

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – January 5, 2022

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

Present:

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

Also present:

Dr. Omar Easy
Superintendent

Parry Graham
Assistant Superintendent

Ellen Whittemore
Director of Finance & Operations

Also: Michelle Crowell, Director of Teaching, Learning, Assessment and EL
Dr. Ellen Mahoney, School Physician

Chair Chris Ryan convened the regular session at 5:32 p.m. A roll call 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 meeting was conducted remotely and recorded by WayCAM. Chris announced that the meeting was remote because some participants are either close contacts or are waiting for test results. Chris thanked the administrators and educators throughout the district for their efforts over the weekend to reopen school on Monday. Chris asked for patience and collaboration during this difficult and frustrating time, given COVID has been around for almost two years.

1. Public Comment:

Chris Ryan read a public comment from Lisa Sambucci thanking Dr. Easy for the positive changes being made in the school district, adding that the COVID Entry Plan is comprehensive and focuses on the students. Ms. Sambucci advocated for the return of lockers at the Middle School particularly during the winter, and she is grateful for the quick and rapid plan and communication to address the racist events in the district. Finally, she appreciates and trusts the Superintendent and School Committee to put the students first.

Chris Ryan read a public comment from Jayme Nowland, a parent and mental health professional. She is in support of changing the schools' policy to adhere to a five-day quarantine which aligns with the town and state protocols, particularly when students are not sick and are not showing any symptoms. Her five-year old has been a close contact twice and each time must quarantine for ten days, even though he was asymptomatic and tested negative for a few days. Ms. Nowland's oldest child tested positive and will be out of school for two weeks. In her opinion, a two-week quarantine is affecting the mental health and educational needs of the students.

Sejal Srinivasan, 35 Covered Bridge Lane, is helping to coordinate the testing program at WHS. She commented that there are logistical challenges for mandating testing for extra-curricular activities similar to what was done last year. Currently, every student is tracked when they show up to be tested, given that some enrolled students in the testing program do not show up. She suggested using this same process to track students who are in extra-curricular activities. She wonders if it makes sense to mandate testing for extra-curriculars and asked the School Committee to reconsider. She added that less than half the population of WHS students is being tested, and it is not enough to hone in on the actual number of cases.

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Alexia Obar, 18 Dean Road, asked if there is a way to know when administrators' contracts are coming up for renewal and how public comments could be made during the renewal process. Ms. Obar also asked if the district is tracking the number of classes that are being missed by students, given a high teacher absenteeism rate and the non-use of substitutes. This results in inconsistencies in classes. She thanked all the administrators for recently helping within the schools.

Johanna Weldman, 10 Ridgefield Road, has a Kindergartner at Happy Hollow. She thanked everyone and appreciated Dr. Easy's communication and transparency. She commented that DESE has adopted a five-day quarantine and hopes it will be adopted together with a testing protocol. Ms. Weldman also hopes that test and stay can continue and can include vaccinated individuals, can continue notifying the entire classroom when someone tests positive, and can provide the staff with high-quality masks.

Kim asked if test and stay can also include vaccinated students. Parry noted that the State and CIC via DESE sent out a reminder that districts cannot test vaccinated students as part of the test and stay program, as those vaccinated are less likely to contract COVID if they are a close contact. Additionally, there is a personnel challenge and a test supply issue. A discussion ensued in this regard.

Jessie Villatoro, a Middle School teacher, is in support of having students in school and feels that this might not be the time to change the quarantining policy, as teachers and students have dealt with so many changes and it is not in the best interest of anyone. She asked the School Committee to wait another week before a decision is made.

2. Superintendent Update:

(a) COVID-19 Response:

Parry updated the School Committee regarding positive cases since the last time reported for the Dashboard. The district reported more cases over the winter break since the start of school, most cases being at Wayland High School. From December 23 to the end of the break, there were 114 student cases and they break down as follows: Claypit Hill (21), Happy Hollow (6), Loker (13), Middle School (19), and High School (55). The number of staff cases are Claypit Hill (9), Happy Hollow (3), Loker (5), Middle School (7), and High School (10).

In terms of attendance, there was an 85% attendance rate on January 3, it increased on January 4 and remained about the same on January 5. Reasons given for absence were mostly COVID and travel related. Typically, daily attendance averages around 95 percent. Out of all the students who participate in pooled testing, 61% or 187 student winter athletes are included.

Dr. Easy reported that the high school cafeteria was reconfigured with desks in rows for the next two weeks, and the round tables were removed. The middle school classroom desks were also reconfigured to face forward for this week and potentially next week. Pooled testing results should be available tomorrow, but they are being reported slowly and a higher positivity rate than usual is apparent.

(b) Presentation regarding Curriculum and Teaching & Learning:

Michelle Crowell and Parry Graham presented an update to the School Committee regarding Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning that included iReady and ST Math.

Ms. Crowell introduced iReady as a new program to the district that provides a math diagnostic and personalized lessons for elementary students focusing on four major areas: 1) numbers and operations; 2) Algebra and Algebraic Thinking; 3) measurement/data, and 4) Geometry. The program provides age-appropriate software and can be logged into either from school or from home. After DESE identified the need to accelerate math learning due to COVID-19, it identified iReady to be a top computer based program that will enrich and deepen students' understanding of math. The district was awarded a grant from DESE to support the students in this regard. Many other school districts across the Commonwealth use iReady, such as Acton-Boxborough, Burlington, Newton, and Watertown, etc.

As an online adaptive assessment, the students will participate three times per year, October, January and May, and it will assess a student's learning needs, identify a student's strengths and weaknesses, assign a personalized learning path, and provide teachers with supportive instructional resources. Ms. Crowell explained further, including the personalized instruction as well as its goals and its successes for two students in Grade 1 and Grade 4 having two different profiles. Dr. Easy added that this program benefits those students at grade level and for those who want to go beyond grade level and also benefits the Spanish Immersion Program.

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Parry introduced ST Math which is a non-language based math program that uses standards-aligned puzzles to help build math conceptual knowledge and problem-solving skills, also for elementary students. Parry explained how one particular puzzle is solved and how teachers use these puzzles as part of “puzzle talks.” Strengths of the program are that it is highly accessible to all learners, students can complete puzzles at their own pace, there is a strong emphasis on conceptual understanding, and it is recommended by DESE and is grant funded by the Wayland Public Schools Foundation and a state-level agency. Two challenges include the expectation by the state agency that students will use this program frequently and consistently and the challenge to provide as much direct interaction with the teacher together with some screen time.

The START process, also known as SST, is a regular education structure that has been in place in K-12 education for some time. Parry explained that a START/school-based team is when teachers, administrators, counselors, interventionists, SPED staff, EL teachers, and psychologists, etc. can refer students for academic, social-emotional, and/or behavioral concerns. The goal is to identify and put in place those interventions to support a student's improvement in identified areas. Parry explained further, adding that this is not a SPED process, but could lead to a SPED referral. Parry noted the changes to the START process this year, adding that Assistant Principals are leading this process and provided how the program is working at the High School. New forms are being put in place, feedback is being given from the principals and assistant principals in terms of how the process is working, and more feedback will be offered during the second half of the year. Dr. Easy elaborated on the need to get ahead of the learning loss for students.

Required by Mass. General Law, a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) is necessary to be successful. It highlights an approach to curriculum implementation and intervention and is aligned to the Multi-Tiered Systems of support. In researching the district's DCAP, Ms. Crowell and Parry discovered that there was a very general plan in the past. The Director of Student Services and other staff members began to review a draft of the DCAP in order to provide this document to teachers, as it outlines different accommodations, instructional supports and interventions for K-12 students and provides prescriptive interventions for Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports. Also, DCAP also directly supports the START process. Ms. Crowell noted the next steps.

The School Committee posed questions about whether documents about START and DCAP are available to parents, particularly special education parents (SEPAC) and about the thought process and purpose for introducing iReady to elementary students and ST Math that has been in Wayland for two years. Dr. Easy noted that the Middle School has used iReady for several years. A discussion followed. Additional questions were about the State's grant funding, when and how much time students are spending on these two programs that compliment core instruction, and if there are guidelines and parameters in place for the START process.

(c) Discussion and Potential Vote of COVID-19 Protocols, including Potential Testing Mandate for Extra-curricular Activities:

Kim updated the School Committee on the most recent Superintendent's Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting. They discussed the pooled testing mandate for anyone with a focus on extra-curriculars and DESE's change to a five-day quarantine rather than a ten-day quarantine after testing positive. Dr. Easy noted that many districts have adopted this change within their protocols, but our schools' safety protocols remains at ten days for both students and staff. The reasons supporting this decision is partly because social distancing during lunch periods is tight in Happy Hollow and Loker Schools and there is the possibility of a high number of positive cases just coming back after the holiday break. In addition, pooled testing has been moved up from Thursday to Tuesday during the first week in January. The administrators did discuss the concerns around the ten-day quarantine, particularly with a high absenteeism rate, educating the students, and the high school mid-term exams. Some suggestions included keeping students on a ten-day cycle and teachers on a five-day cycle, as well as going from ten days down to seven rather than five days.

Dr. Ellen Mahoney commented that the COVID virus is spreading rapidly, as well as the flu, and there is an increase in hospitalizations. However, she noted that most people may not be contagious within a five to seven day range. In terms of the CDC, she believes that when they decreased the quarantine time, it was focused on adults and allowing them to go back to work. She noted the challenges of students coming back to school before ten days, but it may be beneficial for asymptomatic students and staff while still maintaining the mask protocols.

Four out of five School Committee members expressed their concerns with a ten-day quarantine, such as students are home and isolated much too long, particularly if they are asymptomatic, and students who have siblings who are not eligible for vaccinations; they agreed with CDC's guidance. Kim supports the ten-day quarantine but believes that seven days is reasonable with a focus on how to educate the students when they are home, and she encouraged adding an

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antigen testing option if moving to five days. Dr. Mahoney noted that currently there are more hospitalizations amongst the younger children and there is a greater risk for those who are unvaccinated. The availability, cost, and accuracy of antigen tests was also discussed. Jess added that many families will withdraw from pooled testing if the district does not move to five days.

Dr. Easy agreed that children should be in school, but safely. The district is doing more than what the DESE guidelines recommend. He stressed that there is not enough space at Happy Hollow and Loker to keep students six feet apart during lunch. Given that the pooled testing results are not in yet, he asks if it was possible to delay a vote until the next meeting. Dr. Easy reviewed DESE's guidelines in terms of lunch. A discussion followed.

Jeanne Downs moved that the School Committee reduces the quarantine time from ten days to five days and at the same time highly encourage families to rapid test their students before they come back on day 6.

Parry said there is a difference between isolation vs. quarantine for close contacts. Dr. Mahoney added that students should not have major symptoms according to DESE and CDC guidance.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted (4-1) to reduce the quarantine and isolation time from ten days to five days following the CDC and DESE guidance and including all of the language from the guidance specifically emphasizing the language about the reduction of symptoms before returning to school, and encourage families to conduct a rapid antigen test with a negative result before coming back on day six. 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 motion goes into effect tomorrow.

Testing for Extra-Curricular Activities or Potential Testing Mandate:

After speaking with the high school administration and the Athletic Director, Dr. Easy recommends at this time for all administrators, coaches, club advisers, and the Athletic Director to strongly encourage athletes to participate in pooled testing, as he feels this could be more beneficial than a mandate.

Kim offered some data in terms of 60% of athletes signed up for pooled testing but only 30% get tested, adding that some sports pose a higher risk than others. Jess noted that most kids participate in activities outside of school and a testing mandate may not be helpful. Jeanne recommended a mandate for the next month. A discussion ensued that included the concern and possibility of athletes missing the testing window, thus, resulting in non-participation in the team sport temporarily. Dr. Easy noted other concerns among students. He also recommended a second testing day if students missed the first day; however, there are some capacity and staffing challenges. Parry noted that this could be a possibility at the high school. The School Committee revisited the change in the quarantine, and Dr. Easy asked if the five-day quarantine protocol could be implemented next Monday given the logistical challenges. The School Committee agreed that kids could come back to school on Friday if the five days have been satisfied.

Upon a motion duly made by Kim Reichelt, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to authorize Dr. Easy and Dr. Graham to put forth a plan that will let us test all students involved in extra-curriculars throughout the district and contingent upon having a plan that they are content with and will proceed with that plan through February break. 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	

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3. Financial Matters:

(a) Discussion of FY23 Recommended Budget:

Dr. Easy presented a revised version of the FY23 recommended budget that was presented on December 15. The District Improvement Goals did not change from the last presentation. The FY22 appropriated budget was \$45,223,290 and the FY23 recommended budget is \$47,323,092 resulting in a \$2,099,802 increase or 4.6%.

The FY23 level service budget includes contractual adjustments of \$1,513,364 and enrollment related expenses of \$142,002. Non-personnel drivers include regular and SPED transportation, out-of-district tuition, and athletics in the amount of \$185,908. Dr. Easy reviewed those items that increased the level service budget. Program improvement needs total \$258,528 and include an increase to FTEs for the assistant principals, an increase in FTEs to two guidance/psychologist positions and a full time math coach. Some of these FTEs were funded by grants in FY22.

There are anticipated maintenance needs that are not included in the level services budget totaling \$200,000 and anticipated SPED costs totaling \$433,717. Ellen Whittemore noted that there was an unanticipated maintenance expense recently in the amount of \$30,000.

As usual, there are unmet district needs or things that Dr. Easy would like to bring to the district, such as a Math Curriculum Review, Systematic and Structured Phonics Instruction, Innovative Pathways professional development, Restorative Justice training, Technology printers update, a Director of Social Emotional Learning, elementary building-based subs, a campus life supervisor, and full-day Kindergarten. Dr. Easy gave the cost for each item on the list. Dr. Easy recommends a change to the process for unmet needs moving forward.

A discussion followed the presentation and the School Committee asked questions about the budget, including the anticipated expenses for maintenance and special education. Prepayments for special education were not part of the FY22 budget, and the offset regarding the Circuit Breaker has been made already for FY23. Jeanne noted that the Finance Committee has requested a meeting with the School Committee regarding special education. Ellen Whittemore added that there are provisions from the Mass Municipal Modernization Act for municipalities to establish stabilization funds for special education, as well as facility stabilization accounts for unanticipated expenses.

The Committee will submit questions by Monday for the January 12th meeting regarding the Wayland Middle School, Wayland High School and Athletics.

4. Administrative Matters:

(a) Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve the Grade 5 Snow Tubing Outing on January 26, 2022 at Nashoba Valley Tubing Park, Littleton, MA:

Since this trip is not an overnight trip, the School Committee is not required to vote to approve the trip. Dr. Easy commented that all school administrators support this trip. There is a deadline in which to secure the buses for the trip. The School Committee is in support and all agreed that this trip should move forward.

(b) Review of OML Determinations:

This agenda item was passed over.

5. Policy Matters:

(a) Policy Manual Website:

This agenda item was passed over.

6. Consent Agenda:

(a) Approval of Minutes: December 1, 2021

(b) Approval of School Council Minutes:

- Wayland High School – November 17, 2021
- Happy Hollow – November 18, 2021

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the December 1, 2021 School Committee minutes. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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<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	

A discussion followed regarding the School Council minutes. According to policy, they are provided to the School Committee for its review after the School Council approves them. Kim reminded the School Councils to follow the guidelines around taking the minutes.

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

Jess commented on the differences in the elementary schools by which work is or is not being provided to students because of COVID absences and resulting in very different experiences and unequal education opportunities. Dr. Easy noted that a base-line protocol is in place for all elementary schools which was discussed and approved at an Administrative Council meeting. He explained the process for providing work to students, adding that Google Classroom and Seesaw are being used as additional resources. Parry added that there was an isolated grade level at Happy Hollow that was not following the base-line protocols. Dr. Easy suggested that parents notify the principals.

The School Committee agreed that it is necessary to have consistent policies in all schools and within all classrooms.

8. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 9:12 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 December 1, 2021, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22, and (c) discussing strategy with respect to the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(1), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the School Committee. 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.

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Kim Reichelt, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:56 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	

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Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Omar Easy, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Revised FY23 Recommended Budget Presentation
3. Fifth Grade Snow Tube Outing Information
4. Accounts Payables Warrant
5. Minutes of December 1, 2021
6. WHS School Council Minutes – November 17, 2021
7. Happy Hollow School Council Minutes – November 18, 2021
8. Executive Session Motion