

SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Regular Meeting – January 13, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, January 13, 2021, at 5:00 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  
Kathie Steinberg

*Also participating remotely:*

Arthur Unobskey  
Superintendent

Parry Graham  
Assistant Superintendent

Richard Whitehead  
Director of Student Services

Susan Bottan  
Director of Finance & Operations

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 5:07 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	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

**1. Superintendent Search:**

(a) Update on Process and Final Visit Logistics:

The School Committee discussed the logistics for the “Day in Wayland” for each finalist, including the Committee members who will accompany the candidates on the school visits, as well as sitting in on the virtual sessions. The finalists will visit Friday, January 15, Tuesday, January 19, and Thursday, January 21. There was a discussion regarding the ZOOM links for each constituency that will include a Google feedback form. Candidates could be provided a district computer with the appropriate meeting links.

A discussion followed about the process for reference checks. Kathie and Chris volunteered to make one reference call each for each candidate, and the search firm will conduct the majority of the reference checks.

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

Jeanne read a joint public comment from five Wayland families whose children attend Happy Hollow Elementary School, Wayland High School, and Wayland Middle School. They are concerned about the handling of the recent surge of COVID cases in Wayland. Some of their children were kept home following the December break as they did not agree with the decision to return on January 4 based on the concerns raised by the town’s health professionals and CDC guidelines around indicators and thresholds for risk of school transmission. The families support the hybrid model, but feel the data is telling, positive cases have increased, and Wayland is now considered a “red” community. Therefore, school should not proceed as usual, given the new data. The families asked the School Committee to revisit the model, particularly around the lunch and break schedules because the students are unmasked.

**3. Financial Matters:**

(a) Discussion of FY22 Recommended Budget: SPED, Facilities, and Central Office:  
*Facilities:*

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Susan commented that an allocation of \$1.1M is included in the operating budget for facilities, which has increased about 10% for heating and electricity only, and adding that the FY22 facilities budget is underfunded given the growing budget deficit in this category over the last three years. Susan referred to many unanticipated expenses for the HVAC units, the school roofs, and maintenance and repair of the buildings. School Dude maintenance requests have decreased from 74 last year to 20 this year, which indicates progress in identifying issues in the buildings. Susan noted that there are three drivers for the facilities: HVAC, roofing, and general repairs.

Susan recommended that a detailed short-term and long-term maintenance plan is drafted if the district plans to make a request for an additional \$300,000 for FY22 at Town Meeting. Ben agreed with Susan's comments, adding that the level funded budget request will underfund facilities again. A discussion ensued about the anticipated expenses/projects for FY22 and the process to develop a detailed maintenance plan that includes priorities. The School Committee would like a proposal to increase the maintenance operating budget for review at its next meeting.

*Special Education:*

Richard spoke about the FY22 special education budget noting that there is an effort to build a continuum of services starting from preschool to grade 12 while being proactive in anticipating needs of students such as the rising social, emotional and behavioral needs. A special education teacher is being added at Loker which is an enrollment-driven request. Richard explained the need for a .5 FTE speech therapist at The Children's Way for those children who are in person and for those who have speech-only services. This position was contracted out during the past two years. As a placeholder in the FY22 operating budget, there is also a need for a behavioral specialist in the district that would be in addition to the BCBA currently in the district. Richard explained the difference in the services by these two specialists, adding that the behavioral specialist could possibly be funded through a grant in July.

A discussion ensued about the budget, the status of the SPED pre-pay this year, anticipation of out-of-district placements post COVID, transportation costs due to COVID and limited capacity on vans. Out-of-district transportation can now be funded through the reimbursement of the Circuit Breaker program; Richard explained. Susan spoke about SPED transportation contracts due to limited space. A bid process will take place next year in an effort to reduce costs.

Richard recognized and thanked all special education educators in all areas for their endless commitment to the students of Wayland, including his appreciation for the financial support to build the program.

*Central Office:*

There are no changes in the human resources budget from FY21 to FY22. The curriculum and instruction budget is about \$2,000 less going into FY22. Parry explained the makeup of the budget that includes strategic priorities pre-COVID, technology materials, and grant program funding. Parry described the budget to support summer work.

Susan added that there will be an increase of about \$97,000 in transportation costs assuming all students return in the fall, as 15 busses will be needed and a new contract increase.

- (b) Continued Review of Capital Requests and Five-Year Capital Plan:  
Jeanne attended the most recent Finance Committee meeting to present the district's short-term needs and answer any questions. The revised CIP's will be done by January 15.
- (c) Discussion and Possible Vote on Warrant Articles for Town Meeting:  
The School Committee reviewed the warrant for the short-term elementary space needs.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted to approve the article as drafted by Kathie to be submitted for Town Meeting concerning the elementary space needs for FY22 and also delegate the authority to make appropriate revisions to the language of the article and the amount of the request to Kathie and Jeannie. 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	

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The School Committee reviewed a spreadsheet prepared by Susan regarding cost implications for possible increase to in-school instruction from April to June 2021. Several scenarios were presented, such as All-In for Grades 1-5 with three feet of distance, All-In for Grades 6-8 with three feet of distance, All-In for Grades 9-12 with three feet of distance, and other projected costs. Lunchrooms would continue with six feet of distance and bus capacity will remain at 23 students. Susan noted the cost ranges for modular classrooms at Happy Hollow Elementary School. A discussion ensued regarding the information presented.

The School Committee also reviewed a memo that requests a current year transfer from unappropriated funds within the budget. Kathie explained the purpose and process of this request. As the district moves toward more in-person instruction to meet the educational needs of the students, the request will help with the financial impact to the district. However, that impact remains unknown at this time. Kathie will speak to the liaisons of the BOS and FinCom regarding the article and the current year transfer request. Ellen recommended language revisions.

Kim expressed her concern to plan for an all-in program for all students and informed the Committee that she will vote against this plan. She advocated for planning for outdoor tents and recommended a focus on outdoor activities.

Arthur updated the School Committee on the position of the State and DESE in terms of appropriate distancing of three to six feet. They have also consulted with experts about students' social emotional health, what they gain by being in person, and the urgency of a mental health crisis. Arthur noted that outdoor classrooms do present some challenges, adding that the safety of the students and staff remains a priority.

Kathie Steinberg moved that the School Committee submit the request for a current year transfer and if the School Committee needs to do this in the form of a warrant article, it does so. Otherwise, the School Committee sends the memo the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee for the dollar amount that the Committee anticipates needing at this time.

A discussion followed the motion in terms of the amount to request in the current year transfer. It was agreed to ask for an amount up to \$800,000. The timing of Town Meeting in May could be an issue in terms of funding and could result in deficit spending. There was no second.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted (4-1) to authorize Kathie to submit a request for a current year transfer on behalf of the School Committee pursuant to the memorandum that she has drafted for an amount of up to \$800,000, and if it is determined that a separate warrant article on behalf of the School Committee is necessary, then she frame it as a warrant article. If not, that she frame it as a request to the Board of Selectmen to include the request with their warrant article. 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	

(d) Review of Budget Calendar:

Arthur will virtually present the FY22 recommended budget Thursday evening from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. A link was provided on the Facebook page and in the All School News.

#### 4. Superintendent Update:

(a) Hybrid Mode Update:

Middle School social studies teachers are using the software program "Parlay" whereby students can interact as historical figures; Arthur explained the concept. Loker students went on a virtual field trip to the Old South Meeting House during which students dressed up and took part in a debate.

#### 5. COVID-19 Response:

(a) Review and Discussion of Post-Holiday Break Attendance and Possible Planning for Upcoming Breaks:

Arthur presented data for all grade levels received in response to the Health Watch attestation questions related to travel, large gatherings, and attendance after the recent Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday breaks in an effort to

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prepare for possible implications after February break. The Committee discussed the accuracy of the data. In-person average daily attendance for Cohorts A and B was taken for the weeks November 2 to November 6, November 30 to December 4, December 7 to December 11, and January 4 to January 8. Arthur explained further and responded to the Committee's questions. Attendance at all levels was better for Cohort B. A discussion ensued about moving ahead with February vacation, but will revisit the discussion about two weeks before the scheduled break.

- (b) Discussion and Review of Planning for Remainder of School Year, including Kindergarten and Synchronous Augmentation:  
Passed over.
- (c) Surveillance Testing Program Update and Possible Vote to Approve Fee:  
There was a virtual informational meeting last night at which 269 participated. The benefits of pooled testing were presented by Susan Garfield, Ellen spoke about the potential DESE testing program, and Kim Reichelt facilitated the Chat in which many questions were asked. If the district proceeds with the State program, funds will be needed for staffing and administrative work, and the district will work the Town in this regard. Wayland is on the list to participate with the State testing, and they will be in touch in terms of next steps.
- (d) Special Education Update:  
Special education was discussed earlier in the meeting.
- (d) Ongoing Review Groups: Remote and Hybrid Learning Progress Committee and COVID Learning and Safety Committee:  
*RHLCP:*  
No update.

### *COVID Learning and Safety Committee:*

Jeanne updated the Committee about today's meeting at which time ventilation was discussed. Over the holiday break, all ventilation units were cleaned and new filters were installed. Pool testing was also discussed and the teachers are interest in the vaccination rollout, but the timeline is known at this time. February vacation and a communication strategy in terms of travel related questions was discussed. Jeanne reviewed the vaccine timeline for Phase 1 and Phase 2 according to the State guidelines.

- (e) Transportation Update:  
No update.
- (f) Ventilation Update:  
Jeanne updated ventilation earlier in the meeting.
- (g) Next Steps:  
Next steps were addressed earlier in the meeting.

## 6. **Administrative/Procedural Matters:**

- (a) Discussion of Upcoming Meeting Schedule:  
The School Committee is slated to vote on the FY22 recommended operating budget at its meeting of January 20. The public was reminded of the virtual MLK event on Monday, January 18.

## 7. **Matters not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair:**

Parry raised the FFCRA discussion and vote.

*Ellen left the meeting at 8:46 p.m.*

## 8. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to enter Executive Session at 8:46 p.m. for the purposes of (a) discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Wayland Teachers Association (WTA), WESA, Custodial, and Food Services, 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.

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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	absent	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

9. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:07 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 Comment
3. Draft 2021 WPS Elementary Space Needs Warrant Article
4. Draft Request for WPS Current Year Transfer
5. Updated Cost Implications for Increased In-Person Instruction
6. Revised FY22 Recommended Budget Q&A
7. Executive Session Motion