

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – November 3, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, November 3, 2021, at 6:00 P.M. at METCO, Inc. Headquarters, 11 Roxbury Street, Roxbury, MA.

Present were:

Chris Ryan, Chair
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair
Jeanne Downs
Jess Polizzotti
Kim Reichelt

Also:

Dr. Omar Easy
Superintendent

Parry Graham
Assistant Superintendent

Ellen Whittemore
Director of Finance & Operations

Also:

Tony Laing, METCO Director
Caroline Han, Director of Diversity, Equity & Belonging
Allyson Mizoguchi, WHS Principal
Betsy Gavron, WMS Principal
Brian Jones, Loker School Principal
Christie Harvey, Claypit Hill School Principal
Tricia O'Reilly, Happy Hollow School Principal

Beginning at 6:00 p.m., the group enjoyed dinner provided by Murl's Kitchen. After dinner, Ms. Millie Arbaje-Thomas took everyone on a visual and descriptive tour of the information on the headquarters' walls that tell a story about the METCO Program, racial divide and breaking barriers leading up to the current year.

Chair Chris Ryan convened the meeting at 6:40 p.m. The meeting was recorded but not broadcast live and will be posted on WayCAM at a later time.

1. Boston Parents' Meeting/Welcome:

Chair Chris Ryan welcomed and thanked everyone for being at the meeting, as well as those who contributed to making the meeting possible. The School Committee members introduced themselves.

Dr. Tony Laing, METCO Director, introduced Ms. Milly Arbaje-Thomas, President and CEO of METCO, Inc., and thanked her for hosting this annual Boston parents' meeting at which families can ask questions of the School Committee, Superintendent, staff and administration. Dr. Laing commented that the METCO program began in Wayland in 1968 to advance diversity and equity for children of color. This year, Wayland has 131 METCO students enrolled. He added that this meeting will inform everyone of Wayland's commitment to anti-racism and diversity work.

2. Program:

- School Committee Presentation regarding the Wayland Public Schools Anti-Racist Resolution:
The presentation focused on the Anti-Racist Resolution that the School Committee passed unanimously in January 2021, how and why it was adopted, and how it is being implemented and by whom. The resolution came about because a Middle School student expressed to Principal Gavron that she did not feel that she was part of the school because, even though there were many flags hanging in the school, a "Black Lives Matter" flag was not among them.

The resolution that was first introduced by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), was reviewed by the Administrative Council in an effort to modify the resolution to the Wayland Public Schools and the final version was then presented to the School Committee by Betsy Gavron and Caroline Han. After Committee discussion, the Anti-Racist Resolution was passed.

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The School Committee members shared some of their past experiences in this regard and why they strongly supported and reaffirmed their commitments to anti-racism in the schools to establish an awareness of complete belonging and fair and equitable treatment.

The Anti-Racist Resolution was displayed for everyone to see and was recited in sections by several people in the room. The implementation of this commitment starts with the School Committee that supports anti-racist practices by setting policy, overseeing the budget, and hiring the Superintendent. In 2019, and following the 50th METCO anniversary celebration, a Diversity & Equity Coordinator was hired through a WPSF grant, and a State grant was applied for to expand recruiting efforts for people of color. In 2020, the D&E Coordinator position was moved to the operating and METCO budgets, The Columbus Day holiday was renamed to Indigenous People's Day, a training/workshop, hosted by IDEAS, was held for the School Committee, Superintendent, METCO Director and interested parents to explore issues of race and racism and their impact on the school community, and a concentration on the district target goal of "Elevating Achievement." In 2021, the resolution was adopted, there was an alumni presentation on anti-racism education in Wayland, a Boston parent representative was added to School Councils, and the staff participated in anti-bias and anti-racist professional development. The School Committee's and staff's work will continue to center around diversity, equity and belonging, as the School Committee is committed to this ongoing effort.

- Presentation by Ms. Caroline Han, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging:
Ms. Han began her presentation, "Being an Anti-Racist Educator is a Verb" with a Trivia audience participation. She displayed two numbers: #131 and #2713 and asked the audience what they represent. The answers are #131 is the number of Boston resident students in Wayland this year, and #2713 represents the number of students in the district, as solved by Tyler, a Boston resident student. In addition, Ms. Han acknowledged the indigenous people in Massachusetts, given it is Indigenous People's month.

School principals gave examples of how the anti-racist resolution aligns and is in action within their buildings. Elementary school examples include read-alouds with appropriate cultural reading, diversified literature, all-cultural celebrations, a mentor/mentee program for Boston resident programs, reminders for students each morning that they belong "here", the use of books virtually to get difficult messages out to the school community, and conversations about race and culture that supports students and teachers.

At the middle school level, examples are also diversified literature in which every student can see themselves and the lives of others, summer work around micro-aggressions, established structures through which teachers can do this work through TAG, incorporated time into faculty meetings to share different issues and provide support, and student activities in which students can share joyful, happy or sad experiences.

Finally, at the high school level, literature is chosen by the English Department and has picked up momentum because of the resolution, and there have been some changes to the curriculum, as there is an effort to create a sense of belonging for everyone. Books represent all cultures, identities, and races; Ms. Mizoguchi recited some of the book titles written by diverse authors.

Ms. Han continued the presentation noting that building a sense of belonging happens when everyone works collectively toward this goal, as it is a vital and fundamental human need. One knows when he/she belongs when it feels safe and people know you, know your name, support you, accept you, go out of their way to hear you, and are interested in hearing from you. Students thrive as learners when there is a sense of belonging; however, it is not experienced in the same way and could result in belonging uncertainty. Ms. Han provided examples of "belonging uncertainty."

Ms. Han reviewed K-12 professional development that includes anti-bias hiring practices training and the 2021 Spring Staff of Color Retreat. The presentation ended when the some members of the audience read a segment of the poem "Turning to One Another" by Meg Wheatley. Ms. Han's final words were "not everything that counts, can be counted."

- Remarks by the Superintendent of Schools:
Dr. Easy commented that the Anti-Racist Resolution is the beginning of building a community of inclusion and diversity, adding that diversity is a fact, equity is a choice, inclusion is an action, and belonging is an outcome. The district's initiative to diversify the staff is very important and will happen over time, adding that four staff of color were hired this year. The staff of Wayland is committed to making all children feel a sense of belonging in

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our buildings. Dr. Easy described one initiative which is how we educate our students and putting different platforms and systems in the schools to produce progress data. Since time was limited, Dr. Easy suggested having another meeting in the spring for Boston families. He also thanked Dr. Laing and his staff for their efforts in making this evening happen.

Open Discussion:

A few parents asked questions about the achievement gap and the MCAS results, as one parent said that she never sees the questions before receiving the results and how will teachers know what areas should be improved upon. Dr. Easy responded to the parents' questions. One parent suggested that parents are called for various reasons, as they don't always check their emails.

3. **School Committee Meeting:**

(a) Financial Matters (out of order):

- Final Discussion and Approval of Bus Contract:

The School Committee reviewed the open items regarding the bus contract in terms of the signers of the contract.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the bus contract in the document folder and to delegate the Chair to sign it.

(b) Superintendent Update:

- Tiered Focus Monitoring Process:

Parry Graham presented the Tiered Focus Monitoring Process (formerly the Coordinated Program Review), that is reviewed by DESE every three years to ensure compliance with State and Federal laws. The review was done during the 2020-2021 school year. In special education, no corrections were needed, but improvements were recommended on the civil rights side regarding language to be compliant with state regulations.

Improvements will be made in the Student Handbooks around Codes of Conduct and also at the middle and high school levels regarding discipline for students with special needs. The online form for bullying, intervention and prevention needs to be updated, as well as student discipline related to suspensions and the addition of specific language in suspension letters. Also, language in letters sent home for students who are out of school for ten or more days and language and procedures around physical restraint need to be updated. The School Committee reviewed the amended/updated language for each area, and Parry added that there were no changes in policy language.

Dr. Easy noted that he is working with the High School administration around NEASC accreditation at a cost of approximately \$30,000.

The School Committee will vote at its next meeting to approve the changes to the Student Handbooks.

- COVID-19 Response:

Dr. Easy reported that COVID cases are low in all schools and furniture is being added in K-3 classrooms to promote more group and inclusive work. Additional seating arrangements are being worked out at the Middle School while still keeping 3 feet of distance. Dr. Easy will include the classroom reconfigurations and recommendations for masks in his Entry Plan. Dr. Easy is also working with the Health Department to implement vaccination clinics for students ages 5 to 11.

Dr. Easy and Ellen Whittemore are working on the issue of providing "normal" high school lunch periods, given the prior week's weather causing a change to the usual lunch setup.

4. **Administrative Matters:**

(a) Update and Discussion regarding Bus Parking:

Busses will be parked at the Town Building until August 31, 2022 as planned by the Town, and the School Committee will now be responsible to coordinate bus parking, including the location, after August 31. The parking permit will be formally extended at next week's ZBA meeting. The Board of Selectmen has expressed its interest in holding a public forum on bus parking and will discuss this at its next meeting. The bus parking working group will begin its work soon and present a report to the School Committee.

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Kim suggested having open meetings to the public in order to remain transparent and receive public input. A discussion ensued in this regard. Dr. Easy also commented on the timing of the FY23 budget process in terms of any expenses related to bus parking and further discussion continued. A public forum may be held in early December with the School Committee, Board of Selectmen, the bus parking working group and possibly other Town boards.

5. **Consent Agenda:**

- Approval of Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants:
Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated November 3, 2021, in the amount of \$228,228.14
- Approval of Minutes: October 6, 2021

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

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

None.

7. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Omar Easy, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Observers:

See attached.

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Tiered Focus Process Review Information re: Required Updates
3. Accounts Payable & Payroll Warrants
4. Regular Session Minutes of October 6, 2021