

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1039, Tuesday, April 23, 2002
7:00 p.m.

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

John Rokicki, Chairman	David Lowenthal
Sherry Horeanopoulos, Vice-chairman (7:14 PM)	Peter MacDonald
Donald Benson	Kelly Maxwell
Carol Esperti	Natalie Mello
Kimberly Ferguson	Elizabeth Pape
Michael Gennert (7:54 PM)	Julie Scott
Sarah Jordan	Kathleen Singh
Duncan Leith	Margaret Watson
Alice Livdahl	

Committee Members Absent:

Jeffrey Gibbs	Jane James
John Nunnari	

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Susan Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Others present:

Linda Lehans, *The Landmark*
Stacey M. Grossi, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*
Christine Nelson, *Sterling Meetinghouse News*
Jeffrey Wentzell, Paxton
Larry Floryan, Holden
Maureen Floryan, Holden
David Gibbs, Sterling
Melinda Johnson, Paxton
Edward Twarog, Princeton

Paul Moreau, Holden

Chairman Rokicki called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Paul A. Moreau, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 1).

II. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of the 1038th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on April 8, 2002 – approved by consensus

III. Communications

Concern was expressed as to how and why the Paxton Special Meeting was cancelled. It was explained that there was concern having a quorum present. The Superintendent distributed a copy of correspondence to Paxton Selectboard Chairman Goodrich, which corrected newspaper and radio reports (attachment 2). Further discussion occurred. The Superintendent reported that notices went out to all parents in Holden on Monday regarding the Special Town Meeting. Discussion occurred as to whether the Paxton Selectboard may consider rescheduling the Special Town Meeting prior to June 3rd.

Following an inquiry as to whether June 3rd was too late to change the assessment for FY03, the Superintendent reminded the Committee that when the DOE ruled that Holden had to pay vocational/technical education funds, the decision was made in April and the DOE indicated that it would be implemented the next fiscal year because it would have a negative impact on the towns at that late date. In addition the Committee was reminded by the Superintendent that Associate Commissioner of School Finance Jeffrey Wulfson's correspondence indicated that the Martin Opinion could not be implemented for FY03.

The Superintendent will ask the Commissioner's office if four towns approve the change, can it be implemented in FY03. The Superintendent asked the Committee to consider the following possible scenario: the legislature passes the budget on June 5th, the Commissioner of Education approves the Regional Agreement change and indicates that it can be implemented in FY03, Rutland does not pay the District and goes to court requesting and receives an injunction. The District could face a \$3 million reduction, \$1.8 cut in the budget and

\$1.2 in not being able to recover excess debt. The Superintendent advised the Committee that this could be a possibility.

The Superintendent reported that the Treasurer sent out a “worst case” scenario in the assessment letters. This provides a mechanism to implement this action in FY03.

Concern was expressed as to whether the Committee would be sending comments to Jeffrey Wulfson. Chairman Rokicki indicated that it would be discussed under “Unfinished Business”.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that he had advised the Committee that implementation of the Martin Opinion without a Regional Agreement change was illegal, an opinion confirmed by District Counsel Leo McCabe.

A suggestion was made that an alternative could be planned for if Rutland refuses to pay, perhaps asking the other four towns to help out in the interim.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the issue of a delay is not only Paxton’s, but the other three towns which did not schedule Special Town Meetings earlier, as requested by the School Committee.

Following inquiry as to whether the Commissioner was required by law to approve a Regional Agreement change, the Superintendent advised the Committee that the approval process was contained in M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 14B, paragraph i.

A point of order was raised by Member Carol Esperti that the Chairman should not be giving an opinion on an issue and if he wishes to do so, he should turn the gavel over to the Vice-chair.

The Committee was reminded that each child has the right to the same education and that the Committee should not be asking a town to leave the District if the town cannot afford to pay for the education, that this is diametrically opposed to the premise of Education Reform.

Motion: To request the Town of Paxton to reschedule their Special Town Meeting prior to May 14th to consider the implementation of the Martin Opinion

(C. Esperti)
(K. Singh)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Sarah Jordan
David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

John Rokicki
Michael Gennert
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl

(Motion passed 13-4)

Following inquiry as to whether the change to the By-Laws would be acted upon tonight, the Superintendent reported that the change to the By-Laws was inadvertently left off the agenda, and would be considered under “Unfinished Business”.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent agreed to request District Counsel clarify with Attorney Zitowitz that there is concern by some members of the Committee regarding the quorum. Following a request for item 4 of attachment 11, the Superintendent reported that attachment 10 was the communication in question.

A concern was expressed as to whether the Chairman was in violation of the Superintendent’s contract as the Management Subcommittee does not include a representative from Paxton. Chairman Rokicki apologized to the Committee and reported that when the subcommittees were initially set up there was a representative from Paxton. The Superintendent indicated that he had no complaint.

A request was made of the Chair to include in the next Superintendent's report a copy of any correspondence to the District Attorney regarding the emails.

It was reported that several constituents have expressed interest in maintaining the videographer at School Committee meetings.

IV. Education Presentation

No educational presentation was made.

With the consensus of the Committee, Chairman Rokicki took Item VI, C out of order and introduced representatives from Strekalovsky & Hoit, Inc., Gene Raymond and Edward Tynan, and Michael Daley from Financial Advisory Associates, who distributed a packet (attachment 3). Gene Raymond informed the Committee that they were looking for feedback from the committee – a fact finding.

Michael Daley indicated that he used tools available on line to determine "Buildout", a potential of 18,835 students. This information is just information to "be aware." Strekalovsky & Hoit will run their own numbers, using cohorts. Ten years is usually the maximum and it is not recommended to go out further.

Edward Tynan reviewed the cohorts and reported that many families are moving into the District with already established families.

Other options should be looked at, other than the items outlined in Member Donald Benson's memo of March 26, 2002, and input was requested of members for options to consider:

- Possible withdrawal of one or more towns from the District
- Perhaps two Districts would be formed
- Two schools
- Two equal schools
- Township redistricting
- Two unequal – to be determined later
- One school new
- One school – add/renovate
- One school – new site
- Three schools

Strekalovsky & Hoit will not present operating budgets for each model. One choice should come forward.

A September target date is feasible. If any other options come up, the Superintendent agreed to pass them on to Strekalovsky & Hoit. Pursuant to discussions on meeting length, Strekalovsky & Hoit recommended shorter meetings, which tend to be more productive. They also recommended a tight agenda. Once the Committee agrees on three options, Strekalovsky & Hoit suggested the public should be included. Chairman Rokicki scheduled a Special Meeting for 6:00 PM on May 15, 2002 to review the progress of Strekalovsky & Hoit and continue the discussion.

V. Committee Reports

A. Student Advisory Committee (L. McNally, C. Smith)

No members of the Student Advisory Committee were present. Members asked why the students were not attending. The Superintendent will check with the students.

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

The next meeting for the Education Subcommittee is scheduled for May 22, 2002, at 6:30 PM in the Curriculum Center.

C. Education-related Ad-Hoc Subcommittees requiring the action of the School Committee

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

The Superintendent advised that the State will be implementing standards and the Superintendent could invite Dr. Joseph Rappa to present the standards being considered. With the consensus of the Committee, the Superintendent will contact Dr. Rappa to attend the organizational meeting on May 28, 2002.

D. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School – J. Nunnari, Chocksett – P. MacDonald; Davis Hill; Dawson – J. Scott; Houghton – S. Jordan; Mayo – C. Esperti; Mountview – J. James; Naquag – J. Rokicki; Paxton – A. Livdahl; Thomas

Prince – S. Horeanopoulos; Wachusett Regional High School –
E. Pape

The Superintendent reported to the Committee that in Sterling, the SEA has been the parent organization. The principals initiated a request to have two separate parent organizations and the SEA leadership expressed concern and brought the issue to the Selectboard. The Superintendent advised that it would be settled locally and was not a town issue.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

In answer to an inquiry as to whether Rutland received a request for Special Town Meeting, the Superintendent reported that all towns received the same request, delivered via facsimile and regular mail.

Inquiry was made as to when the special education Corrective Action Plan would be sent to the Department of Education. The Superintendent reported that it is due on April 26, 2002.

Following an inquiry regarding information included in the report regarding transportation, the Superintendent advised that he needs time with the Committee to discuss budget issues. The Superintendent agreed to generate a report for transportation over one mile, not one mile and one half.

Motion: To extend the meeting for thirty minutes

(K. Singh)
(K. Maxwell)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson
Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith

Alice Livdahl
David Lowenthal
Kelly Maxwell
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
Peter MacDonald

(Motion passed 16-1)

The Committee should be looking at a policy. The Superintendent will check to see if the District could charge for a bus for which the District receives reimbursement from the State.

The Superintendent's comments regarding the Superintendent's evaluation were questioned. The Superintendent reported to the Committee that he was advising the Committee.

Member Julie Scott left the meeting at 10:17 PM.
Member Peter MacDonald left the meeting at 10:26 PM.

Several members reminded the Committee that there is a process for changing the evaluation, which is part of a legal document.

Motion: To extend the meeting for thirty minutes

(K. Singh)
K. Maxwell)

Vote:

In favor:
John Rokicki
David Lowenthal
Kelly Maxwell
Kathleen Singh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Donald Benson

Carol Esperti
Kimberly Ferguson
Michael Gennert
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Pape

(Motion failed 5-10)

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 10:32 PM, with the remaining items on the agenda not addressed.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes