

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – March 15, 2023

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, March 15, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. at Wayland High School Lecture Hall, South Building 2nd Floor.

Present:

Chris Ryan, Chair
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair
Jeanne Downs
Erin Gibbons
Jessica Polizzotti

Also present:

Parry Graham
Acting Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent

Tom Lafleur
Director of Finance & Operations

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.

School Committee members shared their recent school related experiences. Jeanne commented that the Water Warriors program started up again, as it was suspended due to COVID in 2020. High School students give swim lessons to the Boston students, and it is a great program. Jess gave a shout out to kids participating in Band Fest this evening, adding that she attended the Chorus Concert last week which was also wonderful.

2. Public Comment:

Jeff Sklar, Brooks Road, asked the following questions: Did the School Committee put Dr. Easy on leave, how long will it last and what criteria will determine the end of the leave? What is the status of the investigative report and when will it be released? Mr. Sklar publicly made a public records request for all of the billing related to the investigation. He asked why Ellen Grieco has recused herself from the votes around the school budgets and Special Education. Finally, Mr. Sklar asked the School Committee to amend their practices in terms of transparency, as there have been four Open Meeting Law complaints in a short period of time.

3. Special Matter – School Budget Hearing:

3.1 Presentation of School Committee Recommended FY24 Budget:

Chris Ryan opened the Budget Hearing at 6:08 p.m. The budget presentation began with a review of the School Committee Mission, the District Mission Statement, and the School Committee Budget Goal. The FY23 budget appropriation was \$47,164,770. However, there was a significant increase in Special Education out-of-district placements (44) and transportation which occurred after the budget was approved with funds from the SpED prepay and Circuit Breaker alleviating some of these expenses. However, these funds will not be available in FY24, given there is no remaining balance. Special Education is a major budget driver.

Chris reviewed the FY24 budget process that began in the Fall of 2022 through February 2023 during which the Superintendent presented his FY24 recommended budget in the amount of \$50,001,482, a 6% increase (8.3% adjusted) from FY23. This does not reflect the COLA increases for FY24. The utilities budget was moved to the Town's unclassified section of its budget; he explained. In January, adjustments were made to the budget given the Town's request to reduce the budget by just under \$600,000. Thus, Full Day Kindergarten and the proposed Middle School new staff increases/FTEs were removed reducing the proposed budget to \$49,403,195. In February, after discussions with the School Committee and administrators, the Finance Committee voted a budget of \$48,803,195 resulting in an additional \$600,000 reduction from the school operating budget. The reductions voted by the School Committee were from SpED transportation and two proposed new positions for next year. Chris explained further, including the possible transportation reimbursement from the State.

Chris noted that although the SpED out of district placements are estimated to be about 37 next year from 44 this year, the private placement tuition costs have increased by fourteen percent. In addition, the approved FY23 operating budget did not anticipate the number of out of district placements which are an obligation of the schools in educating these students.

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The Special Education Reserve Fund allows school districts to pay future expenses for unanticipated or unbudgeted SpED costs, such as out-of-district tuition, transportation, and recovery high school tuition. As written in the warrant article and pending approval at Town Meeting, the Finance Committee voted to fund this fund with \$150,000.

The FY24 capital improvement requests total \$600,088 and include district-wide fire alarm control panels/smoke detectors and district-wide replacement of food service equipment. Also included in the capital budget are elementary math curriculum materials and equipment which covers teacher and student materials, software and professional development. Chris described the pilot process to acquire funds since April 2022.

An overview of enrollment, FTE's and unmet needs was also presented.

A Q & A proceeded with questions from the audience around permanent subs vs. daily subs, funding for Restorative Justice Training, and SEL programs.

Chris Ryan closed the Budget Hearing at 6:44 p.m.

3.2 *Open Discussion regarding School Committee Recommended FY24 Budget:*

The School Committee discussed the draft budget booklet that will be provided to the public prior to Town Meeting as prepared by Jeanne. She will work with Erin and the School Committee will review it at the next meeting.

Ellen left the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

Upon a motion by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0) (Ellen Grieco recused herself from the vote) to approve the revised recommended budget of \$48,803,195 for FY24. 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		Recusal
Jeanne Downs	X	
Erin Gibbons	X	
Jess Polizzotti	X	

Ellen returned to the meeting at 6:49 p.m.

4. **Acting Superintendent Update:**

4.1 *Discussion and Vote to Approve the 2023 Submission of the Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority Core Program:*

The School Committee reviewed the draft of the 2023 Statement of Interest with one change around the date of Town Meeting. Tom Lafleur commented that if a district is not selected to be a part of the program the prior year, the district must reapply. The required vote must be worded as provided by the MSBA.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) as follows: Resolved: Having convened in open meeting on March 15, 2023, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of Wayland, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 15, 2023 for the Claypit Hill School located at Adams Lane, Wayland, Massachusetts which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future priorities 2, 4, and 5; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Wayland to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Erin left the meeting at 6:55 p.m.; returned at 6:58 p.m.

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4.2 *Highlighting District Wide Events:*

Parry Graham highlighted and described the district-wide events that have happened or will be soon, such as Family Math Night, Wayland Sings, the String Jamboree, and Band Fest. Dr. Graham thanked all those involved in preparing for and participating in these events.

4.3 *Updates on Leadership Hiring Process:*

Parry Graham updated the School Committee about the hiring processes, the person who will lead each search, and the timelines for several leadership positions. The positions are the Happy Hollow principal, interim Middle School principal, interim Assistant Superintendent, interim Director of Student Services, and interim Director of Finance & Operations. Dr. Graham asked the School Committee to delegate him to form the screening committee for the interim Director of Finance & Operations with one School Committee member participating in this search. A discussion ensued in this regard.

5. **Financial Matters:**

5.1 *Discussion and Review of FY23 Budget vs. Actual to Date:*

The School Committee reviewed three reports provided by Tom Lafleur regarding the status of the FY23 year-to-date budget, grants, and special revenue funds. It is anticipated that 98.7% will have been spent or encumbered for this year's budget, including all payroll, through June 30. A discussion ensued with questions from the Committee about personnel and non-personnel expenses, grants, Circuit Breaker, custodial overtime, the hockey revolving fund, and legal fees. A discussion followed about School Committee legal fees and Special Education legal fees from the same budget line. It was decided to move the Special Education legal fees into the Special Education budget for FY24 and beyond. The School Committee asked for quarterly financial reports going forward.

5.2 *Discussion and Vote to Approve the FY23 Grants:*

- Innovation Pathway Planning Grant (\$25,000)
- Financial Literacy Planning & Implementation Grant (\$15,000)
- Teacher Diversification Grant (\$7,923)

This agenda item was passed over until March 29.

6. **Administrative Matters:**

6.1 *School Committee Communications:*

The School Committee discussed and reviewed the statement that Chris Ryan read at the last meeting on behalf of the entire Committee, as he recommended that it be sent to families and staff. A discussion ensued in this regard, including the goal of the communication. Edits were suggested, discussed, and made to the statement.

7. **Consent Agenda:**

8.1 Robotics Donation (\$1,000)

8.2 Approval of Accounts Payables Warrants:

- Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated March 15, 2023, in the amount of \$647,169.75

8.3 Approval of Minutes: December 22, 2021, March 1, 2023, March 9, 2023

Jeanne will send the edits to the minutes to Diane.

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Gibbons, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda with the revisions that Jeanne will send to Diane.

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

Ellen Grieco presented a matter not anticipated about the potential equity audit in the Town as presented by the Human Rights Diversity Equity & Inclusion Committee (HRDEIC) of which she and Erin are liaisons. The HRDEIC would like to include the schools in this audit. Ellen spoke to the Assistant Town Manager about including the schools in the audit. This process would be more detailed for the schools, as noted and described in an email from Mr. Bugbee and read by Ellen. She asked the School Committee if they would like to include the schools in the equity audit to the extent that the Town funds will allow. The timeline was discussed, including the process and information that would be included for the schools, as there could be a difference between a municipal and school audit.

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Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to request that the school district be added to the equity audit currently under consideration by the Town and that the Schools be included in the RFP process to the extent that it is practicable given the funding that is available for this stage of the audit.

9. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Chris Ryan, seconded by Jess Polizzotti, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 7:41 p.m. for the purposes of (a) discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Wayland Teachers Association (WTA), Wayland Educational Secretaries Association (WESA), Custodians and Food Service, 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) discussing strategy with respect to negotiations with non-union personnel, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(2), as listed on the agenda and as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee; (c) reviewing and declassifying executive session minutes as listed, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: April 27, 2015, August 21, 2017, March 2, 2022, March 16, 2022, April 13, 2022, April 27, 2022, May 11, 2022, and May 25, 2022; (d) the Committee will pass over approving executive session minutes, pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §22: March 1, 2022; (e) 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)(1), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the position of the School Committee; (f) reviewing the response to the March 8, 2023 Open Meeting Law complaint filed by George Harris, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(1), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the position of the School Committee; 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 (Easy v. Wayland School Committee, et al. MCAD Complaint). 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	

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:

<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:

John Pierce, Consult
Kim Reichelt, 11 Coolidge Road
Jeff and Robin Sklar, 18 Brooks Road

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Erin Mueller, 3 Pine Ridge Road
Lorraine Horgan, Happy Hollow School

Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda
2. Draft FY24 Budget Booklet
3. FY24 Budget Hearing Presentation
4. Draft MSBA Statement of Interest
5. Template for School Committee Vote
6. Year-to-Date Budget Report
7. Grant Status Report
8. Special Revenue Funds Status Report
9. WHS Robotics Donation
10. Accounts Payables Warrant
11. Minutes of December 22, 2021
12. Minutes of March 1, 2023
13. Minutes of March 9, 2023
14. Executive Session Motion