

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1071, Monday, February 9, 2004
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	John Nunnari
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	Norman Plourde
Elizabeth Brennan	Julie Scott
Charles Capparelli	Michael Sherman
Clifford Connell	Tammy Tod
David Dickman	Margaret Watson
Patricia Gates (7:11 PM)	Patricia Young
Mark James	

Committee Members Absent:

Donald Benson	René Rodriguez
Alice Livdahl	

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 7:04 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Joanne O'Brien, Jefferson, read a prepared statement, but did not provide a copy for the public record. Ms. O'Brien commented on the quality of the food offerings in the District.

Chair Duncan Leith publicly thanked John Rokicki for his years of service as a School Committee representative from Holden and then from Rutland. John Rokicki also served on the Rutland Building Committee as well as the High School Building Committee.

Chair Duncan Leith reported that a Member of the Holden Finance Committee had asked if the \$200,000 Foundation Reserve amount granted to the District would go back to the Member Towns. The correspondence from Jeffrey Wulfson, Associate Commissioner of Education clearly stated that the funds are for School Committee use. In addition, the Superintendent reported that the School Committee pledged the Foundation reserve money to reduce Member Town assessments.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1070th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on January 26, 2004 – approved by consensus, with Member Julie Scott 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 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)

There were no representatives from the Student Advisory Committee present. The Superintendent reported that he regularly meets with representatives from the Student Council and that at the most recent meeting the issue of non-attendance at School Committee meetings was discussed. Students had indicated that they would be in attendance at the meeting to report to the School Committee.

Chair Duncan Leith reported that he would be willing to meet with students at the high school. Member Michael Sherman volunteered to meet with them as well.

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

1. AP4100 **Policy Relating to Budget/Finance Budget** – first reading (attachment 2)

Motion: To approve AP4100 **Policy Relating to Budget/Finance Budget** for the first reading, waiving the reading

(P. Gates)

(N. Mello)

Friendly amendments to the policy were made and accepted:

- Add “Business/” before the word “Finance” in item 2;
- Add “meeting” after “subcommittee” in item 4a;
- Add “shall be made” following “request” in item 4b; and
- Add “two-thirds” before “majority” in item 7.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

2. Regional Agreement Amendments

The Superintendent distributed copies of the Minutes of the October 8, 2003 Management Subcommittee, where the amendments to the Regional Agreement were reviewed (attachment 3). All recommendations suggested were reviewed by the Management Subcommittee and then referred to District Counsel Leo McCabe.

Member Patricia Gates asked to have the record be corrected to state that the Management Subcommittee reviewed all proposals submitted and by consensus chose to take no action.

- a. Motion: To amend Section 1. MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE amended Wachusett Regional School District Agreement by deleting Section 1.1.2, which reads:

1.1.2 All members elected thereafter, except as provided in paragraph 1.1.4, shall be elected for a three year term, provided, however, the Town of Sterling at its annual town meeting in the year 2000 shall elect two (2) members, one for a one year term and one for a three year term, rather than two members each for a three year term.

And by substituting therefore the following:

1.1.2 All members elected thereafter, except as provided in paragraph 1.1.4, shall be elected for a three year term.

and recommend said amendment for approval by the Member Towns.

(N. Mello)
(J. Nunnari)

Following inquiry, Chair Duncan Leith explained that the term has always been set by the Regional

Agreement, except for appointments or particular situations when the membership of the Committee was increasing. The Superintendent reported that the Committee could recommend a change to delegate the setting of terms to the Member Towns, should the Committee desire to do so.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion: To amend Section 1. MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE amended Wachusett Regional School District Agreement by deleting Section 1.1.3, which reads:

1.1.3 The population of the participating towns shall be determined every five (5) years in accordance with the towns' annual census with the first five (5) year review to be conducted in calendar 1998 and certified by the respective town clerks. Any increase in membership resulting from population changes shall be elected

at the annual town meeting following the review year, provided, however, that in 1998 the Town of Rutland shall elect two (2) new members at a special election, the initial terms of which shall be established by the Regional District School Committee pursuant to the provisions of Section 1.1.4.

The five (5) year census review year and the election of new membership increase shall be in accordance with the following schedule:

CENSUS REVIEW	ELECTION AT ANNUAL MEETING
1997	1998
2002	2003
2007	2008
2012	2013

and every five (5) years thereafter.

And by substituting therefore the following:

- 1.1.3 The population of the participating towns shall be determined every five (5) years in accordance with the towns' annual census with the first five (5) year review to be conducted in calendar 1998 and certified by the respective town clerks. Any increase in membership resulting from population changes shall be elected at the annual town meeting following the review year.

The five (5) year census review year and the election of new membership increase shall be in accordance with the following schedule:

CENSUS REVIEW	ELECTION AT ANNUAL MEETING
2007	2008
2012	2013

2017
2022
and every five (5) years thereafter.

2018
2023

and recommend said amendment for approval by the Member Towns.

(N. Mello)
(J. Nunnari)

Chair Duncan Leith explained that the Management Subcommittee considered changing the size of the Committee but the Subcommittee thought that it was important to maintain the current practice of the smallest town having at least two members.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that the only case District Counsel Leo McCabe used in his opinion was the Mahan case, as listed in his correspondence dated January 20, 2004. It was also noted that weighted voting was defeated in 2000, as a proposed amendment to the Regional Agreement. The Member Town with the lowest population is the one to watch as it could skew the proportions dramatically if a significant decline occurred.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

- b. Motion: To amend Section 2. LOCATION of the Amended Wachusett Regional School District Agreement by deleting the notation “(Amended 11/2/59)” appearing at the end of the section and recommend said amendment for approval by the Member Towns.

And to amend Section 5. PAYMENTS TO THE REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL TREASURER of the Amended Wachusett Regional School District Agreement by deleting the notation “(Amended from quarterly to semi-annually by Chapter 116 of the Acts of 1951)” appearing at the end of the section and recommend said amendment for approval by the Member Towns.

And to amend Section 8. WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBER TOWNS – PRE-KINDERGARTEN- GRADE 12 of the Amended Wachusett Regional School District Agreement by deleting the notation “(Amended 5/7/77, but retaining the provision inserted by Chapter 116 of the Acts of 1951; Validating Act, Chapter 461 of the Acts of 1977)” appearing at the end of the section and recommend said amendment for approval by the Member Towns.

And to amend Section 10. BUDGET of the Amended Wachusett Regional School District Agreement by deleting Section 10 in its entirety, which reads:

The Regional District School Committee shall prepare and present a budget to each Member Town as required by statute for the ensuing year itemized as follows:

1. General Control
2. Expenses of Instruction

3. Operation of School Plant
4. Auxiliary Agencies
5. Outlay
6. Debts and Interest Charges
7. Special Charges

(Amended 5/29/73 by Wachusett Regional School District Committee under authority of Chapter 510 of the Acts of 1970, an Act authorizing regional district school committees to amend agreement to conform to the law relating to the change in fiscal year.)

and by substituting therefore the following:

The Regional District School Committee shall prepare, adopt and present a budget for the ensuing fiscal year to each Member Town as provided in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 16B and the provisions of State law, including any amendments thereto.

and recommend said amendment for approval by the Member Towns.

(N. Mello)
(M. Sherman)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Chair Duncan Leith asked if there were any other proposed amendments to the Regional Agreement for the Committee to consider. Member Norman Plourde asked that in Section 9 “Regional District School Committee” be replaced with “Wachusett Regional School District”. The Superintendent currently prepares the Annual Report and, therefore, it should be the District submitting the report to Member Towns. The Superintendent explained that prior to his appointment and K-12 regionalization, the report consisted of two letters, one from the Superintendent and one from the Chair of the School Committee. Space was very limited and the financial information submitted by the Superintendent was not always included or it was revised. The District then decided to produce its own annual report.

Chair Duncan Leith referred this issue to the Management Subcommittee and also that the issue be reviewed by District Counsel Leo McCabe.

Following an inquiry regarding the request of members of the community for an ethics provision, Chair Duncan Leith reported that the School Committee already has an ethics policy.

Following inquiry as to the secretary function, Chairman Duncan Leith indicated that it was a by-law issue, not a Regional Agreement issue.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained that Section 8.3.1 provides that Member Towns, which vote to leave the District, are still responsible for outstanding debt.

It was noted that Section 7 allows towns to be accepted into the District easily and yet it is difficult to leave the District. Chair Duncan Leith referred Section 7 to the

Management Subcommittee and also that the issue be reviewed by District Counsel Leo McCabe.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that there are still employees due terminal benefits under Section 18.

3. Motion: That the Business/Finance Subcommittee meet with a representative from each of the Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Committees at the earliest possible date to begin discussions of the FY05 budget to determine an equitable School Committee appropriation number.

(M. Sherman)
(C. Capparelli)

Chair Duncan Leith reported that this was a unanimous vote of the Management Subcommittee.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Julie Scott

(Motion passed 14-0-1)

Member Margaret Watson distributed *Proposed Ground Rules* (attachment 4). It was agreed by consensus that the Business/Finance Subcommittee shall take the suggestions under advisement.

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

Education Subcommittee Chair Julie Scott reported that the next meeting of the Education Subcommittee is scheduled for Monday, February 23, 2004, at 6:00 PM in the Modular Cafeteria, prior to the regular School Committee Meeting. Several policies have been referred to the Education Subcommittee and will be reviewed.

- 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 the next two Business/Finance Subcommittee meetings are scheduled for March 4th and March 11th at 6:30 PM at the Curriculum Center. Correspondence will be sent from Chair Duncan Leith and Business/Finance Chair Natalie Mello inviting a representative from each of the Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Committees. In order to compile the necessary data, the first meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2004.

The Superintendent reported that due to the timeliness of the Commissioner's posting of the Foundation Budget, the Superintendent intends to distribute the proposed budget at the February 23, 2004 meeting. The Public Hearing and the adoption of the appropriation is scheduled for March 22nd which gives the Committee time to deliberate and ask questions.

- E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

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

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Michael Sherman reported that the next meeting of the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18, 2004 in the Curriculum Center at the District Central Office at 6:30

PM. He reported that the Superintendent was requested to facilitate presentations at each of the schools in March utilizing the following topics:

- Value-added School District
- FY05 Budget process
- High School project status
- Impact of FY04 reductions on instruction

The dates for the meetings were scheduled as follows:

School	School Committee Members	Date
Central Tree Middle School	Elizabeth Brennan John Nunnari	March 18, 2004
Chocksett Middle School & Houghton Elementary School	Charles Capparelli Norman Plourde Patricia Young	March 3, 2004
Davis Hill Elementary School	Julie Scott Donald Benson	March 4, 2004
Dawson Elementary School	Mark James Michael Sherman	March 2, 2004
Mayo Elementary School	Margaret Watson David Dickman	March 9, 2004
Mountview Middle School	Michael Sherman Duncan Leith	March 9, 2004
Naquag Elementary School	Elizabeth Brennan John Nunnari	March 10, 2004
Paxton Center School	Natalie Mello Alice Livdahl	March 17, 2004
Thomas Prince School	Clifford Connell Patricia Gates	March 10, 2004
Wachusett Regional High School	Natalie Mello Tammy Tod	March 16, 2004

Chair Duncan Leith reported that at the Retreat, School Committee Members identified important topics for upcoming letters to the editors. Members will be requested to write to *The Landmark* and *The Worcester Telegram & Gazette*.

The Superintendent reported that Member Julie Scott informed him that the challenge course was not being

used at Davis Hill, since ~~the physical education teacher left the District~~ THE FIRST YEAR THE SCHOOL HAD OPENED, 2000-2001. The Superintendent will inquire of the principal how the course has been used.

Following a request for the report on the Impact of FY04 Reductions on Instruction, provided to the Committee in the Superintendent's Report, the Superintendent reported that each of the principals has a copy and that Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach Chair Michael Sherman would incorporate parts of it in the presentation to be used in March at the meetings at each school.

Following a request from a member, the Superintendent reported that the School Committee has been kept informed about the changing appropriation and that the annual report is not changed as the appropriation changes. The Superintendent advised the Committee that he would include another copy of the latest appropriation in the next Superintendent's Report.

F. Building Committees

1. High School

Chair Duncan Leith reported that he will take over as temporary Chair of the High School Building Committee until a replacement can be found. The Building Committee is seeking an additional member, either from the School Committee or the community at large. Any suggestions should be brought to the attention of Chair Leith.

Chair Duncan Leith reported that TLT Corporation was the lowest bid for General Contractors. TLT has just completed the Cohasset High School renovation/addition. A complaint was filed by The Foundation for Fair Contracting of Massachusetts. Chair Leith reported that TLT is an open shop, not a union shop, but must pay prevailing wage, as provided by Massachusetts General Laws. The Superintendent reported that the timing is critical, as the project was to start on February 1st.

Attorney Greg Angelini, filling in for District Counsel Leo McCabe, is familiar with the process. The Superintendent met last week with Attorney Angelini, the architect, and representatives from TLT. An expedited hearing was requested and is scheduled for Thursday, February 12, 2004. In deference to the Attorney General, who provides an advisory opinion only, the contract will not be signed until after the hearing. TLT has already executed the contract, so it is ready for signature by the Superintendent.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that although the sub-bids are submitted to the District, the General Contractor includes the sub-bidders it prefers in the General Contractor bid.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree

No report.

3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

The Rutland Elementary School Building Committee has not met since the last School Committee meeting. The Superintendent requested that the borrowing process should be discussed, as the climate is advantageous to the towns with interest rates so low. The Superintendent noted that the District had used a new borrowing process that would level the debt payment and avoid undesirable spikes. The Superintendent requested that Member John Nunnari share this with the Rutland Building Committee.

4. Sterling

No report.

The Superintendent reported that the District continues to have problems with some of the new schools, in particular with the heating systems. Over the weekend, Chocksett experienced a problem with a faulty slip joint. This will be a recurring problem due to the quality of the product installed. At Davis Hill there was a problem with a relay and also the cold weather had jelled the diesel fuel.

- 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 Julie Scott, Davis Hill School, asked about the request from the School Committee for information about snacks in schools. The Superintendent explained that at the last School Committee meeting it was decided by consensus to seek information on snacks in the schools and that the information would be brought back to the School Committee.

Member Margaret Watson, Mayo Elementary, reported that the subject of snacks in the schools was discussed at the School Council meeting. Snacks at Mayo Elementary School can be purchased twice a day. Most of the food available is “junk food” and is available through vending machines. If school staff discover that lunch money is being used on snacks, a note goes home to parents. Income by snacks supplements cafeteria costs and would be a significant problem for the cafeteria budget, should snacks be eliminated. The Mayo School Council has begun discussions on the School Improvement Plan. The School Council requested that Member Watson report to the School Committee that the reduction in art, music, and physical education is not working well. One specialist sees 900 students per week.

Member Norman Plourde, Houghton, reported that there is a close relationship between the school and the Sterling Historical Association. He also reported that the hawk is now in the hands of the taxidermist.

V. Superintendent’s Report

- A. Presentation of the Governor’s SBA Proposal

The Superintendent shared with the Committee the Governor’s PowerPoint presentation on his School Building Assistance proposal (attachment 5).

Motion: That the School Committee send letters to legislators and critical committees in support of the Governor's School Building Assistance proposal

(P. Gates)
(C. Connell)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

B. Discussion of Report

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that if a special education aide is out and a substitute cannot be found, kindergarten aides are often used, due to provisions of IEP's. The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the District is not staffed where it should be and that where reductions were made the District must comply.

Following inquiry regarding an Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) report noting special education at 3.7%, the Superintendent reported that the District is higher and that the young students entering the special education system are much more involved physically and emotionally.

The Superintendent reported that as of December 30, 2002, the District placed a moratorium on positions. The Superintendent advised the Committee that it is the School Committee's responsibility to appropriate funds and the Superintendent's responsibility to staff the District, within the appropriation. During FY04 major reductions were made, but custodians and nurses were not part of those reductions. Those areas will have to be reviewed should the Committee reduce the personnel appropriation portion for FY05.

The Superintendent informed the Committee, in response to inquiry, that the maintenance staff was re-aligned following analysis of square footage; no reductions in the maintenance staff occurred.

Discussion occurred on the report included in the Superintendent's Report on the *Impact of FY04 Reductions on Instruction*. The report puts a bleak face on the reality of the reductions; more members of the public need to see and read the document. When asked if FY05 would address some, all or none of the problems in the impact statement, the Superintendent replied that the FY05 budget would not address any of the issues. When asked if further cuts would be needed in FY05, the Superintendent reported that most likely further reductions would need to be made.

A concern was raised regarding elimination of the late busses at the high school, particularly in light of the data supplied in the Superintendent's Report. The Superintendent reported that the District shared the concern and that staff is preparing an impact statement by bus per day. During the presentation to the School Committee on Budget Assumptions, the Superintendent reported he expected an increase in Chapter 71 reimbursement. The Governor's House 1 Budget proposal included a decrease in Chapter 71 reimbursement. The transportation fee will be increased by \$13 for FY05. The Superintendent reminded the Committee that difficult decisions were made in FY04 and that District staff is burdened.

When asked about the lack of textbook in some of the schools, the Superintendent reported that he was not aware of textbook reductions this year; at the end of FY03, any remaining funds were transferred to *Instructional Support* and textbooks were

purchased for FY04, in order to ensure delivery. The Superintendent expects that textbooks will be reduced next year.

The Superintendent reported that Commissioner David Driscoll spoke at a Superintendent's meeting where the Commissioner proudly stated that Chapter 70 was level-funded. The Superintendent reminded the Commissioner that during the FY04 budget season, the Chapter 70 reductions cut off Districts at their knees and that level-funding will keep them there. It appears that the Governor has lost the commitment to fund the provisions of the Education Reform Act; instead, new initiatives are introduced.

Member Clifford Connell requested an executive session to discuss the collective bargaining. This will be addressed during New Business.

VI. Public Hearing

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 6).

Motion: To extend the meeting for thirty minutes

(M. Sherman)

(D. Dickman)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion: To enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations with nonunion personnel and union personnel, at the end of the meeting not to return to public session

(N. Mello)

(J. Nunnari)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

(Motion passed unanimously)

VII. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. New Business

Following inquiry regarding the establishment of a foundation, the Superintendent reported that he had spoken with District Counsel Leo McCabe, who will be putting together all necessary documentation for School Committee action.

IX. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned the regular session at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes