

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1033, Monday, January 28, 2002
7:00 p.m.

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

John Rokicki, Chairman	Alice Livdahl
Sherry Horeanopoulos, Vice-chairman	David Lowenthal
Donald Benson	Peter MacDonald
Carol Esperti	Kelly Maxwell
Kimberly Ferguson	Natalie Mello
Michael Gennert	Elizabeth Pape (7:10 PM)
Jeffrey Gibbs	Julie Scott
Sarah Jordan	Kathleen Singh
Duncan Leith	

Committee Members Absent:

Kenneth Fensin	John Nunnari
Jane James	

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Brian O'Connell, Director of Administrative Services
Philip Campbell, Director of Student/Information Services
Susan Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Others present:

Linda Lehans, *The Landmark*
Stacey M. Grossi, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*
Christine Nelson, *Sterling Meetinghouse News*
Timothy Ethier, Chair, Holden Selectboard
Suzanne St. Pierre-Ethier, Holden
Maureen Floryan, Holden
Debbie Croucher, Sterling
Melinda Johnson, Paxton

Elaine Smith, Sterling
Donna Dominguez, Sterling

Chairman Rokicki called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Elaine Smith, Sterling reported that an incident occurred at Chocksett Middle School. Her son was accused and was disciplined by the Principal. Her concern was related to the letter sent home regarding the incident and that more students were involved and the situation has not been solved.

Debbie Croucher, Sterling read a prepared statement (attachment 1).

Maureen Floryan, Holden read a prepared statement (attachment 2)

Timothy Ethier, Chairman Holden Selectboard, expressed concern regarding the process for hiring a facilitator. He is concerned that the District will lose the opportunity to obtain reimbursement for the modulars, as reported by David Driscoll at a meeting recently in Holden. He reminded the two-school advocates that they have had nine months to present a proposal and have done nothing. He urged the Committee to not waste any more time; a vote is needed soon. This could be our last chance.

~~A member~~ MEMBER CAROL ESPERTI asked about the agenda not including action for the Superintendent.

Motion: To amend the School Committee By-laws to include, following Committee reports, the Superintendent's Report, both discussion of the report and recommendations of the Superintendent for School Committee action on each of the three agendas.

(C. Esperti)
(S. Jordan)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jeffrey Gibbs

Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of the 1032nd Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on December 10, 2001 – voted by consensus with the following correction on page 9 of the vote on the "Motion: To direct.." to record Members Kelly Maxwell and Natalie Mello as voting against the motion and Member Michael Gennert voting in favor of the motion.

III. Communications

Member Carol Esperti requested that the Committee discuss the communication from her, included in the packet, under New Business.

Member Duncan Leith reported that he had a communication from the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee -- Legislative Corrections to Regional School District Funding. He would distribute the communication under New Business.

Member Kimberly Ferguson asked if the District's report on compliance was sent to the Department of Education. The Superintendent reported that it had been sent in on time to the Department.

IV. Education Presentation

There was no presentation made at the meeting.

V. Committee Reports

A. Student Advisory Committee (L. McNally, C. Smith)

No Student Advisory members were in attendance at the meeting.

B. Education Subcommittee (J. Nunnari – Chair, K. Ferguson, M. Gennert, S. Jordan, A. Livdahl, D. Lowenthal, E. Pape)

The Education Subcommittee is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, January 30, 2002 at 7:00 PM in the Curriculum Center.

~~A member~~ MEMBER SARAH JORDAN of the Committee asked why the Education Subcommittee meeting was not scheduled prior to the education meeting of the School Committee, as discussed during the adoption of the By-Law change. Chairman Rokicki will discuss the issue with Education Subcommittee Chair John Nunnari to see if accommodations can be made so that Members appointed to the Education Subcommittee can attend the meetings.

C. Education-related Ad-Hoc Subcommittees requiring the action of the School Committee

Chairman Rokicki questioned why the Ad-Hoc Subcommittees were not included on the agenda. The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the new agenda only refers to Ad-Hoc Subcommittee related to education be included on this agenda.

1. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Review District Goals

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee ~~Chair~~ MEMBER Elizabeth Pape reported that the Committee met on Thursday and copies of the goals were sent to the Superintendent. They were mailed to members immediately upon receipt. The Superintendent distributed copies again to the Committee (attachment 3).

There was discussion as to how to proceed from this point. The Superintendent commended the effort and quality of the goals and questioned the use of the word “objective”. ~~Chairman~~ MEMBER Pape accepted the suggestion to remove the word objective. Discussion continued regarding the timing of the annual review of goals, to help facilitate the planning done by the Superintendent and his staff.

~~Members discussed~~ MEMBER CAROL ESPERTI REQUESTED the addition of a goal under communication to encourage family involvement, utilizing specific tools. There was a suggestion to include something about preparing students for college or the work force.

There was a suggestion made to allow more time for review of the goals presented and to defer action until the next or subsequent meeting. Chairman Rokicki deferred this to the February 25, 2002 meeting for discussion and possible action.

- D. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School – J. Nunnari, Chocksett – P. MacDonald; Davis Hill; Dawson – J. Scott; Houghton – S. Jordan; Mayo – C. Esperti; Mountview – J. James; Naquag – J. Rokicki; Paxton – A. Livdahl; Thomas Prince – S. Horeanopoulos; Wachusett Regional High School – E. Pape

Member Elizabeth Pape, High School liaison, reported that she would bring the Committee's concerns regarding aesthetics to the school council. A question was asked regarding the school council's plan to present a two-school plan. Member Pape explained that it was a topic discussed but she is not sure that it actually would happen.

It was noted by a member that the eighth grade open house at the high school was excellent.

Member Peter MacDonald reported that a rooster was brought to school at Chocksett and was successfully captured by District staff.

VI. Public Hearing

No one from the general public wished to speak.

There was discussion surrounding whether members should respond to members of the public who speak at the meetings. **SHORT OF A CHANGE IN THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE BY-LAWS OR MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS, DISCUSSION IS ALLOWABLE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR.**

A member asked the Superintendent about the Parent Advisory Council preparations for school council training, utilizing Paul McGowan. The Superintendent informed the Committee that Paul McGowan, who was selected by the Parent Advisory Group, was used by the District on two

occasions for school council training, which the Superintendent had previously reported to the School Committee. THE AD-HOC SUBCOMMITTEE WAS NEVER MADE AWARE BY PAUL MCGOWAN THAT HE HAD DONE PRIOR WORK FOR THE DISTRICT.

The Superintendent reported that the school council training with facilitator Paul McGowan has been scheduled for Thursday, February 28, 2002 at 7:00 PM at Davis Hill Elementary School.

VII. Unfinished Business

- A. Motion: To adopt DP7141 **Policy Relating to Budget/Finance Inventory Control** for the second reading, waiving the reading.

(P. MacDonald)
(D. Leith)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jeffrey Gibbs
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

VIII. New Business

- A. Superintendent requested the School Committee go into executive session for strategies for collective bargaining and character reputation of an individual.
- B. The Superintendent suggested that other issues the Committee might like to discuss:

- 1. Regional Agreement Change

The Superintendent reported that Commissioner of Education David Driscoll's legal department would not approve the agreement change as presented. The Superintendent has requested a legal opinion from the Department of Education legal department.

- 2. Facility Report – Tappe Report

The Superintendent reported that District staff is working on the list requested at the last meeting by the School Committee.

- 3. Facilitator Issues – Legal Opinions

Discussion was deferred to the end of New Business.

- 4. Modular Classrooms

~~A member asked if Holden town officials have received proper information.~~ MEMBER CAROL ESPERTI ASKED IF THE HOLDEN BUILDING COMMISSIONER HAS RECEIVED SITE SPECIFICATIONS FOR A SITE PLAN REVIEW. The Superintendent reported that the contractor will provide all necessary information to the town and will follow all laws applicable regarding this project.

Discussion took place surrounding the timeline for the long-term solution for the high school. The Committee has not voted a specific timeline. Committee members were reminded to always keep the timeline in mind.

- 5. The Superintendent reported that Jeffrey Wulfson from the Department of Education will make a presentation to the

Committee on February 11, 2002. The Superintendent will notify the Chairs of the member town selectboards and finance/advisory committees.

6. Role of legal counsel

The Management Subcommittee will be discussing the legal counsel at its next meeting.

7. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Review Regional Agreement

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Sherry Horeanopoulos deferred this item to the next meeting. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Sherry Horeanopoulos asked that a sentence be deleted on attachment 14, regarding seats being replaced on a pre-arranged schedule.

Motion: To enter into executive session at the end of the meeting, not to return to public session, to discuss strategies for negotiations and character and reputation of an individual.

(S. Horeanopoulos)

(S. Jordan)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jeffrey Gibbs
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Discussion returned to the timeline for the long-term high school facility solution.

Motion: That the Committee establish a date by which the Committee will bring a long-term solution to the towns for a vote.

(D. Benson)

(K. Singh)

Chairman Rokicki reminded the Committee that the timeline should be based upon actual dates to be met. March submission for this year is not possible. Also the Committee needs to decide if the vote will be for the whole plan or just for architectural fees.

A friendly amendment was made and accepted by the maker of the motion and the one who seconded the motion, to change the motion to read "That at the February 11th School Committee meeting the Committee will establish a date by which the Committee will bring a long-term solution to the towns for a vote".

Roll call vote on the main motion to read: "That at the February 11th School Committee meeting the Committee will establish a date by which the Committee will bring a long-term high school solution to the towns for a vote."

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Kimberly Ferguson
Jeffrey Gibbs
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape

Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:

Carol Esperti
Michael Gennert
Sarah Jordan

(Motion passed 14-3)

Motion: To direct the Superintendent to continue negotiations with Strekalovsky & Hoit, Inc. despite the legal opinion provided by Attorney Leo McCabe.

(C. Esperti)
(S. Horeanopoulos)

Chairman Rokicki asked that it be noted on the record that he was uncomfortable accepting a motion of this type. He believes that the motion is out of order and against the law.

Objection to the consideration of a question:

(M. Gennert)

Chairman Rokicki informed the Committee that the motion is not debatable, does not require a second, cannot be amended, and requires a two-thirds majority vote.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Michael Gennert
Jeffrey Gibbs
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape

Opposed:

Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Sarah Jordan

David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

(Motion failed 7-10)

Discussion surrounding the motion continued. Chairman Rokicki reminded members that Massachusetts General Laws supercede the Regional Agreement.

Following discussion by members inferring that contracts such as NESDEC and architectural firms WERE ENTERED INTO BY THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE, the Superintendent reminded the Committee that he indeed contracted with NESDEC, and followed the process, within the law, for the contracting of the architects. If this motion passes, the Superintendent would go to the Attorney General for guidance as he cannot implement something against the law. The Superintendent reinforced that the company was not at issue, the process is at issue. The Superintendent recommended at the previous meeting that the Committee change its direction so that the District could hire an architect rather than a facilitator. A member reported that he thought that Attorney McCabe was incompetent.

The Superintendent restated that the opinion rendered by Director of Administrative Services Brian O'Connell at the January 14, 2002 School Committee meeting was not a legal opinion but rather his personal opinion, requested by the Superintendent.

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes

(S. Horeanopoulos)
(J. Scott)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jeffrey Gibbs
Sarah Jordan

Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

SUBSTITUTE Motion: To direct the Superintendent to solicit for Invitation for Proposals with specifics to mirror the Northborough-Southborough Proposal as a guide for consulting services

(C. Esperti)
(S. Horeanopoulos)

~~A member~~ MEMBER CAROL ESPERTI expressed concern that through this type of process the Committee could lose Strekalovsky & Hoit, Inc. The Superintendent reminded the Committee that an equitable process is not possible if a group has already been named. The Committee cannot steer the process.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that this process would require an understanding by the Committee that the Superintendent would exceed the boundaries of policy but be within State law.

The Superintendent reported that he would call Strekalovsky & Hoit, Inc., Tappe, and HMFH and hopefully provide information to the Committee by February 11, 2002. The Superintendent indicated he would solicit architects identified by individual Committee members. The Superintendent reported that he would use the scope of work on the Northborough-Southborough proposal as the guide.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson

Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jeffrey Gibbs
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:
None

(Motion unanimously)

IX. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned to enter executive session at 10:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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