

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Special Meeting – July 22, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, July 22, 2020, at 1:00 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

*Present and participating remotely were:*

Jeanne Downs, Chair  
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair  
Kim Reichelt  
Chris Ryan  
Kathie Steinberg

*Also participating remotely:*

Arthur Unobskey  
Superintendent

Parry Graham  
Assistant Superintendent

Susan Botta  
Director of Finance and Operations

Richard Whitehead  
Director of Student Services

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 1:08 p.m. The meeting was recorded by WayCAM and 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>Present</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X
Kim Reichelt	X
Chris Ryan	X
Kathie Steinberg	X

**1. Comments and Written Statements from the Public:**

Kori Rogers made a public comment on behalf of the WTA members. Although teachers go above and beyond and want to be back in the classroom with students, they will not do so at their own peril, and the in-school plan must be removed from consideration. COVID cases continue to rise in the United States, and there is evidence that children aged 10 to 19 can transmit the disease at the same rates as adults although they may be less susceptible to the symptoms. Based on a survey of WTA members, 90% responded as follows: 69% do not feel safe, 18% were unsure, 13% do feel safe if the reopening plan is implemented as noted in the Superintendent’s presentation.

Jeanne read a public comment from Daniel Gorsky, WMS 6<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher. Although Mr. Gorsky would like nothing more to return to school to teach his math class, he is terrified to return and jeopardize his health, his family’s health, and the health of his students, colleagues, and community. He adds that Wayland does not have the capacity to test staff and students and educators are not trained to make medical decisions every day. He asked the School Committee to seriously consider the remote model whereby teachers can focus on teaching, learning, and relationship building without the impossible task of maintaining a safe environment in a person-to-person model.

Jeanne read a public comment from Wayland resident Dr. Jonathan Smith. He is a physician practicing in Wayland and the parent of a rising 7<sup>th</sup> grader and 9<sup>th</sup> grader. It is Dr. Smith’s opinion that safety should be the priority in making a decision about reopening school, especially since the School Committee continues to meet remotely and the central office staff are in the office simultaneously. Given that many teachers and parents are petrified to return to the schools, he asked the Committee to consider their decisions in a personal manner and to start the school year all remote.

Jeff Sklar, Brooks Road, commented that many questions posed by the public to the School Committee have not been addressed and wondered if a response should be specified. He noted that the School Committee should give the public 48 hours advanced notice for any changes to the meeting schedule and asked that public documents continue to be

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posted. Mr. Sklar said that the remote program “Edgeunity” has received about 98% negative reviews, high school cohorting will be a huge task unless it is done at 50% capacity; it should not be all or none. *Response: We are working on the public documents issue given access issues due to Google changes. The School Committee does its best to answer every email, given the volume of emails received, in the FAQ’s.*

Jeanne read a public comment from Linda Hines in which she expresses her support for the all-in model for the return to school in the fall, particularly for the incoming seniors, given the many disadvantages that juniors faced last spring during the remote model, such as the GPA ruling, pass/fail grading, and the loss of spring sports. The students have experienced a negative impact to their college acceptance process and the potential to receive scholarships, all of which has created anxiety for some of these students. Ms. Hines added that many of the students have been out and about and working at their summer jobs and yet school is considered to be unsafe. Given the COVID numbers in Wayland and the advice from the Harvard School of Public Health and MGH that it is safe to return to school, she advocates for a return to school while being respectful of the families who do not want to return in person by offering a remote option for the year.

Jeanne read Kori Rogers statement due to a bad connection during Ms. Rogers’ call.

2. **Administrative/Procedural Matters:**

- Update on Superintendent Search:

Jeanne will send out a Doodle Poll regarding a one hour meeting with Lyle Kirtman of Future Management Systems.

3. **Policy Matters:**

- JFABD: Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services
- JFABE: Educational Opportunities for Military Children
- JFABF: Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care

The policies, proposed by MASC, were put out for public comment and no comments were received.

Upon a motion duly made by Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve policies JFABD, JFABE, and JFABF. A roll call vote was taken.

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

4. **Consent Agenda:**

- Approval of Minutes: July 8, 2020 and July 13, 2020

This agenda item was passed over.

5. **COVID-19 Response:**

- Continued Discussion of Three Models for Return to School in Fall 2020 (Remote, Hybrid, All-In), including State Guidance, Community and Staff Feedback, Outstanding Questions, and Teaching and Learning and Operational Aspects:

Parry reviewed a draft report with the School Committee that summarizes curriculum coverage during the spring remote model and a plan for curriculum coverage in the fall. In addition to this report, the School Committee requested a summary of this report in terms of the response related to potential curriculum loss at all grade levels in each of the various models.

Parry thanked the department chairs, curriculum leaders and the elementary curriculum directors for their assistance in preparing the draft report in terms of what their subject areas would look like in all three models – All-In, Hybrid, and All Remote. Each model is based on different variables, but all-in represents 100% of students in school, a staggered hybrid model brings 50% of students into buildings, and the all-remote model is for all students from their homes. Each model presents different challenges for curriculum coverage and instructional time pre-COVID and is all speculative as described

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by Parry.

In the elementary all-in model, time would be lost during arrivals and dismissals making sure that safety protocols are followed. Typical instructional models would not be possible due to social distancing in classrooms and schedules, which several breaks throughout the day. The goal would be to maintain as much as reading and math progress for students, but science and social studies curriculum would be lessened. Thus, the all-in model could represent the lowest amount of curriculum coverage but it would be consistent coverage and relationships would be developed.

In the elementary hybrid model (AAXBB), there would be half the students on “A” days and half on “B” days which would potentially allow for smaller group work and individualized attention depending on social distancing guidelines. The larger majority of curriculum in math and literacy could be covered, while social studies, science and specials may be covered on the remote days. On the remote days, there would be limited opportunities for synchronous learning assuming that classroom teachers are teaching those students who are in the classroom.

The elementary all remote model would provide the greatest window of instructional time, but could also create an accessibility issue for K-2 students depending on adult support in the home and would not allow the students and teachers to build relationships. Parry added that because the goal is to provide a full day of school in this model and the hybrid model, it would be necessary to develop a significantly structured consistent schedule. Parry explained the assessment/grading process for students as well as expectations and accountability, particularly at the middle school and the high school. Parry described the “AAXBB” hybrid model, adding that this model was preferred because it allows for more consistency. The “X” day would allow teachers to plan as well as provide some online synchronous instruction, but the day could differ at the elementary and secondary levels. Another hybrid model that was considered was “ABXAB” and, although it has not been ruled out, there were several disadvantages to this schedule.

The Middle School curriculum leaders did not see huge differences in terms of learning in all of the models; however, the all-in model would present time lost with transitions during the instructional day. In terms of core subjects, math classes would benefit most with an all-in model and English would have the biggest challenge because of instructional practices. Parry explained the challenges for these and other subjects, such as world languages and orchestra and band. The Middle School hybrid model could offer more curriculum coverage depending on the level of classes. However, science classes could be impacted in all three models, particularly for lab work since equipment cannot be shared. Parry continued to identify the challenges in an all remote model, adding that staff is working on creative methods to address some of the challenges.

The High School is affected in much of the same ways in all three models as Parry reported for the Middle School in terms of relationship building, equity of access, and curriculum coverage. In English and Social Studies, there could be differences and changes in the curriculum and would not change across the three models. However, students would have more time to read and write independently. Parry noted the concerns for math classes, particularly in the remote model. The challenges in world language, fine arts and wellness classes are similar to those at the middle school level.

A discussion followed Parry’s report regarding instructional time for the all-in model, as well as the level of support for struggling students in all three models, and the possible loss of curriculum relative to the SEL component, and the impact to leveling for the three models, particularly for the middle and high schools. Kathie reminded the public that the current task is to prepare for all three models moving forward. Parry addressed remote days in the hybrid model and in the fully remote model for the elementary and secondary students in terms of synchronous and asynchronous classes and activities, adding that that in an all-remote model, the day would be structured to mimic a normal structured school day within the typical hours of a school day. However, for the middle and high school students the days could differ depending on the schedules put together by the principals, noting that attendance will be taken when in a synchronous classroom.

There has been professional development for teachers in preparation for the remote and hybrid models as well as paid summer work days around curriculum development. For K-2, SeeSaw has been the consistent model and Grades 3-8 use Google Classroom. There may be an opt-in option for families whereby they can choose an all-remote model or the hybrid model. However, there are many challenges, such as staffing and the difficulty in offering a full range of classes at the high school level.

- Update on Fall Planning:

The Wayland Public Schools’ core values remain throughout this COVID-19 planning process – health and safety, equity, academic engagement, and emotional connections. Arthur reviewed the working timeline that began in late May to mid-June to the present that included teaching and learning and operations working groups, surveys, listening sessions,

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guidance from the DESE commissioner to develop three models, and building-based work around schedules. A model blueprint will be provided to the community on August 10, and “A Day in the Life” for students and staff will be presented at School Committee meetings moving forward.

A survey was conducted on June 21 for families which asked if families would keep their children home if an all-in model with 3 feet of social distancing and other safety protocols were in place for the fall. Of the 1,467+ responses by 9:00 a.m. the next morning, 30% would not send their children to school and 68% would send their children to school. The same question was asked for a hybrid model with 6 feet of social distancing, and 15% (400 students) would keep their children home and 84% would send their children to school. The staff was also asked to participate in a similar survey to address the possibility of childcare issues if teaching from their classrooms, and 183 responses were received. About 30% would have childcare issues and 70% would not. Arthur reported on the results of a district survey in which he and 12 other superintendents participated asking districts which models were being considered. About 50% of districts were leaning towards the hybrid model and 25% towards the all-in model. Arthur noted that the DESE Commissioner will not require districts to follow any model, as local School Committees will determine what is best for their district; however, there is a possibility that he could mandate opening or closing of schools. More guidance is also expected in August regarding interscholastic sports which have been postponed until September 14.

Ventilation is an important factor in reopening schools, and the actions taken have been the review of ventilation equipment and their functioning, hiring an engineering firm to do independent testing, and determining appropriate MERV filters and sourcing them for installation.

Arthur addressed the process for families who want to opt-out of an in-school model if the school year begins with students in the buildings. The handling and oversight of this model internally is still being discussed. Soon the State will share an online platform to determine the preferred vendor for a K-12 experience. Natick and Weston will be using Edgenuity, and it is being considered by the State. If families opt-out of attending school in person, a substantial commitment may be necessary for an all remote model. There are several questions that still need to be answered, such as scheduling and what it would mean for if families had to quarantine for two weeks but did not opt-out.

A list of questions from the School Committee was given to the Board of Health around social distancing, grades of masks, temperature checks, testing regimens and pool testing, and the protocol if there is a positive case in the schools. The Board of Health will provide recommendations and/or guidelines relative to these questions. A discussion followed in terms of how to proceed with the guidance.

Within a hybrid model, allocation of days was proposed, the preference being “AAXBB” weeks, which is also preferred by most other districts. Arthur noted the advantages and disadvantages and asked the School Committee for a decision in this regard so that planning can begin at the building levels. A discussion ensued about which day to structure as the “X” day and the possibility of providing some significant synchronous academic engagement for part of the “X” day, given that the teachers will use the rest of the day for contractual planning time. Parry addressed a suggested model of “ABXAB” week. The School Committee agreed that the administrators can move forward with the “AAXBB” hybrid model with the assurance that there is substantial synchronous academic engagement on Wednesdays.

- **Next Steps:**

The next School Committee meeting is July 29 and three models will be presented including “A Day in the Life” for students in each model, as well as the implications and mitigation approaches in the different models. In the presentations, Ellen asked for a commitment for academic engagement for each day for all three models to help assess what is being done remotely and what is being done in person at each grade level. Arthur addressed the possibility of offering different models to different levels simultaneously. Moving forward, there will be reports about a special education plan, a rough estimate of time spent on the various safety protocols for each model, and the financial impact for each model, an update on ventilation issues, and the process to move between plans if necessary and the time commitment for each plan.

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

None.

**7. Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously to enter Executive Session at 4:00 p.m. for the purpose 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

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have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; and the School Committee will pass over item (b): approve the following Executive Session Minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 22: July 8, 2020 The School Committee will be joined by Arthur Unobskey, Superintendent of Schools, Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

The School Committee will adjourn in Executive Session and will not reconvene in open session. A roll call vote was taken:

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

8. **Adjournment from Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 4:35 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk  
Wayland School Committee

**Corresponding Documentation:**

1. Agenda
2. Public Comments