

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Special Meeting – April 15, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Wayland School Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, April 15, 2020, at 11:00 A.M. broadcast by WayCAM in the Wayland Town Building.

*Present and participating remotely were:*

Jeanne Downs, Chair  
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair (arrived at 11:05 a.m.)  
Nate Buffum (arrived at 11:25 a.m.)  
Kim Reichelt  
Kathie Steinberg

*Also participating remotely:*

Arthur Unobskey  
Superintendent

Parry Graham  
Assistant Superintendent

Richard Whitehead  
Director of Student Services

Susan Bottan  
Director of Finance & Operations

*Also:*

Kathleen Merrell, Director of The Children's Way  
Patricia Keefe, Director of Wayland School Community Programs  
Doug Levine, Board of Selectmen

Chair Jeanne Downs convened the open session at 11:04 a.m. The meeting was recorded by WayCAM and was conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 health pandemic and according to the revised open meeting law that allows remote participation.

As conveyed by Jeanne Downs, teachers, staff, and administrators have implemented a remote learning plan since the school closure just over a month ago for which the School Committee is so thankful and appreciative. The district has the students' best interests in mind, and information in this regard is changing every day as we navigate through this unfamiliar territory. During this unprecedented time, the School Committee asked that we all treat each other with grace and kindness during this difficult time.

**1. Discuss COVID-19 Response:**

- Discussion of Potential Reimbursement of Fee-Based Program Fees and Possible Vote to Approve Reimbursements:

The School Committee reviewed five fee-based programs, including the spreadsheets with summarized information that Susan provided: 1) high school parking, 2) transportation, 3) full-day Kindergarten, 4) BASE, and 5) The Children's Way.

*High School Parking:*

If reimbursements from its own fund balance are sent to families from March 13 to May 4, the scheduled date for reopening school, \$10,000 will remain in that account. Susan explained the balances in this fund if school reopens on June 1 or doesn't reopen at all, adding there will be an impact to this account if the campus monitor is paid or furloughed.

A discussion ensued about postponing a vote regarding reimbursements and the status of employees paid from these fee-based accounts through May 4, given the amount of information provided and to allow the School Committee an opportunity to review the information further and put forth questions at the next meeting. Susan noted that depending on the School Committee's vote regarding reimbursements, it would take a minimum of six weeks to set up the accounts payables system. Susan addressed the expense related to the DPW for snowplowing this year.

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*Transportation:*

Susan reviewed the account with a May 4, June 1, or end of year closure, similar to the High School parking review. Keeping in mind that no revenue has been generated from field trips and, if families are reimbursed 100%, the fund balance remaining will be about \$253,000. However, Susan is projecting that there will be a prepayment for next year in the amount of \$285,000 some of which will be borrowed. Since there are few expenses to cut back on, Susan recommended that the School Committee consider a reimbursement of 89% to families, so the prepayment amount can be preserved. A discussion ensued about the amount of reimbursement to families. The School Committee agreed that transportation fee payers should be reimbursed 100% since school closed on March 12.

*Nate joined the meeting at 11:25 a.m.*

*Full Day Kindergarten:*

At this time, wages and benefits will need to be paid for staff. If school reopens on May 4, there will be a negative balance of \$7,000. However, the gap will increase substantially depending on the length of the school closure. Susan proposed a reimbursement to families of less than 100%, as instruction could be delivered to the FDK students. Susan is concerned with a longer closure, as it will be more difficult to close the gap/deficit in the account and to mitigate this deficit that some level of instruction is delivered. Arthur explained the remote learning expectations for kindergarten students based on the guidance from the state that approximately 3.5 hours a day is a full day experience and what teachers are providing. A discussion followed in this regard, including the instruction offered to traditional vs. full day kindergarten students. Susan noted that based on information she has received from the state many districts are reimbursing families 50%, adding that very few districts charge kindergarten fees. To address the differentiation between what a half-day student and a full-day student is getting in terms of remote learning, Arthur commented that kindergarten is very similar to first and second grades in terms of what is being provided. He explained further, adding that school districts vary in their amount of daily instruction.

Ellen proposed that a subcommittee be created if the closure goes beyond May 4 to look into what other towns similar to Wayland are doing and to consult with DESE and MASC to get a sense of how to move forward. The discussion continued around fee reimbursements. This decision will be postponed as well.

Susan added that instrumental music and building rentals are also fee-based services, and these services have been cancelled. In terms of athletics, Susan is waiting to hear more about the length of the athletic season so that an appropriate fee can be recalculated.

*BASE:*

If school were to reopen on May 4 and assuming that families would be reimbursed 100%, there will be a year-end balance of \$220,000. School Committee members and Pat Keefe agreed that families should be 100% reimbursed given that the actual service is not being provided. Pat explained the quarterly payment schedules for families, adding that some families have paid through the fourth quarter. A discussion ensued in terms of refunding families or crediting families for those who would return next September. Susan added that it has been recommended by the auditors that families have a choice in this regard. Repayment could be made through the residual balance. A discussion regarding furloughing BASE employees which means that employees would not work for a portion of or the entire time of the shutdown. Furloughed employees would still receive pension credit and have access to benefits, as well as receiving a state payout reimbursed by the town and Federal stimulus money. Based on this information, it is to the employees' financial advantage to be furloughed. However, Pat feels that a furlough is not beneficial to the BASE program given the work that the entire staff is doing now for the re-opening of BASE and the uncertainty of some staff returning in the fall, especially if schools are closed through June. A discussion ensued in terms of fiscal responsibility and the remaining BASE fund balance.

Fall registration is complete for returning families, with the exception of Kindergarten families, and the program is full. It was decided that more information is needed to determine staffing options, especially for the longer closure announcement by the state. Options and flexibility are available in terms of furloughing and would be considered for May and/or June. Pat and Susan will draft a proposal for the next meeting.

*TCW:*

If TCW reopened on May 4 and if parents were reimbursed from March 13 to May 1, this would leave a fund balance of approximately \$92,000. The full tuition reimbursement would be calculated from 11:30 a.m. to the end of the day. Susan and Katy explained the reimbursement plan moving forward that is using the prepayment of \$240,000 for next year, as well as the plans to change the program design to better utilize Special Education funding

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Katy shared what the TCW staff is doing during the closure to deliver information, offer enrichment activities, and organize Google Meets to the 90 families in the program. Based on his discussions with Katy and some TCW staff, Richard described how special education services will continue to be delivered to the children of The Children’s Way. He wants to continue the traditions and model of inclusion, including how the more complex kids receive their services.

Katy described the terms in the families’ contracts around reimbursements during school closures. A discussion ensued in terms of possible Federal assistance through small business loans and/or stimulus funds for TCW, but some criteria might prevent the program from receiving any Federal support. Doug Levine of the BOS added that there are conversations in this regard with the State Reps and Senators, but no specific information has been received as of this date. Susan reviewed the options for reimbursement moving forward, which could include furloughing employees. The School Committee agreed that the TCW staff will continue working for now, while Katy and Susan continue to review the budget and family contracts. They will report back to the School Committee at the next meeting.

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to reimburse high school parking, BASE families, and transportation 100% since school closed through May 1 with the option of extending if school remains closed through June. Full Day Kindergarten and The Children’s Way reimbursements will be deferred. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

## 2. **Comments and Written Statements from the Public (taken out of order):**

Jeanne read the following emails entered into public comment.

On behalf of BASE families, Daniel Shapiro emailed regarding BASE tuition reimbursement from the date of school closure through the reopening of school or until the last scheduled day of school since services are not being delivered at this time.

Mr. Shapiro’s second email addressed the district’s decision not to cancel school vacation week and asked that this decision be reconsidered. He acknowledged the dedicated teachers’ and their countless efforts to provide remote learning to their students, but feels that the momentum should continue as this not the time to pause. He cited many reasons why learning should continue through the scheduled break and added that many other districts have made the decision to forego the vacation week for teachers and students.

The first call was from Chris Cullen of 7 Coolidge Road, Wayland, a Spanish Immersion parent, and he voiced his continued support and commitment to the Spanish Immersion Program, especially while schools are closed and remote learning is being provided. His comments were in response to a letter that was circulated regarding concerns about the continuity of school and the non-support expressed by the writer about the Spanish Immersion Program. He asked those who are expressing negativity about this program to stop doing so. Mr. Cullen expressed his appreciation for everyone’s efforts during this time.

The second call was from Courtney Connery of 8 Goodman Lane, Wayland who also voiced her support for the Spanish Immersion Program, adding that the letter received by the School Committee was misguided and the writer does not have children in the program. She commented that Spanish Immersion instruction has continued seamlessly given this extreme situation and the team has gone above and beyond, and she is impressed with their dedication and creativity. Ms. Connery described the ways in which children are continuing their learning in this regard.

Jeanne read an email from Danielle LeBlanc expressing her support and dedication to the Spanish Immersion Program regardless of the current situation and is upset by the letter sent to the School Committee. She noted that the teachers and administrators have exceeded her family’s expectations for her daughter’s experience in this program.

Another email was sent from Wayland resident and alumni Zachary Tofias. His son will be joining the Spanish Immersion Program in the fall, as he is an advocate of increasing foreign language in the schools. Mr. Tofias asked the School Committee to continue the investment of this program for the children of Wayland.

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An email from Kate and Nick Sambuco was sent on behalf of many families who are involved in the Spanish Immersion Program. Mrs. Sambuco is also a member of the Spanish Immersion Parent Advisory Council. She noted that despite the difficult circumstances, the Loker staff have worked tirelessly to provide an immersion experience despite the lack of in-person instruction. Mrs. Sambuco described how her kindergartner is participating in class meetings, the resources that are being provided and that her son is continuing to grow in his ability to speak Spanish. On behalf of all the Spanish Immersion families, they remain committed to this program.

Kim read a public comment from Kevin Grasmick of Wayland and a parent of a kindergartner in the Spanish Immersion Program. He expressed his family's continued and unrelenting support for this program despite the temporary remote learning experience at this time. Mr. Grasmick added that this program is so important and needed in the Wayland schools and is worth the financial investment, given that Spanish is spoken in over 20 countries globally and is the native language of over 40 million people in the United States.

**3. Discuss COVID-19 Response (continued):**

- Discussion of School Closure and Remote Learning Phase Two:  
Arthur commented that Phase 2 of remote learning began on Monday, April 13, and described the impressive efforts of all the K-12 staff. In the elementary grades, the emphasis is to gradually introduce new content in some areas, such as in science, adding that currently there isn't an emphasis on new skills. Parry provided an example of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade butterfly project and the 5<sup>th</sup> grade biography project. He noted that class placement and the math placement for rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders is moving forward.

Arthur recognized the Wayland music program's award as being one of the Best Communities in Music Education. Arthur described this well-deserved award and what it means in terms of outstanding music achievement.

Ellen raised the suggestion of forming a subcommittee together with Kim to provide some additional research into other towns' efforts in regard to their remote learning during this pandemic and school closure as a supplemental effort to the administration's work in this regard. A discussion ensued about the possibility of this effort and the structure according to the open meeting law.

The School Committee addressed the decision to move forward with April vacation as raised by Kim. A discussion ensued that included the most recent WTA MOA amended language and the pros and cons of moving ahead with the vacation week. Since this issue was not raised by principals and teachers and given the late date, most members, with the exception of Kim, agreed not to pursue a change in the schedule.

- Financial Update:  
This discussion was postponed until the next meeting.
- Discussion of Long-Term Planning:  
This discussion was postponed until the next meeting. Kathie asked for a consideration for summer work moving forward if school is canceled through June.
- Review of School Committee Communication to Staff:  
The School Committee agreed to send this communication to staff.
- Next Steps:  
This was passed over.

**4. Spanish Immersion Program Update:**

Jeanne acknowledged the emails and calls regarding the Spanish Immersion Program. She did prepare a response to the writer of the original email and will provide the final response to the Committee members. Parry confirmed that Spanish Immersion parents are happy with the progression of the program, adding that the Loker staff is working hard to maintain the progression and noted that Lilliana Smith is meeting with small groups of students and Spanish is spoken throughout. The Spanish Immersion kindergarten lottery was conducted in March and 45 names were submitted with hopes of being accepted for one of the 22 spaces available. A gender balance was maintained and a communication was sent to those families who were accepted into the program and to those who were placed on a waitlist. A second grade teacher was hired for the Spanish Immersion Program and work continues to guarantee the future of the program. Arthur added that discussions around maintaining a Spanish infused experience at the middle school level are taking place as well.

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5. **Review and Possible Vote to Approve and Authorize Chair to Sign Amended TEC (The Education Cooperative) Agreement:**

Jeanne noted that Medway has joined The Education Cooperative and the agreement was amended to that regard.

Upon a motion duly made by Ellen Grieco, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve and authorize the chair to sign the amended TEC agreement that includes Medway. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

6. **Consent Agenda:**

- Approval of Minutes: March 24, 2020

Jeanne noted a typo in the minutes.

Upon a motion duly made Kathie Steinberg, seconded by Ellen Grieco, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Consent Agenda. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

7. **Matters not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair (taken out of order):**

Jeanne announced that the School Committee will meet every Wednesday at noon. The next meeting is April 22.

8. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Jeanne Downs, seconded by Kathie Steinberg, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn at 1:41 p.m. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Jeanne Downs, Chair	X	
Ellen Grieco, Vice Chair	X	
Nate Buffum	X	
Kim Reichelt	X	
Kathie Steinberg	X	

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Unobskey, Clerk  
Wayland School Committee

**Corresponding Documentation:**

1. Agenda
2. TEC Amended Collaborative Agreement
3. BASE Year-End Projections for Revenue and Expenses
4. FDK Year-End Projections for Revenue and Expenses
5. TCW Year-End Projections for Revenue and Expenses
6. FY2020 Financial Report – Projected Year End Balances

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7. FY2020 Non-Personnel Financial Summary
8. FY2020 Personnel Financial Summary
9. Transportation Year-End Projections for Revenue and Expenses
10. WHS Parking Year-End Projections for Revenue and Expenses
11. Emailed Public Comments (5)
12. Special Session Minutes of March 24 2020