

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – January 19, 2022

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, at 5:30 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

Present:

Chris Ryan, Chair
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair (arrived at 5:53 p.m.)
Jeanne Downs
Jessica Polizzotti
Kim Reichelt

Also present:

Dr. Omar Easy
Superintendent

Parry Graham
Assistant Superintendent

Ellen Whittemore
Director of Finance & Operations

Also: Patricia Keefe, Director of WSCP
Kim Barrett, Director of TCW

Chair Chris Ryan convened the regular session at 5:30 p.m. A roll call was taken as follows:

1. Public Comment:

Michelle Lataille is the WTA vice-president and a special education teacher at Happy Hollow. On behalf of WTA, she made a statement in order to provide clarity to the Wayland community regarding the WTA's email campaign, adding that it has always been the WTA's goal to achieve collaboration with the School Committee and the Central Office administration. She expressed the WTA's continued concerns, adding that "when there is a lack of communication, collaboration and transparency from the Central Office and School Committee it makes teachers feel that their voices and expertise are not valued in areas that impact their teaching and the students' learning."

Chris Ryan responded that the School Committee is in the process of addressing the WTA's comments.

Chris Ryan read a public comment from Jen Pearlman, 34 Pequot Road, who expressed her appreciation to the School Committee for adopting the updated guidelines around COVID isolation and quarantine and for putting in the time to keep the students healthy and in school.

Chris Ryan read a public comment from Michelle Vanslette, 10 Jericho Lane. Although she is unaware of the most of the concerns of the WTA, particularly "Interference by Central Office Administration directly with teachers' assessment practices and grades," she is concerned about disharmony in the district. She shared her perspective as a parent of a WHS student regarding the cumulative pre-calculus exam given to students last June, including her son's class in which the majority of the students failed. Ms. Vanslette noted that the year that the kids had virtual, hybrid, and in-person classes was challenging for both students and teachers resulting in the curriculum only being partially covered. She was grateful for the responsiveness by Dr. Easy and the School Committee and the common sense reaction to throw the test out. Ms. Vanslette also asked the School Committee and the community to examine and hear both sides of the issues being raised in the WTA letter.

Chris Ryan read a public comment from the volunteers of the Claypit Hill School Council (Kristin Heres, Larina Mehta, Elizabeth Wuerz and Susanne Geiger) in which they expressed their concern that "key stakeholders, including Claypit Hill administrators and teachers are not receiving or being included in mission-critical communications concerning the school's proposed budget." Chris added that this communication was received on January 14, 2022 and their concerns were addressed, as the budget was posted on the website. He communicated with them that the budget was available.

Jeff Sklar, 18 Brooks Road, commented that he also read the letter from the WTA. He noted that "in life when there is something we don't like that we be curious rather than furious." Mr. Sklar thought that the WTA letter lacked specifics, as he is interested in the issues, and recommended that people communicate questions to the Superintendent or the

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – January 19, 2022

School Committee without making accusations. Mr. Sklar referred to one line in the letter regarding interference by Central Office around assessments and grades. He also referred to the cumulative pre-calculus exam as pointed out in the previous comment as an issue he has knowledge about.

Chris Ryan made a public comment regarding an email chain that went to a group of parents, including his wife who is also a teacher in another district. Handwritten notes were attached to the email from a Wayland teacher in which Chris was inaccurately portrayed as being neglectful. He stated that the School Committee's role is to hire the Superintendent and to work together with the Superintendent around policy and the budget. The School Committee is willing to discuss those things within their purview and anything else should be directed to teachers, principals or administrators which is the proper procedure. He welcomes collaborative behavior moving forward, as he has always promised to do what is in the best interest of the students.

Barbara Coughlin, Head of WHS Math Department, finds it disheartening that the School Committee allows people to make statements that are false while attacking individual teachers, adding that teachers work hard in the best interest of the students.

Alexia Obar, 18 Dean Road, commented that change is difficult, but she hopes that situations will not divide the community. She added that everyone can work together for the children and should focus on the positive.

2. Superintendent Update:

(a) COVID-19 Response:

Parry updated the School Committee regarding positive COVID cases. Since last Wednesday, 91 students and 10 staff members were COVID positive adding to the 499 total student and staff positive cases since December 15 and the winter break. He thanked Kim Reichelt for updating the Dashboard and the principals for their communications to the school community.

At The Children's Way, only 7 students were COVID positive since September, adding that 5 or 6 were reported positive in the last few weeks.

Dr. Easy presented the new option as recommended by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) to those districts and schools that continue or start symptomatic and/or pooled testing. If school districts choose to implement the new option that will be in place from January 31 to April 22, students and staff will receive rapid antigen at-home tests bi-weekly so individuals can test once a week on Mondays; however, it is not a requirement but is recommended. Test and Stay as well as contact tracing will be discontinued with the new option; pooled testing will continue on Thursdays. It is the districts' responsibility to apply for the bi-weekly tests, and districts must also notify their local boards of health of this shift. This program will be reviewed by DESE and DPH to determine if any updates are needed beyond April 22.

Ellen arrived at 5:53 p.m

It was suggested by Kim that the tests provided by the State are used by those who are coming out of quarantine or have tested positive, as she is concerned about making any changes at this time. Parry commented that when the new guidelines were being looked into, DESE reviewed data across Massachusetts regarding Test and Stay, as well as the percentage of students who participated in Test and Stay who were positive; roughly 2%. The data does not distinguish from the DELTA or Omicron variants. A discussion followed about test and stay and contact tracing.

Dr. Easy's recommendation is to implement this new more efficient option as of January 31, adding that pooled testing will continue, parents and staff will always be notified of a positive case, and contact tracing will be discontinued given that it is a challenge. Kim asked if the administrators could revisit testing for those who return to school after quarantine since more tests will become available. Dr. Easy and Parry will report back on Monday, January 26.

3. Financial Matters:

(a) Discussion of FY23 Recommended Budget:

Ellen Whittemore will provide an additional update to the School Committee once the Town closes FY21 later next week. Ms. Whittemore reported on other fee-based programs. The budget book was updated for athletics and Full-Day Kindergarten. The school lunch program is in a good place financially, and the Federal government extended a waiver for all students to receive breakfast and a hot lunch through June 30 for which reimbursements

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – January 19, 2022

are being received. Food Service will be in the positive at the end of FY22 and moving into FY23. In terms of next year's parking fees, the High School parking will increase ridership and fees. Building rentals will be increased next year to outside organizations. First Student transportation is going well with a fleet of 13 buses, transportation fees will increase slightly next year, and there could be a small increase in ridership.

Special Revenue Accounts:

Pat Keefe, Director of WSCP, updated the School Committee on the fee-based programs, such as BASE, Pegasus, Enrichment, and The Children's Way.

BASE:

Pat Keefe noted that the BASE program was better this year even though enrollment was lower than pre-COVID and staffing was a challenge while still trying to have a 9:1 ratio. Ms. Keefe made a commitment to families that they could re-enroll after taking a year off due to COVID. Her goal is to offer and build the same quality program that can be fully staffed next year which results in a projection of about 80 kids in each of the four buildings which is lower than the enrollment of 303 this year, adding that there are also space issues in the buildings. The FY23 BASE budget was built on a maximum number of students with the returning staff that she knows she will have in place as of April and May during the registration process; however, the program can always be expanded if the space and staff can support it. Tuition will not be increased and the program will run from June 27 through August 5.

Ellen Whittemore added that there is an anticipated robust carryover that will allow for 95% funding for health insurance and OPEB obligations moving forward. The process will begin next week in anticipation of May Town Meeting as Ms. Whittemore, together with Pat Keefe, Kim Barrett, and Cheryl Judd, will review month to month projections to determine, based on cash flow, a fair and realistic contribution to health insurance in FY23. A discussion ensued in this regard.

Pegasus:

There were 131 kids in last year's Pegasus program which was held at the Middle School from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and was very different from previous years. Teachers created homeroom communities and gave them a name, such as the "Sharks." This prevented cohort changes and eliminated many extra positions which resulted in a positive budget. Field trips and swimming at the public pool were non-existent last summer but swimming and one field trip per session will be reinstated this summer. There will be a slight increase in tuition for the pool only during the 1:00 to 3:00 block of time. Registration will open by February 1 through March 31 and the program will run from June 27 to August 5, 2022.

Enrichment:

Some enrichment programs did not survive COVID because the programs were virtual given they could not run in the buildings. It was recommended not to run Enrichment programs for FY23. Elementary chorus will be moved into the tutoring program. Ellen Whittemore explained this new line item/category.

The Children's Way:

Director Kim Barrett noted that The Children's Way is celebrating 35 years of being a pre-school, adding that the dedicated and caring staff has a combined 193 years at TCW who work with involved and supportive families. The current model consists of three classrooms under the Wayland School Community Programs and two classrooms service students receiving special education under Student Services. This current model has created challenges and is confusing for staff and families resulting in poor staff morale while continuing to work hard for the benefit of the students. In addition, specialists and special education staff are only in two classrooms and are not available in the remaining general education classrooms for children with increased needs due to the continuing pandemic.

Ms. Barrett recommends a restructure for next year (FY23) that will form one cohesive integrated public preschool program under the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), as this will ensure constant support from specialists and special education staff in all five classrooms. She also recommends staffing each classroom with a DESE SPED licensed educator and at least two support educators. For those TCW educators who want to continue under DESE, they should be sufficiently trained, certified and prepared.

To become a DESE program, there are budgetary and regulatory elements to navigate. The high needs classroom would remain and would be more inclusive and integrated, while the other classrooms would also be staffed with those who are DESE certified. As with the old model, students can be identified with issues sooner. Ellen

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – January 19, 2022

Whittemore explained the FY22 budget vs. the FY23 budget in terms of fringe benefits and OPEB payments. A discussion ensued about the high and low financial trend for TCW salaries; Ms. Whittemore explained and answered questions regarding the budget going forward.

Facilities:

The facilities budget remains a concern, particularly for utility/energy costs. Ellen Whittemore requested that time is given to her and Dr. Easy to continue an analysis and discussions with the Town in this regard before the School Committee includes this topic in its budget discussions. Dr. Easy explained further and he will update the School Committee at the next meeting.

A discussion ensued about adequate funding next year, given that facilities has been underfunded during the past few years, and moving \$200,000 back into the facilities budget. Ms. Whittemore noted that there could be a town stabilization/reserve account for unanticipated facilities expenses that could be partially funded.

Central Office:

The FY23 non-personnel budget for curriculum and instruction is level-service. Prior to the pandemic, the elementary writing program was being reviewed and has since been reinstated with the goal of piloting a new program for Grades 3, 4, and 5. Structured math intervention programs are also being budgeted for FY23, similar to Foundations for the literacy program. Ellen Grieco recommended adding \$8,000 to \$10,000 to the FY23 budget for an unmet need, curriculum review, and suggested this as an annual budget item. Ellen Whittemore answered a question regarding FY23 program improvement and enrollment driven staffing positions.

Special Education:

Ms. Whittemore described the special request and role of a Middle School counselor/special education teacher, as the implementation of the START program would warrant this position. Another staffing position for a WHS school psychologist would be a reallocation of an FTE due to a Middle School psychologist retirement.

Dr. Easy recommended the following be added to the budget: \$10,000 in construction costs for Central Office, a Director of Social and Emotional Learning, district-wide restorative justice training, building-based subs in the Middle School and the elementary schools, additional professional development for Innovative Pathways at WHS, a technology upgrade for a lease of two additional copiers at Happy Hollow and WHS, a campus life supervisor, and funding full-day Kindergarten. Ellen Grieco suggested that the WPSF grants possibly fund the systemic instruction phonics training for some staff. Parry will look into this.

Jeanne announced that there will be a community budget presentation at the January 24th meeting.

4. Administrative Matters:

- (a) Review of OML Determinations:
This agenda item was passed over.

5. Policy Matters:

- (a) Possible Vote to Approve the Following Policies:
- BEDG: Minutes
 - JBB: Educational Equity

Kim noted that these are the same policies that were approved to go out for public comment a few weeks ago and are unchanged. No comments were received.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve Policies BEDG and JBB.

6. Consent Agenda:

- (a) Approval of Minutes:
- December 12, 2021
 - January 5, 2022

Jeanne noted the edit to the January 5, 2022 minutes.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – January 19, 2022

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) approve the consent agenda with the minutes as amended.

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

None.

8. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 7:50 p.m. for the purposes of a) 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 a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; and b) approving the executive session minutes of January 5, 2022, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22. The Chair noted that the executive session minutes will not be approved this evening. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

The School Committee will be joined by Dr. Omar Easy, Superintendent, Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

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

9. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:16 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Omar Easy, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Observers:

See attached.

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Public Comments
3. Policy BEDG - Minutes
4. Policy JBB – Educational Equity
5. Minutes of December 12, 2021
6. Minutes of January 5, 2021
7. Executive Session Motion