

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – February 10, 2015

A Regular Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held on Tuesday, February 10, 2015, at 7:00 P.M. in the School Committee Room of the Wayland Town Building.

Present were:

Ellen Grieco, Chair
Barb Fletcher, Vice Chair
Malcolm Astley
Donna Bouchard
Jeanne Downs

Also:

Paul Stein
Superintendent

Brad Crozier
Assistant Superintendent

Susan Bottan
Business Administrator

Marlene Dodyk
Director of Student Services

Chair Ellen Grieco convened the Regular Session at 7:02 p.m.

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

Rick Green noted his concern with the proposed increase in the school budget and asked the Committee to make a creative effort to do more with less. He referred to high personnel costs in the schools and compared them to the stagnant salaries in private sector. Rick asked the Committee to set up a fund for economically challenged families who want to partake of the fee-based programs and to shift the cost to those who get the most benefit and who are financially better off.

Red Gates agreed with the previous comments and would like a reduction of his property taxes. He feels that they will eventually exceed his income.

Barrett Brontis, a school parent, spoke in support of the recommended budget of 4.5% in order to forward the district goals, as the goals are created for a reason. The district needs to retain excellent teachers and excellent educational programs to keep the district competitive and to keep the investment that has marked this excellent school system for decades. Barrett also stressed the importance of iPads and technology education for the students.

Brenda Hsu, a school parent and a member of the Wayland Public Schools Foundation (WPSF), also supports the recommended budget and feels it was carefully thought out. She noted that the WPSF has funded most of the iPads being used by students and has invested close to \$1M in the past 10 years on technology. Brenda commented on Wayland's award winning music program and, if music fees were increased, she feels that participation would diminish. Brenda was passionate about keeping the excellent programs in place, and feels that the Committee and administrators do want to find creative ways in which to save money.

On behalf of her husband Jim Grumbach and herself, Beth Butler, a past School Committee member, supports the recommended budget and urged the Committee to pass it and endorse it to the FinCom. She commented that Wayland is very lucky to have such a fine school system, which has been brought to another level of excellence by Dr. Stein. Beth noted the dedication of the teachers and administrators, and she is proud to set aside a good portion of their funds to support the education of all students in Wayland.

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Doug Levine grew up in Weston and feels that the public school system is a critical foundation, although he does agree that the property taxes are very high. He commented that Wayland spends less than Newton, Concord-Carlisle, Dover-Sherborn, etc., and, because he wants an excellent education for his daughter, he feels that the budget should be left to Dr. Stein.

Based on her comments on FTE numbers at the last meeting, Annette Lewis drafted an FTE table related to what she found on the school website (she provided the links). She gave Ellen a copy. Annette referred to the proposed personnel budgets and what she feels are inconsistencies in several school reports. In an effort to understand what the taxpayers are funding, she would like to know what services are being delivered, as well as the exact number of staff who are delivering these services.

Margo Melnicove commented that the petitioners do not support the 4.5% increase to the budget; however, they do support education and are asking for fiscal restraint by the Committee in following the FinCom's budget guideline for a level services budget. She referred to the last meeting and the comments made by Tom Greenaway, Chair of the Finance Committee. Margo asked the Committee to use a 3.9% budget as a starting point to make reductions in the budget without cutting services and still maintaining sustainable decreases in taxes moving forward. She also commented on the requested positions of a Claypit Hill assistant principal and the extended hours of an elementary reading specialist.

George Bernard, a WHS graduate of 1970, and a parent whose 3 children graduated from WHS commented that he works for the federal government where cuts are being made all the time and commented that the School Committee is not in touch with reality. He asked the Committee to control spending, as the senior citizens are being pushed out of town and the middle class is getting hit the hardest.

Joe Barrett echoed the previous comments and his 3 children also attended the schools. He has three elderly neighbors who are moving and they have supported the schools for decades. Joe commented that he believes the proposed budget is 400% above the rate of inflation and this is not the time to add services. He encouraged everyone to work together.

Donna Bouchard made a personal statement that the budget increases by 10.8% between last year and this year's budgets. She spoke on behalf of the senior citizens who have been supporting the schools for years and related to what they are experiencing because of the increases in their property taxes. Donna encouraged compromise so that the budget works for everyone in the community.

Barb offered to work with Annette to understand the differences in the summary numbers and to explain how the FTEs are reported.

2. **Financial Matters:**

(a) Continued Discussion regarding the Proposed FY16 Budget:

- Additional & Previously Presented Information & Analysis regarding FY16 Budget:

Barb suggested that the Committee vote on fees at the next meeting, as she found a document that lists all fees with corresponding statutes and was not provided to the Committee for this meeting.

Donna moved that the School Committee support the 3.9% budget increase that addresses level services as the Committee's new ceiling budget. Ellen seconded the motion.

Donna explained the reasons behind her motion in terms of what the residents are communicating and what the FinCom has recommended. Ellen added that she received many emails in support of the Superintendent's recommended budget and reiterated that the FinCom asked the Committee to provide a level services budget as well as list of unmet needs beyond level services. These factors add to the difficulty of determining a budget number from which to work downward.

Jeanne suggested starting with a 4.5% increase and make reductions from that point. She did a budget reducing exercise down to 3.7%, while still supporting Paul's recommended budget.

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A discussion ensued regarding setting a ceiling number and possibly working down from the recommended budget in an attempt to reduce the budget, to meet the FinCom's recommendation, and to understand what the list of unmet needs includes.

Malcolm continued his advocacy for a K-12 health and wellness coordinator and commented on what other districts are doing in this regard. Further, Malcolm spoke on the culture of violence in our society, cited some statistics, and appealed for a coordinated effort to support a process needed to teach students respect for one another and so much more about relationships. Malcolm noted what the Newton Public Schools and Lincoln-Sudbury High School are doing in this regard. He also supports the Claypit Hill assistant principal position.

The motion did not carry, as the School Committee voted (1-4).

The School Committee reviewed Jeanne's budget exercise, and she explained how she reached the bottom number, which included increasing the Circuit Breaker offset and raising fees. Barb described her process to reduce the budget, which also included the potential of increasing the Circuit Breaker offset and imposing an increase in bus fees. Barb included the indirect costs for BASE. Barb noted that her reductions totaled \$219,000 or \$20,000 under a level services budget.

A discussion ensued regarding the use of one-time funds, such as using building use fees for the custodial assessment and Pegasus fees for one-time capital projects for WSCP programs. Barb also recommended researching the indirect costs for Enrichment. Malcolm added that, in his opinion, the Circuit Breaker funds could be used to fund a Health and Wellness Coordinator and the SPED assessment could be put off for another year. However, it was noted that the funds would only be a one-time expense; thus, allowing the funding of a Health and Wellness Coordinator for just one year.

For various reasons, Ellen suggested that the hiring of a Claypit Hill assistant principal be postponed until next year and consider it a high priority for the FY17 budget process, especially in light of the timing for hiring a new principal at Claypit. She asked the Committee and Paul for their input. A discussion ensued regarding a need for administrative support when situations arise given the size of the school, as well as differing views based on current and historical enrollment numbers.

Upon a motion duly made by Donna Bouchard, seconded by Jeanne Downs, the School Committee voted (2-2-1) to support adding a 0.5 Claypit Hill assistant principal for the FY16 budget. The motion did not pass.

Upon a motion duly made by Barb Fletcher, seconded by Donna Bouchard, the School Committee voted (3-2) not to include the 0.5 FTE assistant principal in the FY16 budget, but give it priority consideration in the FY17 budget based on the recommendation of the administration.

A discussion ensued before the vote on the latter motion regarding the process of setting the budget during the Committee's deliberations.

In an effort to reduce the budget further, the Committee discussed the ramp-up courses for students "in the middle" at the middle and high schools and the replacement of staff computers. Ellen read the description of these three courses and how they would be facilitated for one week during the summer and during the school year. Paul elaborated on these courses being offered and the potential number of participating students. In response to some concerns regarding enrollment in these courses and the teacher stipends, Paul commented that this proposal is innovative, connects with the Achievement Gap, and allows students the opportunity to succeed in honors courses that might not otherwise occur.

Ellen read the reason for the request to replace/lease 80% of staff computers that are 4 to 6 years old at a cost of \$65,000. Although this request is considered an unmet need, it was suggested that the Finance Committee be asked to include it in the operating budget. Barb explained the funding philosophy that

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changed since these computers were first purchased in 2010. A discussion ensued regarding the recycling process of these computers to some staff.

Ellen thanked the administrators for the amount of time spent in providing detailed information requested by the School Committee during this budget process. Taking into consideration all that has been discussed in terms of the high property taxes, Ellen noted her support to include a writing specialist position into the budget, but will not make a motion to include it in the FY16 budget.

The Committee reviewed and compared the list of budget reductions that Barb and Jeanne included in their budget reducing exercises. Barb recommended taking \$25,000 from the Circuit Breaker, while Jeanne recommended \$70,000. Donna asked if there could be the possibility of borrowing money from the state, interest free, if a situation arose in terms of a shortage in the budget. This type of loan would not have to be paid back for five years. Although it could not be confirmed as of this meeting, Marlene responded that, according to the statute, this loan generates administrative fees and premiums related to a risk pool that would be paid by the school district. Marlene explained the “extraordinary relief” application process, should it be necessary for the district.

In terms of the age of the computers for which replacement is being recommended, Paul noted that 175 Macs and 15 PCs are more than 4 years old and of those numbers, 104 Macs and all 15 PCs are more than 5 years old.

The Committee continued its discussion of reducing the amount of the Circuit Breaker in the budget, including the rationale of an incremental reduction each year. The Finance Subcommittee will draft guidelines related to balances for such accounts. Also discussed was the philosophy of asking the FinCom for reserve funds or a current year transfer for true emergencies and how it would impact the budget year to year. In terms of risk management and avoiding budget freezes, Paul asked the Committee to provide him with a written statement before Town Meeting of how much risk the School Committee is willing to take. Paul noted his thought process regarding this request.

To reach \$100,000 in reductions, Ellen recommended the following options: \$25,000 (Circuit Breaker) and \$75,000 (bus fees) or \$50,000 (Circuit Breaker) and \$50,000 (bus fees). Paul is comfortable with \$50,000 for Circuit Breaker, given that the SPED Review will be a one-time expense; the School Committee agreed.

The areas and items considered to reduce the budget in the amount of \$291,740 are as follows (including the cumulative amount for corrections of \$46,240):

- Claypit Hill Assistant Principal (\$53,500)
- Circuit Breaker (\$50,000)
- Staff Exchange (\$50,000)
- Athletic Fees Cap (\$4,000)
- BASE Indirect Allocation (\$18,000)
- Bus Fee Increase (\$70,000 = \$300 fee)

The budget becomes \$36,719,239, which is a 3.63% increase above the FY15 budget and \$93,928 below the level services budget.

Upon a motion duly made by Malcolm Astley, seconded by Donna Bouchard, the School Committee voted (2-3) to add the K-12 0.4 Health and Wellness Coordinator position in the amount of \$32,323 to the budget. The motion did not pass.

A discussion ensued about the decision to increase the bus fee and the impact it would have to ridership, as well as the high school parking fee related to winter snow removal year to year. The Committee also discussed at length the Health and Wellness Coordinator position in terms of the tasks involved and possible ways to fund this position. This position would result in a 3.72% increase above the FY15

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budget. The Committee members stated their opinions in terms of their support or non-support. Paul stated that the Health and Wellness Coordinator and Claypit Hill Assistant Principal are high priority positions, and the Coordinator position would continue to be included in the vision for a long range plan for health and wellness. Donna suggested looking for a more creative way to fund the health and wellness position; for instance, possible coordination with Wayland's Youth and Family Services and/or the possible use of a substance abuse grant.

The discussion will continue at future meetings in terms of attempting to find savings to fund the Health and Wellness Coordinator position, while still reducing the overall burden to the taxpayers.

Barb left the meeting at 9:49 p.m.

Paul left the meeting at 9:51 p.m.

Barb returned to the meeting at 9:52 p.m.

The option of funding the Claypit Hill assistant principal position was also discussed and will continue in the future.

Paul returned to the meeting at 9:57 p.m.

The School Committee agreed to recommend an FY16 budget of \$36,719,239, a 3.63% increase above the FY15 budget.

A motion was duly made by Barb Fletcher, seconded by Ellen Grieco, to recommend to the Finance Committee an FY16 budget figure of \$36,719,239.

Donna recommended an amendment to this motion.

A motion was duly made by Donna Bouchard, seconded by Barb Fletcher, the School Committee voted (4-1) (Malcolm opposed) to include an amendment to the previous motion that the School Committee will continue to work on additional savings to try to bring the percent increase closer to a compromise between level services and level funding without cutting any services.

Donna explained the motion to amend the first motion.

- (b) Potential Vote to Approve Fees for FY16:
This agenda item was deferred to February 23rd.
- (c) Potential Vote to Approve Adjustments to the Superintendent's Recommended FY16 Budget:
This was discussed during earlier discussions tonight.
- (d) Discussion of (and) Potential Vote to Approve the Presentation of FY16 Budget to the Finance Committee:
This agenda item was passed over.
- (e) Review and Approval of the Proposal for the SPED Review:
A discussion ensued about whether Dorsey Yearley would provide sample reviews that she has conducted with other towns. Marlene and Paul commented that this is a matter of confidentiality; therefore, may not be possible for various reasons. Marlene will get back to the Committee before another discussion is scheduled.

3. **Administrative/Procedural Matters:**

- (a) Continued Discussion of Electronic Availability of Public School Documents:
The School Committee agreed that meeting documents will become available to the public on February 23rd.

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4. **Comments from the Public:**

Beth Butler commented that there have been three principals at Claypit Hill in the past 20 years. In support of a Claypit Hill assistant principal, she commented on the increased workloads in areas of evaluations, training, and standardized testing. There is also pressure for administrators to be present in terms of supervision to address the trend to hire a higher percentage of newer teachers. In Beth's opinion, it is standard in a school of this size to have an assistant principal, which also becomes a safety issue. Beth feels that Paul, a former assistant principal himself, completely understands the importance of this key position in terms of the welfare of the students, parents, and teachers.

A resident asked about the bus fee attrition rate and the high school parking fee. He asked that the Committee verify those payers by doing a sporadic check of participants.

Margo Melnicove thanked the School Committee.

Tom Sciacca confirmed his past prediction that there would be conflict surrounding the budget. In terms of the Claypit Hill assistant principal, Tom commented on management styles in education vs. private sector. As a member of the Technology Task Force, he noted that the task force realized this in terms of how the use of technology is propagated. Tom commented on the budget process, again comparing to the private sector. Innovation is key, in his opinion, and the largest part of the schools' budget is teacher salaries and class size. He referred to a study regarding class size; however, other than in the lower grades, Tom is not aware that class size does matter. He recommended an increase of one student in each class in an effort solve this year's budget problem and that the Committee think outside of the box whether it is acceptable or not.

5. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Barb Fletcher, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to enter Executive Session at 10:19 p.m. for the purpose of discussing strategy related to George Harris's Open Meeting Law Complaint filed on December 16, 2014 related to insufficient detail for July 30, 2014 executive session minutes and not stating a purpose for entering Executive Session for the August 28, 2014 meeting, as permitted by M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(1). A roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

The School Committee will be joined by Paul Stein, Superintendent, and Diane Marobella, recording secretary.

The School Committee will reconvene in open session for the purpose of adjournment only.

6. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Barb Fletcher, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the Regular Session at 10:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Stein, Clerk
Wayland School Committee

Observers:
See attached list.

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Corresponding Documentation:

1. Agenda & Backup Information
2. Superintendent's FY16 Recommended Budget Adjustments
3. Full Day Kindergarten and The Children's Way Tuition Comparisons
4. The Children's Way Budget Allocation FY09 to FY18