

# MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 1, 2023

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. at Wayland High School Lecture Hall, South Building 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.

*Present:*

Chris Ryan, Chair  
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair  
Jeanne Downs  
Erin Gibbons  
Jessica Polizzotti (arrived at 7:14 p.m.)

*Also present:*

Parry Graham  
Acting Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent

Tom Lafleur  
Director of Finance & Operations

*Also:*

Madeline O’Leary, WHS Student Representative  
Betsy Gavron, WMS Principal

**1. Welcome & Call to Order:**

Chair Chris Ryan convened the regular session at 6:00 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded by WayCAM. He acknowledged that there was an error in reference to the Mass General Law for agenda item 9.1, as it should be referenced as M.G.L. c.30A, s.21(a)(3), not s.22, and it will be reflected in the minutes.

Chris Ryan read a statement that acknowledged concerns regarding Dr. Easy’s status in the district. Since the School Committee cannot comment on pending litigation and personnel matters, the members are aware of the frustrations and feelings of the community around this situation. The School Committee will be as transparent as possible and asks for patience throughout this situation, as detailed comments cannot be made at this time. “The School Committee members as volunteers take their role very seriously, and Mr. Ryan thanked his fellow members for their solemnness in which they have treated all of their work, especially this matter. Each of the people here are at this table because of their commitment to the Wayland community and our students.”

As the liaison to the Middle School, Jeanne visited ten classrooms in which there was enthusiasm and joy present amongst the teachers and students. Erin announced that the girls’ basketball have a playoff game tomorrow evening, adding that it has been a while since the team has been in the playoffs.

**2. Public Comment:**

Craig Gruber, 108 Sears Road, thanked the School Committee, adding that “there is a calm setting over and in our schools.” He also thanked Dr. Graham for his open and thoughtful communications resulting in an understanding of situations as well as actions taken to resolve them.

Doug Levine of Gray Birch Lane thanked the School Committee for its tireless efforts as volunteers and for supporting the teachers and staff of the Wayland Public Schools. He continues to say that despite a strong difference of opinion among residents toward the School Committee, the Committee members have the information, context, and perspective to represent the Wayland community and to continue to focus on the students, teachers, and staff.

Kim Reichelt, 11 Coolidge Road, expressed her concerns about the misinformation and “spin” that is being put out to the public via social media, etc. Ms. Reichelt gave an example of postings on social media from one resident in which he posted a partial statement made at a previous meeting by Dr. Easy. She read the actual sentence in full by Dr. Easy in an effort to present the full context of his statement.

Jeff Sklar, Brooks Road, referred to the previous public comment, adding that it is very typical of what is happening on social media. He noted a past public comment by a high school teacher was false in which he said that a teacher left the district because of Dr. Easy. Mr. Sklar commented that the teacher who left was bullying other teachers, adding that there is a serious bullying situation in the schools. Despite communication from parents and students about this issue, the problem persisted as no action was taken, except by Dr. Easy in an administrative council meeting. Mr. Sklar

## MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 1, 2023

questioned why the Superintendent was placed on leave when he was exonerated as a result of an investigation into the administrative meeting, adding that there are no standing charges against him and currently there is no report from the investigation.

Janice Crager, 10 Sylvan Lane, commented that she is a woman of color, a resident of Wayland for the past 12 years and the mother of two children who adore their teachers. Ms. Crager referred to her difficult past and experiences growing up in a family of color. However, as a resident she has experienced warmth and friendship. She referred to Dr. Easy's statement at the School Committee meeting on January 25 at which time he spoke to the entire community, and she quoted some of what he said. Ms. Crager referred to public comments made by two parents on January 18 during which she believes they were respectful comments. Finally, she supports the School Committee's decision to place the Superintendent on leave.

John Pierce has worked professionally with Dr. Easy in Wayland and elsewhere over the past ten years. Mr. Pierce commented that the portrayal of Dr. Easy as a leader is "grossly unjust" based on his work relationship with him. He is concerned about the absence of information, as placing Dr. Easy on leave gives the impression that the investigative report pointed to something "damming", adding that it is not true. Justice, communication and transparency must be real, as people have a right to know and urged the School Committee to find its way in this regard

Corey MacGregor, Concord Road, acknowledged that students and families of color, METCO families, teachers, administrators, and the School Committee have been hurting for the last year and a half and it will take a long time to heal. She continued that everyone cares deeply about the schools and racism, but are troubled by the recent events, especially when there is no specific information related to the Superintendent, but acknowledged that the public cannot and may not be privy to this information. Ms. MacGregor hopes that Wayland can take this opportunity to rebuild stronger and not be torn apart by the School Committee's recent decision.

Catherine Radmer, Woodridge Road, commented that all of the concerns and criticisms she has heard from the teachers are not based on racial issues, adding that the Superintendent's defenses were based on race. She referred to Dr. Easy's filing of a racial discrimination complaint with the State, and, in her opinion, one incident to which he refers in the complaint is not true and does not appear to be what it must be. She elaborated and said this is not leadership.

*Ellen Grieco left the meeting at 6:22 p.m.*

### 3. Acting Superintendent Update:

#### 3.1 Discussion with WHS Student Representative Madeline O'Leary:

WHS senior Madeline O'Leary reported on the recent Winter Week activities, such as an A Cappella concert, a Windows dance performance, and an event with a hypnotist. There is a performance of "Lost Girl" this week, and the Senior Comedy and Dance Show is taking place next weekend.

Students are concerned about the security at the High School and options are being explored by the school administration around an electronic entering system using student ID's, since doors now remain open, and the possibility of increasing security cameras. Another concern for seniors is the cost of accessing student transcripts to be sent electronically to each college/university to which a student applies. The fee is \$5.00 per transcript, and it does apply when transcripts are also sent to graduate schools three or four years later. Madeline explained other fees as well in this regard. The hope would be to incorporate these fees into the school budget eliminating the fees for families. A discussion followed.

#### 3.2 Approval of Wayland Middle School 2023 Cape Cod Trip:

Principal Betsy Gavron presented the reinstated Cape Cod trip since 2020 for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students. They will be going to a new location at Camp Burgess in Sandwich, Massachusetts. She described the activities that the students will experience, such as hiking and kayaking. Since transportation costs have doubled, the cost to families will be \$464 per student. However, tripship funds have been raised to alleviate the costs for families.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the Cape Cod trip as presented.

#### 3.3 Update regarding the District's Emergency Preparedness:

Parry Graham reported that the district has devised a plan if "swatting" calls should occur in Wayland, as has happened in several districts recently. Each school has its own emergency response plan, and there is a district

## MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 1, 2023

plan in place as well. The plans will be reviewed and possibly updated this spring. Dr. Graham is working with the police and fire departments, as there could be additional practices around lockdowns and different types of evacuation drills possibly by the end of the school year. More information in this regard will be forthcoming.

The nursing team has identified several defibrillators and walkies for emergency personnel that need to be replaced in the buildings. A Safe Schools grant, a Village Bank grant and town funding could all be used for this purpose.

### 3.4. *Planning for District Leadership Openings:*

Parry Graham informed the School Committee of the search process for several leadership openings. In most cases, Dr. Graham recommends one-year interim positions since he will not be in Wayland next year and it may not be possible to run many high-quality searches simultaneously at this time. He described the process, the makeup of the committees, and timeline for each search, as well as the administrator who will lead each search. The Happy Hollow principal position and the Assistant Director of Special Education and Out-of-District Coordinator, will be posted as permanent positions. However, the following positions are recommended to be on an interim basis for FY24: Middle School Principal, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Special Education, and Director of Finance & Operations.

*Erin left the meeting at 6:52 p.m.; returned at 6:54 p.m.*

A discussion ensued about some of these positions, including the School Committee's possible role in the search for the Director of Finance & Operations.

## 4. **Financial Matters:**

### 6.1 *Review and Discussion of FY24 Budget:*

Parry reiterated that the Middle School FTE's as proposed in the FY24 operating budget due to the increase to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment by about 40 to 50 students next year were impacted by the \$600,000 first round reduction as requested by the Finance Committee. Dr. Graham added that Full Day Kindergarten was also taken out of the FY24 proposed budget in the amount of \$450,000 requiring Kindergarten families to continue to pay the full fee.

Betsy Gavron addressed the impact and ramifications to the proposed FTE's at the Middle School next year, adding that the 6<sup>th</sup> grade student increase will result in two sections per discipline. A challenge is hiring less than a full or half time FTE and whether there are enough resources to reallocate and shift existing staff, as job descriptions will change. Ms. Gavron noted that the need for a .4 FTE in World Language still exists. She explained movement within staffing for Social Studies and English, adding that the Writing Center will be affected by a .4 FTE. The Math classes will also be impacted. Before making these adjustments, the original proposal was to add to 2.2 FTE's, but due to reductions, the proposal is reduced to .8 FTE total at the Middle School.

Parry reported that the Chapter 70 funding from the State will be higher in FY24 compared to FY23 which is approximately \$1.1M resulting in more revenue for the Town. However, this revenue was not included in the Town's budget projections for next year. In addition, the Finance Committee asked the School Department to cut another \$600,000 from the FY24 operating budget.

Jeanne and Chris attended the recent Finance Committee meeting at which time it was discussed that the residential tax rate was nearing 9% even with the first round of cuts of close to \$600,000 by the School Department. Thus, the Finance Committee voted another \$600,000 reduction from the FY24 operating budget. Jeanne and Chris proposed moving Special Education \$300,000 of transportation funds into the SPED Stabilization Fund which would result in a \$300,000 reduction. However, the Finance Committee went forward with a \$600,000 reduction in the FY24 operating budget. The math curriculum was added back into the capital budget.

*Jess Polizzotti arrived at the meeting at 7:15 p.m.*

Jeanne explained the Town's process around the Chapter 70 funding for which they used to alleviate the tax increase for residents to just under 7%. A discussion followed about the SPED Stabilization Fund.

Parry commented that he, Tom and Dr. Cataldo spent much time reviewing the Special Education budget, particularly the out-of-district expenses for tuition (approximately \$1.6M) and transportation. He explained the

## MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 1, 2023

process through which they discussed, adding that the district has a legal obligation to educate these students regardless of whether there is money in the budget. Tom Lafleur explained how the Circuit Breaker is applied to the school operating budget for purposes of reimbursing Special Education out-of-district tuition and transportation. The schools are responsible for the base amount of \$47,000+ per student with the Circuit Breaker funding the remainder at 75% for the following fiscal year; however, this is not guaranteed. This is reflected in the FY24 budget for tuition only.

To satisfy the additional proposed \$600,000 reduction in the operating budget, Parry offered two options.

- Take \$600,000 from the Special Education transportation budget and hope that the State will reimburse to its maximum of \$300,000 leaving the district to come up with an additional \$300,000.
- Reduce the Special Education transportation budget by \$300,000, but if the district does not get the State reimbursement, there would be about 4.0 FTE's in personnel starting with positions not yet filled, such as a Special Education teacher at Loker School and an additional elementary EL teacher position in the amount of about \$150,000. Dr. Graham explained further. To satisfy the additional \$150,000, two

*Ellen Grieco returned to the meeting at 7:27 p.m. She left again at 7:29 p.m.*

existing positions would need to be cut. A discussion ensued regarding the two options. Jeanne noted that if \$600,000 is not taken from the budget at this time, the School Committee would be on Town Meeting floor amending the budget. Tom Lafleur told the School Committee that he expects that in FY24 the School Department will be asking the Town for more money; he explained. The Committee members expressed their concerns moving forward.

Dr. Graham addressed the plan to expand the language-based program at Claypit Hill, as well as the possibility of increasing the program at the Middle School and providing it at the High School. This could impact existing personnel or could be necessary to add new personnel trained in this area. Another discussion ensued regarding the options presented.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to further reduce the budget by \$450,000 with a decrease of \$300,000 to SPED transportation and a decrease of \$150,000 that's made up of two positions not yet filled that Tom and Parry presented.

Chris will notify the Finance Committee via email. Jeanne offered some language for the email.

#### 4.2 *Review and Possible Vote on SpED Stabilization Fund Warrant Article:*

The School Committee reviewed the warrant article. Jeanne commented that the Town Counsel reviewed the article as well and recommended this fund is called a reserve fund rather than a stabilization fund; she explained. Also, the Finance Committee has asked the School Committee to transfer money from the operating budget to this fund. A discussion ensued about whether or not money can be added to the fund at any time.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to change the word in the warrant article from "stabilization" to "reserve" fund in the actual text.

*Chris left the meeting at 8:05 p.m.; returned at 8:07 p.m.*

The Community Budget Forum will be on March 13, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Lecture Hall. The Budget Hearing is on March 15, 2023.

*Ellen returned to the meeting at 8:06 p.m.*

## 5. **Administrative Matters:**

### 7.1 *PMBC Update – Loker Roof Project:*

Jeanne reported that the Loker roof was completely finished, including the electrical work.

## 6. **Policy Matters:**

### 6.1 *Overview of Upcoming Policies for Discussion in Future Subcommittee Meetings:*

The Policy Subcommittee is meeting next week and Jess Polizzotti reviewed what will be discussed at the

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Regular Meeting – March 1, 2023

meeting, such as the Test Return Policy, Policy KF (Use of School Facilities), and possibly School Councils.

- 6.2 *Suggestions of Policies for Review from the Subcommittee and Acting Superintendent Parry Graham:*  
Dr. Graham suggested that the Subcommittee review Policy ACE (Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability). He explained that there was a Civil Rights Complaint within the district in this regard.

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

None.

8. **Consent Agenda:**

- 8.1 Declaration and Approval of Technology Surplus Items to be Recycled  
8.2 Approval of Donation – Basketball Hoop from Wayland Youth Basketball Association  
8.3 Approval of Accounts Payables Warrants:
  - Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated February 28, 2023, in the amount of \$528,891.21
  - Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated March 1, 2023, in the amount of \$841,104.498.4 Approval of Minutes: January 11, 2023, January 18, 2023 and January 25, 2023

Ellen noted that she was present at the January 11, 2023 meeting, as well as January 18, 2023.

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Gibbons, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda reflecting the changes mentioned by Ellen.

9. **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 8:18 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; (b) reviewing the response to the February 14, 2023 Open Meeting Law complaint filed by George Harris, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the position of the School Committee; (c) reviewing and declassifying executive session minutes as listed, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: January 5, 2022, January 12, 2022, January 19, 2022, January 24, 2022, January 26, 2022, February 9, 2022, and February 16, 2022; (d) approving executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: January 4, 2023, January 9, 2023, January 11, 2023, January 18, 2023, and January 25, 2023; and (e) discussing strategy with respect to litigation, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the School Committee (Arbitration involving Wayland 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	
Erin Gibbons	X	
Jess Polizzotti	X	

Chris acknowledged that the wrong M.G.L. was referenced for agenda item 9.1 and should be referenced as M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3) and not §22. It will be reflected in the minutes.

The School Committee will be joined by Parry Graham, Acting Superintendent/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 Erin Gibbons, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:45 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Regular Meeting – March 1, 2023

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Chris Ryan, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs	X	
Erin Gibbons	X	
Jess Polizzotti	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Parry Graham, Clerk/Acting Superintendent  
Wayland School Committee

**Observers:**

See sign-in sheet.

**Corresponding Documentation:**

1. Agenda
2. Madeline O’Leary’s Presentation
3. Middle School Cape Cod Trip Proposal
4. SpED Stabilization Fund Warrant Article
5. FY23 Tech Surplus Items
6. Happy Hollow Equipment Donation
7. Accounts Payables Warrant
8. Minutes of January 11, 2023
9. Minutes of January 18, 2023
10. Minutes of January 25, 2023
11. Executive Session Motion