

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE Regular Session/Retreat – September 23, 2013

A Regular Session/Retreat of the Wayland School Committee was held on Monday, September 23, 2013, at 6:30 P.M. in the Conference Room of the Public Safety Building.

Present were:

Barb Fletcher, Chair
Beth Butler, Vice Chair
Malcolm Astley
Ellen Grieco
Donna Bouchard

Also:

Paul Stein
Superintendent of Schools

Brad Crozier
Assistant Superintendent

Marlene Dodyk
Director of Student Services

Geoffrey MacDonald
Business Administrator

Also:

Cherry Karlson
Finance Committee

Chair Barb Fletcher convened the Regular Session at 6:37 P.M. and announced that WayCAM was taping the meeting.

1. **Comments & Written Statements from the Public:**

Dave Bernstein, a member of the Technology Task Force, commented on new techniques and technologies that allow teachers to work in classes where students can advance at their own rate. He stated that cognitive development is not directly correlated to chronological age. He said that students should advance only when they have mastered the material. Dave noted that he is planning to ask the town at Town Meeting to make the investment of this method of teaching, but because of the recent accounts reports, his request may be pushed back. He asked the School Committee to find the root cause of the accounts issue and take steps to ensure that the monies are being spent wisely in an effort to restore public confidence.

Also a member of the Technology Task Force, Tom Sciacca seconded the previous comments. Tom commented on the aggregate inflation rate and the tracking of median incomes nationally and state-wide over the last six years and how it compares to teachers' salaries in Wayland. Tom stated that teachers have done significantly better in the last six years and asked the School Committee if they were aware of this tracking and, if so, how they reacted to it.

Barb read an email from resident John Frangione regarding the possibility of merging financial operations with the town, as he sees cost cutting as a major priority of the School Committee. He stated that neighborhood schools should become neighborhood schools again and also noted that there is a chronic parking shortage at the schools.

Barb read an email from resident Alice Boelter regarding the FY15 budget process. She asked that the School Committee combine technology and financial operations with the town to eliminate unnecessary duplication. She also suggested that the School Committee use the citizens of Wayland as appointees to a Budget Advisory Committee.

The final email read was from Kent George regarding the budget guidelines and the unsustainable policies of increasing the school budget, as he stated that school expenses push tax rates. He asked that the School Committee consider sending their budget recommendation to Town Meeting for approval.

Louis Jurist commented on the remarks made in the emails read by the Chair. Louis referred to the Abrahams Group Report in which it reported that the administration was not overstaffed. He also commented that the School

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Committee is the Budget Committee and noted some history of the budget process by the School Committee. He suggested that residents look at comparative costs in other districts to determine what is appropriate for educating the students.

2. **Discussion with Finance Committee Representative re: the FY15 Budget Process:**

FinCom representative Cherry Karlson met with the School Committee to review the FY15 budget process. She stated the Finance Committee will vote the guidelines for FY15 capital budgets at tonight's meeting. Cherry commented that in terms of the operating budget, they are not aware of any change in services; thus, the assumption is that the same level of services will exist for FY15. However, the biggest variables are salaries, both in the town and the schools. Cherry stated that a time frame for the budget will be formalized, but it is contingent upon setting dates for Town Meeting. The FinCom will request capital budgets by the end of October and the operating budgets by the end of November.

A discussion followed regarding the potential redistricting of elementary schools and the impact on the budget. Cherry instructed the Committee in terms of how to move forward with this element of the budget. Donna Bouchard proposed that once a dollar figure is known for salaries, the taxpayers should receive any money left over from the salary reserve. She also stated that she is a strong advocate for an Advisory Budget Committee and encourages grant applications to create savings in the operational budget.

Cherry said that the salary reserve is for a number of contracts on the school and the town side. If it is not used, it will return to free cash. She commented that there was an overall tax change of about 4% with just over a 3% increase in the budget. Malcolm asked for the FinCom's support of tax changes at the state level.

Cherry urged the School Committee to keep the budget materials coming, so the process can move along. She or Tom Greenaway will report back to the School Committee regarding the vote on the guidelines.

3. **Consent Agenda:**

Donna Bouchard asked about school trips in terms of expense reporting as mentioned in the Powers & Sullivan Report. The School Committee discussed how to proceed with school trips reporting going forward. The discussion was tabled until later in the meeting.

(a) **Approval of Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants:**

- Wayland School Department Accounts Payables warrant, dated September 23, 2013, in the amount of \$206,160.60
- Wayland School Department Payroll warrant, dated September 19, 2013, in the amount of \$1,307,101.74

Upon a motion duly made by Malcolm Astley, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Payroll warrant, dated September 19, 2013, in the amount of \$1,307,101.74 and the Accounts Payables warrant dated September 23, 2013 in the amount of \$206,160.60.

4. **Retreat with Rob Evans of Human Relations Services:**

In an effort to prepare the agenda for this session, Rob Evans spoke with each member individually and a topic unanimous amongst the members was "time management during meetings."

Rob pointed out the areas in which Committee members were most concerned, such as, 1) meetings are too long and not enough time is spent on educational matters, 2) too much time is taken to discuss procedural details and formalities and topics that are not on the agenda, 3) the need to have more balance between members regarding "air time", 4) meetings are not as efficient or as effective as they could be, 5) differences regarding philosophies and/or politics, which results in not being able to move forward in a positive way, and 6) there seems to be a problem with respect, trust, and tone of the meetings.

Suggestions for discussion were offered in order to help the School Committee move forward and become more effective. A concern is to discuss ways to gather information for members and the appropriate use of legal counsel by the School Committee. Another concern was the challenge to manage disagreement amongst members after a motion is on the table and the lack of focus of the topic. Committee members described what does happen in these instances and provided some examples of why unscheduled topics come up and could, therefore, require School

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Committee action.

Rob suggested that the Chair set time limits for each agenda item, but still have the option to extend the time. Other topics could always be put off to another meeting, if the resolution of some can be achieved. It was also suggested that a specific timetable be assigned to staff presentations, as well as setting the meeting agenda by categories or subject matter. Rob suggested that one way to control the length of meetings and create a less rigid atmosphere is to regularly meet twice a month, but also have a once-a-month “workshop” during the day at which discussions and presentations can be included. This type of format allows the Committee to focus more on education.

The Committee discussed the issue of putting procedures in place when one member feels strongly about an issue and the other members do not. Rob commented that it can come down to a difference in styles and viewpoints, and, most often, it is not a personal issue. However, there needs to be a balance in each member’s approach. Rob also noted that there will never be perfect harmony, but to avoid any misunderstanding, it would be helpful to have appropriate, professional, respectful, and frank conversations either discreetly, privately, or openly with the Chair.

In seeking an understanding of certain areas or asking questions to learn more about something, the Committee discussed how best to approach the administrators in such a way that does not convey a criticism or a lack of trust. Rob suggested that everyone has their own style, and they may not be aware of how they are perceived.

The Committee also discussed the overwhelming task by administrators and committee members to satisfy many public records requests and how time can be better managed. It was also noted that this issue is a School Committee objective. On the issue of transparency, Rob commented that there is transparency and then there is radical transparency, which does incur a high cost. It should be established by the Board members and/or the Superintendent as to what are reasonable requests and the time that would be incurred in gathering the information. To create a better working relationship and to avoid the possibility of a superintendent turnover every 3 to 5 years, which is common in many districts, Rob recommended an annual year-end self-evaluation by School Committee members, which would include asking the Superintendent about his and the members’ working relationship.

The Committee discussed the cumulative effect of requests, how it impacts the administrators, and if there is a process that can be developed to address this issue. Paul commented that it is important to share the same factual information with each member, i.e. emails from Committee members, as the cumulative effect can be so time consuming. This is also true of requests from the community. Paul suggested that a more efficient approach might be a phone call to help him get a sense of what is being requested and why the request is being made. It is also helpful, according to Rob, to establish a timeline with the requester. Paul added that there is a subcategory to all of this and that is that each person on the School Committee should understand what it means to be a member of the Committee, as each has certain obligations, and what it means if a member is acting on his/her own.

Rob suggested that the Committee find a way to advocate for what they were elected to do, but still keeping in mind that there are multiple viewpoints on the Committee. If a Committee doesn’t make decisions in a way that reflects the values of the school system, then there could be a trickle-down effect throughout the schools. There needs to be some clarity and respect for others on the Committee because ultimately it is for the benefit of the students.

The Committee discussed the difference between seeking information from administrators vs. micromanaging, as it is sometimes difficult to draw the line. Also discussed was the concern that if a member had a question about something relating to School Committee business, it should be brought to the entire Committee for clarity, so they can work through it together. Rob recommended that if a pattern occurs regularly, then it is important for the Committee to be aware, as it may be information that can be tied to a goal, allowing the Committee to share with others appropriately. Rob commented that new members experience a learning curve, and there is a process whereby the Committee decides what is important and what is not in an effort to avoid micromanaging. As a general rule, whenever the administration can be utilized, it is usually the best way to achieve answers, and it will help to build a collaborative Committee relationship.

One last discussion involved the School Committee’s perceived tentativeness in moving forward with some issues, which results in tabling the items being discussed. Rob recommended that members speak up in terms of wanting to reach a decision when he/she feels that the issues are being avoided or put off indefinitely.

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5. **Review of Concussion Policy per Massachusetts Department of Public Health:**

Marlene Dodyk informed the School Committee that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health requires that the Concussion Policy and the protocols be reviewed every two years. She commented that Ruth Mori and Stephen Cass reviewed the policy and guidelines and they made some changes. The policy is consistent with the regulations, but there have been minor changes to the protocol. Marlene explained the inconsistency in terms of when the form should be filled out by the physician. Marlene answered questions from the School Committee.

Upon a motion duly made by Beth Butler, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Concussion Policy and the associated protocols with the future change of the timing of when the form is completed by the doctor.

Malcolm expressed concern in terms of how the system is communicating the dangers and risks of concussions in sports in general, but particularly football. Another concern is the Committee's support of allowing students to participate in those sports in the face of the risks. Paul stated that parents must sign off on the permission form, and they are notified of the risks involved via a link to the training module. Barb suggested that Committee members review the Health & Wellness presentation online. Malcolm distributed to the Committee a Boston Globe editorial regarding CTE or chronic traumatic encephalopathy in athletes.

6. **Approval of Invoices for Middle School Roof Project:**

Barb reviewed the two invoices for the Middle School roof project with the School Committee. The Permanent Municipal Building Committee reviewed them on September 11, 2013.

Upon a motion duly made by Malcolm Astley, seconded by Donna Bouchard, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the invoice for Capeway Roofing Systems in the amount of \$990,092.00 and also Amendment #2 in the amount of \$6,500 to the contract with Joslin, Lesser & Associates.

7. **Final Review of FY13 Annual Report:**

This agenda item was tabled until October 7.

8. **Discussion of Proposal for Extended Hours for Recording Secretary:**

A proposal was provided to the School Committee in which the recording secretary's hours would be extended up to 5 hours to include executive sessions and time spent in preparing the minutes.

Upon a motion duly made by Donna Bouchard, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve increasing the average meeting time to 5 hours to include executive sessions for a base stipend of \$3,479 and additional meetings beyond 24 to be paid \$130 per meeting.

9. **Prepare for Public Forum on October 7:**

The School Committee discussed the public forum format and agenda topics for October 7, which will include the first School Committee objective presentation by Ellen. Paul will present his district-wide goals to the community along with a review of the history of how and why the goals were developed. There will also be an extended public comment period. The School Committee agreed that they will have a discussion with the public regarding the goals. A communication will be sent out to the public via the list serve.

The School Committee discussed the Elementary Building Use Task Force Public Forum being held at Loker School on Monday, September 30, and the process they will follow moving forward with a decision. Paul commented that the rough cost estimates will be addressed for all of the recommendations.

A meeting will be posted for the School Committee to attend the forum at Loker School.

10. **Consent Agenda Continued:**

The School Committee continued their discussion regarding school trips. They discussed the bi-annual stipends for the WHS India Exchange trip, and it was noted that for the Washington D.C. and Geology trips, there is no cost to the district.

Paul commented that the planning of these trips has been ongoing for several years and there is no additional funding being requested. In terms of the stipends, the high school stipends shift from year to year depending on the need as

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part of the principal's responsibility. Paul recommended that the Committee move forward with the approval, as this discussion could delay the planning process. He also agreed that if the School Committee wants an accounting of these trips, he would provide it later.

(b) **Approval of School Trips:**

- WHS India Exchange Trip
- WHS China Exchange Trip (re-vote)
 - Change of Return Date
 - Change of Travel Agent
- Middle School Washington D.C. Trip
- Middle School New York Geology Trip

A motion was duly made by Malcolm Astley, seconded by Beth Butler, but no action was taken.

Beth asked that the administrators monitor the State Department's assessments that these regions are safe for travel.

Paul asked the School Committee to be specific with their request in terms of what they want included in the expense reporting of the school trips. Barb responded with the following three items: 1) how much money was collected; 2) how was it spent; and 3) if anything was left over, what happened to the money. The Committee discussed the recommendations made in the Powers & Sullivan Report and how to move forward.

A motion was duly made by Malcolm Astley, seconded by Beth Butler, to approve the school trips listed in the agenda. No action was taken.

Malcolm asked questions regarding the India summer trip in terms of the planner/chaperone's stipend and what his employment status is, if it is a school-sponsored trip, and if there are any liability concerns. The School Committee discussed these concerns. Paul agreed to seek an opinion from town counsel.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the China, D.C., and New York geology trips.

(c) **Approval of Minutes:**

- Retreat/Special Session of August 22, 2013
- Regular Session of August 26, 2013 (re-vote) (tabled)

Ellen provided her comments and changes for the Regular Session minutes of August 26, 2013, section 5. The Committee discussed the reasons why these changes were made, as they were made in the context of a document that was retained confidentially. Malcolm questioned the language in sections 3 and 6 pertaining to the Open Meeting Law and suggested that the language be as specific as possible. The August 26, 2013 minutes were tabled.

- Special Session of September 3, 2013
- Regular Session of September 9, 2013

Upon a motion duly made by Malcolm Astley, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted (4-1) (Donna abstained) to approve the Special Session minutes of August 22, 2013, as written, and minutes of the Special Session of September 3, 2013 and Regular Session of September 9, 2013, as amended.

11. **Superintendent's Report:**

Paul asked the School Committee to get back to him regarding the agenda for the meeting with Boston parents on Monday, October 28.

Paul commented that the back-to-school nights have begun and, what he considers to be the best part of his job, Paul visited the schools and the classrooms. Paul described his experiences in a Middle School life science classroom as well as the High School literature classrooms. He also attended the METCO sponsored picnic, which kicked off the year.

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12. **School Committee Reports & Future Agenda Topics:**

The School Committee discussed the lack of parking at school events. Paul informed the School Committee that this issue is being looked into. They also discussed ways in which to keep the public informed and it was suggested that the School Committee publish a monthly newsletter.

The Committee discussed rating agenda items on the Follow-up and Status Report at the next meeting, as well as discussing the benefits from the OML training.

The Committee discussed when they will hear from Jim Toomey regarding his opinion concerning the accounts report.

13. **Comments from the Public:**

Maryann Borkowski commented on the school accounts report and the repercussions that have followed. She spoke to the recent article in the Metrowest News, in which she stated that it was published with incomplete information. Maryann noted her concern that only one name was mentioned in the article related to the many accounts that were audited. She commented that people care passionately about our children, and it is difficult to face this adversity and these accusations. Maryann wanted to go on record as a taxpayer that she is upset about the amount of money spent on this report.

14. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Beth Butler, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 10:25 p.m., as permitted under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to Collective Bargaining for all school unions (WTA, WESA, Custodial and Food Service) and to reconvene in Regular Session as such a discussion in open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee and Executive Session is necessary to protect the bargaining position of the School Committee and also to review Executive Session minutes for possible declassification pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30(a) Section 22, and also pursuant to Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(7) to comply with laws protecting student privacy, e.g. FERPA to discuss matters pertaining to a student or students, as requested by the parents and also to approve Executive Session minutes as listed on the agenda. The School Committee will enter Regular Session only to approve declassification of certain Executive Session minutes. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Barb Fletcher, Chair	X	
Beth Butler, Vice Chair	X	
Malcolm Astley	X	
Ellen Grieco	X	
Donna Bouchard	X	

15. **Release of Executive Session Minutes:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Beth Butler, the School Committee voted to release the Executive Session minutes of September 3, 2013 and September 9, 2013 (sessions 1 & 2) with redactions.

16. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Malcolm Astley, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the Regular Session at 12:01 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Stein, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Observers:

Tom Sciacca, WVN & TTF
Dave Bernstein, TTF
Louis Jurist, Wayland
Maryann Borkowski, Wayland

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Corresponding Documentation:

1. WPS Concussion Protocol
2. WPS Concussion Policy
3. Middle School Roof Project Memo & Invoice
4. Accounts Payables & Payroll Warrants
5. China Exchange Trip Form
6. India Exchange Trip Form
7. Middle School Washington D.C. Trip Forms
8. Middle School New York Geology Trip Form
9. Retreat/Special Session Minutes of August 22, 2013
10. Regular Session Minutes of August 26, 2013
11. Special Session Minutes of September 3, 2013
12. Regular Session Minutes of September 9, 2013