

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1069, Monday, January 12, 2004
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	René Rodriguez (7:40 PM)
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	John Rokicki (7:10 PM)
Donald Benson	Julie Scott
Elizabeth Brennan	Michael Sherman
David Dickman	Tammy Tod
Alice Livdahl	Margaret Watson
John Nunnari	Patricia Young (7:04 PM)
Norman Plourde	

Committee Members Absent:

Charles Capparelli	Patricia Gates
Clifford Connell	Mark James

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative Services
Susan Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

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

Chair Duncan Leith called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

I. Public Hearing

No one from the public wished to speak.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1068th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on December 15, 2003 – approved by consensus, changing “Sterling PTA’s” to “Sterling PTO’s” on page 5.

III. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

- A. Approval of the Treasurer's Recommendation for the sale by the District of a \$20,000,000 General Obligation Bond dated January 15, 2004, authorized September 30, 2002 to Merrill Lynch & Co. – New York, New York at the true interest cost of 4.008213%

The Superintendent distributed copies of the Treasurer's recommendation (attachment 2). The Superintendent reported that the bids were all very close. He explained that the purpose of borrowing \$20 million now and the balance later is to level the cost over the course of the loan, resulting in no negative impact on the taxpayers in three years. Reimbursement should start around 2011. This borrowing scenario was agreed to by the Member Towns, Treasurer, and Superintendent.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained that the difference between the 6% projected interest rate and the 4% actual rate is approximately \$3 million for the total borrowing.

Motion: To approve the Treasurer's recommendation for the sale by the District of a \$20,000,000 General Obligation Bond dated January 15, 2004, authorized September 30, 2002 to Merrill Lynch & Co. – New York, New York at the true interest cost of 4.008213%

(N. Mello)
(M. Sherman)

The Superintendent informed the Committee that he would include an explanation for the September 30, 2002 date in his next report.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan

David Dickman
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Chairman Duncan Leith reminded the Committee that if there were questions regarding the Comptroller's report that members should contact the Superintendent; if there were questions regarding the Treasurer's report, members should contact Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello.

IV. Committee Reports

- A. Student Advisory Committee (C. Brennan, R. Hinson, A. Vaillancourt)

No one from the Student Advisory Committee was present.

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

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the next Management Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for February 4, 2004 at 6:30 PM in the Superintendent's Conference Room. The proposed Regional Agreement amendments will be on the agenda with a recommendation to the full Committee.

Member John Rokicki requested an electronic version of the Proposed Regional Agreement amendments. The Superintendent will forward the copy to Member Rokicki.

- C. Education Subcommittee (J. Scott, Chair, E. Brennan, M. James, J. Nunnari, N. Plourde, R. Rodriguez, M. Watson)

Education Chair Julie Scott reported that the Education Subcommittee met at 6:00 PM on January 12, 2004, prior to the School Committee meeting. Most of the meeting was dedicated to discussions concerning the School Improvement Plans that are reviewed in the spring.

Education Chair Julie Scott distributed copies of DP3510 **Policy Relating to Education Class Size**, which was included in the December 23, 2003 Superintendent's Report (attachment 3). The Education Subcommittee recognizes the high standards for our District and the Subcommittee.

Motion: To approve DP3510 **Policy Relating to Education Class Size** for the first reading, waiving the reading
(J. Scott)
(J. Nunnari)

The Superintendent recommended that the Committee receive an impact study from the Superintendent before action by the Committee. The Education Subcommittee wanted the School Committee to review the proposed numbers before requesting an impact study. The Superintendent recommended that the policy include an annual report on class size for the November School Committee meeting.

When asked whether the impact could include projections out a few years, the Superintendent reported that the buildings are staffed equitably by enrollment. The Superintendent reported that the word "average" could be inserted which would level out the students. The Superintendent explained that sometimes there are unique needs of some students and using "average" class size would provide the principal the leeway to assign to classes by need and not only by numbers. The Superintendent informed the Committee that staffing in classrooms is solely a principal decision.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that high school classes combined in one classroom would be counted as one, not two. The Superintendent emphasized the importance of establishing a standard for the community.

When asked if the Education Subcommittee discussed the possibility of getting input from the community, Chair Julie Scott reported that the impact study is needed first.

Motion: To table the motion

(N. Mello)
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
David Dickman
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Julie Scott

(Motion passed 14-0-1)

The next Education Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2004 at 6:00 PM in the Modular Cafeteria at the high school.

- D. Business/Finance Subcommittee (N. Mello, Chair, C. Connell, D. Dickman, D. Leith, J. Nunnari, M. Sherman, P. Young)

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello reported that a meeting of the Subcommittee would be scheduled after the School Committee Retreat.

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Mello asked whether or not the Treasurer had signed the new contract. The Superintendent indicated that he would follow-up on that with the Treasurer.

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

1. Community Outreach (M. Sherman, Chair, E. Brennan, C. Capparelli, C. Connell, A. Livdahl)

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach Chair Michael Sherman reported that the next meeting of the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee is scheduled for Wednesday, January 21, 2004, but will be held in the Superintendent's Conference Room rather than the Curriculum Center.

F. Building Committees

1. High School – John Rokicki

High School; Building Committee Chair John Rokicki reported that the next meeting of the Building Committee is scheduled for Thursday, January 15, 2004, at 6:00 PM at the high school. Sub-bids for the project will be opened on January 14, 2003 and bids for the General Contractor will be opened on January 21, 2004.

The Superintendent reported that the District will go through the purchasing process and enter into contracts with lowest bidders who can perform the work, as specified.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that the concerns expressed in communication from Holden Building Commissioner Dennis Lipka regarding height and area concerns are not considered significant by the architect.

The high school project was submitted as a Green School Project. Since there can only be one Green School project per District per year, possibly Rutland could be considered as a Green School project for the next year. However, the Superintendent advised that both projects are on the same School Building Assistance priority list.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree – John Rokicki

The Superintendent reported that in the nurse's office at Central Tree the sprinkler burst on Saturday night or early Sunday morning. Apparently the design was flawed and there was not sufficient heat in the room. District staff will assess damage, although limited and take corrective action. It appears that some carpeting will need to be replaced. District staff is also evaluating the area to make changes so that this type of problem will not occur in the future.

The Superintendent reported that there also was a similar problem at Mountview in the pump room. There appears to be no damage to the school.

3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

Member John Nunnari reported that the next Rutland Elementary School building meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 15, 2004.

4. Sterling

G. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School (J. Nunnari), Chocksett Middle School (C. Capparelli), Davis Hill Elementary School (R. Rodriguez), Dawson Elementary School (M. James), Houghton Elementary School (N. Plourde), Mayo Elementary School (M. Watson), Mountview Middle School (D. Benson), Naquag Elementary School (E. Brennan), Paxton Center School (A. Livdahl), Thomas Prince School (C. Connell), and Wachusett Regional High School (N. Mello, T. Tod).

Member Norman Plourde reported that the students at Houghton Elementary School recently voted the hawk as its mascot. Member Plourde took on the challenge to find a Red Tail Hawk, which could be preserved by a taxidermist for display at the school. Member Plourde was pleased to report that he was successful in locating a hawk and has obtained the services of a taxidermist at no charge. A State permit was applied for and obtained, which included the provision that the hawk would be part of the educational plan of students.

Member Tammy Tod reported that the high school council met in December and in January. Principal Thomas Pandiscio reported to the Council that there had been an increase in fighting at the school, especially among girls and that he was looking into making changes to the disciplinary code. Principal Pandiscio sent a letter to parents and it appears that the fighting has stopped.

Principal Pandiscio also reported to the Council that he will be making a recommendation to the Superintendent to change some of the graduation requirements, in particular those related to foreign language. The Superintendent reported that he had met with the principal and discussed the matter. He indicated that students struggle in many subjects and standards should not be lowered because of that. A written recommendation will be forthcoming from Principal Pandiscio to the Superintendent; it will then be reviewed with the Cabinet. If a recommendation comes from the Cabinet, it will be sent to the Committee and probably referred to the Education Subcommittee for discussion and recommendation.

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

The Superintendent reported that he will be attending several meetings regarding the process for the upcoming budget, including a meeting with the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS) at Assabet Regional Vocational School.

The Superintendent thanked publicly Representative Lewis Evangelidis who came by the Central Office and urged the Superintendent to apply for funds from the Foundation Reserve Account. Due to his encouragement, the District will receive \$200,000 from the fund.

Chair Duncan Leith referred to the Management Subcommittee the request of the Paxton Selectboard to form a Committee for the FY05 budget.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reviewed the revenue received by the District in comparison to what was projected: the \$200,000 from the Foundation Reserve was not budgeted and

that will save that amount from *Instructional Support* the Circuit Breaker was estimated at \$800,000 and the District will receive approximately \$700,000, or a \$100,000 shortfall; the District projected no funding for Charter Schools; the Committee had already approved the use of the *Excess & Deficiency* (E & D). The Superintendent emphasized that the Circuit Breaker should have realized for the District more funding than the previous 50/50 but instead the District will receive less.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. The Superintendent recommended that the School Committee continue to request that District Counsel Leo McCabe remain neutral in the lawsuit of Town of Holden vs Wachusett Regional School District et als. The Committee took no action to change its position of neutrality.

2. Approval of 2004/2005 School Calendar

Following inquiry regarding the schools being closed on Good Friday, the Superintendent reported that there was a preponderance of requests for personal days and that it is necessary to staff the buildings. The School Committee voted to have the day off for the 2003/2004 calendar and the Superintendent recommended that the 2004/2005 calendar reflect the same.

Motion: To approve the 2004/2005 School Calendar, changing the March Professional Development Day to March 28 and indicating a March Break, rather than Good Friday (attachment 4)

(N. Mello)
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
David Dickman
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari

Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman

Opposed:

Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson

Abstained:

Patricia Young

(Motion passed 12-2-1)

3. Amended FY04 Appropriation, including the transfer of \$347,403 from *Excess & Deficiency* (E & D)

Motion: To approve the Amended FY04 Appropriation including the transfer of \$347,403 from Excess & Deficiency (E & D) (attachment 5)

(J. Nunnari)
(N. Mello)

Member Michael Sherman left the meeting at 8:55 PM.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
David Dickman
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Member Michael Sherman returned to the meeting at 8:58 PM.

VI. Public Hearing

No one from the public wished to speak.

VII. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. New Business

1. Retreat Reminder

Members were reminded that the Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, January 17, 2004, from 8:00 AM until noon in the Hagglund Room at the Campus Center at WPI. Member Natalie Mello distributed directions to WPI along with a map (attachment 6).

2. Member Donald Benson distributed and read as part of the public record his proposed Amended P4100 **Policy Relating to Budget/Finance Budget** (attachment 7). Member Benson suggested that the policy be used during retreat discussions on Saturday, January 17, 2004. This policy should be referred to Business/Finance Subcommittee for review.

3. Member Margaret Watson called the Committee's attention to her proposed program Books for Kids, including in the Superintendent's Report as attachment 22 (attachment 8).

Member Watson expressed to the Committee that there may be people without children or businesses that might be interested in contributing to such a program and she requested that the Committee consider such a proposal.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that, by law, the School Committee can establish a Foundation and collect and

distribute funds. By consensus, the Committee agreed to have the Superintendent explore the establishment of a Foundation.

4. Member Norman Plourde reflected on thoughts about the Massachusetts General Laws regarding student representation on School Committees (attachment 9). He suggested that the Committee focus more closely on the requirements of the law relative to student representation at the School Committee table.

The issue was referred to Management Subcommittee for consideration.

5. Member Tammy Tod commented that the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee has not come to the School Committee to report to the School Committee, as is provided by law. The Superintendent reported that it is up to the parents to meet, elect officers, and report to the School Committee. It is the District's responsibility to provide staff support to such a Committee.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(J. Rokicki)
(R. Rodriguez)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
David Dickman
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes