

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1075, Monday, April 12, 2004
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	John Kane
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	Alice Livdahl
Donald Benson	John Nunnari (7:17 PM)
Elizabeth Brennan	Norman Plourde
Charles Capparelli	Michael Sherman
Clifford Connell	Tammy Tod
David Dickman	Margaret Watson
Patricia Gates	Patricia Young
Mark James	

Committee Members Absent:

Julie Scott	René Rodriguez
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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.

Chair Duncan Leith informed the Committee that Item VB Presentation on District Food Services Program would be taken out of order and introduced the Superintendent. The Superintendent thanked the School Committee and staff for their kind thoughts and words.

The Superintendent introduced Manager of Food Services Ellen Mowrey who reviewed the Food Services Program via a PowerPoint Presentation (attachment 2). Ms. Mowrey distributed the following information regarding the Food Services Program (attachment 3):

- *School Lunches, Smart Yet Satisfying!*;
- *Teaching Kids How to Eat Right at Home & at School*;
- *How to Use the Food Guide Pyramid*; and
- *WRSD Elementary School Menu for April 2004*.

Following inquiry Manager Mowrey informed the Committee that all lunch sizes were the same, pursuant to regulations established by the USDA. Manager Mowrey informed the Committee that the USDA does not provide guidelines for snacks in schools; each school decides what snacks will be made available, with input from school councils.

The Superintendent acknowledged Manager Mowrey as a staff member who makes things work in the District. Manager Mowrey reported that the District is looking at a pilot nutritional program.

Following an inquiry regarding sanitation in the cafeteria and kitchens, Manager Mowrey informed the Committee that all cafeteria staff are either certified in food safety or become certified within the first year. Training occurred this past week for cafeteria workers and is ongoing. Director of Administrative Services Steven Penka added that the District is required to have an Integrated Pest Management Program at each school, which includes monthly inspections.

I. Public Hearing

Alan Paul Moreau, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 4)

Richard Fenton, Chair Paxton Finance Committee, read a prepared statement (attachment 5).

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

David Gibbs, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 7).

II. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 23, 2004

Chair Duncan Leith informed the Committee that District Counsel Leo McCabe has recommended that executive session

minutes should approved by the School Committee by roll call vote. Minutes of regular or special meetings of the Committee can be approved by consensus.

Motion: To approve the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on February 23, 2004, correcting the word "Vice-chair" on page 1, not to be released until the matter has been completed

(N. Mello)
(J. Nunnari)

Roll call 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
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

David Dickman
Patricia Gates

(Motion 15-0-2)

- B. Approval of 1073rd Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 8, 2004 -- approved by consensus, with Member Natalie Mello abstaining.
- C. Approval of the Annual Budget Hearing Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 22, 2004 -- approved by consensus,

adding on page 6 after “Senator Chandler asked for” the words “individual Member”. Members David Dickman and John Nunnari abstained.

- D. Approval of 1074th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 22, 2004 -- approved by consensus, with Member David Dickman abstaining.
- E. Approval of the 254th Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 29, 2004 -- approved by consensus, with Member Clifford Connell abstaining.
- F. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 29, 2004

Acting Secretary Natalie Mello distributed copies of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 29, 2004 to School Committee Members only and action was deferred until the next meeting.

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.

Following inquiry regarding the sequencing of the findings by the Auditor, the Superintendent explained to the Committee that when the Auditors found the error, the District was notified. The correction was made immediately and forwarded to the Department of Education. The Auditors, however, were still obligated to record the findings in the report. The Superintendent explained to the Committee that all but one finding had been corrected and a memo to that effect was included in the Superintendent’s Report. The last finding is being challenged by the District as the auditor from last year, from the same auditing firm, told the District what to do and the auditor from this year has a different view.

Following a request for copies of the Health Surveys that will be completed by students in April, the Superintendent will include copies in the next Superintendent’s Report. The Superintendent also reported

that he would include the incremental impact of special education student enrollment in future reports.

When asked about the missing Petty Cash funds, the Superintendent reported that he was surprised that the Petty Cash account was accessible to so many employees and expressed dissatisfaction with the oversight and management of the account. The account was immediately closed to ensure no further problems.

IV. Committee Reports

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

There were no representatives from the Student Advisory Committee present.

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

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the Management Subcommittee met on Tuesday, March 30, 2004, to evaluate the Superintendent. The Subcommittee then went into executive session discussing contract negotiations with non-union personnel. Chair Leith reported that he would be requesting an executive session under new business.

Chair Leith distributed draft reports from Management, Business/Finance and Education Subcommittees under separate cover. The evaluation of the Superintendent will take place at the April 26, 2004 School Committee meeting. Any substantive changes would be made by motion at the April 26th meeting.

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

In the absence of Education Subcommittee Chair Julie Scott, Education Subcommittee Member Norman Plourde reported that the Education Subcommittee met on Monday, April 5, 2004 and reviewed AP3311.1 **Policy Relating to Education Graduation Requirements.**

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

Motion: To approve AP3311.1 **Policy Relating to Education Graduation Requirements** for the first reading, waiving the reading

(J. Nunnari)

(C. Capparelli)

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained that the requirements are actually tightened for foreign language with the amended policy, requiring two years of the same language or ten credits in a Partnership Program. With depleted resources, the Superintendent reported that there currently is a problem staffing foreign language classes for students continually having difficulty succeeding. The Superintendent also reported that special education students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) can be waived from the requirement of foreign language.

Following inquiry regarding the decision to participate in a Partnership Program being before grade 11 in high school, the Superintendent reported that he thought an introductory class would be offered to ninth grade students interested in the Partnership Programs but would verify that with Principal Thomas Pandiscio and would include the information in the next Superintendent's Report.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith

Natalie Mello

Donald Benson

Elizabeth Brennan

Charles Capparelli

Clifford Connell

David Dickman

Patricia Gates

Mark James

John Kane

Alice Livdahl

John Nunnari

Norman Plourde

Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

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

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello reported that the Business/Finance Subcommittee met on Monday, March 29, 2004, to evaluate the Superintendent.

Chair Duncan Leith asked Committee Members to defer any questions on the *FY05 Appropriation* until after the presentation by the Superintendent on the impacts of a possible \$1.4 million further reduction to the *FY05 Appropriation*, later in the meeting.

- 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 Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach met twice, on March 24, 2004 and April 7, 2004. At both meetings the idea of hosting an informational meeting on the *FY05 Appropriation* and the impacts of possible further reductions was discussed.

- a. April 29, 2004 Budget Information Meeting

The Ad-hoc Subcommittee is recommending that an informational meeting be held on Thursday, April 29th, from 7:00 – 8:30 PM at the auditorium at the high school. Principals would serve as the panelists.

Motion: That the Wachusett Regional School Committee support and host a community outreach

event on Thursday, April 29, 2004, from 7:00 – 8:30 PM in the auditorium at the high school. The topic will be the possible impact to a further \$1.4 million reduction to the *FY05 Appropriation*.

(M. Sherman)

(D. Dickman)

The Superintendent informed the Committee that if the informational meeting is affirmed by the Committee he would immediately notify all collective bargaining units, as well as other staff, of the importance of attending the meeting. The PTA's, PTO's, and school councils would also be notified. The District already has received an offer to provide day-care during the meeting. All announcements and/or press releases will encourage all to attend. A notice will be sent to Member Town Halls, Libraries, and Senior Centers. Holden Cable has been notified and is trying to get a crew to film the event, which would then be made available to the Member Towns.

The Superintendent reported that the Ad-hoc Subcommittee also discussed the idea of requesting a half hour program on local cable on the *FY05 Appropriation* and the impact of possible future reductions. Ad-hoc Subcommittee Chair Michael Sherman is exploring this idea with Holden Cable.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith

Natalie Mello

Donald Benson

Elizabeth Brennan

Charles Capparelli

Clifford Connell

David Dickman

Patricia Gates

Mark James

John Kane

Alice Livdahl

John Nunnari

Norman Plourde

Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion unanimously)

F. Building Committees

1. High School

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the High School Building Committee met on March 31, 2004. The Building Committee was notified by the project management firm, URS, that there would be a change in personnel, due to health reasons, and that URS would provide, at no charge to the Building Committee, an additional staff member. Chair Leith reported that a potential problem with taking a chemistry class offline was stopped and changes made to accommodate the need for the classroom. The temporary structures for the courtyard have begun. The Building Committee voted to have the costs for the graduation at Worcester's Centrum Centre paid for by Building Committee.

Director of Administrative Services Steven Penka reported that through cooperation with the Holden Recreation Department the field problems have been resolved for this year. District staff will be working with Town of Holden staff to solve field problems for next year.

The Superintendent reported that there was an expenditure authorized by the architects without approval. The Superintendent will be meeting with the architect to clarify the process. The Superintendent also reported that the District received invoices directly from inspectors for various inspections. The Superintendent has asked District Counsel to advise whether the District can pay these directly or whether they must come through the Town of Holden.

Following inquiry regarding providing the School Committee with a costing schedule, the Superintendent reported that the Comptroller provides financial updates in his monthly financial report to the Superintendent and that URS is working on a more detailed report. The Superintendent will provide an update in his next report to the School Committee.

Following inquiry regarding the cost for the modulars, the Superintendent reminded the Committee that the cost of the modulars had been included in the cost for the project when applying to the Department of Education for reimbursement. Only the land is not included in the application for reimbursement. The final determination will be that of the Department of Education.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree

The Superintendent reported that he had received two notices from the Department of Education regarding the final audit on the project, which he has forwarded to the Town of Rutland for completion.

3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

Member John Nunnari reported that the Rutland Building Committee met last week and he was unable to attend. Member Elizabeth Brennan attended the meeting and reported that the sewer survey was completed and that advertisements for the Clerk of the Works have been placed. There is a subgroup of the Building Committee participating in the interview process. In three to four weeks the Building Committee will meet at the architects' office to view the inside materials. The next meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2004.

Director of Administrative Services Steven Penka reported that a third alternative building material for the exterior of the building was brought to the meeting and it appears to be less abrasive. The sample will be brought in for the Superintendent's review.

4. Sterling

Chair Duncan Leith deferred the following reports and moved directly to the Superintendent's 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).

V. Superintendent's Report

- A. Discussion of Report
- B. Presentation on District Food Services Program

See above.

- C. Approval of *Amended FY04 Appropriation*

Motion: To approve the *Amended FY04 Appropriation*, as presented by the Superintendent (attachment 8)

(N. Mello)
(M. Sherman)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman

Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

D. Disposition of Modular Units

Motion: That the Wachusett Regional School District is authorized to dispose of surplus tangible personal property, consisting of the modular cafeteria and the modular classroom units located at the Wachusett Regional High School, at a fair market resale value, the modular cafeteria to be disposed of after the end of the school year in June 2005 and the modular classrooms to be disposed of after the end of the school year in June 2006. The sale and disposition may be made to another governmental unit within the provisions of General Laws Chapter 30B, Section 1(b)7 or, in the alternative, by competitive sealed bids pursuant to the provisions of General Laws Chapter 30B, Section 15, and that the Superintendent be authorized to execute all necessary agreements to effectuate the disposition of the modular units.

(N. Mello)
(J. Nunnari)

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that if the modulars were sold, that amount would be deducted from cost of the project before reimbursement. The Superintendent estimated that the District could net \$1.5 million. The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the debt for the modular classrooms cannot be folded into the debt for the high school. The District cannot borrow more than five years on that type of project.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell

David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Chair Duncan Leith called a five minute recess at 9:05 PM.

Chair Duncan Leith reconvened the meeting at 9:10 PM

- E. Presentation of the Impact Statement – Reduction of \$1.4 million from the Approved *FY05 Appropriation*

The Superintendent distributed copies of the *School Committee Priorities* (attachment 9). At the direction of the School Committee by vote at the March 22, 2004 School Committee meeting, the Superintendent reported via a PowerPoint presentation the impacts of an addition \$1.4 million reduction to the *FY05 Appropriation* (attachment 10).

Following the presentation, the Committee discussed the impacts, as presented by the Superintendent. The Superintendent reported that the District is already collecting revenue from parents in the form of transportation and athletic fees as well as an increase in meal costs in the cafeterias. If the athletic program was to be on a fee base, it would be estimated at \$800 per student per sport. The Superintendent reported that losing athletics, in addition to losing 90-100 staff positions in two years, is devastating.

By consensus, the Committee agreed that the public must be informed of the ramifications of such a reduction. The Superintendent reported that all staff members will receive a copy of the PowerPoint presentation tomorrow.

The Superintendent reported that the District received incentive money when the Member Towns amended the Regional Agreement to include K-12. This incentive money was stopped in FY04.

When asked about the legislative process, the Superintendent reported that there is not much hope in receiving an increase in Chapter 70 Aid but that regional transportation aid and Circuit Breaker reimbursement are projected to increase. The Superintendent commented that if the income tax had not been reduced, there would not be the problems in State funding that is being experienced now. No organization, except for the Massachusetts Teachers Association, is urging the reinstatement of the 5.95%. Therefore, this is a local problem has been created for which there needs to be a local solution.

Motion: To extend the meeting for thirty minutes

(N. Mello)

(J. Nunnari)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion: That the Wachusett Regional School District Committee send a letter before April 19, 2004 to each of our state representatives and senators asking them to support any revenue packages that may include raising the state income tax with all monies raised committed to public education and to notify the Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Committees.

(N. Mello)
(J. Kane)

The Superintendent reported that, if the above motion is affirmed, he would notify the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS).

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

Donald Benson
Michael Sherman
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 14-3)

Chair Duncan Leith reported that he had contacted District Counsel Leo McCabe and asked that he prepare citizen petitions for warrants for the annual meeting or special meetings, should that be necessary. The petitions can be picked up following the meeting.

Member Clifford Connell left the meeting at 10:15 PM.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that he would try to get copies of the warrant articles for the annual town meetings. The Superintendent reported that it is legal for the Selectboard to set two warrants, provided that the total is the appropriation voted by the School Committee. Discussion continued regarding the ability or inability to amend an article at town meeting to remove the provision for a Proposition 2 ½ override. Member John Kane, a former Rutland Town Moderator, reported that a decision of the moderator can be challenged and, if successful by a majority of the voters present, would remove the moderator from the issue. A challenge can also be made following the meeting and if determined that the moderator acted improperly, the vote would be considered null and void. Member Kane also informed the Committee that a motion can be made to take an article out of order.

Motion: To extend the meeting for fifteen minutes

(N. Mello)

(M. Sherman)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

VI. Public Hearing

Melinda Johnson, Paxton, urged the School Committee to stay together and save the District from further reductions.

VII. Unfinished Business

VIII. New Business

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)
(C. Capparelli)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

IX. Adjournment

The Committee entered executive session at 10:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes