

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1053, Monday February 10, 2003
7:00 p.m.

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

John Rokicki, Chairman	Jeffrey Gibbs (8:05 PM)
Duncan Leith, Vice-Chairman	Jane James
Donald Benson	Alice Livdahl
Charles Capparelli	Peter MacDonald (7:15 PM)
Clifford Connell	Natalie Mello
Carol Esperti	John Nunnari
David Fedeli	Julie Scott
Kimberly Ferguson	Margaret Watson
Patricia Gates (7:17 PM)	Patricia Young

Committee Members Absent:

Kelly Maxwell	Tammy Tod
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Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative Services
Philip E. Campbell, Director of Student/Information Services
Susan H. Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Others Present:

Linda Lehans, *The Landmark*
Marc Sanguinetti, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*
Alan Berg, Holden Finance Committee
Larry Floryan, Holden
David Gibbs, Sterling
Mark James, Holden

Chairman John Rokicki called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Chairman Rokicki introduced Charles Capparelli as the newly appointed Sterling representative.

I. Public Hearing

No one from the public wished to speak.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of the 1052nd Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on January 27, 2003 – approved by consensus with the following correction to page 2: Secretary's Report, Item A, to add "by Member Kimberly Ferguson" after "When asked,"

Chairman John Rokicki distributed to members only copies of the Executive Session Minutes of January 10, 2003. Chairman Rokicki reported that he would mail to Members the Executive Session Minutes of December 30, 2002 prior to the next meeting.

Member Carol Esperti asked that it be recorded in the minutes that the Chairman reported that the Executive Session Minutes of December 30, 2002 would be mailed to the members prior to the next meeting.

III. Clarifications relating to Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement

- A. Presentation of Warrants and Payroll

The warrants were circulated for signature.

IV. Communications

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that only the special education van was involved in an accident. There were no reported injuries. The van was inspected and was reported that the van was inspected in 2002. The concern was the lack of information provided regarding the accident. Inquiry has been made to the transportation provider as to the cause of the fire.

The District students and staff were commended on the SAT and AP scores, as distributed in the Superintendent's report. The Superintendent informed the Committee that he has concern because the

number of students taking the AP tests has decreased but was pleased overall.

Attention was drawn to Attachment 9 of the Superintendent's report, correspondence to Eric Gunn, where reference was made to a Special Progress Report due from the high school in April 2002. The Superintendent informed the Committee that he would include the correspondence in the next Superintendent's report.

V. Committee Reports

- A. Student Advisory Committee (K. Brunelle, L. Zambetti, N. Leger, E. DeMarco)

This item should only be on the education agenda of the School Committee

- B. Management Subcommittee (J. Rokicki, Chair, D. Leith, C. Esperti, P. Gates, A. Livdahl, K. Maxwell, N. Mello, J. Scott)

Chairman Rokicki reported that the next meeting of the Management Subcommittee would be Wednesday, February 12, 2003, at 7:00 PM in the Curriculum Center at the District Central Office for the purpose of reviewing the School Committee By-Laws.

Member Carol Esperti objected to the Management Subcommittee addressing issues IN HER ABSENCE she requested to be put on the agenda. She indicated that she had not requested a By-Law change in regards to informing members that information OF A PERSONAL NATURE REGARDING INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS ~~concerning them~~ would be included in the Superintendent's report; she REQUESTED IT BE DONE AS A COURTESY TO MEMBERS ~~thought that it was just common courtesy~~. The Superintendent indicated that the status quo would prevail until such time as the Committee decides to changes its By-Laws.

Member Carol Esperti also reported that she had been in contact with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) regarding her concern about listing members of the public at School Committee meetings who have not signed the attendance record. She reported that the ACLU will be contacting the Committee

regarding this issue. The Superintendent again reminded the Committee that this is a practice that preceded him.

- C. Business/Finance Subcommittee (N. Mello, J. Rokicki, D. Leith, D. Benson, D. Fedeli)

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello reported that the Business/Finance Subcommittee met on February 4, 2003 and reviewed the appointment of and charge to the high school building committee.

1. Motion: To adopt the Recommendation for Appointment of the High School Building Committee, as presented, waiving the reading (attachment 1)

(N. Mello)

(D. Leith)

Motion to Amend: The first bullet shall be replaced by “The High School Building Committee shall include representation from each of the five Member Towns”

(P. Gates)

(D. Fedeli)

Vote on Motion to Amend:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion to Amend: The last bullet will be replaced by:
“The size of the High School Building Committee shall be
a minimum of nine members.”

(C. Esperti)
(P. MacDonald)

Member Carol Esperti offered to change the wording from
nine members to 9-11 members, which was accepted by
Member MacDonald.

Vote on Motion to Amend, which reads: The last bullet
will be replaced by: “The size of the High School
Building Committee shall be from nine to eleven
members.”

In favor:
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Peter MacDonald
Julie Scott

Opposed:
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Abstained:
John Rokicki

(Motion failed 7-9-1)

Roll call vote on main motion, as amended: To adopt the Recommendation for Appointment of the High School Building Committee, as presented, waiving the reading replacing the first bullet with “The High School Building Committee shall include representation from each of the five Member Towns.”

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Fedeli
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Peter MacDonald

(Motion passed 14-3)

Chairman Rokicki put out the notice that he is looking for members.

2. Motion: To adopt the Recommendation for the Charge to the High School Building Committee, as presented, waiving the reading (attachment 2)

(N. Mello)

(J. Nunnari)

Vice-Chairman Duncan Leith took over temporarily for Chairman John Rokicki.

Motion to Amend: To add under Project Design: “The design of the project shall include a media center of sufficient size to ensure appropriate support of instructional delivery of the curriculum and to provide space for students’ individual research and inquiry”

(M. Watson)

(P. MacDonald)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Chairman Rokicki assumed the Chair.

Discussion occurred surrounding the school house plan. The Superintendent clarified that the school would be divided into an upper and a lower school and only the lower school would be divided into houses. There would be flexibility, allowing lower school students to take advanced courses, if applicable.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the design must be flexible for the future. The integrity of the current

good school needs to be maintained and yet it must incorporate the need for alternative ways to instruct. Ninth and tenth grade curriculums are more structured than eleventh and twelfth grades. The plan was developed to create an identity composed of the same teachers for grades nine and ten in each house with teachers also teaching classes outside their assigned school. This model is not new to the community but the plan has been presented to the community. It represents the action of the School Committee.

When asked to clarify what was discussed at the Education Subcommittee regarding the school house plan, Education Subcommittee Chair Julie Scott reported that Principal Thomas Pandiscio was very positive on the school house plan. He indicated that a change like this to a school will be harder on the faculty than on the students but that he believes the plan is educationally sound and the right direction for the high school to go.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the March submission to the Department of Education must include a preliminary design, with the final design due in June. To pause in the development of the design at this juncture would cause considerable design problems.

Motion to Amend: To remove project design section and replace with design will adhere to all specifications of the School Committee

(C. Connell)

Point of Order by Member Margaret Watson: Member Watson expressed her belief that the School Committee has already approved the specifications when approving the report of Strelakovsky & Hoit, Inc.

Chairman John Rokicki ruled that the motion would not undo any previous action of the Committee and ruled the motion in order, provided it received a second.

Motion to amend died due to lack of second.

Motion to Amend: To provide for incentives for completion of the project on time and under budget and punitive

consequences for completion of the project after the projected completion date and over budget.

(C. Connell)

Point of Order by Superintendent: The contract with the architect is an administrative function and should not be considered at this time. He reported that he would take suggestions of this type under advisement.

Chairman ruled the motion to amend was out-of-order.

The Superintendent distributed *Costs Could Block 2nd High School*, **Evening Gazette**, February 14, 1968 (attachment 3).

Motion to Amend: To remove from the project design any references to upper and lower schools, pending further debate on housing structures.

(C. Esperti)

(P. MacDonald)

Motion: To move the question

(P. MacDonald)

(J. Nunnari)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Jeffrey Gibbs
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari

Opposed;

Duncan Leith
Charles Capparelli
Patricia Gates

Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 12-6)

Roll call vote on Motion to Amend: To remove from the project design any references to upper and lower schools, pending further debate on housing structures.

In favor:

Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Peter MacDonald

Opposed:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Jeffrey Gibbs
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Abstained:

Patricia Gates

(Motion failed 5-12-1)

Motion to Amend: To add the words on page 1 under Project Design, “each containing both ninth and tenth grade” following “Divided into two houses”

(P. Gates)

(A. Livdahl)

The Superintendent advised that this is the intent of the school house plan but that the assignment of students rests solely with the principal.

Roll call vote on motion to amend: To add the words on page 1 under Project Design, “each containing both ninth and tenth grade” following “Divided into two houses”

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jeffrey Gibbs
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Peter MacDonald
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 13-5)

Motion to Amend: On Page 2, the first complete bullet, to change “maximize” to “minimize”

(P. MacDonald)
(J. Nunnari)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell

Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jeffrey Gibbs
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion to Amend: On page 2, the third complete bullet, to add, “as well as community use”

(P. MacDonald)

(C. Esperti)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jeffrey Gibbs
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Following inquiry, the Superintendent described the black box theater as a small, flexible theater, painted black with the installation of lights. It is a 2,500 square foot space which is not designed for community use but rather for academic drama use. The current high school has a small theater on the second floor, used for a similar purpose. Many new schools are installing them, including Shrewsbury, Brookline, Weston, and Algonquin. The Superintendent reported that it would not be more costly than any other 2,500 square foot space other than the installation of lights.

Motion: To table the main motion as amended until the February 24th Regular School Committee Meeting

(D. Benson)

(K. Ferguson)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Duncan Leith
Charles Capparelli
Jeffrey Gibbs

Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello

(Motion passed 12-6)

Inquiry was made as to the setting of a special meeting to discuss budget. Chairman Rokicki indicated the discussion would begin tonight, but a special meeting would probably be scheduled to complete the discussion.

D. Business-related Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

E. School Building Committees requiring the action of the School Committee

1. Holden – (J. Scott)
2. Paxton
3. Rutland
 - a. Central Tree/Naquag – (J. Rokicki)
 - b. Elementary – (J. Nunnari)
4. Sterling
5. High School

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of report

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that he was hoping to have discussions regarding many budget issues, as outlined in his report, which provides no particular order.

It was noted that in the minutes of the Education Subcommittee meeting Member Peter MacDonald had made the motion to adjourn, not Member Kimberly Ferguson. The minutes will be corrected to reflect same.

In reference to three emails regarding the Holden Selectboard, the Superintendent reminded members that the Committee already took the advisory vote to use the interest on the high school project for the project, following the Superintendent's recommendation. The Superintendent advised that a separate accounting system is being developed for the high school project in order to maintain a record of interest. It was noted that, in particular, the Holden Selectboard wanted the interest to be used to pay down debt. The Superintendent noted that the State is looking to deduct interest from project reimbursement.

When asked if a policy could be developed for this purpose, the Superintendent reminded the members that the School Committee, by two-thirds majority, appropriates money, not by policy.

It was noted that on Page 18, in the minutes of the Education Subcommittee, the changes discussed were proposed by the administration. The minutes will be corrected.

When asked about some of the budget issues, the Superintendent again explained that he hoped to discuss all of the issues in his report in order to receive some policy direction from the Committee. The Governor's Budget is due to be released February 26th.

Chairman Rokicki collected the copies of the Executive Session Minutes of January 10, 2003.

Member Carol Esperti left the meeting at 9:25 PM.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. Motion: To extend health insurance benefits until June 2004 for staff called to active duty in the armed service, provided that the staff members remain on active duty.

(D. Leith)

(M. Watson)

One of the concerns for staff called up to serve in the armed services in our geographic area is that there is not a military hospital close-by for family members.

Motion to Amend: Add “up to five” between “for” and “called” and to add “members” after “staff”.

(D Leith)
(C. Connell)

Vote on motion to amend:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jeffrey Gibbs
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Patricia Young

(Motion passed 16-0-1)

Vote on main motion, as amended: To extend health insurance benefits until June 2004 for up to five staff members called to active duty in the armed service, provided that the staff members remain on active duty.

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Fedeli

Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jeffrey Gibbs
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 16-0-1)

2. School Committee Policy Discussion Regarding Budget Standards

The Superintendent explained the process he would like to use in order to get policy direction from the Committee. The District is looking at a \$3 million shortfall. He briefly reviewed possible scenarios for the Committee to consider, not necessarily in priority order:

- The appropriations budget shall include excess debt recovery as a revenue source.
- The District shall include 90% of the FY03 residual E & D.
- Reductions should be made first in non-instructional areas prior to instruction being reduced.
- Transportation should meet the minimum requirements of the law with a supplemental budget being prepared for separate and independent action by the towns in order to maintain status quo transportation including distances less than required by state reimbursement formula.

- Non time-on-learning (i.e. extracurricular and athletics) reductions shall be made prior to any reductions in time-on-learning.
- Every effort shall be made to use attrition for staff reductions.
- Reductions in staff shall be made equitably by school level with first consideration being given to instructional support to non required or essential teacher aides.
- Reduction of instructional staff, with the exception of kindergarten, shall be implemented equitably to ensure that grade levels and schools are similarly impacted.

The Superintendent distributed *Students Bused Within the District by School/Distance from School* (attachment 4). The Superintendent briefly explained the information and informed the Committee that should the State change its standard to only reimburse Districts for students who live more than two miles, the impact on the District is doubled. The Superintendent will send the information regarding students who live more than two miles with the next Superintendent's Report.

Chairman Rokicki, with consensus of the Committee, scheduled a Special Meeting for Monday, March 3, 2003, at 7:00 PM in the Media Center at the high school for the purpose of discussing policy direction for budget development.

VII. Public Hearing

VIII. Unfinished Business

- A. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on December 30, 2002
- B. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on January 27, 2003

IX. New Business

X. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(P MacDonald)
(D. Leith)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jeffrey Gibbs
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

ADT:ss/schoolcommittee/minutes