

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Special Meeting

Monday, August 6, 2012

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Duncan Leith, Chair | Sarah LaMountain |
| Colleen Cipro, Vice-chair | James Mason |
| Cynthia Bazinet | Kenneth Mills |
| Steven Hammond | Robert Pelczarski |
| Lance Harris | Norman Plourde |
| Robert Imber | Robert Remillard (8:50 PM) |
| Stacey Jackson | Erik Scheinfeldt |
| Julianne Kelley | Michelle Sciabarrasi |
| Deidre Kosky | Margaret Watson |

Committee Members Absent:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| William Clute | Athas Tsongalis |
|---------------|-----------------|

Administration Present:

Thomas G. Pandiscio, Superintendent of Schools
Kelley Gangi, Director of Curriculum
Darryll McCall, Director of Operations
Susan Sullivan, Director of Human Resources
Rebecca Petersen, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

Others present, who desired to be recorded as present (see attached Attendance Sheet – attachment 1).

I. Call to Order

Chair Leith called the special meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Public Hearing

Chair Leith explained that a public hearing was added to this special meeting agenda at the request of a School Committee member. Chair Leith read aloud the Guidelines for Public Hearing.

Ed Meyer, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 2)
Heather Rausch, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.

Amy Brassard, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.
Amy Bicchieri, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.
Matthew Bovenzi, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.
Maureen Floryan, Holden, addressed the School Committee.
Paul Belair, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.
Robert Lavigne, Holden, addressed the School Committee. (Mr. Lavigne noted he was speaking on his own behalf and not as a Holden Selectboard member.)
Scott Michulak, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.
Karyn Jordan, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.
Lee Laflamme, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.
Chris Lucchesi, Holden, addressed the School Committee. (Mr. Lucchesi noted he was speaking on his own behalf and not as a member of the Mountview Building Committee.)
Lisa Call, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.
Melinda Paré, Sterling, addressed the School Committee.

The public hearing concluded at 7:34 PM.

III. FY13 Budget Status

Chair Leith announced the School Committee will go into executive session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining, and to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel related to a budget shortfall, to return to public session.

Chair Leith reminded members that emails between and among School Committee members can be in violation of the Opening Meeting Law, if deliberations go on in the email exchanges. Emails for the purpose of scheduling a meeting are not in violation of the Opening Meeting Law.

Chair Leith turned the meeting over to Superintendent Pandisico, who, in the absence of Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Remillard, gave a very brief overview of actions taken at the July 30, 2012 meeting of the Business/Finance Subcommittee. Superintendent Pandisico and the School Committee will discuss proposed reductions in executive, and then the Committee will return to public session.

IV. Executive session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining, and to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel related to a budget shortfall

Motion: To enter executive session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining, and to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel related to a budget shortfall, to return to public session.

(R. Imber)

(J. Mason)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Colleen Cipro
Cynthia Bazinet
Steven Hammond
Lance Harris
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
James Mason
Kenneth Mills
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Erik Scheinfeldt
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Deidre Kosky
Sarah LaMountain

The motion passed 15-2.

The Committee adjourned to executive session at 7:40 PM.

The Committee reconvened in public session at 9:02 PM.

Motion: In order to meet the goal of opening schools with a balanced line item budget, District administration is hereby directed to reduce salary expense in order to eliminate both known and anticipated deficits. Such reductions shall include, but may not be limited to, faculty and staff reductions, transfer of staff to open positions, and the attribution of certain salary expense to accounts outside the General Fund. All such reductions shall be authorized by a vote of the School Committee.

The administration is also directed to continue to examine the feasibility of making alternative reductions and/or utilizing available revenue in order to recall staff prior to the start of school where possible. Such alternatives and recalls shall be made by vote of the School Committee

(R. Pelczarski)
(J. Mason)

At Member Imber's suggestion, Superintendent Pandiscio took time before the Committee acted on the motion on the floor to explain what is being sought by the motion. Superintendent Pandiscio reported what administrative positions have been cut to date. He called members' attention to FY13 Possible Reductions (attachment 3). Superintendent Pandiscio explained, line by line, the "high" priorities on attachment 3. Superintendent Pandiscio reported that all items

identified as “high” can most likely be accomplished by the start of the school year. He explained that the “high” reductions total \$1,258,848. All members were given the opportunity to ask questions, and most members contributed to the discussion. Member LaMountain asked Superintendent Pandiscio to read aloud for the public the proposed elementary teacher cuts (attachment 4). Chair Leith repeated that District administration is seeking direction on how to proceed. Lengthy discussion continued. There was some discussion about an audit and associated costs. Members Scheinfeldt and Mason, and others, have taken the time to contact auditing firms/services to try to determine the best route to take. Chair Leith said that further discussion about an audit will take place later in the meeting. Discussion connected to the motion on the table continued. Again Chair Leith mentioned District administration’s need for direction. Superintendent Pandiscio suggested the Committee consider scheduling another special meeting the end of the week. Discussion continued.

Motion: To move the question.

(M. Sciabarrasi)

Motion died due to lack of second.

Some discussion ensued. Vice-chair Cipro re-read the motion.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Colleen Cipro
Cynthia Bazinet
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
James Mason
Kenneth Mills
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Robert Remillard
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Lance Harris
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Deidre Kosky
Sarah LaMountain
Erik Scheinfeldt

The motion passed 12-6.

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes, until 10:30 PM.

(J. Mason)
(C. Bazinet)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Colleen Cipro
Cynthia Bazinet
Steven Hammond
Lance Harris
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Deidre Kosky
Sarah LaMountain
James Mason
Kenneth Mills
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Robert Remillard
Erik Scheinfeldt
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Leith asked Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Remillard to report on the July 30, 2012 meeting of that subcommittee. Subcommittee Chair Remillard reported:

- Erik Scheinfeldt was elected Vice-chair of the Business/Finance Subcommittee
- The Business/Finance Subcommittee voted 6-3 to recommend to the full School Committee to conduct a full forensic audit for fiscal year 2011 to present (motion carried)
- The Business/Finance Subcommittee voted 3-6 to reinstate the position of principal at Chocksett Middle School (motion failed)
- The Business/Finance Subcommittee voted 8-1 to reinstate the position of Business Manager (motion carried)

Some discussion ensued.

Motion: The District schedule a full forensic audit for fiscal 2011 to present, of all accounts and unaccounted financial activity, including but not limited to:

1. operating funds
2. special revenue and revolving funds
3. federal and state grant funds

(J. Kelley)
(S. Jackson)

Some emotional discussion ensued. Motion language was discussed. Member Mason explained that the motion states a “full forensic audit,” and that a full forensic audit requires audit and review of every single line item, which can be very costly. More discussion took place. Member Scheinfeldt reported on what he had learned during conversations with an auditing firm familiar with forensic audits (Phase 1 = up to \$50,000; Limited Phase 2 = \$100,000 - \$150,000, on top of Phase 1; Phase 3 = \$225,000 - \$300,000). Member Scheinfeldt offered the suggestion that this matter be remanded back to the Business/Finance Subcommittee. Chair Leith reminded members there is a motion on the floor. Member Jackson distributed a handout (attachment 5).

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes, until 11:00 PM.

(J. Mason)

(L. Harris)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Colleen Cipro
Cynthia Bazinet
Steven Hammond
Lance Harris
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Deidre Kosky
Sarah LaMountain
James Mason
Kenneth Mills
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Robert Remillard
Erik Scheinfeldt
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

The motion passed unanimously.

Member Kelley said she would be willing to withdraw the motion on the floor, and to reintroduce a motion, deleting reference to “full forensic audit” and substituting a “a forensic audit of limited scope” or “phase 1 audit.” The motion was withdrawn by the maker and seconder of the motion.

Motion: To remand to the Business/Finance Subcommittee the task of researching auditing firms to gather information and cost estimates for a phased forensic step approach audit, with a

cost of \$50,000 or less, and to bring this information back to the full School Committee for consideration.

(J. Mason)
(S. Hammond)

Member Cipro made a friend amendment, which was accepted by the maker and seconder of the motion, for the Business/Finance Subcommittee to proceed and to determine the best auditing firm to conduct a phased audit.

Member Sciabarrasi recommended the District create an RFP (Request for Proposal) in order to go out to bid for these auditing services. Superintendent Pandiscio stressed the importance of the Committee setting the financial limits for these auditing services. The maker and seconder of the motion were willing to amend the motion, changing \$50,000 to \$150,000, for budgeting purposes.

The motion was re-read:

Motion: To remand to the Business/Finance Subcommittee the task of researching auditing firms to gather information and cost estimates for a first phase limited scope audit, with a cost of \$150,000 or less, and to bring this information back to the full School Committee for consideration.

(J. Mason)
(S. Hammond)

Member Sciabarrasi made a friendly amendment to the motion, adding “to research and create an RFP in order to go out to bid for these services.” This friendly amendment was accepted by the maker and seconder of the motion,

Following discussion among members, the maker and seconder of the motion were willing to amend the motion, changing \$150,000 to \$50,000.

Motion: To remand to the Business/Finance Subcommittee the task of researching auditing firms to gather information and cost estimates for a first phase limited scope audit, with a cost of \$50,000 or less, to research and create an RFP in order to go out to bid for these services, and to bring this information back to the full School Committee for consideration.

(J. Mason)
(S. Hammond)

Motion: To move the question.

(C. Cipro)
(C. Bazinet)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Colleen Cipro
Cynthia Bazinet
Steven Hammond

Lance Harris
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Deidre Kosky
Sarah LaMountain
James Mason
Kenneth Mills
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Robert Remillard
Erik Scheinfeldt
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: To remand to the Business/Finance Subcommittee the task of researching auditing firms to gather information and cost estimates for a first phase limited scope audit, with a cost of \$50,000 or less, to research and create an RFP in order to go out to bid for these services, and to bring this information back to the full School Committee for consideration.

(J. Mason)

(S. Hammond)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Colleen Cipro
Cynthia Bazinet
Steven Hammond
Lance Harris
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Deidre Kosky
Sarah LaMountain
James Mason
Kenneth Mills
Norman Plourde
Robert Remillard
Erik Scheinfeldt
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Robert Pelczarski

The motion passed 17-1.

Chair Leith scheduled a special meeting of the School Committee for Thursday, August 9, 2012, at 7:00 PM in the Media Center of WRHS.

Motion: To adjourn.

(R. Imber)
(S. Hammond)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Colleen Cipro
Cynthia Bazinet
Steven Hammond
Lance Harris
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Deidre Kosky
Sarah LaMountain
James Mason
Kenneth Mills
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Robert Remillard
Erik Scheinfeldt
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas G. Pandiscio, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools