

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1072, Monday, February 23, 2004
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	John Nunnari
Donald Benson	Norman Plourde
Elizabeth Brennan	Julie Scott
Charles Capparelli	Michael Sherman
Clifford Connell (7:10 PM)	Tammy Tod
Mark James	Margaret Watson
John Kane	Patricia Young

Committee Members Absent:

David Dickman	René Rodriguez
Patricia Gates	

Administration Present:

Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
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 7:05 PM.

Chair Duncan Leith took Item VB out of order and introduced Wachusett Regional High School Principal Thomas Pandiscio.

B. Update on the NEASC Accreditation for the High School

Principal Pandiscio distributed a copy of *Report of the Visiting Committee and Overview of Findings* (attachments 2 and 3).

Principal Pandiscio reported that the high school is accredited, is still on probation, and, hopefully, will soon be off probation. He thanked the Committee for implementing the short-term modular solution and for doing cosmetic projects such as painting the lockers.

Principal Pandiscio walked the Committee through the format of the report. He explained that the accreditation process does not concern “axe grinding”, but rather is a thorough process, which has a series of rules to follow. Principal Pandiscio reported that the faculty was more critical of the high school in the self-study than the evaluators from NEASC. He was proudest of Commendation #3 of Standard 5, “The positive school climate generates pride and ownership throughout the school community.”

Principal Pandiscio reported that the staff will review the report and that the recommendations require committee work, debate, and analysis. There are four to six recommendations on each standard, many crossing over several standards. The principal will file a two-year study report and hopefully will eliminate as many recommendations as possible.

When asked about Recommendation #6 on Standard 7, “Provide avenues for teacher interaction with the school committee to discuss initiatives and share successful programs”, Principal Pandiscio did not remember much emphasis on this issue during the evaluation process.

When asked when the accreditation will be considered by NEASC, Principal Pandiscio reported that he was notified that the Wachusett accreditation would be taken up at some upcoming board meeting.

Chair Duncan Leith introduced and welcomed newly appointed representative from Rutland, John Kane.

I. Public Hearing

Douglas Briggs, Rutland Selectman and Chair of the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, provided further information to the Committee and the public on the upcoming fiftieth anniversary celebration, in particular the “Buy-A-Brick” program (attachment 4). He reported that the response from Alumni to the events of the celebration are being

received very positively. Mr. Briggs also invited Committee members to attend the Science Fair at the high school on Tuesday, February 24, 2004.

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 5).

Edwin Meyer, Holden, read a prepared statement and distributed copies of information obtained through the *Freedom of Information Act* (attachments 6 and 7).

Chair Duncan Leith read a statement from former School Committee Member John Rokicki (attachment 8).

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1071st Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 9, 2004 – approved by consensus adding on the top of page 14 after “since”, “the first year the school had opened, 2000-2001” and deleting “the physical education teacher left the District”. Member Alice Livdahl abstained.

The Executive Session minutes from February 9, 2004 will be included in the next Superintendent's Report.

III. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

IV. Committee Reports

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

No members were present.

Chair Duncan Leith reported on the achievements of the track teams, in particular the accomplishments of Michael Banks winning the Class A mile and Vicki Weismann winning the Class A 600 meter.

- 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 – second reading**

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

(N. Mello)
(C. Capparelli)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The next Management Subcommittee meeting has not been scheduled.

- 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 Education Subcommittee met before the regular School Committee Meeting and reviewed both policies before the Committee.

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

The Education Subcommittee is not bringing the policy forward but would like to meet on March 8, 2004 with Principal Pandiscio and Foreign Language Curriculum Supervisor to review before making a recommendation to the full Committee.

2. **DP3510 Policy Relating to Education *Class Size*** – first reading

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

(J. Scott)
(N. Mello)

The Education Subcommittee recognized that the District currently has class sizes greater than the numbers on the policy. The Subcommittee looked at the policy as a benchmark to work towards.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

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

Chair Duncan Leith reported that he will send a letter to the Chairs of the Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Committees, similar to the letter sent by the Superintendent inviting representatives to the Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting on March 4, 2004.

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello reported that the next meeting of the Business/Finance Subcommittee is scheduled for Thursday, March 4, 2004, at 6:30 PM in the Curriculum Center. Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Committees have been notified that the presentation of the *Proposed FY05 Appropriation* will be made at that meeting. March 11, 2004 will be a second meeting. The March 16th posted meeting may be canceled.

Member Donald Benson asked that a copy of the Holden Resource profile be included in the next Superintendent's Report.

Chair Duncan Leith reported that Holden Selectman Joseph Sullivan presented information, which he forwarded to the Superintendent and will also be included in the next Superintendent's Report. Chair Leith reported that Holden Finance Committee representative, Alan Berg, also presented information and Chair Leith asked that if any Members have copies to please forward to the Superintendent.

- 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 last meeting of the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee was scheduled for Wednesday, February 18, 2004, but could not be convened due to a lack of quorum. Chair Sherman distributed an outline of the presentation for the meetings at the District schools (attachment 9). He requested input from Members. The first meeting will be March 2, 2004

at Dawson and Members were invited to attend to see the presentation in action. Some concern was expressed regarding the need for back-up information. There was consensus that the presentation should start with positive information on a value-added District, perhaps utilizing the value-added chart from Commissioner David Driscoll.

Members were asked to send Ad-hoc Subcommittee Chair Michael Sherman questions to ask the community or questions expected to be asked by the community.

F. Building Committees

1. High School

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the next meeting of the High School Building Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, February 25, 2004, 6:00 PM. Each School Committee Member received correspondence from a trade union, criticizing the general contractor, TLT. Thorough background checks were made by the administration and members of the Building Committee. Chair Duncan Leith has appointed Michael Tsotsis from Rutland as Chair of the High School Building Committee. Chair Leith also spoke with Jon Fitch from Princeton who had offered his assistance to the Building Committee. He will be meeting with him this week.

The groundbreaking will be scheduled soon and the School Committee will be notified.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree

The Building Committee has not met.

3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

The Building Committee has not met.

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).

Mountview Middle School – Member Donald Benson reported that the school council discussed snacks. The students have access to snacks only at lunchtime in the cafeteria. The Council agreed that the decision for what is offered to students should be a school-based decision.

Wachusett Regional High School – Member Natalie Mello reported that the school council discussed snacks. The council felt that it was not a critical issue. The soda machines are off during the school day; there is no caffeine or chocolate available in the cafeteria. The larger concern of the council was the consumption by students of junk food, i.e. chips, cookies. The council was reminded that the cafeteria at the school is a discreet cost center. The council also expressed concern as to the definition of “healthy” and that good nutrition starts at home at early age.

Chocksett Middle School – Member Charlie Capparelli reported that the school council discussed snacks. The council did not think that it was a major issue. If snacks were not made available at school, the same type of snacks would be brought from home.

Member Patricia Young reported that she had received telephone calls from Chocksett Middle School parents who were concerned about the small portion size at the school.

Naquag Elementary School – Member Elizabeth Brennan reported that the school council discussed snacks. The council felt that the subject was worth discussing and exploring further. The variety of food offerings has been reduced although the list is still long.

Member Brennan reported that the *SuccessMaker* home component was introduced to the Rutland community and the feedback is very positive. She also reported that work is

continuing on the Science Expo, scheduled for the beginning of May. There was also discussion regarding the impact of FY04 budget reductions on academic activities at the school.

Paxton Center School – Member Alice Livdahl reported that the school council discussed snacks. Only juice and water are available at the school. The main focus of the council meeting was a discussion of the middle school program and the loss of chorus and band, due to FY04 budget reductions. A concern was raised regarding one large class, the incoming fifth grade, and the council is requesting some type of accommodation, an aide if an additional teacher is not available. Member Livdahl reported that she would pass on the request to the Superintendent.

Member Livdahl commented on the most recent problems with the univents at Paxton Center School over the February recess. Following inquiry, Director of Operations Paul Soojian reported that the cause is still being determined and that he estimates that insurance should cover most of it.

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Following inquiry regarding the Superintendent's expense reports, Chair Duncan Leith informed the Committee that since the issue is a contractual issue with the Superintendent, questions should be asked in executive session.

B. Update on the NEASC Accreditation for the High School

See above.

C. *Proposed FY05 Appropriation*

Director of Operations Paul Soojian distributed the *Proposed FY05 Appropriation* (attachment 10). The Committee was reminded that the presentation on the *Proposed FY05 Appropriation* will be made at the Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting on March 4, 2004.

Members Donald Benson and Clifford Connell requested that a copy of the final FY04 Appropriation be sent to the Finance/Advisory Committees. Director of Operations Paul

Soojian reported that a copy would be forwarded to the Chairs of the Member Town Finance/Advisory Committees.

VI. Public Hearing

Kim Paquette, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 11).

VII. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. New Business

There was no new business.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To enter executive session at the end of the meeting, not to return to public session, for the purposes of discussing contract negotiations with non-union personnel

(N. Mello)

(M. Sherman)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Donald Benson
John Nunnari

(Motion passed 13-2)

The meeting adjourned at 9:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes