

SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Special Meeting – August 18, 2021

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, August 18, 2021, at 5:30 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

Present and participating remotely were:

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

Also participating remotely:

Dr. Omar Easy
Superintendent

Parry Graham
Assistant Superintendent

Richard Whitehead
Director of Student Services

Ellen Whittemore
Director of Finance & Operations

Also:

Dr. Ellen Mahoney, School Physician
Allyson Mizoguchi, WHS Principal
Laura Cole, WHS Assistant Principal

Chair Chris Ryan convened the regular session at 5:32 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>
Chris Ryan, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs	X	
Jessica Polizzotti	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	

1. Public Comment:

Chris Ryan read a public comment, dated July 18, from Caroline Owen, Garden Path, in which she asked the School Committee to allow the kids to have a “normal” school year, as she is troubled by the continued mandates and the harm that, in her opinion, masks and other protocols are affecting children emotionally, mentally and physically; she described. Ms. Owen added that Wayland has a low incidence of COVID illness and spread, and a large number of students and staff are fully vaccinated, thus, masks should be an option.

Chris Ryan read a public comment from Lee Ann Cohen in which she advocates for a mandatory indoor mask mandate in the schools, in accordance with both CDC and AAP guidelines, until the younger children can be fully vaccinated. She noted that the Delta strain is very contagious and children are being affected significantly.

Phil Nelson, 73 Vincent Avenue, West Roxbury is a Happy Hollow parent and he supports masks for elementary students, as the Delta variant is affecting younger students. He noted that children with autoimmune deficiencies are at greater risk and cannot be vaccinated.

Sara Sun, West Plain Street, is concerned that children will be forced to wear masks, as they are healthy for the most part and to her, this does not make sense. She noted that Dr. Fauci stated that asymptomatic spread is very rare. As a literacy specialist, she has concerns about not allowing students to see each other, particularly while forming letters and seeing how sounds are made. Ms. Sun feels that the children are having their school experience taken away and

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the implications of this will not be known for years. She asked the School Committee to let the families decide what is best for their children.

N.C. of Alpine Road, believes that despite the Delta variant, wearing a mask is not beneficial, it causes more harm, and also believes there is no need to wear a mask because the risk of transmission to young children in schools is small. N.C. cited some information about mask efficacy and noted that transmission was higher in schools that required masks vs. in schools that did not. She also commented on the harm that masks can cause, such as difficulty breathing, they increase carbon dioxide in the bloodstream, and create mental health issues.

Nimmi Trapasso, 26 Rolling Lane, is a family physician and has been dealing with COVID on a daily basis. Recommendations, particularly around universal masking, are based on science and real data. Dr. Trapasso did acknowledge that there are some harms as a result of masking. However, the greater risk for children is getting ill, being hospitalized, and dying. The Delta variant is very different from the initial COVID virus, and parents are responsible to keep their children safe.

Christine Rafferty, 55 Orchard Lane, commented that we are all dealing with a constantly changing environment and should rely on the experts, such as the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics, regarding masking in schools. She recited some statistics in other states, such as Mississippi and Florida, in terms of large scale spread and quarantining among children. Given that DESE has not recommended remote learning, we need to take all precautions to keep the kids in the classroom.

Tze Yang Ng, 10 Meadowview, advocated for universal masking for children in the schools, as it is the best weapon against COVID and it is the best way to keep the kids in school. Scientific data should be trusted, and the benefits outweigh the risks.

2. **Special Matters:**

(a) Update regarding High School Graduation June 2022:

Allyson Mizoguchi and Laura Cole proposed a date change for the WHS graduation in June 2022 and beyond. Although it has been traditionally held on the first Sunday in June at 3:00 p.m., the proposal is to hold the graduation on the first Friday evening in June at 6:00 p.m. For the 2022 graduation, the proposed date would be June 3. Laura presented the reasons for the change, such as the hot weather in the afternoon, the culmination of senior activities during that week, and more staff could attend.

A discussion ensued about the impact to sports, given that the graduation would be held on the athletic field.

Upon a motion by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve a change to the calendar to allow for graduation for the Friday evening, June 3 at 6:00 p.m., before the current date of June 5. 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	
Jessica Polizzotti	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	

3. **Superintendent Update:**

(a) COVID-19 Response:

- Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Fall Health and Safety Protocols, including Discussion of Policy EBCFA (Face Coverings):

Dr. Easy presented his 2021-2022 School Reopening Plan, including an update to the fall health and safety protocols for the school buildings for mask wearing, 3 feet of physical distancing, and movement protocols.

Dr. Ellen Mahoney, school physician and a member of Dr. Easy's SAC (Superintendent Advisory Committee) spoke about SAC's role in reopening schools. The SAC is comprised of two physicians, parents/community members, and school staff during which guidance and feedback is provided and discussed regarding opening schools safely for in-person learning. The consensus is to implement protocols that will keep the students in-person for the entire school year.

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Dr. Easy recommended that **all** school staff and students wear a mask indoors and on school busses regardless of vaccination status. Masks will not be required indoors if social distancing is followed during mask breaks, while eating or drinking, or while a teacher is alone in a classroom. Masks will not be required outdoors or during outdoor sports participation.

Movement protocols are in place to avoid crowding and minimize unnecessary person-to-person interactions during arrivals and dismissals, class transitions, and bathroom breaks. Exterior doors will be utilized and hallways and entrances and exits will be clearly marked to enforce social distancing. Outdoor tents will be utilized again this year, as well as using courtyards and open spaces for mask breaks, snacks and weather-permitting activities, as well additional space for lunch breaks.

For K-5, distancing guidelines for classroom configurations may be revisited in October for K-2 classrooms and November for Grades 3-5 classrooms if there is a low frequency of COVID 19 in the elementary schools. This would allow for a more collaborative educational experience.

Dr. Easy presented a phased transitional protocol around physical distancing, masking, COVID-19 testing, quarantine requirements, and the vaccination percentage in the school buildings. He explained the proposed transitions. He recommended starting at Phase II as described earlier in the presentation, and also includes the fact that 81 to 85% of students in Grades 7 to 12 and staff have been vaccinated. There will also be weekly pool testing by CIC for those who sign up.

The School Committee asked questions about the pooled testing program, the movement into the next phase depending on the percentage of vaccinations, the current percentage of vaccinations, and the possibility of asking for proof of vaccination. Concerns were also raised about COVID cases among the vaccinated population, meeting the needs of students who require speech services, and the reality of not reaching Phase IV whereby the entire staff and eligible students are vaccinated. A discussion ensued in this regard. Dr. Mahoney confirmed that the COVID vaccine is documented on a child's health form, however, receiving the vaccination data from the State can be a timing issue.

The quarantine rules for Phase II were reviewed, including test and stay. If a student is unvaccinated but is considered a close contact and is asymptomatic, he/she could remain in school vs. quarantining if they were tested at school with the Binax Now Covid test that produces results within 15 minutes and is negative for 5 consecutive days. If a Saturday and Sunday is within the 5 days, DESE recommends that the student quarantines on those days. Test and stay only applies to those families who signed up for the pooled testing. If families opt out of pooled testing, quarantining is necessary.

Richard addressed the concerns about delivering speech services for those students, particularly when masks are required. Given that these issues presented themselves last year, Richard is confident that the services will be delivered as needed.

Jeanne moved that the School Committee vote to implement the portion of Phase II of the chart presented that implements three feet of physical distancing, maintains the current mask policy for all indoor activities, on busses, and not required for outdoor activities, and includes weekly pooled testing.

The motion was revised and Ellen added to the motion.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kim Reichelt, that the School Committee implements Phase II (orange line first 3 columns on chart presented) to open school to the extent that it includes three feet of physical distancing, all individuals wearing masks indoors and masks not required for outdoors, and offering weekly pooled testing by CIC. Reconsideration will be revisited on September 22 in terms of the data and will try to find accurate data about vaccination rates and in-school transmission.

A discussion followed regarding educating sick students at home and the test and stay protocol.

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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	
Jessica Polizzotti	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	

The School Committee discussed Policy EBCFA in terms of a possible revision if students do not follow the masking guidelines and change language to not requiring masks outdoors. A motion was made by Jeanne Downs and then amended as follows:

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously to update Policy EBCFA, Face Coverings, to change the second paragraph to delete the last two sentences, "Students are not required to wear masks outdoors and adults must wear masks outdoors if distancing cannot be maintained." and replace it with "Masks are not required outdoors." 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	
Jessica Polizzotti	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	

(b) Financial Matters:

- Discussion regarding Middle School 8th Grade Trip to New York on September 28 and 30:
This agenda item was passed over.
- Bus Contract:
Ellen Whittemore updated the School Committee about the bus contract. There are two matters that need further review by the Town and First Student, and there will be continued discussion over the next few days after which Ellen will receive an update from John Bugbee, the Assistant Town Administrator.

Although the contract has not been fully executed, the bus routes are prepared, including the METCO routes. The district will receive fewer busses, but it will be an increase from the pre-COVID transportation program. Ellen Whittemore will prepare a cost analysis and comparison for the School Committee.

- Discussion regarding Closure of Claypit Hill Playground through October 15, 2021:
Dr. Easy updated the School Committee noting that construction is scheduled for August 31 through October 15, weather permitting and including that the temperature remains above sixty degrees. However, there are concerns for students' and staff's safety, particularly during recess, and the possibility that the work could extend beyond October 15. Alternate activities will be planned during recess, given the playground's temporary inaccessibility. A discussion ensued about the pour and place process and the appropriation of funds.

Dr. Easy added that construction at the Happy Hollow playground is underway with the anticipation that during the first week of September pour and place for the entire playground will occur.

4. Discuss Collaborations with the Town and School Department:

Chris Ryan informed the School Committee that the discussions/collaboration have been through the lens of the Massachusetts Education Reform laws and what is necessary for the School Committee and School Department. Ongoing conversations will continue between Chris, Dr. Easy, and the Board of Selectmen Chair.

5. Matters not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair:

Dr. Easy proposed adding an extra document for proof of residency for new families moving into Wayland, such as an Affidavit from the Town Clerk's office to which the Town Clerk would attest to property ownerships and rentals via the

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census and/or voter registration. The School Committee asked several questions and a discussion followed. This topic will be revisited.

6. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Kim Reichelt, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 7:40 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	
Jessica Polizzotti	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Omar Easy, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Policy EBCFA (Face Masks)