

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1036, Monday March 11, 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	John Nunnari
Jane James	Julie Scott
Sarah Jordan	Kathleen Singh
Duncan Leith	Margaret Watson

Committee Members Absent:

Jeffrey Gibbs	Elizabeth Pape
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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
Peter Brennan, Comptroller
Susan Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Others present:

Linda Lehans, *The Landmark*
Stacey M. Grossi, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*
James Leger, Chair Rutland Selectboard
Louis Cornacchioli, Rutland Selectboard
Douglas Briggs, Rutland Selectboard
Clealand Blair, Chair Rutland Finance Committee
Christian deMarcken, Paxton Finance Committee
Stanley Moss, Chair Princeton Advisory Board

David White, Holden Selectboard
James Scola, Holden Selectboard
Michael Wronski, Holden Selectboard
Joseph Giotta, Holden Finance Committee
Paul Anderson, Holden Finance Committee
Lou Evangelitis, Holden Finance Committee
Brian Bullock, Holden Town Manager
Remo Rossi, Sterling Selectboard
Paul Sushchuk, Sterling Selectboard
Maureen Floryan, Holden
Larry Floryan, Holden
David Gibbs, Sterling
Mark James, Holden
Jeffrey Wentzell, Paxton
Melinda Johnson, Paxton
Edward Twarog, Princeton
Lee Merlin, Holden
Michael Esperti, Holden
Susan Duval, Sterling
David Clark, Sterling
Jean Theurkauf, Sterling
Ann Quill, Sterling

Chairman Rokicki called the meeting to order at 9:12 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Chairman Rokicki asked for members of the public to speak on items not related to the budget.

Louis Cornacchioli, Rutland Selectboard, asked the Committee to look into why the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* did not cover the girls state championship as prominently as it should have been. He urged the Committee to contact the editor, Mr. Bennett, and to please make that report public.

Mark James, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 1).

David Gibbs, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 2).

Lou Evangelitis, Holden Finance Committee, asked the Committee to consider only one thing – is there an inequity among the towns?

Louis Cornacchioli, Rutland, responded that he wished that the townspeople had been shown both sides of the issue. He believes that if accurate information had been provided, votes would have been different. He urged a no vote on the "Martin Opinion". He urged that the focus for the Committee be on the students and the high school facility issue.

Joseph Giotta, Holden Finance Committee, responded that in Holden both sides were presented and the vote was the same. He commented on Jeffrey Wulfson's presentation and indicated that he "talked out of both sides of his mouth".

Susan Duval, Sterling, reported that both sides of the issue were presented and the vote was in favor of rectifying the inequity.

Melinda Johnson, Paxton, indicated that this is a town issue and began in 1998. She indicated that it was brought up to divert from the high school facility issue. The School Committee's job is to adopt a budget for the students and fiscally responsible to the taxpayers.

Larry Floryan, Holden, indicated that Mr. Driscoll and Mr. Wulfson indicated that there is an inequity and Net School Spending was equalized in FY02.

David Clark, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 3).

Chairman Rokicki, without objection of the Committee, took Item IV out of order.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of report

Chairman Rokicki deferred discussion on this item due to the lateness of the meeting.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. Motion: To approve of Amended 2002 School Committee Calendar

(S. Jordan)
(J. Scott)

Motion: To divide the question.

(D. Benson)
(C. Esperti)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jane James
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion: To change the March 25, 2002 meeting to March 26, 2002.

(S. Jordan)
(J. Scott)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Jane James
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion: To change the May 13, 2002 to May 15, 2002.
(S. Horeanopoulos)
(S. Jordan)

Vote:

In favor:
John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Michael Gennert
Jane James
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Kimberly Ferguson

(Motion passed 17-1)

Motion: To change the June 24, 2002 Meeting to a Special Meeting to address the long-term high school facility issue.

(S. Horeanopoulos)

(C. Esperti)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jane James
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

As the budget was referred back to the Budget/Finance Subcommittee, items 2 through 5 were deferred to the March 26, 2002 meeting.

1. Approval of Proposed FY03 Staffing Authorization
2. Approval of Proposed FY03 Budget Appropriation

3. Approval of Adoption of Stabilization Fund
4. Approval of Transfer of \$500,000 from Excess & Deficiency to the Stabilization Fund

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes.

(M. Gennert)

(A. Livdahl)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jane James
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

David Lowenthal

(Motion passed 17-0-1)

The Superintendent distributed NESDEC Enrollment projections for the Town of Rutland (attachment 4).

5. Motion: To approve the Transfer of \$50,000 from Excess & Deficiency to fund a Rutland Elementary School Needs Assessment

(J. Nunnari)
(J. Scott)

The Committee discussed the enrollment projections, as the Town of Rutland has experienced unusually high rate of growth. The Superintendent reported that all Needs Assessments were paid for by the District. He also reported that this project needs to get on the State list if the project were number one this year it would be number 250 on the State list!

In response to a member inquiry related to a newspaper article as to the K-2 organization of the school, the Superintendent reported that that option was discussed at the Business/Finance Subcommittee and that the decision is a policy decision.

The Superintendent explained the enrollment projections. Based on the current projections Naquag will be out of space in two years and that portables will probably be needed. Central Tree has a bit more flexibility.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jane James
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The Superintendent informed the Committee that he would have Strekalovsky & Hoit, Inc. present at the March 26, 2002 meeting to introduce them to the Committee and to begin the process as facilitating for the high school project.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of the 1034th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 11, 2002 – deferred until the March 26, 2002 Meeting
- B. Approval of the Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 11, 2002 – deferred until the March 26, 2002 Meeting
- B. Approval of the 1035th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 25, 2002 – deferred until the March 26, 2002 Meeting

III. Clarifications relating to Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement

- A. Presentation of Warrants and Payroll

Warrants were circulated for signature.

IV. Communications

Chairman Rokicki deferred discussion on this item due to the lateness of the meeting.

V. Committee Reports

Chairman Rokicki deferred discussion on these items due to the lateness of the meeting, with the exception of the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Review the Regional Agreement at the request of Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Review the Regional Agreement Chair Sherry Horeanopoulos.

- A. Management Subcommittee (J. Rokicki -- Chair, C. Esperti, S. Horeanopoulos, D. Leith, K. Maxwell, J. Nunnari, K. Singh)
- B. Business/Finance Subcommittee (D. Leith – Chair, J. Gibbs, J. James, P. MacDonald, N. Mello, J. Rokicki, J. Scott)
- C. Business-related Ad-Hoc Subcommittees
 - 1. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Review the Regional Agreement (S. Horeanopoulos – Chair, D. Leith, N. Mello, J. Rokicki, K. Singh)

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Sherry Horeanopoulos reported that Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Members Sherry Horeanopoulos, Natalie Mello and John Rokicki met and discussed the inequities issue. The other issue of concern is the size of the Committee. The recommendation is for a Committee size of fifteen, no town would have fewer than two, utilizing a weighted vote. There would be five from Holden, three from each of Sterling and Rutland, and two each from Paxton and Princeton. She asked for guidance from the Committee.

Questions were raised as to what other methods were considered. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Sherry Horeanopoulos reported that no other methods were considered. A question was asked to the advantage of fifteen versus twenty. The issue has been around a long time and should be addressed and fifteen is a starting place. The issue of District-wide voting was raised which would eliminate the question, “Who does a committee member represent – the town or the District?”

The Chairman will proceed to contact legal counsel to draft a proposed warrant article for the above specifications that will then be subject to further consideration by the School Committee.

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes.
(J. Scott)
(K. Maxwell)

Roll call vote:
In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jane James
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

2. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee – Legislative Corrections to Regional School District Funding (J. Rokicki, D. Leith, J. Nunnari)
 3. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Review District Goals (D. Benson, M. Gennert, S. Jordan, P. MacDonald, E. Pape)
- D. School Building Committees requiring the action of the School Committee
6. Holden – (J. Scott)
 2. Paxton –
 3. Rutland – (J. Rokicki)
 4. Sterling – (S. Jordan)

VII. Public Hearing

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

VIII. Unfinished Business

A. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on January 28, 2002

Inquiry was made as to the issue of the Executive Session has been resolved. Chairman Rokicki explained that there were two issues discussed in that executive session, contract negotiations and character and reputation. The contract negotiations have been resolved but the other issue has not.

Chairman John Rokicki reported that he had spoken to District Counsel Leo McCabe, who had explained how to address the Executive Session Minutes but that he had left his notes at home and would defer discussion until the next meeting.

B. Tabled Motion: To retain the services of counsel for matters referred by the School Committee and to begin this process by directing the Chair to establish an ad-hoc search subcommittee comprised of school committee members.

IX. New Business

A. Motion: Whereas School Committee Member Carol Esperti, by records provided to the School Committee at the February 11, 2002 School Committee meeting, violated the spirit, if not the letter of MGL Chapter 39, Section 23B Open Meeting Law, School Committee Policies P1111 Policy Relating to School Committee Operations School Committee Authority and P1160 Policy Relating to School Committee Operations School Committee Member Ethics, and Massachusetts Association of School Committee (MASC) Code of Ethics 1F.

Whereas School Committee Member Carol Esperti, through her own admittance at the February 11, 2002 School Committee Meeting, affirmed that she distributed to six members of the School Committee, an email concerning issues pertinent to the Superintendent and including an encouragement to "let the bickering begin".

Whereas School Committee Member Carol Esperti, at the February 25, 2002 School Committee meeting acknowledged that she solicits support from School Committee members on matters under consideration by the School Committee contrary to Massachusetts Association of School Committee (MASC) Code of Ethics 1F and School Committee Policy P1160 Policy Relating to School Committee Operations School Committee Member Ethics.

The Wachusett Regional School Committee hereby censures Member Carol Esperti for behavior unbecoming a School Committee Member and for her attempts at undermining the governance of the School Committee and the administration and does also hereby request that Member Carol Esperti submit her resignation from the Wachusett Regional School Committee to the Holden Town Clerk, effective immediately.

(D. Leith)

(J. Nunnari)

Motion: To move the question

(J. Nunnari)

(J. James)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Michael Gennert

Jane James

Alice Livdahl

Natalie Mello

John Nunnari

Opposed:

John Rokicki

Sherry Horeanopoulos

Donald Benson

Carol Esperti

Kimberly Ferguson

Sarah Jordan

Duncan Leith

David Lowenthal

Peter MacDonald

Kelly Maxwell

Julie Scott

Kathleen Singh

Abstained:

Margaret Watson

(Motion failed 5-12-1)

Chairman Rokicki advised the Committee that this issue should be handled in executive session. If no member made such a motion, the issue would be discussed in public session.

Motion: To table the question

(S. Horeanopoulos)

(S. Jordan)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki

Sherry Horeanopoulos

Duncan Leith

Alice Livdahl

David Lowenthal

Kelly Maxwell

Natalie Mello

Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Donald Benson

Carol Esperti

Kimberly Ferguson

Michael Gennert

Jane James

Sarah Jordan

Peter MacDonald

John Nunnari

Julie Scott

Kathleen Singh

(Motion failed 8-10)

Chairman Rokicki asked the Committee for a motion to enter executive session to address this issue. Following a question from a member, Chairman Rokicki read a portion of M.G.L.

Chapter 23, Section 13B, which allows for executive session to deal with the character and reputation of any individual, whether elected or employed.

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes.

(S. Horeanopoulos)

(K. Singh)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jane James
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:

Sarah Jordan
Kelly Maxwell
Margaret Watson

(Motion passed 15-3)

Discussion continued among members. Member Duncan Leith explained the reasons for his motion; Member Carol Esperti defended her actions cited in the motion.

Roll call vote on main motion:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Donald Benson
Michael Gennert
Jane James

Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Sherry Horeanopoulos
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Sarah Jordan
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kathleen Singh

Abstained:

Kelly Maxwell

(Motion passed 10-7-1)

Motion: The participating towns of the Wachusett Regional School District adopt the following process in making assessments to the member towns with respect to the apportionment of its budget:

Step One: The District shall annually allocate the amount of funds to be requested that are in excess of the aggregate of the Net Minimum Contribution (NMC) for all of its members and the Chapter 70 allocated to the District (not including Transportation expense and existing outstanding Debt Service) on a per capita basis. These amounts shall be hereinafter known as the “Regional Agreement Spending Assessment (RASA)”.

Step Two: Allocate the aggregate of the NMC required of each member town among the members based on their respective per capita percentage from the previous October 1, enrollment counts.

Step Three: Compare the amounts determined under Step Two with the actual NMC for those members and assign to any member whose NMC (a) exceeds the amount determined under Step Two a credit equal to that excess or (b) is less than the amount determined under Step Two a debt equal to that deficiency.

Step Four: Apply the credits and debits identified in Step #3 to each member's RASA as determined in Step #1 with credits being deducted and debits being added to such amounts, subject to the limitation that no refund can be assigned to a town (zero is the lowest allowable entry under this Step).

Step Five: Issue Regional Agreement Spending Assessments to the member towns based on the amounts determined under Step Four. (attachment 6)

(J. Scott)

(K. Maxwell)

The Chairman accepted the motion with prejudice as he believes that it does not conform to the provisions of State law and the Regional Agreement.

The Superintendent advised the Committee, as the Committee's agent responsible for advising:

- The Department of Education Legal Department will be issuing an opinion on this matter;
- The law is clear that only the Treasurer can determine assessments and exceeds the authority of the School Committee;
- The law is clear on the methods of assessment available to the Treasurer;
- The law is clear that if a change in the method of assessment is desired by member towns that Chapter 16B provides a method for that and that it is a town issue not a School Committee issue; and
- The law further specifies that the Regional Agreement can only address proportional distribution of funds.

Motion: To table the motion.

(C. Esperti)

(K. Maxwell)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki

Carol Esperti

Michael Gennert

Jane James

Sarah Jordan

Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Kimberly Ferguson
Peter MacDonald

(Motion passed 14-4)

X. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(C. Esperti)
(J. James)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Michael Gennert
Jane James
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
Kimberly Ferguson
Peter MacDonald

(Motion passed 16-2)

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes