

# MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – October 18, 2023

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Wednesday, October 18, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. at the Wayland Town Building

*Present:*

Erin Gibbons, Chair  
Jeanne Downs, Vice Chair  
Ellen Grieco  
Erin Mueller  
Christina Rodrigo (arrived at 6:09 p.m.)

*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:* SEPAC Co-Chairs: Courtney Conery and Katy Andrus

Karyn Saxon, K-5 ELA/SS Curriculum Director  
Liliana Smith, Spanish Immersion Curriculum Coordinator  
Ben Keefe, Director of Public Buildings

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

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

School Committee members highlighted their district experiences since the last meeting. Erin Mueller attended the Loker School and The Children’s Way (TCW) parent communications sessions as the School Committee liaison, and had a tour of TCW. Ellen Grieco attended the “No Hate Tour” which was presented by the U.S. Marine Corp. at Wayland High School on October 6. Christina Rodrigo announced that a Happy Hollow student received the “Act of Kindness” Award.

2. **Public Comment:**

Dave Bernstein, 25 Glezen Lane, referred to the turf field report from October 2021 and the downsides of turf fields that can cause health issues, such as cancer and birth defects. He commented that the moratorium called for an investigation because of the threats to one’s health and the environment; it will expire in January 2025. He noted some examples of injuries while playing on the turf field. Mr. Bernstein added that climate change makes the situation worse. A warrant article will be presented at the next Town Meeting to ban turf fields in Wayland moving forward, and it will prevent a replacement turf field when the life of the existing field expires. Finally, Mr. Bernstein noted Wayland needs a multi-year plan with an expense and capital budget to bring all grass fields to their optimal state.

3. **Special Matter:**

3.1 *Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) Annual Survey Results Presentation:*

Co-chairs Courtney Conery and Katy Andrus presented the results from the annual 2022-2023 SEPAC Google survey. Every public school district in Massachusetts is required to have a SEPAC that is assigned an advisory and participatory function by the State. They are also required to meet monthly with Special Education district leaders. SEPAC must also advise the School Committee on matters related to the education and safety of students with disabilities. The overall mission is to help foster an innovative educational environment where all students with special needs have equal access to education and a school environment where they can reach their full potential. Data was collected in March 2023 and all responses were anonymous.

Families who don’t have children on an IEP currently were invited to participate as well. Three hundred and fifteen families responded to the survey, 172 had children with IEP’s, and 5% of families who responded had children who

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were placed out of the district. The majority of the responses came from Loker School families. ADHD was identified the most at 37% and followed by specific learning disabilities at 23%, such as dyslexia and autism. About 20% of families are waiting for diagnosis/disability identification to move forward with an IEP or 504. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the evaluation process.

Mrs. Conery reviewed what families considered to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Special Education Department. Strengths include the dedication, commitment and advocacy of the staff across the district and the effort to include disabled students and educate others in the “Just Like Me” program. Some of the weaknesses/concerns, according to parents, include the lack of a permanent Student Services Director as well as some staff, testing concerns, concerns about the IEP/504 process, a lack of training for staff, dissatisfaction of out-of-district placements, and a lack of transparency. In addition, about 44% of respondents feel there is confusion and a lack of transparency around RTI and MTSS (Multi-tiered System Support) to which the district is moving as recommended by DESE. Parents would like more information and communication about MTSS. However, most are satisfied with the special education services.

In terms of Executive Functioning (EF) concerns, more than half of students with disabilities are impacted with EF issues. Most parents feel that EF is being addressed; however, some families are concerned that the district is not addressing their EF concerns. Mrs. Conery elaborated further and provided a recommendation to evaluate the EF curriculum. The 2023 MCAS scores show a large gap for students with disabilities compared to general education students in ELA for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Overall, about one-third of families feel that their children are making progress, more families feel that their children are making some progress, and a small percentage feel that no progress is being made. However, about 20% of families engage private tutors for mostly math, reading and writing and about 88% of those families have children with IEPs or 504s. SEPAC offered suggestions for making effective progress and closing the achievement gap. SEPAC made some recommendations for the summer program (ESY) and Boost, such as receiving information sooner than May, providing wrap-around childcare for working families, and establishing quality control for these programs given that some families still supplement with tutoring services.

DESE introduced new literacy screening as of July 1, 2023, which identifies children with dyslexia as early as possible, but most K-2 families were unaware of this new screening. The concerns are that dyslexia is not being identified early enough and there aren't enough certified staff for this learning disability. SEPAC's recommendations include early identification of dyslexia, provide dyslexia training for all elementary teachers, and expand equitable language-based services and supports across the district. A discussion ensued about the presentation and questions were asked by the Committee members. It was noted that the prior question around bullying was left out of the survey, and the public was referred to the MetroWest Health Survey 2021 data.

**4. Acting Superintendent Update:**

**4.1 Literacy Update:**

Karyn Saxon and Liliana Smith presented Early Literacy Instruction in the Wayland Public Schools that included the key components of instruction, the implementation of the components, analyzing the data, the Spanish Immersion program and its data, and next steps. Ms. Saxon addressed some of SEPAC's literacy concerns around the tiered system of support, and she is working towards addressing those concerns, adding that the practices continue to evolve when new information is received.

There are five pillars of early literacy and reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension which are used to enable students to become efficient readers. Other views are the “Scarborough Rope of Reading” or the “Simple View of Reading.” The latter is well “supported by research and should be understood as a cognitive theory of reading, not an all-encompassing model.” This view puts word recognition and language comprehension to equal the students' reading comprehension. Karyn explained further. In addition, research teaches strategies that will work for teaching comprehension and the district is looking into how they can be improved. She highlighted two major paradigm shifts that work for teaching comprehension. The first is when students don't follow a scope and sequence when reading; thus, they should be following a specific pattern with decodable books that make more sense. The second shift is looking at how much time is being spent on a particular text – before, during, and after reading. The goals for our readers is to build foundational skills to become proficient readers, read to learn, and to enjoy reading.

*Christina Rodrigo left the meeting at 7:02 p.m.; returned at 7:03 p.m.*

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Following the national model, Massachusetts is moving to a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) which is being implemented in the Wayland schools. Karyn described the MTSS data cycle that begins with screening students three times per year in conjunction with staff meetings to determine if students are meeting the DIBELS benchmarks and which tier of instruction is appropriate, as well as a follow-up process based on progress. Tier 1 support is intensive, Tier 2 is targeted for students who need extra support, and Tier 3 support is universal but not synonymous with special education. Ms. Saxon described each tier of support, including which systems of support are being used for each tier, how many times per week the service is provided, and grade levels.

Liliana Smith described the reading programs for Spanish Immersion, such as Estrellita, the Tier 1 instruction, the accelerated beginning Spanish reading program for K-1 students, which meets the five effective practices and is used five days per week. The Lunita program is for Grade 2 students and it provides explicit skill development in vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. Empowering Writers is also used.

The Summer Bridge Program uses explicit instruction, and there is extra practice with software and skill builders. This program is also available to Spanish Immersion students who use Esperanza and Esc amino al exito, both of which Lilliana described.

In terms of data, Tier 1 instruction is working if 80% of all students are making the DIBELS benchmarks and, if not, is progress being made after three to four months of intervention. Karyn reviewed the K-5 benchmarks for all students from Spring 2023, including those students who made benchmark progress and for those who did not from Fall of 2022 through Winter of 2023. In addition, data from the Fall of 2022 to Spring of 2023 was reviewed for the students who receive intense instruction. Ms. Smith described the framework of the Spanish Immersion program whereby students learn to read and write in Spanish, K-2 students learn all academics in Spanish and are introduced to English in third grade. However, all grade level students are assessed in both languages each year. She presented the DIBELS data as well as a Spanish measurement (mClass) for first grade to fifth grade.

Moving forward, staff continues to implement Foundations and Estrelita while moving toward the full implementation of Heggarty and Empowering Writers. More professional development will be provided to staff in effective reading strategies. A discussion ensued regarding measuring comprehension, MCAS results, and the notification process for students' movement from one tier to another.

4.2 *Preparation for Boston Parent Meeting Scheduled on November 1:*

A discussion ensued about the next School Committee meeting with Boston parents on November 1 at METCO, Inc. The meeting will include introductions and an agenda around the METCO work and initiatives prepared by METCO Director La Toya Rivers. Erin Mueller suggested re-introducing activities that existed at this meeting before COVID. A discussion ensued about a historical case study about the METCO program and its students, as well as the School Committee's prior vote to approve pre-school METCO children to attend The Children's Way.

5. **Administrative Matters:**

5.1 *High School Turf Field Status Update:*

Erin Gibbons reported that there was no floating in the last rain storm given that the screen was removed and most of the crumb rubber pieces were cleaned out of the swale area. Ben Keefe joined the discussion noting that he and Linda Hanson, Director of Conservation, walked the field followed by meeting with a third party engineer who submitted a report today. The engineer confirmed that the design of the turf field is a standard design. Ben added that other towns have had these same issues since the last rain storm. Progress is being made in all areas.

6. **Financial Matters:**

6.1 *Finance Subcommittee Update:*

- **Review of Budget Calendar:**  
The School Committee reviewed the FY25 budget calendar. Some meeting dates have been tweaked, such as removing the January 31 meeting but adding January 24.
- **Discussion and Possible Approval of FY25 Capital Budget:**  
Susan Bottan presented an overview and instructions by Michael McCall for submitting a capital plan of the status of existing projects and capital requests as of 2029 for 2029 by the end of October for those projects that are critical, as the number of projects could be limited. Some of the five-year capital projects could be changed in terms of priorities provided the total amount for this fiscal year is in unison with the Finance Committee's approval of funds last year. Susan highlighted the process by which she and Ben Keefe

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undertook to develop the capital needs plan identifying those projects that are ongoing and which could be closed, but providing a list of short range projects in order to keep the schools operational.

*Erin Gibbons left the meeting at 8:04 p.m.; returned at 8:06 p.m.*

They also reviewed the Finance Committee's five-year capital plan that included the OnSite/InSite capital needs assessment from 2019, as well as walking through each building with the principals, the Facilities Manager, and custodians. The five-year plan was shared with the Finance Subcommittee as well as the Town Manager and town's Finance Director.

*Erin Mueller left the meeting at 8:08 p.m.; returned at 8:10 p.m.*

Susan presented the status of capital projects by category, if there are funds remaining upon completion to be returned to the Town, and if some projects should be closed as recommended. Ben referred to the Loker egress doors capital project that was funded at Town Meeting; however, the Fire Chief confirmed that the egress doors were not needed because code was met. Ben explained further. A discussion ensued about the Loker kitchen project, its warrant process, and the return of funds upon completion. Many projects will be completed this year.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Mueller, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to close the capital projects as presented.

Susan also presented the Finance Committee's approved five-year capital plan from last year. There were three projects funded for FY24 – math curriculum, food service equipment and district-wide fire alarm systems – that totaled \$688,600. The Finance Committee approved school projects as follows: FY25 - \$1.2M, FY26 - \$1.79M, FY27 - \$2.4M and FY28 - \$2.8M. In addition but not included in the capital plan, \$1M was allocated for a Feasibility Study if a school building project was accepted by the MSBA; however, the funds would have to be approved at Town Meeting and the cost could potentially double.

The updated capital project plan as presented was divided by fiscal year requests with some new projects and/or changes to the proposed projects, some approved for this year, and some postponed projects. Susan explained that some of the projects are postponed projects because others are a priority. Ben described the status of the rooftop units and HVAC systems in the school buildings. The Town's plan is to be 30% carbon free by 2030 and 100% carbon free by 2050. When the Loker School roof was replaced last year, they went all electric from the roof up, and moving forward the same could be done to the other schools, but it is very costly. A discussion ensued in this regard. The identified new projects are an automatic transfer switch for the generator at the Middle School, a hot water heater for the High School, cafeteria tables for Claypit Hill, Happy Hollow and the Middle School, a secondary auditorium lighting, sound and projection at the Middle School and High School, and a library student learning center at the High School. A discussion ensued about acquiring new mini-buses and the School Committee's policy on corporate sponsorship. Susan and Ben also noted that the town and schools will do a facilities study together this year to identify capital needs for both the town and schools.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Erin Mueller, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the FY25 capital plan as presented which includes the five-year capital plan.

- Discussion of FY24 Urgent Capital Needs: **Passed over.**

### 7. Consent Agenda:

7.1 Approval of Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants:

- Wayland Public Schools Accounts Payables Warrant, dated October 18, 2023, in the amount of \$376,340.90

7.2 Approval of Minutes: September 20, 2023 (revised) and October 4, 2023:

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

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

None

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9. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Erin Gibbons, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 8:56 p.m. for the purposes of (a) discussing strategy in preparation for negotiation with non-union personnel (Acting Superintendent), as a discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(2); (b) approving executive session minutes, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: September 20, and October 4, 2023 with the intent to withhold said minutes; (c) reviewing previously released executive session minutes with redactions for potential release of prior redacted content, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: May 24, 2023; (d) reviewing executive session minutes for potential release with redactions, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §22: June 7, 2023; and (e) discussing the October 11, 2023 open meeting law complaint filed by George Harris, as permitted by M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(2). 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.

*The administrators and the recording secretary left the meeting at 8:57 p.m.*

10. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Erin Gibbons, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 9:40 pm. A roll call vote was taken:

<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. Public Comment
3. Early Literacy Instruction Presentation
4. Draft Updated 5-Year Capital Plan
5. FY25 Departmental Capital Project Instructions
6. FY25 Budget Calendar
7. Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants
8. School Committee Minutes of September 20, 2023
9. School Committee Minutes of October 4, 2023
10. Executive Session Motion