

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Special Meeting – July 15, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, July 15, 2020, at 1:00 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

*Also:*

Louise Miller, Town Administrator  
Ben Keefe, Public Buildings Director

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 1:02 p.m. The meeting was recorded by WayCAM and 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>Present</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	--
Kim Reichelt	X
Chris Ryan	X
Kathie Steinberg	X

Jeanne announced that Chris Ryan is now a voting member of the School Committee between now and the end of Town Meeting at which time his regular term will begin.

**1. Administrative/Procedural Matters:**

- Update on Superintendent Search:  
Lyle Kirtman will join the School Committee in a one-hour meeting to review the search timeline going forward. Jeanne will provide a Doodle poll for a meeting date.
- Discussion of Topics and Date for Future Training:  
The School Committee discussed the upcoming training with Glenn Koocher of MASC. Given the current issues at hand, such as reopening school in the fall, the School Committee will postpone the training to a more convenient time. Kathie recommended that the School Committee have a discussion in one of its meetings to review its communication structure; a brief discussion followed.

*Ellen joined the meeting at 1:10 p.m.*

*Arthur, Susan, Richard, and Parry joined the meeting at 1:21 p.m.*

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

Jeanne read a public comment from Lee Ann Cohen, 12 Kelsey Rd. Ms. Cohen does not support the all-in back to school model when so much is still not normal, particularly when School Committee and other meetings are still virtual. Although

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her family was saddened by the spring school closure, they felt safe and feels that safety is the foundation for academic success. The hybrid model provides up to 6 feet of social distancing, and if mask wearing and hand washing guidelines are followed it could work, however, returning to an in-person model, may not alleviate the anxiety that children and adults are experiencing if they do not feel safe. Ms. Cohen advocates for a virtual model during the fall while changing the culture around attendance. Whatever the initial decision is, she asks that the School Committee reevaluates the situation in December which would allow a sense of safety and confidence over time and may be in the best interest of public health.

Jeanne read a public comment from Jessica Villatoro, a Middle School special education teacher. While the School Committee and administration discuss reopening plans, Ms. Villatoro asks that the teachers' and students' health and safety is the first consideration. Given the Middle School ventilation issues, as well as the other schools, there isn't enough time to address this issue in order to make the schools safe. As a special education teacher, Ms. Villatoro acknowledges that the SEL needs of the students is crucial, but with many restrictions and rules that are not conducive to a nurturing and welcoming environment this could have an impact on their learning. Students need to feel safe in order to learn. Thus, Ms. Villatoro is advocating to start the school year remotely with the possibility of slowly moving to a hybrid model.

Jeanne read a public comment from Gina Dallin, 76 Glezen Lane. Having asked doctors, nurses and teachers about the ability to physically return to school, it is their opinion that being in school is very important but all had reservations given the red flags and the fact that normalcy is gone. Ms. Dallin noted that meetings are being held virtually and the ventilation systems in the schools are in need of repair and may not be done in time. She noted that teachers need time to adapt and there should be an effort to keep all classes in place. For instance, gym and art could be at the schools outside until it is safe to go back to school. While Ms. Dallin appreciates everyone's efforts, she adds that the students need to be educated in the safest manner possible without loss or creating a COVID surge.

Jeanne read a public comment from Michele Fiske, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Claypit Hill. On a recent WTA survey, she listed the following concerns: 1) the Wayland school leaders appear to be seeking medical advice that is in line with an all-in model; 2) the inability to procure and maintain a sufficient supply of PPE; 3) putting curriculum coverage and academic ranking over the lives of staff and students; 4) having separate meetings for parents and teachers resulting in mixed messaging, particularly about ventilation issues; 5) despite DESE guidelines, Wayland school leaders should convey that the all-in model is not safe; and 6) the appearance of little compassion or regard for the health and safety of all school staff. No one is expendable.

Jeanne read a public comment from Orla Daunt. She has studied the Wayland options proposed and has done research about other countries' experiences in reopening schools and was surprised at the consideration of an all-in model. Ms. Daunt noted that there seems to be no medical or factual data to support re-opening with full attendance and 3 feet of social distancing. If an in-person option is being considered, it might make sense to start with the hybrid model. Similar to universities, Ms. Daunt also recommends some sort of agreement for teachers and families who are traveling out of the New England area over the summer in terms of what can be asked of them if returning to school in-person so that the lives of others are not at risk.

Jeanne read a public comment from Jonathan G. Smith, M.D. He expressed his significant concern about the in-school models that are being considered for the fall, adding that is important to consider the wellbeing of both adults and students. Dr. Smith proposed a list of questions that must be answered prior to school reopening. They include the possibility of the first positive COVID test, quarantining protocol, teachers paid sick leave, testing for everyone, bringing substitutes into the building, notification protocol, and the impact on students and teachers if there is a death in the school community. Dr. Smith suggests that we all ask ourselves if we would feel safe as a teacher.

Jeanne read a public comment from Caitlin Golden, Kindergarten teacher at Claypit Hill, shared her concerns about an in-person model. Ms. Golden feels that there is a difference between being safe and feeling safe and could present a traumatic experience for children. She acknowledges that remote learning is not equitable for all families and that some families are in crisis. However, being in school will not provide the same positive mental health benefits similar to pre-COVID. Ms. Golden's goal is for her children to feel safe, loved and important and asks what the district's end goal is based on health and safety protocols, adding that kindergarten classrooms use pro-social skills (sharing, reading facial expressions and eye contact and resolving conflicts with close adult support, etc.). In her opinion, it would be best to use this time to create better, more robust remote learning experiences.

Jeanne read a public comment from Carrie Dirmeikis, 8<sup>th</sup> grade WMS teacher. Despite all of the research about this virus and the health and safety protocols, Ms. Dirmeikis feels compelled to write about the profound need to evolve and move in new directions in ways that will breathe life into a new vision. Given that Ms. Dirmeikis knows a lot about how young

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minds think, play, and learn and grow, she also knows that a compelling lesson is compelling whether it's up close or at a distance, and children thrive when challenged and supported in equal measure. Children need to feel safe and loved, so how can we fashion new spaces either online and in some precious moments together that might be even better than what we had before? Ms. Dirmeikis urged the School Committee to embrace a hybrid or remote model.

Jeanne read a public comment from Linda Hines in which she feels that it will be extremely difficult to come up with one solution for all grade levels, and it might make more sense to find solutions for each level. Ms. Hines offered suggestions for secondary students who can be responsible to wear masks and clean their own work spaces in each classroom. Students and teachers should attest to their health every day, and if a teacher has circumstances that puts them at high risk or they don't feel safe in school, teaching remotely or FMLA are options. It is Ms. Hines' opinion that if she can work with immunocompromised patients closer than 6 feet with one mask provided per shift, it should be safe for students and teachers to be back in the classrooms.

Jeanne read a public comment from Maureen Devlin, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Happy Hollow. After paying close attention to comments and ideas expressed by families, leaders, community members, and educators in the past week and after reading several articles related to the pandemic, she is in favor of remote instruction for the fall with a reconsideration in December because there are no health risks, remote education will be elevated as the focus will be on education only, and staff who are in the high-risk category are entitled to safety measures and supports outlined by the ADA and OSHA. Ms. Devlin feels that everyone should advocate the government for a family "bail out" for families who need additional child care supports. As a leadership district, Ms. Devlin believes the safest and right choice should be made for everyone.

In response to the previous public comments, Arthur confirmed that the first priority in making a decision is the safety of all students and staff.

**3. COVID-19 Response:**

- Continued Discussion of Three Models for Return to School in Fall 2020 (Remote, Hybrid, All-In), including State Guidance, Community and Staff Feedback, Outstanding Questions, and Teaching and Learning and Operational Aspects:

Arthur thanked Allyson Mizoguchi, Sean Gass, Laura Cole, and Lee Krasnoo, all who organized the upcoming four graduation ceremonies on July 25 and 26 at 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weather permitting. Arthur noted the logistics of the ceremonies, including mask wearing and social distancing. In addition, Arthur reported that Pegasus will not be offered in August due to low enrollment. Families will be notified.

With health and safety as the first priority in reopening schools, Arthur noted that promoting connections and re-engagement between teachers and students is important as well as consistency and substantial academic growth in the different models. In preparation for a remote model, there is robust professional development taking place, including workshops, during the summer in developing fluency and deepening the use of common learning management systems. In planning the hybrid or all-in models, 6 feet of social distancing will be required in a hybrid model and 3 feet for an all-in model. Masks will be required, but the district is waiting on state guidance and Mass. DPH guidance in terms of the appropriate masks and the appropriate number of masks for staff on a daily/weekly basis. Arthur commented on the protocol regarding hand hygiene in the schools.

Susan updated the School Committee on the transportation plan. All-in model: All K-6 students who live more than two miles and are registered for transportation will be bussed with 24 students per bus. Currently, there are 189 Wayland students for which Wayland is required by law to transport and for those as well who have expressed a need. Hybrid model: Twenty-four students will also be assigned seats based on A groups or B groups with those who fall under the criteria of the all-in model with the addition of some registrations for students in grades 7 to 12 taken on a first-come first-served basis using a date and time stamp. In terms of seat assignments, the kindergarten students will be in the front of the bus with the progression of older students toward the rear of the bus. Transportation fees are reimbursable for whose families who have made the decision to forego bus transportation.

A discussion ensued regarding the PPE supply chain. Susan confirmed that Fire Chief McPherson has been purchasing PPE. She described the possible collaborative plan with the school department moving forward. Susan also noted that the district is in possession of face shields and N-95 masks and have enough for the start of school. Depending on the mask guidance and the supply of the district's PPE moving forward, other decisions may be implemented.

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Parry updated the School Committee regarding the Teaching and Learning group's planning regarding the hybrid model in which the AAXBB weekly model was preferred over the one week in and one out model. Parry described further and recommended that it would be helpful to get more feedback from staff and parents regarding childcare. To prepare for ever-changing COVID data, it is recommended that a robust remote model is ready to be implemented at a moment's notice, and movement between a hybrid and all-in model would require advance notice given the operational details.

A discussion followed about removing the all-in model from the equation. As Ellen pointed out, curriculum loss is a concern from the spring remote model. Thus, it is important before this decision can be made is to have this data as well as an assurance that a more robust curriculum will be delivered in the fall while keeping health and safety in the forefront of everyone's mind. Chris Ryan agrees and shared his challenging experience in the spring with remote learning for his children. Kim expressed that the all-in model should be eliminated based on COVID data and focus our efforts on the all remote and the hybrid models. Parry confirmed that he has collected the curriculum loss data and will present it at a future meeting, as well as information in regards to the teachers' training and support allowing them to provide more robust remote learning instruction.

Louise Miller and Ben Keefe joined the meeting at 2:30 p.m. to update the School Committee on ventilation issues in the school buildings. One of the architectural firms (TBA) that is on call with the Town has provided a mechanical engineer, Matt Bean, to assess the ventilations systems. Ben has also been in contact with an independent testing and balancing company (American Test & Balance) and Brian Donovan is the test balance representative. Both company representatives toured the five buildings, with the exception of The Children's Way, and measured the amount of ventilation/outside air coming into the buildings both from outside and through the indoor spaces, such as the instructional spaces and large common spaces. However, the office spaces will not be included in the review at this time. Louise described the two-step process in 1) determining measurements and calculations based on the number of occupants in each room; and 2) reviewing the collected data in terms of being up to code. The estimated cost for the testing and measurement is about \$70,000 and the cost for materials is an additional \$50,000. These estimates do not include the High School given that it is 9 years old and was built with an MSBA grant and was up to code then. In addition, during the spring a green communities' grant was applied for to recommission the review of the ventilation system at the High School. It was noted that the air handling units in the buildings are working, and Louise updated the Committee on the two capital improvement projects for the Loker and Claypit Hill Schools air handlers.

Louise addressed some of the questions sent to Ben and her about the ventilations systems, such as the daily operation of the systems, the recommendation of MERV 13 filter replacements at the Middle School and High School, the assessment of the elementary schools in terms of filter replacements, stand-alone air ventilation systems in non-ventilated spaces, ozone cleaners, and UV lights. It is recommended that spaces that do not have ventilation should not be used as instructional space until such time as air circulation can be installed in those spaces. Questions were asked by the Committee and a discussion ensued about the replacement of the air handler units. Ben added that CFM stands for cubic feet of air per minute and temperature and ventilation are different from one another; he explained. The timing to get this work done at the schools was noted by Ben Keefe, as it could take up to six weeks for completion. CARES funding is not available for facilities upgrades. However, decisions need to be made in the use of the funds that are available. Louise described the process moving forward and Ben added that many of the questions posed to him are about room comfort vs. room ventilation, and they are two different things; he explained. Next steps were discussed based on prioritized goals, including MERV filter replacements. Two School Committee members will continue this discussion offline with Louise and Ben. The School Committee will receive an update at its next meeting.

*Louise Miller and Ben Keefe left the meeting at 3:10 p.m.*

A discussion resumed about the different school models. Arthur addressed the need for a full year-long remote model for families who will opt out for the year regardless of the school model. The district is considering the purchase of a K-12 learning management system which could be outsourced and is similar to Weston's model or the State's recommended model. Attendance requirements for these students are yet to be determined, as well as a year-long commitment for the families if the schools were to reopen in person. In terms of a fall remote plan, Parry shared his discussions with curriculum leaders and department heads, adding that teachers will be planning throughout August and will define much of what remote learning will look like with the expectation of more curriculum, more synchronous learning, and grading and accountability for students.

Allyson Mizoguchi joined the meeting at 3:30 pm. to discuss student cohorts for all possible school learning models. She described the challenges in determining cohorts keeping in mind the core curriculum requirements for students and the addition of electives with the desire to create a safe environment for everyone. One suggestion is to think about how to

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level courses; Allyson provided an example for the junior class. Allyson addressed the possibility of clustering students who are in honors classes, although more discussion in this regard is needed. The School Committee expressed their preferences in regard to cohort models. Allyson described the different scenarios of the hybrid model and what a day would like at the high school, adding that momentum would be better if all students were in two days per week vs. one week in and one week out and what transitioning from one model to another could present. The possibility of having different models at different grade levels, such as K-8 and 9-12, could be difficult for families; Parry described the challenges. A discussion ensued about beneficial cohorts in terms of a robust curriculum, as well as the consideration of the health and safety risks for students and teachers in this regard. Next steps for the high school leadership team is working out the logistics in terms of eSchool and the mechanics of scheduling in order to move forward. Allyson described the different planning in which area high schools are engaged; however, some high schools are researching block scheduling if cohorts are not possible or are not willing to cohort due to health and safety issues. The Committee directed Allyson to work out the logistics for the hybrid A/B model. In the meantime, health guidance will be provided by the Board of Health.

The School Committee continued its discussion regarding the hybrid model in terms of a daily or weekly structure and the learning benefits of each model, as well as the possibility of surveying staff and families regarding the two hybrid models. Parry described the challenges, such as synchronous and asynchronous instruction, teachers' and teacher assistants' schedules related to remote learning days, specials, and cleaning the buildings for each – AAXBB or AABBX and one week in school and week out of school. The School Committee discussed how to move forward with this meeting given the time element. The Committee agreed that more discussion is needed in this regard; a meeting will be held on July 20.

- Next Steps:  
The Committee discussed the parent listening sessions that are scheduled later in the day and the staff listening sessions on Thursday in terms of the members' attendance in each session.

4. **Consent Agenda:**

- Approval of Minutes: June 24, 2020 and July 6, 2020

This agenda item was passed over.

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

None.

6. **Executive Session:**

The executive session was passed over.

7. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 4:58 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