

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Special Meeting #276, Monday, June 19, 2006
7:00 PM

Cafeteria
Davis Hill Elementary School

Committee Members Present:

Margaret Watson, Chair	David Gibbs
Kathleen Sweeney, Vice-chair	Steven Hammond
Thomas Ackerman	Kelly Maxwell
John Bangrazi	Judith Newton
Cynthia Bazinet	John Nunnari
Robert Carter	Edward Pescaro
Shirley Conrad	Michael Sherman
Melinda Coyle (7:04 PM)	Tammy Tod

Committee Members Absent:

Cynthia Ahearn	Norman Plourde
Mark James	

Administration Present:

Thomas G. Pandiscio, Superintendent of Schools
John Locke, Interim Director of Operations
Peter Brennan, Comptroller
Rebecca Petersen, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

I. Call to order.

Chair Watson called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. Chair Watson noted that the agenda for the evening's meeting had been amended, adding an appropriation matter to the agenda. The amended agenda was approved by consensus, with Members Coyle and Newton abstaining.

Chair Watson asked the Superintendent to address the Committee regarding the forthcoming presentation by Jerry Wasserman.

The Superintendent shared copies of Future Management Systems, Inc. March 31, 2006 letter and proposal to provide leadership for the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategic plan process (attachment 1). He also distributed a listing of individuals invited to serve on the Steering Committee (attachment 2). Dr. Pandiscio then introduced Jerry Wasserman of FMS.

II. Presentation by Jerry Wasserman of Future Management Systems, Inc.

Mr. Wasserman gave background of Future Management Systems, Inc. and a brief explanation of what the School Committee can expect in the months ahead. Mr. Wasserman showed a PowerPoint presentation, after which he distributed copies of a Wachusett Strategic Plan Revised Timeline (attachment 3). Mr. Wasserman then opened the floor to a question and answer period, asking members to list what they see as District-related strengths and weaknesses.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
High school graduates admitted to good colleges/universities	Professional development
High scores in standardized tests	Small middle schools vs. large middle schools (within District)
Individual buildings run by individual principals (also seen as a weakness)	Individual buildings run by individual principals (also seen as a strength)
Educational leadership and teachers are strong, resulting in strong test results	Communication with community
Finances and how finances are reported; auditing system and books are top notch	Space issue (for implementation of full day kindergarten)
Sense of community in schools	Lack of department heads at high school
Physical plans/schools in excellent condition	Need for reading specialists at elementary level
Extraordinary support for new, incoming teachers; good mentoring, professional support, induction program, evaluation program	Need for unity in/with School Improvement Plans
Teaching staff in general	Need for curriculum guides
Extracurricular activities	Class size at high school
Rigorous curriculum (exceeding State Frameworks at times)	Inability to offer enough electives at high school so students end up in study halls
Strong parent involvement	Class size at some elementary schools
	Lack of recess at middle school level
	Morning traffic in front of high school
	Need for additional/extra physical activity – not enough opportunities for physical outlet

Mr. Wasserman than asked members to share what they see as outside opportunities schools could take advantage of, but don't at this time:

- Early education offerings
- Full day kindergarten
- Increase length of the school day
- Increase the length of the school year
- Not enough gifted programs being offered
- MCAS remediation
- Setting up of a charitable trust

- Robust and successful community service programs
- K-3 program at Paxton Center School (under a former principal) which has fallen by the wayside
- Bristol Myers-Squibb plans to open plant at Devens – example of improvement in economy in Central Massachusetts

Mr. Wasserman asked members what they see as a change in demographics:

- Opportunity for change with upcoming retirements
- Shortage of administrator candidates

Mr. Wasserman asked what would be seen as challenges if cuts come from the State level:

- Addition of more MCAS requirements
- Changes in American families
- Too much information available to students (technology is both an opportunity and a threat)
- Changes made by strategic plan should not be made too quickly
- Prepare students for possibility of having to change careers/locations
- Charter and choice students leaving the District
- High School leadership void, plus going to the house plan, plus the construction – Big changes for 2,000 students and faculty, which need to be watched
- Maintain good relationships/public relations with Member Towns; keeping towns on the same page when dealing with the five towns

Mr. Wasserman then asked members to state one thing they could do, as a School Committee member, to improve the District:

- Uniforms
- Add more space; add an additional elementary school
- Add 10% to staffing and 20% to salaries
- Full day kindergarten
- Lengthening of school day and/or school year
- Get off global approach and start talking about what can be done to help those individual students who need help
- Target/treat students who need additional help (model approach)
- Address class size (which is “huge” when dealing with at risk students)
- Catch students as they start to derail
- High school day start at 10 AM to follow the natural rhythm of teenagers
- More services for gifted and talented students
- Teach additional language at the early elementary level

Mr. Wasserman then opened the floor to any comments. A concern of the Education Subcommittee, as well as staff members, is that school libraries need attention.

Mr. Wasserman concluded his presentation by letting the members know he welcomes School Committee input, through the Superintendent, and is looking forward to working with the Wachusett Regional School District and School Committee.

III. Appropriation of Massachusetts School Building Authority funds in the amount of \$1,077,495 to the Town of Sterling for school construction reimbursement

Motion: To approve the appropriation of Massachusetts School Building Authority funds in the amount of \$1,077,495 to the Town of Sterling for school construction reimbursement

(K. Maxwell)

(C. Bazinet)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
Kathleen Sweeney
Thomas Ackerman
John Bangrazi
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Shirley Conrad
David Gibbs
Steven Hammond
Kelly Maxwell
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Edward Pescaro
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Melinda Coyle

(Motion passed 15-0-1)

IV. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(D. Gibbs)
(M. Sherman)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
Kathleen Sweeney
Thomas Ackerman
John Bangrazi
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
David Gibbs
Steven Hammond
Kelly Maxwell
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Edward Pescaro
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

TGP:rlp