

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1057, Monday April 14, 2003
7:00 p.m.

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

John Rokicki, Chairman	Jane James
Duncan Leith, Vice-Chairman	Alice Livdahl
Donald Benson	Peter MacDonald
Clifford Connell	John Nunnari
Carol Esperti	Julie Scott
David Fedeli	Margaret Watson
Kimberly Ferguson	Patricia Young
Patricia Gates	

Committee Members Absent:

Charles Capparelli	Natalie Mello
Jeffrey Gibbs	Tammy Tod
Kelly Maxwell	

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Philip E. Campbell, Director of Student/Information Services
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative Services
Peter Brennan, Comptroller
Susan H. Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Others Present:

Linda Lehans, *The Landmark*
Marc Sanguinetti, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*
Susan Staudaer, *Sterling Meetinghouse News*
Stanley Moss, Princeton Selectman
David White, Holden Selectman
Christian W. deMarcken, Paxton Finance Committee

Alan Berg, Holden Finance Committee
Edith Morgan, Princeton Advisory Committee
David Gibbs, Sterling
Larry Floryan, Holden
Maureen Floryan, Holden
Mark S. James, Holden
Edwin Meyer, Holden
Otto Lies, Holden
Leo R. Bachand, Holden
Elizabeth Brennan, Rutland
Michael Sherman, Holden

Chairman John Rokicki called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Edwin Meyer, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 1).

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 2).

Mark James, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 3).

The Superintendent distributed a copy of correspondence from the Princeton Selectboard asking for the high school project to be stopped (attachment 4).

Larry Floryan, Holden, urged the Committee to review financial information before making a decision as critical as this. He estimated that construction costs could increase by 3.5% or more each year that the project is delayed and that the incremental increase would be born by the communities. He urged the Committee not to stop the project.

David White, Holden Selectman, corrected the previous speaker and indicated that the Department of Education would reimburse increased costs. He is not encouraging to stop the project but delay the construction, which would impact the community. He encouraged the Committee to complete all drawings but just not put the project out to bid. He indicated he was given misinformation at the time of the special town meetings.

David Gibbs, Sterling, reminded the Committee and members of the public the wording of the warrant article which approved the borrowing. He believes that this is an effort to stop the project.

Stan Moss, Princeton Selectman, reported that he had received several calls from citizens concerned about paying principal and interest. He suggested the possibility of doing long-term borrowing now as the rates are favorable.

II. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of the 1055th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 10, 2003

Motion: To approve the minutes of the 1055th Regular Meeting of the WRSD Committee held on March 10, 2003

(D. Leith)

(A. Livdahl)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
David Fedeli
Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Kimberly Ferguson

Abstained:

Carol Esperti
Jane James
Peter MacDonald

(Motion passed 11-1-3)

B. Approval of the Executive Session Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 10, 2003

Motion: To approve the minutes of the Executive Session Meeting of the WRSD Committee held on March 10, 2003, the minutes to be released when the matter is concluded

(J. Scott)
(D Leith)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Carol Esperti
Jane James
Peter MacDonald

(Motion passed 12-3)

- C. Approval of the Annual Budget Hearing of the WRSD Committee held on March 25, 2003

Motion: To approve the minutes of the Annual Budget Hearing of the WRSD Committee held on March 25, 2003

(D. Leith)
(M. Watson)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith

Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
Jane James
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 11-4)

- D. Approval of the 1056th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 25, 2003

Motion: To approve the minutes of the 1056th Regular Meeting of the WRSD Committee held on March 25, 2003

(P. MacDonald)
(D. Leith)

Vote:

In favor:
John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
Jane James
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 11-4)

- E. Approval of the Executive Session Meeting minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 25, 2003

Motion: To approve the minutes of the Executive Session Meeting of the WRSD Committee held on March 25, 2003, the minutes to be released when the matter is concluded

(P. MacDonald)

(J. Scott)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
Jane James
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 11-4)

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

A. Presentation of Warrants and Payroll

The warrants were circulated for signatures.

IV. Communications

There were no communications discussed.

V. Committee Reports

A. Student Advisory Committee (K. Brunelle, L. Zambetti, N. Leger, E. DeMarco)

No member of the Student Advisory Committee was present.

B. Management Subcommittee (J. Rokicki, Chair, D. Leith, C. Esperti, P. Gates, A. Livdahl, K. Maxwell, N. Mello, J. Scott)

1. Motion: To adopt DP5241.6 **Policy Relating to Personnel Management Staff Participation in Political and Union Activities** for the first reading, waiving the reading

(C. Esperti)
(P. MacDonald)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari

Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

2. Motion: To adopt DP1170 **Policy Relating to School Committee Operation Use of Electronic Messaging Between and Among School Committee Members** for the first reading, waiving the reading

(D. Leith)
(J. Nunnari)

Discussion occurred surrounding the Open Meeting Law and the issue of emails becoming public record.

Motion to Amend: To change the second sentence in the fourth paragraph to read, "Therefore, in order to ensure compliance, the Superintendent shall be copied on electronic correspondence between and among members which create a quorum of the Committee or any of its subcommittees of the School Committee on matters related to the business of the School Committee."

(P. MacDonald)
(C. Esperti)

Member Peter MacDonald withdrew the amendment, with the agreement of member Carol Esperti.

Motion to Amend: Delete the word "all" in the second sentence in the fourth paragraph

(P. Young)
(C. Esperti)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli

Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Jane James
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

(Motion passed 9-6)

Roll call vote on the main motion as amended:

In favor

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson

(Motion passed 11-4)

Chairman John Rokicki reported that the Management Subcommittee affirmed the proposed changes to the School Committee By-Laws, as presented with the following minor change: page three, adding “at all meetings of the full Committee” after the proposed change.

C. Business/Finance Subcommittee (N. Mello, J. Rokicki, D. Leith, D. Benson, D. Fedeli)

1. Motion: To adopt DP7114 **Policy Relating to Support Operations Use of School Facilities for Telecommunications Equipment** for the first reading
(D. Leith)
(D. Benson)

Motion to Amend: To add the word “Final” on page D, number 4 before the word “approval”
(A. Livdahl)
(C. Esperti)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Vote on motion, as amended:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson

Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

D. Business-related Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

Duncan Leith reported that the Business/Finance Subcommittee will meet at 6:30 PM on April 28, 2003 in the Media Center Side Room at the high school to review the Superintendent's evaluation.

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

1. Holden – (J. Scott)

The Superintendent received a request from the Holden Selectboard to increase the cost of the project by \$125,000, and is recommending approval (attachment 5).

Motion: To approve an increase of \$125,000 to the Holden Elementary School Project, contingent upon a positive vote of the WRSD Holden Building Committee
(D. Leith)
(J. Scott)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
Peter MacDonald
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 13-0-2)

2. Paxton

No report.

3. Rutland

a. Central Tree/Naquag – (J. Rokicki)

No report.

b. Elementary – (J. Nunnari)

The Superintendent reported that the Rutland Building Committee hopes to continue with the purchase of the land. The Building Committee is exploring looking at an abbreviated project.

4. Sterling

The Superintendent asked if any of the Sterling representatives knew of the status of the additional paving to be done at Houghton/Chocksett.

5. High School

Chairman John Rokicki updated the Committee that interviews for a project management firm were completed and that three firms had been chosen and that the administration is performing background checks. A recommendation for School Committee action should be prepared for the April 28, 2003 meeting.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of report

Member Kimberly Ferguson requested that as part of the public record she objects to the administrative meeting that was held on April 1, and any future meetings not open to the public, as she believes that School Committee members should be allowed to attend.

The Superintendent reported that the second meeting may not take place as the final numbers may not be in.

Member Carol Esperti expressed concern regarding the April 1, 2003 administrative meeting because there were forty men and the women members of the School Committee who wanted to attend were excluded. MEMBER CAROL ESPERTI INDICATED THAT SHE HAD TWO PROBLEMS WITH THE MEETING HELD ON APRIL 1, 2003: 1) THAT THE MEETING WAS CALLED AN ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING AND INCLUDED PUBLIC OFFICIALS, NOT ADMINISTRATORS; AND 2) THAT PUBLIC BUSINESS WAS BEING CONDUCTED BY PUBLIC OFFICIALS BUT THE PUBLIC WAS NOT ALLOWED TO ATTEND.

The Superintendent corrected the record that there were eighteen male participants in attendance at the meeting, not forty.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained that the Early Retirement Incentive bill is progressing. He was pleased that the

proposal was discussed in Speaker of the House Finneran's office. Although Speaker Finneran is not in favor of the plan, at least it was being discussed.

The Superintendent explained that most of the talk around the Statehouse is a return to the former Chapter 70 formula and emphasized that it was just talk and conjecture. He also reported that the House may reduce Chapter 70 Aid by approximately 20% and that regional transportation reimbursement could be eliminated.

The Superintendent explained the Early Retirement Incentive program. If a teacher at the top of the salary range was replaced by a new teacher the difference is approximately \$27,000. In addition, a \$15,000 unemployment expense for the reduction of a staff member is avoided. The goal would be that the Massachusetts Teacher Retirement Board (MTRB) would give eligible teachers an additional five years of service and the cost for five years of 5% retirement and delta for the five additional years, would be borne by the District over a five year period. In planning, the Superintendent is looking only at the net savings to the District, the difference between the savings on salaries and the cost to the District.

The Superintendent reported that last December non-teaching employees were offered an option, adopted by the Committee, for early retirement and that fifteen employees took advantage of the offer. The legislature is exploring an early retirement for police and fire employees and the Superintendent indicated that he was not sure if other groups of non-MTRB member employees would be included.

The Superintendent reported that District staff met with the transportation provider regarding a fee for late bus service. The Superintendent reported that, as detailed in his report, the cost for transportation for those students who live less than one and one-half miles from the school could be as high as \$280 per student.

The Superintendent reported that he is waiting for further information before setting a firm number for transportation fees. At this time, without direction from the School Committee and some provision of additional funds for transportation, he would

be required to use the full fee number and that there would be no discount for families.

Member Kimberly Ferguson requested that a copy of her email asking to attend the April 1st administrative meeting be included for the record (attachment 6).

A concern was raised regarding Chairman John Rokicki's use of his business email address, which is included on the School Committee roster. Those who do not wish to be emailed at work should remove their email addresses from the roster. Chairman Rokicki reported that he has always been reachable by a separately provided telephone line specific to School Committee business or via U.S. mail.

Member Julie Scott extended her congratulations to the Wachusett Regional High School music education department for the recent Grammy Award. This was the third year in a row that the department received the award but this year the number of awards was reduced to fifty rather than the one hundred awarded the two prior years.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. Revised Health and Physical Education Curriculum

This was referred to the Education Subcommittee for review and recommendation to the full Committee.

2. Motion: To approve the Establishment of Bank Accounts at BankNorth

(J. Nunnari)

(D. Leith)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson

Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

3. Motion: To affirm the Superintendent's efforts to legislate an Early Retirement Incentive Program for teachers

(C. Esperti)
(D. Leith)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 14-1)

The Superintendent informed the Committee that the next report will be mailed at the end of this week due to the Superintendent's vacation.

VII. Public Hearing

David White, Holden Selectman, reported that the Selectboard set the town warrant because the board had not received a request by the District.

David Gibbs, Sterling, reported that he has never emailed or called anyone on the Committee unless responding to an email sent to him. He suggested that an email system be established that would provide an email service for Committee members.

The Superintendent responded to Selectman White that should the Holden Selectboard include the school budget on its May Town Meeting, he would urge support of the school budget and he would speak in favor of the current budget. Whether to delay action on the school budget is a town decision and the Selectboard must make the decision in the best interest of Holden, knowing the implications of the budget status.

VIII. Unfinished Business

IX. New Business

Member Carol Esperti asked that the Committee be notified that she is requesting, in addition to the recommendation from the Management Subcommittee, that the following be added to Article 2, Section 7 of the School Committee by-Laws following the word "Committee": "for those who wish to become part of the public record."

Motion: That the School Committee vote to allow the Member Towns to vote on the resolution as required by DOE in order to proceed with construction

(C. Connell)
(C. Esperti)

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes

(P. MacDonald)
(C. Esperti)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The Superintendent advised the Committee to refer this matter to counsel. He explained that the limit of seven-year short-term borrowing was the only option available at the time unless the legislature extends it. The Superintendent expressed concern that the motion is not clear as to what the criteria for a decision would be. In order to budget, a date for the timeline was needed in order to prepare a budget. The Committee was informed that any other financial scenarios as to the limits of short-term borrowing and interest rates would be as speculative as the data previously presented; no one can anticipate the economy, actions of the legislature, or interest rates that far out.

Motion: To extend the meeting by ten minutes

(P. Gates)

(C. Esperti)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell

Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Peter MacDonald
Julie Scott

Opposed:

Duncan Leith
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 9-6)

Member Donald Benson did some historical research on prime rates which showed the rates are the lowest in the last ten years (attachment 7). Using this information he calculated some costs for delaying the project, which would outweigh any savings for the communities in delaying construction.

Roll call vote on motion:

In favor:

Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Peter MacDonald

Opposed:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
David Fedeli
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Julie Scott

Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

(Motion failed 5-10)

X. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(P. MacDonald
J. Scott)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
David Fedeli
Kimberly Ferguson
Patricia Gates
Jane James
Alice Livdahl
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/schoolcommittee/minutes