

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – September 8, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, September 8, 2021, at 5:30 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the South Building Lecture Hall at Wayland High School.

*Present and participating remotely were:*

Chris Ryan, Chair  
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair (arrived at 5:32 p.m.)  
Jeanne Downs  
Jessica Polizzotti  
Kim Reichelt

*Also participating remotely:*

Dr. Omar Easy  
Superintendent

Parry Graham  
Assistant Superintendent

Ellen Whittemore  
Director of Finance & Operations

*Also:*

Ben Keefe, Public Buildings Director  
Cherry Karlson, BOS

Chair Chris Ryan convened the regular session at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was recorded by WayCAM. Chris Ryan thanked the High School staff, Leisha Simon, Diane Marobella, Jeanne Downs, and WayCAM for the meeting setup at the new meeting location.

*Ellen arrived at 5:32 p.m.*

### 1. **Public Comment:**

Alexia Obar, 18 Dean Road, recommended posting a Q & A regarding all changes in the district, such as procedures, programming, and new staff. In addition, she suggested that the School Committee receives questions during public comment and post the answers to the questions on the School Committee website in preparation for the next School Committee meeting. Ms. Obar asked about the current status of School Councils.

### 2. **Special Matters:**

(a) Discussion regarding School Facilities:

- Happy Hollow and Claypit Hill Playground Update and High School Athletic Complex:  
Public Buildings Director Ben Keefe updated the School Committee. The Happy Hollow playground is currently under construction and the first binder coat was poured with the hope of applying the finish coat this evening. The expectation that it will be done by day's end on Friday, and the playground will be ready for the students on Monday weather permitting.

The general contractor has not provided a date for the Claypit Hill playground construction as the contractor is concerned about finishing the playground before the first frost, which is typically between October 11 and 20. Construction is anticipated to last three to four weeks. Ben described the work to be done during this time frame, particularly the tentative pour and place schedule. The preference is to do the work now rather than wait until the spring of 2022.

A discussion ensued about the work to be done, the possible work schedule to include weekends, the scope of work, the funds available for wood chips and grass mats, and warranty issues if the playground is not completed this fall. If the pour and place can't be done before October 11, wood chips and grass mats can be put down to be in ADA compliance and to provide access to all students for now. The other option is to close the playground until next year. Dr. Easy expressed his concerns about this project. The consensus is not to close the playground; thus, the School Committee recommended that Plan A begin on an accelerated schedule. In addition, if the pour and place is not likely, the School Committee requested that wood chips and grass mats be put in place until the pour and place is done in the spring.

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### 3. Finance Subcommittee Update (out of order):

#### (a) Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC) Update:

- High School Athletic Complex:

Ben Keefe updated the School Committee regarding the result of the last two rainstorms that caused the release of crumb rubber into the drain system, as the last filter in line was full of water and the screen caught the crumb rubber. This was the result of Ben mistakenly opening the filter/screen that is designed to catch any crumb rubber. The swale held most of the crumb rubber, but some escaped into the wetlands. It was determined that the last filter in line is much too small. It will be redesigned and replaced with a larger filter; Ben explained how the system works. Ben noted that a set of maintenance plans/contract are being drawn up to bid out for the entire stadium to prevent this from happening again, as the system was not maintained properly. A discussion followed and the School Committee asked questions in this regard.

A question arose and a discussion ensued about the Order of Conditions and who is responsible and/or has authority to make decisions regarding the field in terms of work to be done. Ben Keefe confirmed that the responsibilities lie with the Facilities Department. There is also a Memorandum of Understanding between the School Committee, Recreation Commission and the Department of Public Works. It was concluded that the new contract will be with the School Department/Superintendent, but the implementation of the contract between the Facilities Department, and the School Department must be an integral part of the process. A meeting will be held to determine the plan moving forward.

### 4. Special Matters (continued):

#### (a) Discussion regarding School Facilities:

- School Facilities Concerns:

Dr. Easy updated the School Committee regarding his concerns about the lack of the School Department's authority to make decisions to maintain the schools. For instance, the mold issues at Claypit Hill School, which he described in the classrooms as a result of a non-functioning HVAC system, almost prevented the school from opening on September 1. The rooms were cleaned thoroughly and an air-quality test was done. Dr. Easy noted that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will not allow remote learning under any circumstances.

In terms of Happy Hollow School, Dr. Easy received a complaint from DESE that the school is not ADA compliant. He and Ben Keefe walked the building to review the areas that are in question, such as the non-functioning handicap accessible door. Because school facilities/operations does not fall under the Superintendent's responsibilities, Dr. Easy asked the School Committee to review the current process of building operations. He strongly recommended that the schools' operations revert back to the Superintendent, and according to the Education Reform Law, it is his responsibility to educate all students and guarantee safety for students and staff. Ben will keep the School Committee informed of any changes.

- Collaboration between Town and School Departments:

Chris updated the School Committee regarding his discussions with the BOS Chair about improving town and school collaboration and the next steps. It was agreed that the School Department will now oversee procurement and the Town Administrator will do a final signoff.

A clarification is needed about the roles and responsibilities of the Town and School Department. The School Committee reviewed a memo from school counsel in this regard and since resources are being shared collaboratively, it is financially more efficient. Legal counsel refers to the Massachusetts Education Reform Laws in which the School Committee and the School Department as being in charge of the schools and the school budget, including assigned personnel in each school. Chris noted that it is best to be in line with the State law regardless of policies in place.

Moving forward, it has been suggested that the rules and responsibilities are clarified further between Chris as School Committee Chair, the Superintendent, Town Administrator, and the BOS Chair. Chris asked for the School Committee's input and questions regarding the next steps. Ellen provided some history of discussions, a vote by School Committee, and a vote at Town Meeting regarding collaboration between the town and schools in some departments, such as technology. It is within the School Committee's authority to approve a consolidation or non-consolidation. In terms of facilities, the Town Administrator made the decision that she would oversee all town and school buildings.

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Jeanne suggested that the roles and responsibilities are defined clearly before the end of the next budget cycle. The School Committee agreed with and is in support of the next steps. The School Committee does not recall or have a record of a vote to consolidate facilities.

### 5. Superintendent Update:

#### (a) COVID-19 Response:

- Test and Stay Update:

Parry reported that pooled testing will begin tomorrow, September 9. About 1,000 students will participate and many others, although signed up past the deadline, will participate during the second week going forward. In addition to CIC's assistance, parent volunteers and elementary school assistant principals will also help with the pooled testing.

Approved by DESE, test and stay means that if a student identifies as a close contact and is exposed in school, the child can come to school only if asymptomatic, is unvaccinated, and he/she is tested each day for a minimum of five days with the consent of the parent(s). The Binax Now antigen test will produce results in fifteen minutes. An exposure outside of school for an unvaccinated student does not qualify the student to participate in test and stay and would quarantine for ten days; Parry explained.

A discussion followed to include who is considered a close contact and if there is a plan to educate students who are in quarantine at home. Dr. Easy noted that tutoring services, iReady for math, and Track My Progress for reading are ways for students to learn from home, as DESE will not allow remote learning at this time. Streaming into the classroom is being explored, and there will be some follow-up when the student(s) return to school. Dr. Easy explained a possible plan if and when the situation presents itself. Parry will send a notification about the results of the pooled testing at week's end, and each principal will send a communication as well if there is a positive case.

- Continued Review and Possible Vote to Approve the 2021-2022 WPS Reopening Plan:

Dr. Easy revised the reopening plan as suggested by School Committee. The revisions were reviewed and Dr. Easy pointed out some highlights in the plan, such as the HVAC system plan, MERV filters, physical distancing, movement protocols, signage, and masking policy and testing protocols per DESE. One additional suggestion was given. A discussion ensued about the testing protocols.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 2021-22 School Reopening Plan with Jeanne's edit on page 2.

- Vaccination Protocols for Staff and Students:

After speaking to school counsel, Dr. Easy commented that vaccines can be mandated for staff. However, if they choose not to be vaccinated, there could be a consequence. Dr. Easy does not recommend a mandate at this time. According to the survey in which 85% of teachers participated, 4 teachers did not reply, and three did not vaccinate. All Committee members encourage all staff to get vaccinated, but supports mandating vaccines with a relaxed consequence of staff being tested daily. Dr. Easy will discuss this at his first meeting with the WTA President.

A mandate cannot be in place for students, and a discussion followed about another mandate for students who participate in extra-curricular activities; however, Dr. Easy does not recommend this. He does recommend that coaches/advisors strongly encourage students to get vaccinated and/or mandate pooled testing for students.

- School Reopening on September 1:

Chris acknowledged Ellen Whittemore's continued work to prepare the buildings for the first day of school and expressed the WTA's appreciation to make them feel safe and prepared as the new year began.

#### (b) Financial Matters:

- Supply of Drinking Water for Schools:

Dr. Easy reported that the Town tested the water in the schools, and Happy Hollow had the highest levels of PFAS, as well as Loker School. The water cannot be used to refill bottles from the sinks or fountains. It was conveyed that the Town will not provide portable drinking water in the schools, although the water is

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not safe to drink and according to Code of Massachusetts Regulations water must be available at all times. Jeanne referred to rebates being given to some Wayland residents if they fall within a certain category, such as infants or those with a compromised immune system, adding that the schools would not be eligible based on this criteria. A discussion ensued in this regard. Dr. Easy added that the Town receives federal funds to mitigate sewer and water issues.

If agreed upon by the School Committee, the School Department will provide the water, but will submit the invoice to the Town. The cost ranges from \$6,000 to \$8,000 per month to provide water bottles to all five schools. A discussion ensued about alternative options, minimizing bottle waste, and the need for a communication. Dr. Easy will provide an update on September 22.

- **Update on Bus Contract:**

A bus contract has not been executed by the Town, as legal terms are still being negotiated according to the Town Administrator. A Memorandum of Understanding was sent to First Student for a signature and the expectation is that it will be returned next week. The concern is that without a signed contract, First Student could stop service if the terms are not being met. Ellen Whittemore will ask for a copy of the contract, what is being negotiated currently, and a projected date of resolution. Ellen added that due to a bus driver shortage, drivers are being pulled from other towns. Our bus dispatcher is also driving when necessary.

#### 4. **Policy Matters:**

(a) Review and Possible Vote to Approve:

- **Policy BDFA – School Councils:**

The School Committee reviewed Policy BDFA. Kim provided background of why this policy's guidelines are being updated now, adding that the policy will encourage well-working councils to achieve its goals, including following the Open Meeting Law. School Councils also have specific purposes, such as working on School Improvement Plans, to advise the principal on the budget, and to help establish educational goals.

The changes were reviewed and Kim recommended additional changes providing an explanation for each. Changes include having at least one community representative (at least one of whom will be selected by the PTO, leaving the option to the principal to select additional community representatives), and adding a seat for a member of the METCO community at each school. Kim referred to the terms according to law whereby the first meeting must be 45 days from the start of school, conduct fall elections, meet at least six times per year from September to June, offer remote access where practical, and possibly hold one meeting in Boston per year. The School Committee agreed with Kim's recommendations and the policy as a whole.

- **Policy JCA – Assignment of Students to Schools:**  
This policy was passed over.

#### 5. **Finance Subcommittee Update:**

(a) Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC) Update:

- **Loker Roof:**

Jeanne reported that the general contractor submitted a no-cost proposal which means that the price is locked in and all roofing materials will be stored until next year.

- **High School Athletic Complex:**

One item remains on the punch list for this project – the keys and the locks to the elevators in the press box. Gutters will also be added to the restroom outdoor space. The Order of Conditions will be closed.

(b) Capital Project Update:

Ellen Whittemore reported that the concrete pad for the Happy Hollow chair lift was poured yesterday, and the modular temporary space units for the elementary schools will be installed the last two weekends in September.

Dr. Easy asked about the funding source through capital improvement funds if maintenance issues were to arise for the Loker roof or the Claypit Hill roof units. Work was done and invoices must be paid. Ellen Grieco recommended sending an email to the Town Administrator and Ben Keefe with a copy to Chris and Jeanne.

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(c) Discussion with Finance Committee:

The School Committee will attend the September 14 Finance Committee meeting to answer questions and discuss the budget cycle timeline. It was suggested that the School Committee addresses one school topic at each of these meetings to help the FinCom with the budget process, such as the Spanish Immersion Program. Dr. Easy will attend the first meeting. Jess referred to the perception in the Town about the Spanish Immersion Program and the availability to only a small group of students.

6. **Administrative Matters:**

(a) Discussion of Appointment of School Committee Representatives to the Permanent Municipal Building and Audit Committees:

Angela Young is interested in being the PMBC representative, but no one has come forward for the Audit Committee.

(b) Review of OML Determinations:

This agenda item was passed over.

(c) Discussion of Annual Report:

The School Committee reviewed the most recent draft of the Annual Report. The School Committee will review the draft again at its September 22 meeting for submission by September 30.

(d) Final Copy of Residency Guidelines:

The School Committee reviewed the updated Residency Guidelines. A question arose about the Signed Affidavit of Property Residency and Dr. Easy described the updated document to reflect the landlord/property owner. This document will be notarized by the Wayland Town Clerk or a private notary. A discussion followed about the required documents for proof of residency. Dr. Easy noted that this process is very similar to some surrounding towns.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the final copy of the Residency Guidelines with the amendment discussed in the Affidavit which is already on the website.

7. **Consent Agenda:**

(a) Approval of Accounts Payables Warrants:

Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated September 8, 2021, in the amount of \$294,332.05.

(b) Approval of Minutes: August 18, 2021 and August 26, 2021:

The August 26, 2021 minutes were passed over.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve consent agenda without the minutes of August 26, 2021.

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

None.

9. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Omar Easy, Clerk  
Wayland School Committee

**Observers:**

Alexia Obar, 18 Dean Road, Wayland

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### ***Corresponding Documentation:***

1. Agenda
2. Memo re: Chapter 71, Section 37M
3. Revised Reopening Plan 2021-22
4. Wayland Residency Guidelines
5. Policy BDFA – School Councils
6. Annual Report
7. Accounts Payables Warrant
8. Minutes of August 18, 2021
9. Executive Session Motion