

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – November 17, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 5:30 P.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the South Building Lecture Hall at Wayland High School.

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:

Dr. Ellen Mahoney, School Physician
Allyson Mizoguchi, WHS Principal
Michelle Crowell, Director of Teaching, Learning, Assessments & EL
John Pierce

Chair Chris Ryan convened the regular session at 5:33 p.m. The meeting was recorded by WayCAM.

1. **Public Comment:**

Chris Ryan read a public comment from Brienne Lemire, 19 Parkland Drive. She asked the School Committee to consider removing the physical distancing requirement so that the students can return to pre-COVID learning, as she is an elementary school teacher and feels it is the best way to teach and learn and will make a big difference in kids' social-emotional and academic learning. Based on certain districts' case count data and the fact that DESE has not instituted a distancing requirement this year, it is Ms. Lemire's opinion that sitting and working together does not lead to greater COVID transmission.

Chris Ryan read a public comment from MacKenzie Young, a Wayland Middle School student who, according to COVID protocols, quarantined at home twice after coming in close contact with a student even though she wore a mask, had a negative test and had no symptoms on both occasions. MacKenzie commented that during that time not much learning happened and feels it is worse than remote learning. She wonders why unrealistic protocols and rules are still in place when students are getting vaccinated and, in some instances, social distancing can't be followed.

Caroline Hanlon, 44 High Rock Road, is a Loker parent and asked the School Committee to consider applying for the mask mandate waiver at the High School, since the vaccination rate is about 80% vaccinated and follow the same for other schools once they reach an 80% vaccination rate. Ms. Hanlon added that removing masks is important for children's social and emotional wellbeing as well as academics and reading and speech development. She hopes that there will someday be a choice for wearing masks.

Angela Young, Bent Avenue, advocated for removing COVID restrictions, particularly the mask mandate, outlined in the August Reopening Plan regardless of the vaccination rate. Ms. Young asked the School Committee to remain flexible and fluid in its decision making as things continue to change. She feels that children have been subject to academic and social delays given the restrictions in the schools.

2. **Superintendent Update:**

(a) Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve the Tiered Focus Monitoring Process:

Parry explained that Wayland is a Tier 1 district and DESE reviews some of the district's documents as well as conduct staff interviews after which steps are identified and recommended to be changed. Parry reaches out to DESE about every two months regarding a document update and gets their feedback.

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Upon a motion duly made by Jess Polizzotti, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Tiered Focus Monitoring Process changes that were made to the Student Handbooks.

(b) COVID-19 Response:

- Status on Vaccinations:

Parry updated the School Committee on the vaccination status of students. It was affirmed that about 93% of the High School is fully vaccinated, about 90% of the 8th grade, and just under 90% in the 7th grade. Parry noted that there are very few breakthrough cases in the schools. Information was gathered by cross-referencing the State database as well as including information that parents provided.

School physician Dr. Ellen Mahoney joined the discussion and commented that there has been an increase of positive cases for elementary children over the last week. Most children are doing okay, but a few have had more serious illnesses. In her practice, 80% of her children were vaccinated. Dr. Mahoney feels that the test and stay program and pooled testing is helpful so that kids can stay in school. She answered questions from the Committee about the vaccination for children ages 5 to 11, the level of impact of immunity after the first dose, and the demographics of infections within the three elementary schools.

Dr. Easy confirmed that one elementary school has had an uptick of COVID cases and are within the guidelines of social distancing and resulted in no close contacts. Families have the option to participate in the test and stay program, and it is highly recommended for those students who were on the busses. Most of the cases happened outside of school.

A discussion ensued about the possibility of lifting the mask mandate at the high school level and the effects of the emotional well-being of the students, long term. In Dr. Mahoney's opinion, there will be more respiratory transmission among students and more absenteeism if masks come off at this time, particularly during the high flu season. She also feels that the pandemic is not over but will eventually become an endemic. In addition, if students are not vaccinated, Dr. Mahoney recommends masks. However, the same rules should probably apply to all students and staff at least through the February break after which the process could begin to amend the mask protocols.

- Review and Possible Vote of Amended SY2021-22 School Reopening Plan:

Dr. Easy presented his amended 2021-22 School Reopening Plan, adding that about 85% of students and staff combined are vaccinated, even though the data for staff is not available. The first change has to do with physical distancing in the schools. Twenty-four round tables will be placed in the WHS cafeteria to allow for additional seating and classroom configurations at the Middle School will allow for group discussions with students remaining three feet apart. In addition, three feet of distance in hallways and in common areas will be maintained whenever possible to allow the students to have access to lockers and cubbies. A discussion followed Dr. Easy's recommendations at WHS and WMS.

K-3 classrooms will continue to be monitored but will be reconfigured by adding additional tables to allow for a more collaborative educational experience to the extent possible. However, students will not be kept as close contacts for more than fifteen minutes at a time during group discussions. Chris recommended that this reconfiguration apply to K-5 classrooms, and the School Committee agreed. Dr. Easy will make the change.

- Mask Wearing Policy and Review of Masking Guidelines:

DESE's regulations require all staff and students to wear masks. However, the Superintendent will have discretion if district-phased transition protocols are met. If a school demonstrates a vaccination rate of 80% or more for students and staff, then those vaccinated in that school would no longer be subject to the state mask requirement.

Dr. Easy confirmed that staff cannot be asked of their vaccination status unless there is a vaccination mandate. A discussion ensued around gathering vaccination data for the purpose of applying for a mask waiver if a certain percentage is reached. Jess suggested that other high schools be monitored in terms of their data and their status since lifting the mask mandate. More data will be presented on December 15 with another discussion in January.

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Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the changes to the School Reopening Plan that were presented with the amendment for the K-5 classrooms configuration and adding the word “combined” regarding the masks.

Dr. Easy confirmed that about 600 shots are available for the age group of 5 to 11 year olds, and a vaccination clinic will be held at the high school on November 22. As a result of the survey, 202 families expressed interest in the vaccination clinic. In addition, plans are underway to conduct a clinic in Boston for Boston resident students.

(c) High School Administration Presentation:

Dr. Allyson Mizoguchi presented SEL (Social Emotional Learning) highlights for Wayland High School which has remained a priority in the district. The process and framework was developed by CASTEL to help build competencies, knowledge and skills, including ways of applying the different skills around healthy identity, working well with others, managing emotions, achieving one’s own goals, feeling empathy for others, establishing healthy relationships, and making good decisions. Dr. Mizoguchi shared a day in the life of students which is very different from last year, naming all of the activities in which students participate and experience.

Dr. Mizoguchi thanked the School Committee for the added position of clinical counselor who is Ms. Latoya Downes-Steinbrink. She was a METCO elementary coordinator for the district, but is now in this role at the high school and is a member of the Counseling Department. Ms. Downes-Steinbrink supports students with anxiety, “busy mind,” sleep disorders, and depression, as well as helping students to develop coping and engagement skills and strategies. She partners with Wayland Youth & Family Services and Wayland Cares, as well as other agencies.

Another program at the high school since 2017 is The Connect Program for the seniors. Its mission is around learning through those social emotional competencies and is taught by Jeff Blue, Ed DeHoratius, and Erin Lehmann. Dr. Mizoguchi explained the curriculum that centers on 4-5 themes revolving around current issues that impact the community. There is also an emphasis on relationships, communication, collaboration, and building of “16 Habits of Mind.” Finally, she described how last year’s students in The Connect Program obtained a grant from the Wayland Cultural Council and the Lauren Dunne Astley Memorial Foundation to fund the design of a mural that would represent the coming out of COVID. The project will be revisited in the spring in terms of the location of where the mural will be placed in the high school. Dr. Mizoguchi answered questions from the School Committee.

(d) Presentation of Superintendent’s Entry Plan:

This agenda item was passed over.

(e) Assessment Task Force Update:

Michelle Crowell, Director of Teaching, Learning, Assessment, and EL, will facilitate the Assessment Task Force. She spoke about her past educational career which has led her to the Wayland Public Schools.

The purpose of the task force will be to determine the best practice for assessment that will benefit the whole child’s educational experience and put in place a practice that will best serve the Wayland community. Dr. Easy described the process by which school staff and the broader community to become members of the task force that would include four parents, three students, three teachers/curriculum leaders, two community stakeholders, and Ms. Crowell. Twenty-eight responses were received that included a summary of each person’s education and current job.

Dr. Easy introduced John Pierce who will facilitate the meetings to help to bring closure to the topic by bringing everyone together in a collaborative way to discuss the subject at hand. Mr. Pierce has been in education for 35 years, has studied standard-based education and best practices, and is highly trained in teaching, learning, and leading.

After reviewing the applicants’ information, the following people were chosen to be on the task force.

Jeff Baron, 12th grade parent
Stephanie Brandaleone, 11 grade parent
Patricia Barrios, 10th grade parent
Scot Mente, 9th and 11th grade parent
Barbara Coughlin, Math Department Chair/teacher

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Ken Rideout, Science Department Chair/teacher
Mary York, science teacher
Lauren Medeiros, 12th grade student
Eliya Howard-Delman, 12th grade student
Prash Subbiah, 11th grade student
Jeff Sklar, community member
Jess Polizzotti, School Committee member

Dr. Easy presented data from the Tri-County districts and most do return math and science exams. Wayland's peer districts presented many variables; however, Wellesley's practices resemble Wayland's practices. A discussion ensued regarding the results of the survey.

The School Committee discussed and asked questions about the makeup and balance of the task force and the process taken to reach out to the community. Finally, the members expressed their interest, or not, to serve on the task force.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to appoint Jess Polizzotti to be the School Committee member on the task force team.

Ellen Grieco left the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

(f) Financial Matters:

- Expenses:

Ellen Whittemore updated the School Committee on the unanticipated expenses, such as the provision of water in three schools and the out-of-district placements of some students who may need out-of-district placements or the need for additional services. These expenses will be met and an update will be provided in the near future.

- Status on Budget Process:

The principals and district-level administrators provided Ellen and Dr. Easy the FY23 personnel and non-personnel needs in each building, all of which they are reviewing in anticipation of meeting with these administrators regarding their budgets.

Ellen returned at 7:45 p.m.

Dr. Easy asked about the possibility of extending his budget presentation until after the holiday break given the fluidity of the budget. Chris will look into this request.

3. Administrative Matters:

(a) Appointment of Ben Downs as WHS Assistant Swim and Dive Coach:

The necessary paperwork for this appointment was filed by Dr. Easy, and Jeanne and Ben Downs filed the Conflict of Interest form.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted (4-1) (Jeanne abstained) to appoint Ben Downs as the swim and dive coach.

(b) Review of OML Determinations:

Kim presented Open Meeting Law determinations for Acton-Boxboro, Melrose, Everett, and Belmont.

4. Policy Matters:

(a) Review and Possible Vote to Approve the Following Policies:

- BDFC – School Councils
- EBC – Emergency Plans
- GBI – Staff Participation in Political Activities
- ID – School Attendance
- JC – Attendance Areas
- JCA – Assignment of Students to Schools

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Comments were received for Policy BDFA, an older version, from the building principals. Kim referred to the comments that included concerns about timing of elections and recording meetings which is not required by law. Kim noted her responses and changes to the policy. She expressed her concerns about the High School Council meeting that took place that evening, but was not recorded. A discussion followed in this regard. Dr. Easy added that the capability of recording the meetings in some buildings may not be possible and recommended that it be highly encouraged to record. The words “whenever practical” will be kept in the policy in terms of recordings.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve Policies BDFA, EBC, GBI, ID, JC, and JCA.

(b) Review and Possible Vote to Approve and/or Put Out for Public Comment:

- EBC – Supplemental General (Interim) Policy on COVID-Related Issues
- IJNDD – Policy on Social Media
- GBEB – Staff Conduct

Kim presented the recommended changes to Policies EBC, IJNDD, and GBEB and the School Committee discussed the changes, particularly for Policy IJNDD around social media.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to put Policy EBC Supplemental as amended and GBEB as amended out for public comment.

5. Financial Matters:

(a) Possible Vote to Approve a Name Change to Existing Student Activity Accounts:

- Recycling Club to *Green Team*:
- Audio Visual Club to *Theater Tech and Design Team*:

(b) Possible Vote to Approve Student Activity Accounts for the Following Clubs:

- eSports
- National Honor Society
- Photography Club
- Computer Science Club

Ellen Whittemore presented the request by the WHS principal for approval to change the names to two existing student activity accounts and to approve new student activity accounts as listed.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the name changes and the additions proposed by the High School principal to the student activity accounts for the High School.

(c) Review of FY21 4th Quarter Financials:

Ellen Whittemore updated the School Committee on the FY21 4th quarter financials. As of today, the School Department will turn back to the town approximately \$38,087.67 which is in addition to \$100,000 that was remaining in earlier FY21 funds and was used to pre-pay tuition from the Circuit Breaker. Ms. Whittemore explained.

(d) FY23 Capital Budget Discussion, including MSBA Project for School Buildings:

Jeanne noted that the Town Administrator presented all the capital budget requests to the Board of Selectmen, including the School Department’s \$2M request for an MSBA Feasibility Study.

Dr. Easy spoke about the changes to the capital budget that would combine some of the projects. He is proposing a Statement of Interest (SOI) to build a new school in about five years. In addition, \$200,000 is available to conduct a Facilities Study in the three elementary schools to determine which school is in most need for major renovations or replacement. The Town has proposed an extra \$100,000 for FY23 to engage in a more in depth study.

Dr. Easy presented the options as next steps that are to submit an SOI in the spring of 2022, but are open to submitting an SOI in the spring of 2023, if necessary. MSBA timelines must be met; however, the Town’s recommended timelines do not match those of MSBA.

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Jeanne updated the School Committee on the recent Board of Selectmen meeting that she and Chris attended at which time the BOS discussed the capital budget to which Dr. Easy referred. According to the Town Administrator, the budget would be about \$500,000 to \$1M for a Feasibility Study in anticipation of a school project in FY27. Other town projects are being considered, such as the Council on Aging and the grass fields which also have a five-year timeline. Chris added that according to the Town Finance Director, the Capitalization Stabilization Fund could be impacted. Dr. Easy noted that if less funds are appropriated, the timeline could be impacted and extended for a Feasibility Study. A discussion ensued about next steps in securing the appropriate funding, the timeline, and presenting to the Finance Committee at its next meeting.

(e) **Bus Parking Update and Next Steps:**

Jeanne corrected a prior statement she made in terms of diesel-run busses.

As a member of the bus parking working group, Jeanne updated the School Committee on the status of bus parking for which the working group will present a report to the ZBA in four months. The ZBA will not rule out parking the busses at the schools, but also do not recommend parking outside of Wayland due to the cost. Jeanne reported on the work that has been and will be done in the Town Building parking lot, including designating spaces for The Children’s Way families for morning drop-off and designating twenty spaces at the Trinitarian Church for the bus drivers. This issue will be reassessed in January and February given the work that has been done up to the current time. Two members of the working group will present to the School Committee on December 1, and a public forum, hosted by the BOS, is tentatively scheduled for December 6. Jeanne noted the concerns from the Conservation Commission that were addressed.

Chris reported that the South Landfill Visioning Committee is comprised of residents from other committees and will meet this month after a long break, but have requested that a School Committee member serve on this committee. Kim Reichelt volunteered to represent the School Committee.

6. **Consent Agenda:**

(a) **Accounts Payables Warrants:**

- Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated November 17, 2021, in the amount of \$386,078.86

(b) **Approval of Minutes: October 20, 2021**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda.

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

None.

8. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter executive session at 9:00 p.m. for 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 discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; and (b) approval of the following executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: October 20, 2021. 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	
Jessica Polizzotti	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Chris Ryan	X	

The School Committee will be joined by Dr. Omar Easy, Superintendent of Schools, Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent, Ellen Whittemore, Director of Finance and Operations, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

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

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9. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kim Reichelt, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:34 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:

Caroline Hanlon, 44 High Rock Road
Angela Young, Bent Avenue

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Tiered Focus Monitoring Information
3. Filed Public Notice by Dr. Easy re: Ben Downs' Appointment
4. Policy EBC – Emergency Plans
5. Policy GBI – Staff Participation in Political Activities
6. Policy ID – School Attendance
7. Policy JC – Attendance Areas
8. Policy JCA – Assignment of Students to Schools
9. Policy EBC – Supplemental (COVID Related)
10. Policy GBEB – Staff Conduct
11. Policy IJNDD – Policy on Social Media
12. OML Determinations
13. Accounts Payables Warrant
14. Minutes of October 20, 2021
15. Executive Session Motion