

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 27, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. at the Wayland Town Building

Present:

Erin Gibbons, Chair
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair
Ellen Grieco
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:

Abby Shute, Town of Wayland Procurement Officer
Pat Keefe, Director of Wayland School Community Programs
George Uveges, Board of Public Works

1. Welcome & Call to Order:

Chair Erin Gibbons called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded by WayCAM.

The School Committee shared their school experiences over the past two weeks. Jeanne Downs attended the Happy Hollow Talent Show and Taylor Swift was the most popular act. Erin Mueller attended the Claypit Hill Art Show prior to this meeting and it was a beautiful event. Christina Rodrigo attended the very informative SEL talk at Claypit Hill last evening at which about 50 families attended noting that the Middle School SEL talk was well attended also. Christina recommended that people listen to the recording of the evening's program.

2. Public Comment:

George Uveges of the Board of Public Works entered a letter to the School Committee into public comment regarding the cleanup at 195 Main Street.

Kaelyn Phillips, 8 Wayside Road, believes that if there isn't a solution to provide after school care, it will force parents to leave the workforce or to put a child in front of a screen as babysitters. Women's problems are real problems. She has run out of all options, and the School Committee and the community needs to stand up, make this issue a priority, do what is right for the families who need help because lotteries and waitlists are not working.

Mark Pries, 23 Plain Road, commented that he and his wife moved into Wayland for the schools and they are both working parents. His son is starting Kindergarten in the fall, but they have been waitlisted for BASE and Longfellow; thus, they do not have an after school plan or family to which they can turn for help. If this issue is not resolved, he may have to leave Wayland.

Christine Abely, 223 Glezen Lane, commented that she and her husband both work, and she wants to make sure that there is the right tone and attention toward women and their jobs; they are real. She believes that women are being talked down to, told about what their jobs require and what women need. If this problem is not resolved for families, some women may have to quit their jobs.

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William Kugler, 31 Old Tavern Road, is the parent of a rising Kindergartner and noted that this crucial issue of childcare has gone on for many years and needs to be addressed. Given the waitlists and incorrect information from Camp Chickami, it is all causing much stress, as his family does not have a plan. This also raises questions about whether these issues are real or imagined. Sharing the responsibilities, his wife will most likely be impacted given the pressures women face in the workplace.

Ashley Fuller, 31 Concord Road, was lucky enough to get into the Camp Chickami after school program, but the needs of other families are not being met and has created much stress and pressure for those families. Families are asking for 360 hours a year of after school care, which she was told when entering the schools that all of the needs of families would be met. She noted that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees states that the School Committee is responsible to engage in the advocacy of the students.

Tim Schmitz, 13 Bald Rock Road, has an upcoming Kindergartner and commented that it is important that the School Committee commits to making sure that every family gets after school care, as families depend on the schools to fill the gaps where the private sector does not. He also asked for more guidance and clarification in the application process for the different options.

Amanda Shaw, 2 Bow Road, was a parent who helped implement Parents for After School Solutions (PASS) in 2023 and at that time there were 200 spots available for incoming Kindergartners. However, this did not solve this issue, as 98 children are still on the waitlist. The economic and personal impact to the families in the room and at home is huge. It's important that no assumptions are made and that questions are asked. She added that Concord, Framingham and Needham have in-house programs with very little or no wait. Families expect empathy, curiosity, and the School Committee's help in making positive changes. She thanked the School Committee for adding this topic to its agenda.

Fridrik Karlsson, 4 Lakespur, simply stated that if the after school programming cannot be fixed, then there is no excellent school system in Wayland as this issue cannot be separate.

3. **Special Matter:**

Presentation by the Energy and Climate Committee regarding Town Meeting Warrant Article W regarding the Loker Elementary Rooftop Solar Project:

Abby Shute, Sustainability Manager for the Town of Wayland, came before the School Committee regarding Warrant Article W seeking approval to amend the approved Warrant Article 18 from Town Meeting 2021. The article would authorize the Select Board to extend the length of the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) terms from 20 to 25 years that would allow the Town to receive stable and low cost electricity resulting in significant savings. Ms. Shute explained further, adding that based on the size of the project, the kilowatts translates into 30% of Loker School's annual renewable energy usage, and there could be a savings of over \$100,000 over the term of the agreement. The new Loker roof has a 30 year warranty, and the vendor will conduct an appropriate installation on a portion of the roof with little or no disruption to school activities. One concern and arguments opposed is that the solar company may not be in business 25 years from now; however, other companies who are in existence can take over, such as Ameresco. Solar panels would be placed on a portion of the roof and can last for 25 years and would be the responsibility of the vendor. The cost savings could be an additional \$16,000 by extending the 20 year lease to 25 years based on current projections. Solect Energy is the current vendor and has provided a letter of intent. A discussion ensued.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Mueller, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to support the Loker Solar Warrant Article W.

4. **Acting Superintendent Update:**

4.1 *Discussion regarding After School Care:*

David expressed his empathy to the families, as he was one of these parents that relied on afterschool care when his children were young. This is the first district that he has worked in that runs after school programs, as usually non-profit organizations run these programs. These types of programs are tuition based and are run like a small business with revolving accounts; school budgets are not used. The goal is to have programs that are stimulating, include academics, offer SEL supports, and are self-sustainable. It is important to have the staffing and the space/infrastructure in order for these programs to successfully run. David announced that he will form a working group of community members to find a path forward.

Pat Keefe, Director of Wayland School Community Programs (WSCP), apologized for her comments she made at the March 22 Finance Subcommittee meeting. She recognizes the stress that parents feel and the importance of

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after school programs. She has worked over the past ten years to improve this situation and she will continue to do so until she retires on September 30. Pat agreed that Longfellow, Camp Chickami and REC PASS have all made an impact, but more needs to be done. The current options include K-5 BASE programs at three elementary schools, The Children's Way preschool, K-5 at Camp Chickami and Longfellow. BASE supported transportation is provided for Camp Chickami, and there is a requirement of a 5 day schedule until 6:00 p.m. while honoring the same fee as BASE.

Pat explained the registration process for current BASE families and rising Kindergartners, the 2024-25 BASE lottery application process and notification, as well as the re-registration of current families and siblings for Metrowest YMCA's *School's Out Wayland* at Camp Chickami which tried to fill the needs of some the waitlisted families. If a family has been in BASE but then drops out, they must go through the lottery process if they want to get back in. The All Schools News will publish information about the lottery and all families will be notified of their enrollment or waitlist status by May 1. A discussion ensued about the Camp Chickami agreement.

The capacity for BASE has changed over the years for several reasons, such as finding qualified staff and retaining them and the school start time changes. The size of the program is similar but the need has changed and increased to about 30% more families. The student to teacher ratio went from the preferred 7:1 to now 9:1. Pat explained the capacity issue when 4th and 5th grade students were bussed to the Middle School; however, the dismissal time changed that created other issues for families. COVID also played into the capacity change and the non-return of staff. Recently, the wage increased for BASE staff, and Pat hopes to attract more new people. It was suggested to implement a survey to families who have left the program, to revisit the issue of giving TCW children priority registration in BASE, and to raise wages even more if it will attract more capable staff. A discussion ensued about the options of getting information out to families, such as using the website or sending emails, collaborating with the Town's website, including providing links for other program options for Enrichment programs offered by WSCP. The Enrichment programs run for one hour after dismissal and vendors are brought into the district. The REC PASS programs are run by the Town's Recreation Department after dismissal for 90 minutes.

In an effort to increase capacity, a working group of community stakeholders will be formed. Its charge will be to expand after-school offerings to families who need it and to consolidate information and resources so that is easily accessible. Loker Principal Brian Jones will facilitate the working group and its members will be announced by April 10. David will provide an update.

4.2 *Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve the Student Opportunity Act:*

David began by saying that a few years ago, the State legislature approved legislation that would distribute additional resources to the 35 districts who had students who were most disadvantaged. As part of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA), most districts did not get as much funding, thus, these lesser funded districts were asked to develop plans of how they are addressing and supporting their students. All districts must submit these SOA plans to the State on a three-year cycle with annual progress updates submitted in subsequent years. David noted that attendance is a huge concern for districts across demographics post-COVID and this report addresses this issue.

Betsy noted that the SOA is a subset of the District Improvement Plan. This is Wayland's second SOA plan, as the first was drafted during COVID and focused on hiring a more diverse staff; Betsy explained. One focus for this plan will be MCAS data. Betsy explained the data around MCAS performance in different student sub-groups grades 3-8 and grade 10, as shown pre-COVID and post-COVID, for White and Asian Americans, Black/African/Americans, low income and students with disabilities who are on an IEP. Betsy and Debbie clarified those students with disabilities. Betsy commented that some of the sub-groups are very small, and the EL students are doing better than in most districts. She further compared the subgroups to all Wayland students, noting that the subgroups did not have the same outcomes or experience but, in some cases, the gaps were closer and better. Some students are in multiple categories.

Chronic absenteeism is an issue among these subgroups which is when a student misses 18+ days of school, which is an issue that the district wants to understand better over the next three years as it varies in the different subgroups. There could be some mental health barriers, such as anxiety or depression, causing absenteeism; thus, the district wants to see which mental health supports are in place and available, including evidence-based practices that will improve absenteeism. Other local data includes DIBELS, iReady data, other local assessments, course grades, course levels, behavioral referrals, and anecdotal data from students.

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Wayland's chosen strategic objective "to cultivate systems to support the whole student and foster joyful, healthy, and supportive learning environments so that all students feel valued, connected, nourished and ready to learn" aligned with the work that is being prepared and being done this year. The two evidence-based programming focus areas will be around Effective Student Support Systems and Comprehensive Tiered Supports in order to implement a multi-tiered system of supports helping students to progress academically and in their social, emotional and behavioral development. Betsy reviewed and explained the actions, a new student information system, a data analytic system, etc. that are necessary to implement over the next three years. In addition to continuing the work already in place, key multi-tiered systems of support will be strengthened and implemented to work most efficiently. This will involve hiring more of the appropriate staff and staff professional development, selecting and implementing SEL curriculum, as well as implementation coordination in all three areas.

There will be a measurement tool to determine if the district's efforts are working, such as measuring student data and the MTSS implementation data. The State requested to use the lowest-performing MCAS students in those subgroups to determine if progress goals are being met, as well as using attendance data and monitoring student grades and other local assessments. A discussion ensued.

Erin Gibbons left the meeting at 8:17; returned at 8:19.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Student Opportunity Act Plan as presented tonight.

4.3 *Vote to Approve the Acting Superintendent's Recommendation for Director of Student Services:*

David noted that much time in March has been devoted to principal searches and central office administrative searches with the goal of being complete by the end of March. In terms of the Director of Student Services search, David worked with Wayland educators, the SEPAC Chair, and a principal on the Selection Advisory Committee (SAC). After a lengthy process, two finalists emerged, Laura Spear and Ronnie Kessler. Based on the SAC's feedback, David recommended Ronnie Kessler who is currently our Assistant Director of Student Services to begin on July 1, 2024. Since July 2023, Ronnie has built trustful relationships, is a great listener, she knows how to be resourceful, she is a supportive leader, is committed to meet the needs of students, and is a true problem solver. Debbie Dixon, the current Interim Director of Student Services, will continue on a part-time basis and will provide support. As part of the parent interview, Christina shared her positive feedback about Ronnie and agreed with David's recommendation.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Mueller, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve David's recommendation of appointing Ronnie Kessler as the next Director of Student Services.

5. **Administrative Matters:**

5.1 *Discussion regarding Cleanup of 195 Main Street: (taken out of order after 4.1):*

Erin Gibbons reviewed the letter sent to the School Committee from the Board of Public Works who is asking the School Committee and the School Department to clean up the items that have been stored at 195 Main Street, such as shipping containers with school materials, sailing boats and trailers. Together with the Assistant Town Manager John Bugbee, Susan Bottan has begun the process to address this issue. Mr. Bugbee has advertised the contents of the shipping containers, which are rented, in an effort to sell them through government bids on the websites. The sailboats need to find a home or they need to be placed and out of the way to avoid vandalism. George Uveges from the Board of Public Works was present and a discussion ensued. The School Committee agreed to send a formal response to Cliff Lewis of the Board of Public Works with a timeline for the cleanup.

5.2 *High School Field Update:*

This agenda item was passed over.

5.3 *The Education Cooperative Update:*

As a member of the TEC board this year, Erin Mueller updated the School Committee noting that TEC has published their Annual Audit Report. The Education Cooperative is located in Walpole and provides education and support for students with complex learning needs, as well as providing and creating professional development for students and staff. Erin described other benefits for Wayland as a member district. A discussion ensued.

5.4 *Discussion of Acting Superintendent's Evaluation Timeline:*

The Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee developed an evaluation timeline for the School Committee. A

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discussion ensued about past processes. Erin Gibbons suggested a scaled back process, since there will be a superintendent search later this year. Also suggested was a community survey in terms of the next superintendent search.

6. Financial Matters:

6.1 *Full Day Kindergarten Funding Update:*

Based on the discussion at the last meeting in this regard, Erin Gibbons is awaiting feedback from school counsel about the ARPA funding agreement after which she will review. David noted that the goal is to have as much information as possible in terms of sustainability of FDK funding, as well as the community's status around State aid. Erin reported that the Finance Committee voted to approve the proposed FY25 School operating budget as it was presented.

6.2 *The Children's Way Budget Update:*

At the last Finance Subcommittee meeting at which Brian Keveny was in attendance, the Subcommittee and Brian discussed ways in which to cover expenses in an effort to reduce the indirect benefit cost going forward to turn The Children's Way deficit into a positive. The School Committee reviewed a proposed recommendation for TCW FY25 budget revisions. Susan Bottan explained the new calculations/revisions that will sustain TCW for the next three years. The benefits calculation was revised and reduced to \$78,000 from \$143,764 resulting in a \$65,000 difference which will be paid by the Town. A discussion ensued about the financial model and decreasing enrollment. The financial model will be discussed at a future meeting.

In order for the Town to make up the \$65,000 difference for FY25, Susan presented a solution from Town Finance Director Brian Keveny. At a previous meeting, the School Committee voted to return \$198,000 from unpaid BASE benefits from FY22 to Free Cash to repay an unpaid application for FY22. However, the Town is now recommending that the School Committee votes again to move \$65,764 of the \$198,000 to FY25 indirect expenses with the balance going to Free Cash.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Jeanne Downs, that of the \$198,195 repayment, School Committee agrees and voted unanimously (5-0) to transfer \$65,764 to FY25 Indirect Expenses and the balance of \$132,431 to Free Cash.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the updated Children's Way budget as proposed.

6.3 *FY25 Operating and Capital Budgets Update:*

As announced in agenda item 6.1 by Erin Gibbons, FinCom approved the FY25 School operating budget.

6.4 *Discussion of Upcoming Budget Hearing:*

The Budget Hearing will be on April 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

7. Consent Agenda:

7.1 Approval of Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants:

7.2 Approval of Minutes: March 13, 2024

7.3 Approval and Declaration of Surplus Property to be Sold, Recycled, or Disposed of in Accordance with Laws and Regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

Jeanne suggested edits to the March 13, 2024 minutes.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Christina Rodrigo, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda with Jeanne's edits to the minutes.

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 9:17 p.m. for the purposes of (a) approving executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: March 13, 2024 and October 24, 2023 with the intent to also review said for potential redaction and release for

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said minutes and (b) reviewing executive session minutes for possible redaction and release, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: October 18, 2023, October 24, 2023, November 1, 2023, November 15, 2023, November 29, 2023, December 13, 2023, January 3, 2024, January 10, 2024 and February 14, 2024. 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 not be joined by any others.

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

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the Committee voted unanimously (3-0) to adjourn at 9:45 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Gibbons, Chair
Wayland School Committee

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Presentation re: After School Care
3. Student Opportunity Act Plan Final Draft
4. Student Opportunity Act Plan Presentation
5. Letter re: 195 Main Street Cleanup
6. The Children's Way FY25 Budget & Request for Re-vote
7. BASE Request for Re-vote
8. Payroll & Accounts Payables Warrants
9. Minutes of March 13, 2024
10. Declaration of Surplus Equipment
11. Executive Session Motion