

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 13, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. at the Wayland Town Building

Present:

Erin Gibbons, Chair
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair (remote)
Ellen Grieco (arrived at 6:31 p.m.)
Erin Mueller
Christina Rodrigo

Also present:

David Fleishman
Acting Superintendent

Betsy Gavron
Interim Assistant Superintendent

Susan Bottan
Director of Finance & Operations

Debbie Dixson
Interim Director of Student Services

Also:

Caroline Han, Director of Diversity, Equity & Belonging, METCO Academic Dean
Karyn Saxon, K-5 ELA/SS Curriculum Coordinator
Jacob Montwieler, WMS Social Studies Curriculum Leader & 8th Gr. Teacher
Melissa Harvey, Literacy Boost Specialist
David Schmirer, WHS Social Studies Department Head & Teacher
Peter Galalis, WHS English Department Head & Teacher

1. Welcome & Call to Order:

Chair Erin Gibbons called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded by WayCAM.

School Committee members shared their school experiences over the past two weeks. Christina Rodrigo attended the very successful Loker School Science Fair in which her fifth grade son participated. Erin Gibbons attended Wayland Sings and Erin Mueller participated in the Strings Concert.

Jeanne Downs announced that the ten-week Water Warriors swim program for Boston students began last week. Wayland High School students are the swimming instructors for the elementary and middle school children.

Erin Gibbons announced the School Committee will pass over agenda items 4.3 and 4.4.

2. Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

3. Acting Superintendent Update:

3.1 *District Goal Update – Part two: “Belonging in the Curriculum” Presentation by Wayland Curriculum Leaders for English and Social Studies K-12:*

Prior to the presentation, David reported that he attended a WHS program about the Holocaust with 9th and 11th graders who are studying the Holocaust. Mr. Dan Ottenheimer was the guest speaker whose father was a Holocaust survivor and was also a speaker at different events.

David reiterated from the presentation at the last meeting that there are two ways to experience belonging – in the classroom through the curriculum and out of the classroom via clubs, affinity groups, speakers, events, etc. This presentation will focus on the curriculum which can change for many reasons but also when the State Frameworks changes; he gave some examples. The key questions that educators ask are “How do we create school communities

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 13, 2024

where students can show up as their authentic selves and feel a sense of belonging?” and “How do we open up hearts and open minds?”

Elementary:

Karyn Saxon, ELA and Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator spoke about the elementary curriculum. She and elementary teachers reviewed and revised the Social Studies Scope and Sequence from 2018 to 2021 to align with the new DESE Social Science and History Standards. With the help of Caroline Han, work has been done to integrate the new Social Justice Standards (Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Action) into the Social Studies curriculum. Although studied in K-5 classrooms, an example of “identity” for K-2 students is how they see the way their own families do things and how different it could be in other families. Grades 1 and 2 teachers use picture books to get the conversation going about the importance of recognizing identities and diversity, such as *The Proudest Blue*, *The Colors of Us*, *Whoever You Are*, and *Julian is a Mermaid*. Action refers to the identification of injustice and to speak up when it is being witnessed. The 3rd graders concentrate on Massachusetts History, such as the American Revolution, and writing essays about Martin Luther King, Jr. focusing on standing up for others in the wake of injustice.

The Claypit Hill Kindergarten classes implemented “Play for Change” through a Wayland Public Schools Foundation Grant. The goal is to help students to feel included and to have a sense of belonging, as well as making others feel included. One of the projects last year was working together to build an inclusive environment. Karyn described the unit “The Best Day Ever” in “Play for Change” which focused on fairness for everyone through communication and change even if rules don’t allow for fairness for everyone.

There are updated K-5 ELA Mentor Texts to diversify experiences and characters, some being *Cora Cooks Pancit*, *Jacob’s New Dress*, *A Friend Like Simon*, *Don’t Touch My Hair*, *Under My Hijab*, and *The Story I’ll Tell*. Karyn noted that the elementary librarians have continuously been diversifying books in their libraries, including creating collections in different languages. She described how librarians observe monthly cultural celebrations that include families.

Middle School:

Social Studies teacher Jake Montweiler noted that in the Social Studies classrooms, deep questions that matter are asked of the students in an effort to make them feel safe in an environment where they can reflect on multiple perspectives, to share in areas in which they disagree, and to make connections between the past and present. Sixth and 7th grade studies are a mix of Ancient Civilizations, Modern History, current events, and Geography. The 8th grade curriculum focuses on civics case studies during the second semester.

More specifically, the 6th grade is studying Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Jake named the men and women activists noted in history whom the students study in these units focusing on those who have had an impact on their communities in a broader sense. He explained how the lessons are approached and the questions that are asked about each activist in an effort to create a sense of belonging in Wayland. The 7th grade focuses on the theme of emotional engagement and studies European regions and Latin America with a mix of geography, history and current events. The students are exploring the refugee crisis in Europe and with a grant awarded by the Wayland Public Schools Foundation they are making a connection between ELA classes and Social Studies classes; he explained. Eighth grade is more challenging in the Civics case studies where in the final unit they compare the segregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957 with the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools many years ago. This unit has implications of how current events and today’s immigration policies are interpreted. Jake explained, adding that the curriculum in this regard has come a long way.

Stepping in for Carrie Dermeikis, Literacy Specialist Melissa Harvey began her presentation with a video of Dr. Rudine Bishop Simms who spoke about the importance of diverse books through which students can see themselves in this more than ever diverse world. Dr. Bishop is the author of *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors* in which the mirrors represent a reflection of the students, the windows allow the students to see other worlds in comparison to their own, and the sliding glass door allows students the opportunity to enter those worlds.

In one of the 6th grade English classes towards the end of the 2022-2023 school year, the teacher asked her students to assess the books on her shelves to determine if the classroom library offered windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors to the students. The books were reviewed by who was on the cover, who was the main character, and who was the author. Independent reading is encouraged, particularly with diverse, inclusive and positive literature through funding by the Wayland PTO and the Wayland Public Schools Foundation. Literature Circle books are also

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – March 13, 2024

introduced and contain neuro-diverse main characters, such as *Anything but Typical* and *Granny Torrell Makes Soup*. Anchor Picture Books, such as *Snack Attack* and *Jabari Jumps*, are used to teach different reading and writing strategies. A majority of the picture books feature main characters of color and many others are largely neutral through non-human characters, such as animals.

In 7th grade, there are three areas showing a clear focus on diversity, equity, and belonging. The first is through a whole grade novel, *New Kid*, which uses humor and playful graphics to shed light on micro-aggressions and stereo types that one might experience in school. The second is the continual expansion of racially and culturally diverse main characters within the fantasy genre study. And third, there is a new interdisciplinary unit that brings attention to the global refugee crisis and the struggles that the immigrants endure. Some of the book choices are *New Kid*, *Nowhere Boy* and *Amari*.

There are four basics in the 8th grade year that look to promote understanding and empathy through literature across diverse experiences. Melissa noted that the teachers offer deliberately chosen excerpts from many authors that are reflective of the students in the classrooms. Additional efforts are the use of the book, *Look Both Ways* and a study of their house mentor Martin Luther King, Jr. and his ideas. New this year are a collection of Literature Circle novels that show the many ways that individual identities can evolve despite prevailing social narratives which can either strengthen, undermine, establish or erase these identities. Some examples of books are *All Thirteen*, *Look Both Ways*, and *I Must Betray You*. Lastly, belonging is reflected through writing assignments and mentor text topics; Melissa explained.

High School:

Social Studies Department Head and teacher Dave Schmirer presented a case study of the 11th grade classrooms in which students feel a sense of belonging while being their authentic selves. David noted that the best way to create this environment is through U.S. History classes where immigration is studied, such as the Ellis Island arrivals of European children, some coming alone, in the 1890's and beyond. Moving forward to the present, there are unaccompanied immigrant children arriving every day from Central and South America at the Southern border. Dave explained how "representation, relevance, engagement, and belonging" is accomplished in the classroom, starting with students interviewing their own families about their immigration stories and representing about 21 different countries, thus, engaging with family members. From these interviews, the students conduct their own research for a better understanding of their country of origin, the factors leading to the immigration process, and the ability to make connections through other stories.

Dave provided an overview of Social Studies by grade level:

- 9th grade: Modern World History which studies the Holocaust and Genocide
- 10th grade: US I
- 11th grade: US II includes a Civics project
- 12th grade: Electives that include Psychology, Criminal Justice Studies, Race & Racism, AP Gov, AP Euro, and Business and Innovation

Department Head and English teacher Peter Galalis presented the ways in which ELA classes focus on belonging in the classroom through reading and writing. Aside from teacher selected whole class reading about 50% of the time, newly integrated is a book group approach in which the book is chosen by the student in order to create a sense of belonging.

Christina Rodrigo left the meeting at 7:05 p.m.; returned at 7:09 p.m.

Daily independent reading in class for about the first 10 minutes of class has continued for many years as well, also with books of the students' choice. Poems and short stories are also included in the curriculum. Peter reviewed and highlighted sample book titles in all four grades that represent belonging through literature, some of them fairly new additions. Students write about belonging in which they develop a student voice for many situations through telling stories, expressing themselves and reflecting, informing and explaining, evaluating and judging, inquiring and exploring, analyzing and interpreting resulting in taking a stand and proposing solutions. Student voices are valued in various ways at each grade level through reflective writing, personal narratives, research projects, and admissions essays, etc.; Peter explained. A discussion followed the presentation.

Erin Gibbons left the meeting at 7:24 p.m.; returned at 7:26 p.m.

Erin Mueller left the meeting at 7:25 p.m.; returned at 7:27 p.m.

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 13, 2024

4. **Administrative Matters:**

4.1 *Wayland Public Schools Foundation Mid-Year Update Report:*

Ellen Grieco highlighted the ongoing fundraising efforts of the WPSF that includes the New Year’s Eve Bash partnering with the Villa and Wayland Dads, the Spelling Bee, Wednesdays at the Villa, and Hats Off. They continually support teachers’ innovative ideas in an effort to provide new experiences for the students. The next grant review is next week all of which will be reported to the School Committee at a future meeting.

4.2 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve the 7th Grade Wonder Week Trip Proposal:*

Upon a motion duly made by Christina Rodrigo, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 7th Grade Wonder Week field trip as presented in the materials provided. A roll call vote was taken as follows.

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Erin Gibbons, Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Erin Mueller	X	
Christina Rodrigo	X	

4.3 *High School Field Update:*

This agenda item was passed over.

4.4 *TEC Update:*

This agenda item was passed over.

5. **Financial Matters:**

5.1 *FY25 Operating and Capital Budgets Update:*

Susan Bottan reported that the Finance Committee may vote on the FY25 operating budget next Monday, March 18. The Finance Committee may also revoke the capital budget based on status updates of existing capital projects from the Assistant Town Manager.

5.2 *Discussion of Use of ARPA Funds for Full Day Kindergarten in FY25 and Possible Vote to Adjust FY25 Proposed Budget to Reflect Said Funding:*

David shared new information as of today regarding Full Day Kindergarten. He reiterated his budget proposal to offer Full Day Kindergarten without tuition for FY25 with the help of Chapter 70 funding in FY26. With the support of the Select Board, the Town Administrator and Finance Director, ARPA funds are available to fund FDK (\$535,000) in FY25; however, this is not a recurring fund. In terms of Chapter 70 funding for Wayland, the school district was classified as a Foundation Aid district; however, that has changed to a Minimum Aid district and will affect the funding from FY26 onward. There is a range of Foundation Aid criteria. State data takes into consideration the economics of students in terms of financial aid for transportation and free and reduced lunch, the average income of communities, and housing values, etc. Districts’ status can shift again, but it would not be known until the next budget cycle. Susan explained further three of the deciding factors, such as the decrease in inflation, the property values, and residents’ incomes.

Erin Gibbons added that many districts face this same challenge and suggested having a representative from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to discuss this issue at a future meeting. The challenge is to sustain the funding for FDK in future years with the least impact to the taxpayers. According to the guidelines, FDK must be removed from the FY25 budget, thus reducing the budget, if using the ARPA funds. A discussion ensued. The Schools and Town will enter into a grant agreement for the use of the ARPA funds.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Christina Rodrigo, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to accept the ARPA funding, reduce the operating budget by \$535,769, to remove Full Day Kindergarten from the operating budget, and to approve the contract with the Town subject to Murphy, Hesse, Toomey & Lehane’s approval and to authorize Erin Gibbons to sign it. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 13, 2024

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Erin Gibbons, Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Erin Mueller	X	
Christina Rodrigo	X	

There will be an update in two weeks.

5.3 *Review and Possible Vote to Approve Special Revenue Fund Budgets for FY25:*

Susan reported that there are some highlights about issues identified in projecting out the multi-year budget for special revenue funds, such as The Children's Way (TCW) projections. Since TCW became part of the Wayland Public Schools, this model has increased the difficulty to be self-sufficient and to raise funds to cover benefits and OPEB costs. Moving forward, if the program covers the benefits and OPEB costs next year, the TCW budget will be in deficit by \$50,000. Susan asked the School Committee to consider a new calculation for the benefits and OPEB expense or to eliminate this expense altogether as was done for Full Day Kindergarten. The Town could ultimately pick up this expense. TCW staffing is a little lower due to decreased enrollment. A discussion ensued regarding next steps, including why this issue was not anticipated.

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Mueller, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Special Revenue funds for FY25 and fees as proposed. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Erin Gibbons, Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Erin Mueller	X	
Christina Rodrigo	X	

5.4 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Transfer from SPED Reserve Fund to Operating Budget for FY24:*
Susan does not recommended this as noted.

5.5 *Approval of Special Education Transportation Expense:*

Susan recommended moving the transportation expense from the operating budget to the SPED reserve fund in the amount of \$150,000, as it charges the fund for monies directly set aside for use of Special Ed transportation. An expense transfer form will be completed for the purpose of moving the \$150,000 in transportation expenses incurred so far this year to the reserve fund. Susan noted that it is anticipated that \$1.1M will be spent on transportation, but only \$690,000 has been budgeted.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Mueller, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to transfer the \$150,000 of Special Education transportation expenses to the Special Education Reserve Fund. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Erin Gibbons, Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Erin Mueller	X	
Christina Rodrigo	X	

6. **Consent Agenda:**

- 6.1 Approval of Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants:
- 6.2 Approval of Minutes: February 28, 2024

Upon a motion duly moved by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Christina Rodrigo, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 13, 2024

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Erin Gibbons, Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Erin Mueller	X	
Christina Rodrigo	X	

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

None.

9. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Gibbons, seconded by Erin Mueller, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 8:11 p.m. for the purposes of (a) approving executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: February 28, 2024 with the intent to also review and potentially release with redactions said minutes and (b) a discussion and possible vote with respect to the collective bargaining agreement with the public employees' local union no. 1116 – custodians and maintenance personnel, pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3). A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Erin Gibbons, Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Erin Mueller	X	
Christina Rodrigo	X	

The School Committee will be joined by David Fleishman, Acting Superintendent, Susan Botton, Director of Finance & Operations, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

The School Committee will reconvene in open session to announce the vote regarding the Custodial Collective Bargaining Agreement.

10. **Open Session:** Announce the Vote taken by the School Committee regarding Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Public Employees' Local Union No. 1116 – Custodians and Maintenance Personnel:

At 8:28 p.m., Erin Gibbons announced that the School Committee took a vote to approve the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Public Employees' Local Union No. 1116 – Custodians and Maintenance Personnel.

11. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Christina Rodrigo, the Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Erin Gibbons, Chair	X	
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Erin Mueller	X	
Christina Rodrigo	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Gibbons, Chair
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Wayland Public Schools Foundation Flyer/Summary
3. WMS 7th Grade "Wonder Week" Trip Proposal
4. Memo re: Fee-Based Special Revenue Funds FY21-FY27

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 13, 2024

5. Special Education Transportation Expense Transfer
6. Payroll & Accounts Payables Warrants
7. Minutes of February 28, 2024
8. Executive Session Motion