

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1070, Monday, January 26, 2004
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	Mark James
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	Alice Livdahl
Donald Benson	John Nunnari
Elizabeth Brennan	Norman Plourde
Charles Capparelli	René Rodriguez (7:38 PM)
Clifford Connell (7:57 PM)	John Rokicki (7:38 PM)
David Dickman	Michael Sherman (8:10 PM)
Patricia Gates (7:05 PM)	Margaret Watson (7:04 PM)

Committee Members Absent:

Julie Scott	Patricia Young
Tammy Tod	

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative Services
Peter Brennan, Comptroller
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. Chair Leith read a prepared statement regarding the Chair clarifying misinformation at the beginning of the meetings (attachment 2).

I. Public Hearing

Douglas Briggs, Rutland Selectboard and member of the WRHS Class of 1970 spoke on the upcoming Celebration of 50 Years of Wachusett Regional High School (attachment 3).

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 4).

Chair Duncan Leith reported that he was asked to make a part of the public record a letter from Larry Floryan from Holden to the Joint Committee on Education, disputing Holden's remarks on Chapter 70 Aid reform (attachment 5).

Chair Duncan Leith informed the Committee that he was first addressing Item V, A Presentation on *No Child Left Behind* Regulations and the Impact on Professional Development and turned the meeting over to the Superintendent. Director of Operations Paul Soojian described the impacts on professional development by the education Reform Act of 1993, *No Child Left Behind*, and contractual obligations, through a PowerPoint presentation (attachment 6).

The Superintendent reported that he would provide to the Committee the cost for contractual obligation professional development for teachers and administrators. Following inquiry, the Superintendent informed the Committee that for the FY04 budget the legislature did not require the District to spend a specific amount of money on professional development but did not relieve Districts of the responsibility to provide professional development at no cost to the employee, as provided for in the Education Reform Act of 1993.

The Superintendent reported that District staff is analyzing the District's professional development plan in order to determine potential areas of non-compliance with the provisions of *No Child Left Behind*. The analysis will result in adjustments to the professional development program and will be provided to the Committee upon its completion. The Superintendent reported that the Confratute at the University of Connecticut is the most prolific supplier for professional development to the District staff due to its varied offerings. Last summer the program was supported by grants.

The Committee expressed concern that professional development requirements, without funding, is another of many unfunded mandates that face the District in planning an educational and professional program for students and staff in the District.

Chair Duncan Leith return to the original agenda.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1069th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on January 12, 2004 – approved by consensus
- B. Approval of 253rd Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on January 17, 2004 – approved by consensus, adding “The Committee agreed by consensus that the Chairs of the Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Committees will be invited to the Management Subcommittee on February 4, 2004.” on page 5 before adjournment

Following inquiry, Chair Duncan Leith reported that the only official vote taken at the retreat was to adjourn but that consensus was reached on the priorities of the standards in preparation for budget and that consensus is a provision of Robert's Rules of Order. Agreeing by consensus is a common practice of the Committee and is followed when approving minutes of School Committee meetings.

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 Superintendent; if there were questions regarding the Treasurer's report, members should contact Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello.

Comptroller Brennan confirmed for the Committee that \$1,113, 750 was certified by the Department of Revenue (DOR) for the *Excess & Deficiency Fund (E & D)*.

The Superintendent reported that the Treasurer informed him that the District is limited as to which banks that the District can use in order to obtain higher return.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that following Professional Development Days, the transfer of charges from *Salaries* to *Instructional Support* is made from Salaries to Professional Development, which is how it is reported to the State. This includes two professional development days as well as the new training for first and second year teachers.

IV. Committee Reports

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

The Superintendent reported that he is meeting with representatives from the Student Advisory Committee and he will bring up the subject of non-attendance at School Committee meetings.

- 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 Wednesday, February 4, 2004 at 6:30 PM in the Curriculum Center at the Central Office. The Chairs of the Member Town Selectboard and Finance/Advisory Boards have been invited to attend, to review the process for the FY05 budget. The Subcommittee will also review the proposed changes to the Regional Agreement. Chair Duncan Leith invited Member Norman Plourde to review the policy for student advisory members attending School Committee meetings.

The Superintendent reported that District Counsel Leo McCabe has forwarded final recommendations for the Regional Agreement Amendments. These recommendations will be forwarded to the School Committee.

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

The next Education Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 23, 2004 at 6:00PM 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)

Chair Natalie Mello requested that Business/Finance Subcommittee Members hold the following dates for possible future Business/Finance Subcommittee:

Thursday, February 5, 2004

Tuesday, February 17, 2004

Tuesday, March 2, 2004
Tuesday, March 16, 2004
Tuesday, March 30, 2004

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

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

In the absence of Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Michael Sherman, Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Member Elizabeth Brennan reported that the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee had met on Wednesday, January 21, 2004 and reviewed the priority lists returned by Members following the January 17, 2004 School Committee Retreat. The focused of discussion was on topics surrounding the budget process, valued-added school district and the high school project. The Ad-Hoc Subcommittee also suggested that the School Committee Chair provide remarks prior to each meeting to clarify any misinformation that has been provided to the community, at public meetings or in the media.

Discussion occurred surrounding the make up of possible future meetings with the community. The Ad-Hoc Subcommittee also planned for the luncheon meeting with representatives from *The Landmark*.

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the meeting with representatives from The Landmark went very well. In attendance were Chair Leith, Vice-Chair Natalie Mello, Member Michael Sherman, *The Landmark* Editor-in-Chief James Keogh, reporters Linda Lehans and Ria Megnan and the Superintendent. Ideas were shared.

Following inquiry, the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the high school was referred to the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee.

F. Building Committees

1. High School – John Rokicki

High School Building Committee Chair John Rokicki reported that the opening of the General Contractor bids is

scheduled for Wednesday, January 28, 2004 at 2:00 PM. The High School Building Committee will meet Wednesday, January 28, 2004 at 5:00 PM in the Media Center at the high school to review the bids.

In order to provide clarity to the Committee regarding correspondence from Holden Building Commissioner Dennis Lipka, Chair Rokicki reported that all three items have been addressed in the published specifications. The letter was sent in case the District wanted to appeal to the State for relief from any of the three items.

Upon request of a member, High School Building Committee Chair John Rokicki reported that detailed financial reports are reviewed by the Building Committee and summary reports are provided monthly by the Comptroller as part of the Superintendent's report.

Member Rokicki reported that a Certificate for Special Permit from Town of Holden has been received. Approval by the Conservation Committee has also been received. The Committee continues to meet with the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) to resolve a few issues regarding the pond in front of the high school.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree – John Rokicki

No report.

3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

Member John Nunnari reported that the Rutland Building Committee met on January 15, 2004. Concerns of administration regarding the building materials for the exterior of the building are being addressed. The architect has gone out to bid for different types of siding, which would be safer for students.

The Building Committee reviewed the drawings of all aspects of the building. The Building Committee has agreed that a recording secretary was needed; the Town of Rutland will be looking for a part-time person to act as secretary to the Building Committee.

The Building Committee has begun the process for obtaining a Clerk of the Works. Construction will begin in September 2004 and be completed by March 2006.

4. Sterling

No report.

- G. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School (J. Nunnari), Chocksett Middle School (C. Capparelli), Davis Hill Elementary School (J. Scott), 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 Alice Livdahl reported that Paxton Center School Council had its first meeting with new principal, Anthony DeFrino. The Council will address the middle school program and class trips as future items for discussion.

Member Elizabeth Brennan reported that the Naquag Elementary School Council met. Discussion occurred surrounding the rotating schedule for art, music, and physical education, as parents are having difficulty keeping track of the schedule. Naquag Principal Darryll McCall reported that quality programs are being brought to the schools and that field trips will be limited. The Council meeting was held just prior to the introduction of the Successmaker home component at a parent kick-off meeting, resulting in some discussion about the program.

The Superintendent reported that the first parent meeting in Rutland to kick-off the implementation of the home component of Successmaker was successful. Many parents are choosing to participate in this home-link program.

Chair Duncan Leith reported that he had received an invitation to a program at Mayo School on Thursday, January 29, 2004. Chair Leith will provide the Superintendent a copy of the invitation to forward to the Committee.

V. Superintendent's Report

- A. Presentation on *No Child Left Behind* Regulations and the Impact on Professional Development

Presented at the beginning of the meeting.

- B. Acknowledgement of Gift of Van from Holden Police Department

The Superintendent acknowledged publicly the gift of a 2004 Ford van, valued at \$18,692, to the District for use in the *Life Skills Program* at the high school. Donations were made from the Holden Police Association, Wachusett Partnership for Criminal Justice, Rotary and WRHS Booster Club.

- C. Presentation on FY05 Budget Schedule and Status

The Superintendent shared with the Committee the Timeline for the FY05 Budget Process and Assumptions through a PowerPoint presentation (attachment 7).

Following discussion of the timeline, the Superintendent informed the Committee that there is a regular School Committee meeting on Monday, March 8, 2004, where discussion could take place on the budget, provided to the Committee in the Superintendent's Report of March 4, 2004, prior to adoption at the March 22, 2004 meeting.

The Superintendent reported that in the past *Excess & Deficiency* funds have been used for capital projects, not operating funds. A one-time transfer of \$250,000 from E & D was used to reduce Member Town transportation requirements as the transportation contract had been renegotiated.

Discussion continued on both the budget process and the assumptions. Some on the Committee discussed the need to give the Superintendent further fiscal direction beyond the educational priority direction provided at the School Committee Retreat. Others discussed that a complete budget proposal from the Superintendent was needed before any attempt to reduce the budget. The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the use of E & D funds for the operating budget in FY04 would come to roost in FY05.

There was considerable discussion surrounding the need to improve the process and not to repeat the activities of FY04. The Superintendent reported that, to that end, he was asked to bring a timeline and he brought assumptions as well, in order to begin the process.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that last year the Committee negotiated with itself as the municipal budgets were approved prior to action on the School Committee budget. By consensus, the Committee agreed that municipal and school budgets should be addressed at the same town meetings, not separately.

Following inquiry, Chair Duncan Leith reported that Paxton's proposal from the Paxton Selectboard is not a finalized process; Member Alice Livdahl reported that she and Member Natalie Mello reminded the Paxton Selectboard that a subcommittee of the School Committee does not have the authority to negotiate.

The Superintendent was asked about the history of the *Excess & Deficiency* account. The Superintendent reported that the report had been provided in the December 23, 2003 report, but will provide an updated version.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that any suggestions from the SPED Task Force would be seen in future budgets as it takes time to revise IEPs. He advised the Committee that the only place for leeway in the budget is class size; the District can fit more students in classrooms. During the FY04 process the Superintendent provided possible scenarios for possible future cuts in staff and, as a result, the District lost foreign language teachers. The Committee was reminded that the District lost staff and that no Member Town municipal staff was lost.

There was some discussion regarding the need for two budgets, a "needs budget" and a "means budget". Concern was raised as to how to determine means and that if a number was presented to the community, it would become the number for the community.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reminded that Committee that, pursuant to the Regional Agreement, students cannot be assigned to a school over town lines for grades K-8, unless the

sending and receiving towns approve the transfer or through a parent request. This would prohibit such budgetary suggestions as to transfer the middle school program at one or both of the K-8 schools to other middle schools in the District.

The School Committee was reminded by the Superintendent that the Committee's good faith effort to delay the FY04 budget backfired because the municipal budgets were approved in advance of the final school budget. All budget problems began at approval of Town budgets at the May Member Town Annual Meetings, leaving insufficient funds for the School Committee budget.

Motion: To extend meeting for thirty minutes
(J. Rokicki)
(N. Mello)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

D. Discussion of Report

E. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. **AP3311.1 Policy Relating to Education *Graduation Requirements*** – first reading

Chair Duncan Leith referred the policy to the Education Subcommittee for review and recommendation to the full Committee.

VI. Public Hearing

Brian O'Donnell, Holden, expressed concern about the policy for signing in for the first public hearing, as he was in attendance while the first Public Hearing was still going on and was not allowed to speak. He stated that having a policy for class size is insensitive to the voters. Voters voted against the Proposition 2 ½ ballots because they could not afford it. The District should consider cutting back on heat.

Larry Floryan, Holden, repeated how important it is to compare the District's budget to the State and like communities. There is a wealth of information from the Department of Revenue and Department of Education. The District does not sit well compared to like communities; it is in the bottom 25%. The bottom 9% does not spend more than foundation. Is that where the District wants to be?

Kim Paquette, Holden, wants the Committee to know that there is group of parents who have formed, *Valuing our Towns and Our Education* (VOTE), a political action committee, hopefully to include parents from all towns. The Committee was reminded that it must sell the budget to the parents, to the elected officials and to the community at large. Ms. Paquette asked what has been expended for the Meyer lawsuit to date. Chair Leith reported that over \$3,200 in legal fees has already been expended for the Meyer lawsuit and it still remains on the docket at the Court for future consideration.

VII. Unfinished Business

A. Tabled Motion: To approve DP3510 **Policy Relating to Education *Class Size*** for the first reading, waiving the reading

Chair Duncan Leith referred this policy to the Education Subcommittee for further review following the information provided by the Superintendent on the impact of such a policy.

VIII. New Business

Following a request by Member Donald Benson, Chair Leith reported that Member Benson's recommendation to amend policy P4210 **Policy Relating to Budget/Finance Budget** will be put on the Management Subcommittee agenda.

Member Clifford Connell commented on the availability of snacks in schools and that the Committee should be made aware of this in relation to the problem of obesity in young children. The Superintendent reported that policies can be developed that could determine the types of drinks and snacks to be made available. The Superintendent suggested that the subject be brought by School Committee Liaisons to School Councils for input. The Superintendent reported that he would notify the principals to include this as an agenda item for future meetings. Once the input is received from the councils, perhaps an Ad-Hoc Subcommittee could be formed to review practices.

Following a request by Member Margaret Watson to address a handout from Joanne O'Brien from Holden on safe food practices, the Superintendent indicated that he would provide a presentation by the Food Service staff in the District for a future meeting.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(N. Mello)
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki

Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 10:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes