

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1087, Monday January 24, 2005
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	David Gibbs
John Nunnari, Vice-chair	Mark James
Cynthia Bazinet	John Kane
Elizabeth Brennan	Alice Livdahl
Charles Capparelli	Mary Catherine Maher (7:07 PM)
Robert Carter	Norman Plourde
Clifford Connell	Michael Sherman

Committee Members Absent:

Patricia Gates	Cheryl Rauh
Kelly Maxwell	Margaret Watson
Natalie Mello	

Administration Present:

Paul K. Soojian, Deputy Superintendent and Director of Operations
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative Services
Susan H. 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 7:04 PM and distributed a copy of the Corrected Agenda and AP8130 **Policy Relating to Communication/Public Relations** *Distribution of Notices by Students* (attachments 2 and 3)

I. Public Hearing

No one from the public wished to speak.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1086th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on January 10, 2005 – approved by consensus with Members Charles Capparelli, Robert Carter, and Mary Catherine Maher abstaining.

III. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

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

IV. Committee Reports

A. Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the School Committee met on Saturday, January 22, 2005, for the School Committee Retreat. The Retreat focused on prioritizing the School Committee goals in order to provide direction to the Superintendent in preparing the FY06 budget. Chair Leith commented that the School Committee spent time focusing on education and that the Committee agreed by consensus that the budget would be a value-based budget aimed at improving the educational product of the District and to restore the services and staff reduced over the past two years. Chair Leith commended Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello for her thorough preparation for the Retreat and publicly thanked the facilitator, Paul LaCava, for a job well done.

Chair Leith took the opportunity to introduce the two new members from Holden, Robert Carter and Mary Catherine (Cathy) Maher.

B. Student Advisory Committee (C. Brennan, K. Getchell, J. Leger, C. Wilde)

No one in from the Student Advisory Committee was in attendance.

C. Management Subcommittee (D. Leith, Chair, C. Capparelli, P. Gates, D. Gibbs, M. James, N. Mello, J. Nunnari, M. Watson)

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the Management Subcommittee meeting was canceled and the next meeting will be Thursday, February 3, 2005, at 5:30 PM in the Superintendent's Conference Room.

Chair Leith reported that he would appoint the two new members to subcommittees following discussions with each of them.

1. AP8130 ***Policy Relating to Communication/Public Relations Distribution of Notices by Students*** – second reading

Motion: To approve AP8130 ***Policy Relating to Communication/Public Relations Distribution of Notices by Students*** for the second reading, waiving the reading

(D. Gibbs)
(J. Nunnari)

Some Members reported that concern had been expressed by parents regarding the denial of distribution of flyers from such organizations as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, soccer, etc., should the policy be adopted by the School Committee. Other Members expressed concerned that the District could be subject to possible litigation, if the policy is not adopted by the School Committee. Deputy Superintendent Soojian noted that correspondence from the Attorney General was included in the Deputy Superintendent's report regarding a hate group distributing CDs on school grounds and that this is an example of what the District could face if the School Committee was not pro-active.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
John Nunnari
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Robert Carter
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl

Mary Catherine Maher
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman

Opposed:
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell

(Motion passed 12-2)

- D. Education Subcommittee (M. Watson, Chair, C. Bazinet, E. Brennan, A. Livdahl, J. Nunnari, N. Plourde)

The next Education Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 31, 2005, at 6:00 PM in the Superintendent's Conference Room at the District Central Office. Member Natalie Mello has agreed to provide information to the Subcommittee on foreign travel.

- E. Business/Finance Subcommittee (N. Mello, Chair, C. Connell, D. Gibbs, M. James, J. Kane, D. Leith, K. Maxwell, M. Sherman)

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the Business/Finance Subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting. Correspondence was sent to the Member Town Selectboards with the financial information from the Department of Revenue. Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that to date no responses have been received from the Member Towns.

A member noted that the agreement on a value-based budget made at the School Committee Retreat was made prior to the release of any State budget information. Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that Governor Romney will file House 1 on Wednesday, January 26, 2005, with the Department of Education expected to post the next week regarding Minimum Local Contribution and Net School Spending amounts. A request was made to email the School Committee members when that information is available. Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the School Committee that he would inform them when House 1 was available and when the Department of Education posted the Minimum Local Contribution and Net School Spending information.

Chair Leith reported that the next Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting has not been scheduled.

- F. Community Outreach Subcommittee (D. Gibbs, Chair, C. Bazinet, E. Brennan, C. Connell, D. Leith, A. Livdahl, M. Sherman)

Community Outreach Subcommittee Chair David Gibbs reported that the Community Outreach Subcommittee met on January 20, 2005 and agreed on the role and responsibilities of the subcommittee. The subcommittee also voted to recommend to the Management Subcommittee to include the adopted roles, goals and responsibilities of the subcommittees in the front of the WRSD Policy Book.

The School Committee agreed by consensus to include adopted statements regarding goals, roles and responsibilities of subcommittees at the beginning of the WRSD Policy Book.

The next meeting of the Community Outreach Subcommittee is scheduled for January 31, 2005 at 7:30 PM in the Curriculum Center at the District Central Office.

- G. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

1. Review the Process for Selection of a Superintendent (N. Plourde, Chair, C. Capparelli, C. Connell, M. James, D. Leith, A. Livdahl, N. Mello, J. Nunnari, M. Watson)

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Norman Plourde reported that the last meeting had been canceled. The responses to the Request for Proposals (RFPs) are due on Thursday, January 27, 2005, at 11:00 AM. Ad-hoc Subcommittee Chair Plourde requested that Chair Leith schedule a special School Committee meeting to discuss the process and determine the direction of the School Committee. Ad-hoc Subcommittee Chair Plourde suggested that the special meeting be scheduled for Wednesday, February 2, 2005, at 7:00 PM. Chair Leith responded that he wanted to make sure that Members were available before a special meeting is scheduled. Chair Leith requested that Members contact him as to whether or not they would be available on February 2, 2005.

Chair Leith reported that Glenn Koocher from MASC contacted him and reported that MASC would not be submitting a proposal. However, Mr. Koocher sent

information to Chair Leith regarding the superintendent search process and reported that MASC would be willing to come to the School Committee and make a presentation. Chair Leith included the information as part of the public record (attachment 4).

Following inquiry, Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the School Committee that the RFP opening would take place in the Curriculum Center at the District Central Office at 11:00 AM on Thursday, January 27, 2005. Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that twelve firms were sent the RFP and that the list was compiled from information from MASC and MASS.

H. Building Committees

1. High School

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the High School Building Committee is now meeting twice a month and is having additional administrative meetings as well. Chair Leith reported that he will try to attend some of the administrative meetings.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree

3. Rutland – Elementary School – Elizabeth Brennan

Member Elizabeth Brennan reported that the Rutland Building Committee has not met for several weeks. Marty Goulet has been appointed Clerk of the Works. The Building Committee expects to meet at the end of February when clearing the land begins.

I. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School (C. Rauh), Chocksett Middle School (C. Capparelli), Davis Hill Elementary School (C. Bazinet), Dawson Elementary School (M. James), Houghton Elementary School (N. Plourde), Mayo Elementary School (M. Watson), Mountview Middle School (M. Sherman), Naquag Elementary School (E. Brennan), Paxton Center School (A. Livdahl), Thomas Prince School (C. Connell), and Wachusett Regional High School (K. Maxwell).

Member Elizabeth Brennan reported that the Naquag School Council met two weeks ago. The Council is preparing a parent

survey; information from other schools is being gathered by the Council. The Council also discussed the new elementary school and expressed hope that it would indeed open as scheduled in September 2006, as originally planned.

Member Cynthia Bazinet reported that the Davis Hill School Council met January 20, 2005 and discussed the impact of the budget reductions on the school. The student handbook was also discussed.

Member Alice Livdahl reported that the Paxton Center School Council met January 19, 2005 and was not convened due to a lack of quorum. The Council is compiling the results of a parent survey.

Member Charles Capparelli reported that the Chocksett Middle School Council met on January 19, 2005 and discussed the December 9th lockdown drill conducted at the school. He reported that the school administration and staff learned a lot from the drill, which was done with the cooperation of the Sterling police and fire departments. The Council also expressed concern about the budget as the class sizes will be larger next year. A subcommittee of the School Council was established to begin work on the School Improvement Plan.

Following inquiry, Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the School Committee that there are two types of safety drills for schools, evacuation and lockdown or shelter in place. Each of the schools ran a trial lockdown drill to determine what the school needed to correct should an actual emergency occur. Member Town police and fire departments have cooperated with each of the schools during this process.

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Member Alice Livdahl asked if the computers now being used at the high school could be re-distributed to the schools in need of technology, once the new computers, as part of the building project, are installed at the high school. Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that the high school has the oldest computers in the District and that when the elementary schools received new computers during building projects, the older computers went to the high school to hold them over until the high school project

was completed. Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that the District is conducting a technology inventory and that information will be shared with the School Committee when completed. The process, however, is a lengthy one.

Member Elizabeth Brennan asked if the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council offered an opportunity for parents to give feedback to the Superintendent. Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that there is opportunity for discussion. However, at the last meeting, due to the storm, discussion was limited.

Member Elizabeth Brennan commented on the information included in the Deputy Superintendent's report regarding meal receipts and whether or not there is any data regarding increases or decreases in revenue at the schools where nutritional decisions have been made. The District has not collected the information in that way in the past.

Member Clifford Connell reported that he has proposed a policy on nutrition, which he forwarded to Chair Leith and hopes will be discussed at the next Community Outreach Subcommittee meeting.

Member Michael Sherman noted that there was information contained in the Deputy Superintendent's report regarding an award for math/science teachers. Following inquiry, Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the Committee that many award opportunities are made available to staff through the District News but that the District does not gather information on the number of staff nominated for such awards.

Following inquiry from Member Michael Sherman on where the funding would come from for renovations to the gymnasium at the Early Childhood Center, Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the School Committee that the District was gathering information at this time and that no funding mechanism has been identified to date.

Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that the District has experienced several boiler issues:

- At the high school there are several problems, the latest on the morning of January 24th.
- Naquag boiler had problems with the main boiler and the back-up boiler did not fire. The District is working to repair the boiler.

- There have been three problems with the boiler at the Early Childhood Center.

Following inquiry, Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the School Committee that District Counsel Leo McCabe continues to advise the School Committee to remain neutral in the Holden v. WRSD et al lawsuit for the following reasons:

- The outcome will probably be the same, whether the School Committee participated or not.
- The School Committee requested that the Commissioner of Education be brought in to the suit; the District should remain in line with the position of the Commissioner.
- The School Committee should not expend funds at this time.

B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that the District had received from the Department of Revenue (DOR) correspondence certifying the Excess & Deficiency (E & D) at \$365,378, not \$494,305, the estimate by the District auditors. The District immediately contacted the DOR and the District auditor to determine the cause for such a discrepancy. Following discussions, the District is expected to receive an amended certification of E & D funds in the amount of \$490,627. Deputy Superintendent Soojian will forward the certification to the School Committee once it has been received by the District.

VI. Public Hearing

No one from the public wished to speak.

VII. Unfinished Business

- A. Tabled Motion: To adopt the proposal for the Wachusett Regional School District to Establish a Stabilization Fund, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 71, section 16G½, as prepared by District Counsel Leo McCabe:

Whereas the Wachusett Regional School District is desirous of establishing a Stabilization Fund pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, section 16G½ to provide a fund for the upgrading, replacement and improvement of information technology systems within the School District and for such other

lawful purposes as provided by the Statute, the Regional District School Committee hereby authorizes and proposes to the Member Towns, the establishment of a stabilization fund for the Regional School District as follows:

1. The Regional School District is authorized, upon a majority vote of all members of the Regional District School Committee and with the approval of a majority of the local appropriating authorities of the Member Towns, to establish a stabilization fund and, may in any year, include in its annual budget for deposit in the stabilization fund an amount not exceeding five percent of the aggregate amount apportioned to the Member Towns for the preceding fiscal year or such larger amount as may be approved by the Director of Accounts.
2. The aggregate amount in the fund at any time shall not exceed five percent of the combined equalized valuations of the Member Towns. Any interest shall be added to and become a part of the fund.
3. The annual report submitted to the member Towns pursuant to Chapter 71, section 16 (k) shall include a statement of the balance in the stabilization fund and all additions to and withdrawals from the fund during the period covered by the report.
4. The Treasurer of the Regional School District shall be the custodian of such fund and may deposit or invest the fund in such deposits or investments as are legal for the deposit or investment of revenue funds of the District or in such securities as are legal for the investment of funds of savings banks under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
5. The stabilization fund may be appropriated by a vote of two thirds of all members of the Regional District School Committee for the upgrade, replacement and improvement of information technology systems within the School District and for any other purpose for which the Regional School District may borrow money as provided in M.G.L Chapter 71, Section 16 or for such other District purpose as the Authorized State Agency may approve. No expenditures may be made from such appropriation unless the procedures set forth in Section 15 of the *Amended*

Wachusett Regional School District Agreement for the approval of a debt issue are complied with, which require two-thirds voter approval of the District either at Town Meetings or by ballot referendum.

Motion: To take the motion from the table

(M. Sherman)
(J. Kane)

Roll call vote

In favor:

Duncan Leith
John Nunnari
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Michael Sherman

Opposed:

Cynthia Bazinet
Clifford Connell
David Gibbs
Mark James
Norman Plourde

Abstained:

Robert Carter
Mary Catherine Maher

(Motion passed 7-5-2)

Some members expressed an interest in hearing comments from the Chairs of the Education and Business/Finance Subcommittees, who were not in attendance. Members also expressed an interest in hearing from the Superintendent on the issue.

Motion: To postpone action on the motion until the School Committee meeting on February 14, 2005

(M. James)
(D. Gibbs)

Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the Committee that the issue was first brought to the attention of the School Committee in 2002 when the Superintendent first had concerns that the technology was aging.

The high school project was before the voters and the issue was deferred. Budget reductions in the next two years caused the Superintendent to delay discussion again. The technology that was provided as part of the school projects is beginning to show its age. There is not enough money to do this as a budget item. It is only possible, by law, to carry over 5% of the operating budget in a year. This technology stabilization fund would be a vehicle to put away the money over time. Deputy Superintendent Soojian expressed concern that if the School Committee went to the Member Towns in the future for a separate warrant article for technology, the Member Towns might question why the School Committee did not prepare for this, since the issue is known.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
John Nunnari
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
Clifford Connell
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Mary Catherine Maher
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

VIII. New Business

A member asked what had happened with the interest in establishing a charitable foundation. Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the Committee that his best recollection was that District Counsel Leo McCabe had offered information on this but that he would find out and include it in the next Superintendent's report.

Motion: To join MASC and to appropriate the funds from certified Excess & Deficiency (E & D)

(C. Connell)
(A. Livdahl)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
John Nunnari
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
Clifford Connell
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Mary Catherine Maher
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

In order to help him get up to speed as a new Member of the School Committee, Member Robert Carter asked Deputy Superintendent Soojian to either name the three biggest problems in the District or in order to improve what three improvements would he recommend.

Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the Committee that he wholeheartedly concurs with the School Committee's intent in setting their priorities. He further stated that the three improvements he would suggest to improve education in the District would be:

1. stop erosion of staff and programs
2. provide instructional support so that the staff has the tools to effectively do their job
3. maintain professional development at a level that would support the staff

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(J. Nunnari)
(C. Connell)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
John Nunnari
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
Clifford Connell
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Mary Catherine Maher
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman

Opposed:

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul K. Soojian
Deputy Superintendent and Director of Operations