school four days a week. Ms. Bergeron stated her reasons, adding that although teachers do a great job connecting with the students, remote learning is not developmentally appropriate and students cannot be successful unless they are in school. She stated that in-person schooling does not result in super spreading of COVID.

Jeanne read a public comment from Caroline Higgins in which she urged the School Committee to vote to bring Kindergartners into school four days a week, as many peer towns are successfully doing so. Although teachers are working extremely hard to find ways to keep students engaged, it can't continue because it is not developmentally appropriate for a Kindergartner be on a device for too long. The hybrid mode is also taking a toll on Wayland families.

Mike Lemire, 19 Parkland Drive, also supports bringing his Kindergartner and others back into school four days a week, as safety protocols are followed in the schools and data indicates that transmission in schools is very rare. In order for these students to learn effectively and achieve successful results, they need in-person instruction. Mr. Lemire gave a shout out for Miss Horgan, an incredible Kindergarten teacher.

Jeanne read a public comment from Claire Castagno, 58 Dean Road, in support of bringing Kindergartners back in person four days a week. Since implementing the hybrid mode, her children's demeanor is much better and their attention span, enthusiasm and structure is so much better when in person with their teachers. Ms. Castagno added that town documents indicate approval and compliance with DESE's updated safety standard in the buildings making it possible to bring the students to school.

Julie Norton, 6 Sears Road, expressed her support to bring Kindergartners back to school four days or more a week as soon as possible. She believes it is time for Wayland to follow the examples of many peer towns. Ms. Norton suggested finding creative ways to make this happen including altering the COVID guidelines as needed.

Jeanne read a public comment from Caroline Hanlon, 44 High Rock Road, urged the School Committee to move forward with in-person schooling four days a week for Kindergartners. The benefits are clear, as supported by DESE and the American Academy of Pediatrics, especially when there is continued mitigations strategies in place to provide a safe and healthy environment.

Rob Haskins, 22 Stonebridge Road, has a Kindergartner and a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader who are getting too much screen time and their social and emotional development is not satisfactory during the hybrid model. He also would like to see the Kindergartners return to school four days a week. These kids should be forming new relationships in a social environment. Mr. Haskins noted that surrounding towns have successfully brought their younger students in for what resembles a more normal week.

Jeanne read a public comment from Nicolette Mascari in which she states that the current hybrid model is not educationally sufficient and barely meets the requirements around the number of instructional hours as set by DESE. Mrs. Mascari and her husband are in full support of bringing the Kindergartners into school full-time with certain safety measures in place, including three feet of social distancing. She stated reasons as listed in her written comment, adding that data supports

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their request in terms of the lack of spread inside the schools, camps and sports. Finally, Mrs. Mascari commented on the stress of many families.

Chris Lindstrom, Moore Road, at first thought that bringing Kindergartners into school more often was a good idea, but he now has several concerns. He believes that the entire cohort system will be undermined, larger classes will be created, and more spread of the virus could result without 6 feet of social distancing and routine testing. Mr. Lindstrom noted that parents are aware of staff who are against this proposal and acknowledged that teachers are already doing so much. He encouraged the School Committee to hear the feedback from staff and nurses about this proposal.

Jeanne read a public comment from Kristen Oseychik in which she asked the School Committee to vote to send Kindergartners back to school four days a week and to consider the same for first and second graders.

Jen Lee read an email that she sent to Betsy Gavron regarding the disadvantages and complications of pool testing, including that pool testing is not useful once the overall positivity rate is up. She has not seen a consensus as to the number of optimal persons per pool sample and asymptomatic people do not have a predictable viral load; she elaborated on this research. Ms. Lee does not support pool testing.

Jeanne read a public comment from Courtney Thornhill Finley in which she expressed her strong desire to bring Kindergartners back to school as much as possible because her child is only learning two days a week when in school, adding that the teachers are wonderful. For the mental health of the students and their families, including their educational foundation, Ms. Finley urged the School Committee to bring the children back to school.

The public comments not read were submitted by Lisamarie Annunciata, Kristin Verdiani Rowe, Vidya Lyengar, Nimmi Trapasso, Lissa Gelbwachs, Becky and Trevor Chisholm, and Nia Lutch. They, too, support bringing Kindergarten children into school at least four days a week. Kaelyn Phillips also submitted a comment that was not read and does not support this proposal. Their comments can be read online.

#### 4. Superintendent Update:

- Hybrid Mode Update:

Arthur praised the success and the hard work by all staff and students. Everyone has been very creative, and PE teachers are able to take the classes outside of the buildings.

#### 5. COVID-19 Response:

- Positive COVID Case Update:

Arthur reported that there have been cases in the schools, but there is no documented spread in the schools. The nurses and the Health Department perform contact tracing at all hours and even weekends. Arthur urged the community to respond with complete candor in order for the process to work. The School Committee agreed that everyone must do their part to keep the schools open and to keep everyone safe.

- Update on Kindergarten In-Person Learning, including Survey Results:

Before beginning the presentation, Arthur commented that the leadership team and the teachers agree that in-person learning is what is best for the kids as long as protocols and safety measures are maintained.

The purpose of the presentation, made by Parry, was to identify survey results and the challenges and impacts to the program and the budget if Kindergartners were in school four days a week. Two hundred and eighteen Kindergarten families, including 15 WRAP families, responded to the survey. They were asked about time spent at home supervising and supporting their children during the remote days, the preference to maintain 6 feet of distance or less, the likelihood of requesting movement into WRAP if students go in four days a week, and the likelihood of transitioning out of WRAP after the first semester.

Nine Kindergarten teachers responded to a survey in which they acknowledged the advantages of in-person learning, but noted their concerns regarding social distancing less than six feet, health and safety, managing space and supplies, managing routines, stress and exhaustion, and the spread of adult attention.

Parry identified the room capacities in each elementary school, adding that Kindergarten classrooms are typically larger than other classrooms. To maintain six feet of distance at all times, there would be a financial impact to the budget including hiring additional staff and purchasing additional classroom supplies and furniture. There would also be some disruption to scheduling lunch and recess, arrival and dismissal times, bussing, and the possibility of shifting

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students to new teachers.

A discussion ensued in which holding two half day sessions was suggested. However, teachers would still be working a full day, families would be on different schedules, and there would be a huge impact to the staffing budget. Four options are on the table: 1) keep the program as is; 2) going all-in with six feet of distance; 3) going all-in with less than six feet of distance; and 4) restructuring the remote model with more synchronous learning. The School Committee asked for more detail in terms of costs of bring kindergartners back in, bring all students back in, and other possible changes to be discussed at the December 2 meeting.

### 6. Financial Matters (out of order):

- Review and Possible Vote to Approve FY22 Capital Requests and Five-Year Capital Plan:

Susan noted that the capital equipment is separate from the operating budget, and a capital project must cost \$25,000 or more with a life span of five years. The School Committee reviewed the capital projects by category and separated by building. Susan described the process that begins with a review by the School Committee, followed by a review of the list by the Town Administrator, the Finance Director, and the Director of Public Buildings in the context of available funding and capacity within the Facilities Department. Susan added that a small cost was included to hire a project manager.

The priorities range from high, mid-level, and low. The high priorities will cost about \$4.8M to which custodial equipment and storage has been added, as well as an athletic mini-bus, and ventilation upgrades and refinements.

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Chris Ryan, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the capital appropriation requests for FY22 as discussed tonight and the five-year capital plan as presented tonight.

- Discussion and Review of COVID Related Finances:  
Passed over.

- Discussion of Feasibility Study:  
Passed over.

### 7. COVID-19 Response (continued):

- Discussion of Communication to School Community regarding Increased In-Person Learning:  
Passed over.

- Discussion of Reallocated Resources for Hybrid Mode:  
Passed over.

- Health Data Collection Letter:  
Passed over.

- Special Education Update:  
Passed over.

- Ongoing Review Groups: Remote and Hybrid Learning Progress Committee and COVID Learning and Safety Committee:  
Passed over.

- Transportation Update:  
Passed over.

- Ventilation Update:  
Passed over.

- Testing Update, including Survey Results:  
Ellen reported that the funding of surveillance testing remains a question. The Committee decided to meet again on Monday to discuss testing in more detail.

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- Next Steps:  
Passed over.

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

Passed over.

9. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 7:30 p.m. for the purposes of (a) discussing regarding strategy related to collective bargaining with custodial union, 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) discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with WESA, 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; and (c) approving the following executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: October 21 2020 and November 4, 2020.

The School Committee will be joined by Arthur Unobskey, Superintendent of Schools, Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

The School Committee will adjourn in Executive Session and will not reconvene in open session. 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	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 7:43 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	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk  
Wayland School Committee

**Corresponding Documentation:**

1. Agenda
2. Public Comments
3. Wayland Superintendent Leadership Profile
4. Capital Account Financial Summary
5. Draft FY22 Five-Year Capital Plan Appropriation Requests
6. Draft FY22 Five-Year Capital Plan by Location, Project, and Priority
7. FY21 Budget Summary and Status
8. Minutes of October 21, 2020 and November 4, 2020
9. Executive Session Motion