

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1038, Monday April 8, 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 (7:07 PM)
Carol Esperti	Natalie Mello
Kimberly Ferguson	John Nunnari
Michael Gennert	Julie Scott
Jeffrey Gibbs	Kathleen Singh (7:38 PM)
Sarah Jordan	Margaret Watson
Duncan Leith	

Committee Members Absent:

Jane James	Elizabeth Pape
Kelly Maxwell	

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
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*
Meghan Ackerman, *ECHO*
Maureen Floryan, Holden
Larry Floryan, Holden
David Gibbs, Sterling
Edward Twarog, Princeton
Mark James, Holden
Melinda Johnson, Paxton

Chairman Rokicki called the meeting to order at 7: 02 PM.

I. Public Hearing

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

David Gibbs, Sterling, read Section 14.2 of the Regional Agreement:

This Agreement may be amended by recommendation of the Regional District School Committee and approval of member towns of the District by majority vote at an annual or special town meeting provided that not more than one town disagrees. No such amendment shall be made which shall substantially impair the rights of the holders of any bonds or notes of the District then outstanding or the rights of the District to procure the means for payment thereof; provided, that this provision shall not prevent the admission of new towns to the District and the reapportionment accordingly of that part of the cost of construction represented by bonds or notes of the District then outstanding and of interest thereon (Chapter 116 of the Acts of 1951).

Mr. Gibbs asked for a response from the Committee as to whether the amendment recently voted by the Committee abides by this provision of the Regional Agreement.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of the 1034th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 11, 2002 – approved by consensus, adding on page 7 under Committee Reports “Member Kimberly Ferguson reported that she was not available on Wednesday nights and that she possibly should be eliminated as a member of the Education Subcommittee”; on page 3, changing “A member” to “Member Carol Esperti” in the fourth complete paragraph; in the same paragraph on page 3 adding “a possibility of” before “an expanded program”.
- B. Approval of the Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 11, 2002 – approved by consensus.
- C. Approval of the 1035th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 25, 2002 – approved by consensus adding on page 4 under Education Subcommittee “Member

Kimberly Ferguson reported that she was not available on Wednesday nights and that she possibly should be eliminated as a member of the Education Subcommittee”; on page 3, eliminate the word “directly” and change the word “from” to “to” in the first paragraph.

- D. Approval of the Minutes of the Budget Hearing Minutes held on March 11, 2002 – approved by consensus, changing on page 2, “Paxton” to “Holden”.
- E. Approval of the 1036th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 11, 2002 – approved by consensus
- F. Approval of the 1037th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 26, 2002 – approved by consensus, changing on page 15 “PM” to “AM”.

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

A. Presentation of Warrants and Payroll

Warrants were circulated for signature. Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Duncan Leith directed the Committee that if there are any questions for the Treasurer, forward them to Duncan Leith, Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair; any questions for the Comptroller, forward them to the Superintendent.

A member asked if there were other minutes outstanding. The Superintendent reported that by *Robert’s Rules of Order*, if an item is not acted upon at the next meeting it is taken off of Old Business. The Superintendent will report to the Committee on what determines when and how an executive session subject becomes public.

IV. Communications

The Superintendent distributed communication from Jeffrey Wulfson, Chief Finance Officer at the Department of Education, received Friday, April 5, 2002, requesting input regarding the Wachusett Regional School Committee’s action to amend the Regional Agreement (attachment 2). The Superintendent reported that he had contacted the Holden’s Town Manager and a Rutland selectman to confirm that a copy of Mr. Wulfson’s correspondence had been sent to the towns. The

Superintendent indicated that he would contact Jeff Wulfson to determine who the “interested parties” were. If the member towns were not included in his mailing, the Superintendent would send copies.

Discussion continued as to whether the Committee should respond as a whole to Mr. Wulfson’s correspondence. A member asked whether District Counsel Leo McCabe’s correspondence to Debra Comfort would get the Committee’s answer as to whether four or five towns are needed to ratify the amendment (attachment 5 of the Superintendent’s report).

In response to a statement that there is an issue between Chapter 70 and Chapter 71 language, the Superintendent informed the Committee that Chapter 70 included the phrase, “Other laws not withstanding” and therefore superceded Chapter 71.

Motion: That the Committee submit comments to Jeffrey Wulfson prior to April 26, 2002 pointing out apparent disparities in the Department of Education’s interpretations which have resulted in conflict between the wealth-based formula and the Regional Agreement language and how different regions have been allowed to interpret them differently.

(A. Livdahl)

(D. Leith)

There was discussion surrounding the content of the comments and whether or not the Committee should review the comments first.

Motion: To table the motion

(A. Livdahl)

(N. Mello)

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

Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
David Lowenthal
Kathleen Singh

(Motion passed 15-0-2)

V. Committee Reports

Chairman Rokicki distributed the Subcommittee reports on the Superintendent's Evaluation (attachments 3, 4, and 5). Chairman Rokicki explained the process urging Members to review the reports, submit written comments, and that the evaluation would be voted on at the next School Committee meeting.

In response to inquiry regarding the evaluation process as to whether the individual subcommittee reports are voted on individually or as a whole, Chairman Rokicki reported that the evaluation is accepted in total. It was asked if the Superintendent was present at the subcommittee meetings where the Superintendent's evaluation was discussed. The Superintendent indicated that he was in attendance at Management and Business/Finance but was not in attendance at the Education Subcommittee, but was represented.

Chairman Rokicki indicated that any additions or deletions to the evaluations presented would be submitted in writing and would be presented as amendments to the evaluation, prior to the next meeting.

In response to a request that the Superintendent not be present during the evaluation, Member Margaret Watson requested to go on record that there is no place for anonymity in the process of evaluation; members need to evaluate the Superintendent directly.

The Superintendent advised the Committee that all individuals in the District are evaluated in person, face to face, and the Superintendent would never evaluate personnel in any other way.

Following discussion, Chairman Rokicki summarized that if comments are to be brought up as amendments to the Superintendent's evaluation, the comments must be submitted in writing by April 17, 2002 for inclusion in the Superintendent's report.

To clarify questions of members, Chairman Rokicki explained the process for changing the Superintendent's evaluation. He explained that the evaluation is a negotiated agreement between the Superintendent and the School Committee and to change the document, would require mutual agreement. The Committee would be at risk if the contract was opened and any changes should be made at the beginning of the evaluation period, not at the end.

Questions were raised regarding items in the District Action Plan. The Superintendent, in response to a question, advised the Committee that attachment 9A of the Superintendent's report is being reviewed and that future evaluation could take place. Director of Student/Information Services Philip Campbell further explained that future evaluations could be the range of programs or could be types of services.

A. Management Subcommittee (J. Rokicki -- Chair, C. Esperti, S. Horeanopoulos, D. Leith, K. Maxwell, J. Nunnari, K. Singh)

1. Superintendent's Evaluation

The Superintendent's evaluation will be voted at the second April meeting.

The Management Subcommittee recommended that the By-Laws be changed to address the definition of a quorum for subcommittees, by deleting Article 2, Section 4, paragraph 5 "Three or more subcommittee members will constitute a quorum if the majority is less than three." The Committee is duly noted and the proposed amendment would be on the next appropriate agenda, May 15, 2002. A copy of the By-Law will be distributed with that paragraph "red-lined".

B. Business/Finance Subcommittee (D. Leith – Chair, J. Gibbs, J. James, P. MacDonald, N. Mello, J. Rokicki, J. Scott)

1. Superintendent's Evaluation

The Superintendent's evaluation will be voted at the second April meeting.

2. Approval of the Following Policies (Clerical only):

P4242 Policy Related to Budget/Finance *Early Childhood*

P4280 Policy Related to Budget/Finance *Gifts, Grants and Bequests*

P4343.2 Policy Related to Budget/Finance *Bidding Requirements*

P4721 Policy Related to Budget/Finance *Student Activity Funds*

P7112 Policy Related to Support Operations *Non-District*

P7132 Policy Related to Support Operations *Maintenance, Repairs, and Renovations*

P7151.1 Policy Related to Support Operations *Playground Safety*

P7161 Policy Related to Support Operations *Naming of School Property*

P7222 Policy Related to Support Operations *Contract Services*

These policies were deferred to the next meeting, due to further corrections at the request of the Superintendent.

Subcommittee Chairman Leith reported that the next meeting would be May 7, 2002 at 7:00 PM not 7:30 PM. He reported that the subcommittee talked about possible cuts if cuts are necessary. He reviewed the list discussed at the meeting, including fees for various activities, becoming a "choice"

school, and other options. The Superintendent informed the Committee that the principals were notified to bring up these possible cuts at the School Council meetings and to report back to the Superintendent.

It was recommended that the District rent space to cell towers due to the regular income they would generate. The Superintendent indicated that he would look into it. Another member registered that the videographer should not be deleted, as it is a service to the community.

In response to inquiry related to early retirement, the Superintendent informed the Committee that the early retirement programs from the State are already in place. The State programs will have an affect on the budget and that possibly eighteen staff members will be retiring. The District and Committee goals and values support the minimal impact on the classroom and staff lay offs. The Superintendent promised the Committee that the Superintendent would reduce in many areas before the classrooms. He hopes that no staff members will have to be laid off. Retirements are up which will have a major positive impact on reductions.

The Superintendent's rough estimates were as follows in savings/revenue enhancements:

- Transportation \$ 200,000
- User fees \$ 270,000
- Parking fees \$ 28,000
- Lunch fees increase \$ 100,000
- Teacher/staff ratios \$ 50,000/teacher
- Building Use fees \$ 20,000
- Extra-curricular fees \$ 50,000
- Member dues \$ 20,000
- Choice District \$ 200,000

TOTAL SAVINGS/
INCREASED REVENUE) \$ 1,000,000
(teacher reductions not included)

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 asked if the language to change the size of the Committee had been received from District Counsel Leo McCabe. Chairman Rokicki will check with Attorney McCabe on the status of the language.

2. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee – Legislative Corrections to Regional School District Funding (J. Rokicki, D. Leith, J. Nunnari)

The Ad-Hoc Subcommittee has not met.

3. Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to Review District Goals (D. Benson, M. Gennert, S. Jordan, P. MacDonald, E. Pape)

The Ad-Hoc Subcommittee has not met. The Superintendent will share with the Committee information received from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Office of Accountability including standards that the department is developing.

Following a question regarding information shared with Committee members by the Superintendent, the Superintendent reminded the Committee that information requested by one member is always shared with all members.

D. School Building Committees requiring the action of the School Committee

1. Holden – (J. Scott)

The District has a list of issues remaining.

2. Paxton –

Member Natalie Mello reported that she was informed by Paxton Center School Principal Louis Giantris that there is no longer a Building Committee in Paxton. The Superintendent asked if the audit has been accepted and that Member Mello

should check with the Paxton Treasurer if indeed the project is complete and accepted by the State.

3. Rutland – (J. Rokicki)

4. Sterling – (S. Jordan)

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

1. Superintendent's Evaluation

The Superintendent's evaluation will be voted at the second April meeting.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of report

Member Carol Esperti asked that if a member is referenced in correspondence, the member should be copied. She was referring to Attachment 7, correspondence from District Counsel Leo McCabe to the Supervisor of Record.

Asked if a sprinkler system was included in the original design of the modular classrooms, the Superintendent reported that it has always been a part of the design. The Superintendent indicated that he would provide to the Committee a summary of any change-orders for the modulars.

An inspection was made of the high school indicating that doors need to be replaced to address security, bathroom repairs are needed, locker repairs are needed and painting is needed. In response to a question the Superintendent informed the Committee that the removal of the film on the windows and re-glazing of the windows would be very costly but would be reviewed. Reference was made for the need to replace bathroom partitions and asbestos tiles at Mountview.

Concern was expressed regarding the implementation of a video surveillance system and the ensure that parents and students are made aware of the cameras.

The Superintendent reported that these maintenance issues must be addressed. Budget problems would preclude some of these issues and the school is up for review by NEASC. In response to an inquiry the Superintendent advised the Committee that once some of these issues are addressed then the upkeep is the principal's responsibility. Some maintenance issues should have been addressed and were not.

In response to inquiry, the Superintendent reported that he did not have the justification for Strekalovsky & Hoit's report that all SBA projects would be funded. There are approximately 240 districts on the waiting list now. Strekalovsky & Hoit will be attending the April 23, 2002 meeting. The DOE approved thirty-five projects only. The Superintendent reported that the borrowing law will probably be changed allowing for seven years of temporary borrowing rather than five years.

A question was raised as to the MASC email correspondence regarding the level of cuts, included in the Superintendent's report. The Superintendent reported that the level of reduction is anyone's guess, only House Speaker Finneran and Senate President Birmingham know.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. Motion: To approve of Amended School Committee Calendar to change April 22, 2002 meeting to April 23, 2002
(S. Jordan)
(J. Gibbs)

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
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

3. Motion: To approve of Transfer of \$250,000 from Excess & Deficiency to Buildings and Grounds

(S. Jordan)

(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
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

4. Motion: To adopt the first reading of DP3450 **Policy Relating to Education *Non-Discrimination of Educational Materials***, waiving the reading

(S. Jordan)

(N. Mello)

Discussion ensued regarding the concerns surrounding the censoring of materials. The Superintendent reported that the District would be pro-active in its review of materials.

The Superintendent suggested that if materials were rejected, the School Committee should approve that denial. The words “Materials deemed unacceptable for students will be shared with the School Committee for final determination.” This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

It was noted that Chapter 71 Section 50 gives the School Committee authority to change textbooks.

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
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:

David Lowenthal
Margaret Watson

(Motion passed 15-2)

5. Motion: To adopt for the first reading DP 6760 **Policy Relating to Pupil Services *Recognition of Outstanding Achievement***, waiving the reading.

(P. MacDonald)
(N. Mello)

Member Lowenthal left the meeting at 9:55 PM.

A question was asked whether “marital status” should be added. The consensus of the Committee was not to include this in this policy or others in the District.

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
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

6. Motion: To adopt for the first reading AP6813 **Policy Relating to Pupil Services *Scholarships***, waiving the reading.

(C. Esperti)
(P. MacDonald)

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
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

VII. Public Hearing

No member of the public wished to speak.

VIII. Unfinished Business

IX. New Business

X. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(N. Mello)
(S. Horeanopoulos)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson

Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Jeffrey Gibbs
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes