

SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – May 5, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, May 5, 2021, at 5:45 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

Omar Easy
Incoming Superintendent

Also:

George Harris
Louise Miller, Town Administrator

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 5:49 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. Comments and Written Statements from the Public:

Jeanne read a public comment from Paul and Gretchen Dresens regarding school bus parking. They reminded the School Committee that in 2017 and 2018 almost 800 residents signed a petition expressing that parking busses at or near a school was unacceptable in Wayland. Since then, the busses were temporarily parked at River's Edge and were moved to the rear of the Town Building this year, also temporarily. They referenced the School Committee's vote at the January 29, 2018 not to park the busses at the Middle School. Since the busses must be moved again very soon, they expressed their strong opinion that parking at any school is not an option.

Caroline Owen, 16 Garden Path, asked the School Committee to amend its policy that was adopted on April 14 requiring compulsory testing through the DESE optional COVID-19 pooled testing program as a requirement for students participating in extracurricular activities at Wayland High School to be in compliance with DESE. DESE's policy allows families to opt out of the pooled testing without penalty. She referred to and read the DESE language in the group letter submitted to the School Committee. Ms. Owen noted that many towns are not requiring testing, including 3 towns in the athletic DCL and the School Committee is in violation with its agreement with DESE. She will forward the Civil Defense Act of 1950, §20 to the School Committee for their review.

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Jeanne read a public comment from Anthony Boschetto in which he asked the School Committee to reconsider its vote on April 14, 2021 which requires mandatory consent into the DESE pool testing program for those parents of high school students who participate in in-person extracurricular activities. In the meantime, he wants the policy rescinded until this matter is resolved. Mr. Boschetto filed a complaint with DESE as it states that the “Wayland School System is bound by the contractual obligations with the DESE, which include the Statement of Assurances, which explicitly states participation must be voluntary.”

Sheila Carel, 18 Joyce Road, commented that she heard a rumor that the school busses will be parked at the old DPW site by the Middle School. She continued to say that the School Committee has a responsibility to the students and the teachers not to park the busses near that site or any school and asked that the Committee stands by their 2018 vote.

Jeanne read a public comment from Drita Protopapa and Gustavo Silva, 216 Concord Road. They, too, asked the School Committee to reconsider its April 14, 2021 vote making pooled testing mandatory for high school students participating in in-person extracurricular activities. There should be an opt-out option without penalty to the students and their ability to participate in extracurricular activities.

An additional letter was submitted to the School Committee regarding pooled testing that will be posted on the School Committee website under May 5 public documents. It was signed by Caroline Owen, Drita Protopapa, Gustavo Dumont Silva, Sara Sun, James Sun, Anthony Boschetto, Heidi Heilman, Brad Heilman, Mary Ellen Lyons, Ted Henning, Tara Bonvie, Lori Aidala, Richard Aidala, Luciana Prunier, Brian Prunier, Richard Stafford, Barbara Dulong, Debby Toto, John Toto, and others not named.

2. Special Matter:

(a) Discussion with George Harris regarding Open Meeting Law (OML), including Recent OML Complaint:
Mr. Harris attended tonight’s meeting to address the OML complaint filed by him in January pertaining to three sets of minutes for the Superintendent candidate interviews. Mr. Harris would like to discuss the amendment process and try to find a “cure” to the matter at hand.

Mr. Harris agreed that the minutes as they exist now are fine, but there is a process to approve the minutes that includes transparency for the public. Jeanne added that at the last School Committee meeting, an explanation was given as to why and how the minutes were revised twice to comply with the OML.

Mr. Harris offered his suggestions as to how to stay in compliance with the OML and think about it from the vantage point of the public. For instance, the public should know why the OML complaint was filed. He also suggested that a member of the School Committee, other than the Chair, should become the OML Specialist to insure that the Committee is in compliance. Mr. Harris noted that the Attorney General reviews about 180 to 200 OML complaints each year. Kim has been the OML Specialist for the School Committee for some time. In response to a question, recorded videos are not a substitute for the minutes, as minutes must be maintained as public record forever.

3. COVID-19 Response:

(a) Grades K-12 All-In Update, including Distancing Protocols:
Arthur reported that most students in Grades 6-12 are very excited to be back in school. However, some students are experiencing anxiety and social distancing and new schedules/routines can be a challenge. Another challenge is that the band and chorus students sing ten feet apart wearing face masks. On the positive side, students have developed new friendships and are able to access extra help if needed.

In terms of end-of-year celebrations, there will be a graduation ceremony on June 6 and groupings are being worked out and other outside events will be limited to staff and students, such as Field Day. Arthur described other graduation events for students for which families will receive communication.

(b) Special Education Update:
For the most part, the return to school is positive, but some students are struggling with the new rigid structure as opposed to earlier flexibility in the hybrid mode. There are concerns about the long-term impacts the past year has had on students’ mental health, attention, organization and executive functioning, etc. Time will provide more information in this regard.

The typical in-person “coffee morning” for rising students into 6th and 9th grades who are on IEP’s will now take place virtually during two meetings: May 11 for the rising 6th graders and May 13 for the rising 9th graders, both at 7:00 p.m.

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The meeting agenda will include an introduction to some special education staff, a discussion of the general structure, and how the program operates.

The SEPAC co-chairs will attend the May 12th meeting.

(c) Remote and Hybrid Learning Progress Committee (RHLPC) and COVID Learning and Safety Team Update:

RHLPC:

There was no RHLPC update.

COVID Learning and Safety Team:

At today's meeting, the team discussed issues that need attention, such as the health attestation form, face coverings, ventilation, decreasing the amount of cleaning in the buildings, and permanent desk replacements.

(d) Surveillance Testing Update:

Arthur updated the School Committee on last week's pooled testing in which 1,413 students (slightly over 50% of students) and about 215 staff participated (about 60% of staff). Reflex testing was performed the following day as there were two positive pools out of 217. Those two positive pools were quarantined for about 8 hours. The testing takes place on Fridays.

The School Committee discussed the concerns raised by some families about the School Committee's vote to mandate pooled testing for WHS students who participate in extracurricular activities and are requesting that the School Committee vote again to provide an opt-out option. Jeanne cited statistics of the other 11 DCL districts in this regard. Westford Academy does not pool test, Acton Boxboro, Bedford, and Boston Latin provide optional testing, Cambridge Rindge and Latin, Concord Carlisle, Lincoln Sudbury, Newton South, Waltham, Wayland and Weston mandate pooled testing. Jeanne explained that of the seven who mandate, the involvement of the towns' Board of Health differed. Ellen confirmed that the Wayland BOH was not consulted by the School Committee.

Three families have filed PRS complaints with DESE about mandating pooled testing for which DESE can use its regulatory authority. Arthur summarized his conversation with DESE in terms of its problem resolution system. The public can file a concern if they feel that the rights of students are not being fulfilled. Once the district receives the complaints from DESE, Arthur will send a formal response back to DESE within a week, DESE will send a formal response to Arthur as a follow-up within two weeks.

School counsel has advised that mandatory pooled testing presents no issues with Hippa regulations in terms of how the testing is being conducted, and the district is aligned with the attorney's advice in terms of how we handle the consent for after-school extracurricular activities, adding that sports has had many caveats for athletes. Arthur elaborated on the advice from school counsel and the district will present its case based on this advice.

A discussion ensued and Ellen recommended that the district consults with the Board of Health, as she believes that there are inequities, although she still supports testing, but there has not been specific evidence of transmission among athletes. She added that being indoors is riskier than being outside. Kim supports continuing with the testing as it is whereby transmission can be identified. Chris commented that Wayland should continue to work as a community to manage the risks and he will continue to support the mandated pooled testing. Kathie continues to support the mandated pooled testing, as the district is constantly evaluating the risks and what can be done to mitigate them. Finally, Jeanne will continue to support the mandated pooled testing because the district is doing everything to keep the students in school and keep everyone safe throughout the community.

The School Committee agreed to move forward with the same mandate, particularly for the testing on May 14. Arthur will consult with the Director of the Health Department about the school district's requirement for high school students as it is set up to participate in pooled testing, what is the medical justification, should the middle school students be included, and does it align with CDC guidance.

(e) Next Steps:

Next steps were covered in the previous discussions.

4. Financial Matters (out of order):

(a) Bus Contract and Bus Parking Update:

Louise Miller joined the meeting to discuss the bus contract and the ongoing issue of bus parking. She learned of the

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bus parking problem two years when she began her tenure in Wayland and offered the history of where the busses have been parked and the ongoing process to find a more permanent solution and location to park the busses. The last location was identified as the MASS DOT parcel on Route 20 in Sudbury, an agreement was reached, and funds were spent to prepare the site for the busses. However, MASS Dot sold it to a private company and it was back to square one. Unable to find another solution, the ZBA issued a special permit to park nine busses behind the Town Building for this year through June 30, 2021. However, Ms. Miller could ask the ZBA to extend the special permit until August 30 to accommodate the busses for summer programming. As the Town Building opens up more to the public and programming, the parking spaces will be needed, as the bus fleet will be increased for the 2021-2022 school year.

Ms. Miller noted that there are other possible options in Natick and in another town north of Wayland, but the locations in other towns are too far away according to the Town Planner and will cost the district a significant sum of money annually for which funding is not available. She asked the School Committee to consider parking the school busses on school property and issue an immediate RFP for potential locations in town. Another possibility is to have the vendor take the responsibility of parking the busses. Splitting up the busses complicates the dispatch and operations.

The Route 20 south landfill is owned by the town and bus parking on that site, along with the site's other uses, may or may not be possible. It could take about two years to prepare the site, as well as costing a substantial amount of money in the millions, and would involve many regulatory agencies. A discussion ensued regarding next steps the concerns of parking the busses on school property, and the new bus contract. Kathie will provide past documents related to bus parking, and a small working group will be formed.

Assistant Town Administrator John Bugbee and Susan Bottan are working together on the bid specifications of the bus contract that may include bus parking because it will affect the price of the contract. Susan noted that there is currently a shortage of bus drivers.

- (b) Director of Finance and Operations Search Update and Possible Vote to Select New Director:
Dr. Easy thanked the search committee and Parry Graham for their efforts in finding a new Director of Finance and Operations. He described the search process, including his conversations with the top five candidates. Dr. Easy recommended Ellen Whittemore from the Winchester Public Schools as Wayland's Director of Finance and Operations.

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter contract negotiations with Ellen Whittemore for the position of Director of Finance and Operations for the Wayland Public Schools. 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	

5. Administrative Matters:

- (a) Superintendent Transition Update:
Dr. Easy has been meeting with Central Office staff and town officials and is leading the search for The Children's Way Director and the Director of Finance and Operations. Dr. Unobskey and Dr. Easy are working together to ensure a smooth transition.

6. Financial Matters (continued):

- (a) Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC) Update:
Michael Hoyle provided Jeanne with an update about the Loker roof project which will be done by Tower Construction when the school year ends in June.
- (b) Review of Information for Town Meeting:
The School Committee discussed the topics Jeanne will review at Town Meeting within an eight-minute period. Topics include COVID expenses, academic loss and students' mental health issues, the budget and its highlights, and the capital budget.

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7. **Consent Agenda:**

- (a) Approval of Minutes: April 14, 2021 and April 30 2021:
Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Chris Ryan, the School Committee voted (4-0)
to approve the Consent Agenda not including the minutes of April 30, 2021. 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	

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

None.

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 8:25 p.m. for purposes of (a) discussing strategy in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel to wit Director of Finance and Operations, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(2), as 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 the Wayland Teachers Association (WTA), as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3) as discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; (c) reviewing executive session minutes for possible declassification as listed on the agenda, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22; and (d) approval of the following executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: April 14, 2021. 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	

The School Committee will be joined by Arthur Unobskey, Superintendent of Schools, Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, Omar Easy, Incoming Superintendent, Susan Bottan, Director of Finance and Operations, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

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

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 10:27 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

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Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Public Comments
3. Letter to AGO from George Harris
4. Minutes of April 14, 2021
5. Executive Session Motion