

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1076, Monday, April 26, 2004  
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria  
Wachusett Regional High School

*Committee Members Present:*

Duncan Leith, Chair	Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	John Nunnari
Donald Benson	Norman Plourde
Charles Capparelli	Julie Scott
David Dickman	Michael Sherman
Patricia Gates	Tammy Tod
Mark James	Margaret Watson
John Kane	Patricia Young (7:09 PM)

*Committee Members Absent:*

Elizabeth Brennan	René Rodriguez
Clifford Connell	

*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 7:00 PM. Chair Leith reported that *Petitions for a Special Town Meeting* were filed by Holden citizens with the Holden Town Clerk on April 26, 2004 and that *Petitions for an Additional Warrant Article at the Annual Town Meeting* were filed in Paxton and Holden. Paxton Selectboard accepted the petition and added the additional warrant article to the *Annual Town Meeting Warrant*, but Holden did not, indicating that the warrant was already closed. Princeton citizens did not file petitions, as the wording of the articles on the *Annual Town Meeting Warrant* may be amended to

remove the contingency of a Proposition 2 ½ override ballot. Chair Leith commented that it was important that the citizens at Town Meetings should have options. Chair Leith expressed appreciation to citizens who worked on the petition drive.

Chair Leith reported that the District had received good news from the State legislators; the District would be receiving additional funds from Circuit Breaker and Regional Transportation but that contingencies were added to the extra funding. Out-of-district tuition rates are expected to rise again, which impacts directly the actual funding available. Also, attached to the increased regional transportation reimbursement, Districts would be required to transport students to other schools. Chair Leith reported that the Superintendent immediately notified Chair Leith and recommended that the incremental extra funds be used to reduce the Member Towns' assessments, once determination was made as to the impacts of the contingencies.

Chair Leith reported to the public that the use of *Excess & Deficiency* funds will not be likely this year, as the fund was nearly depleted to reduce Member Town assessments for FY04.

Chair Leith recognized and thanked Members David Dickman, Julie Scott, and Tammy Tod for their service to the Wachusett District in their roles as School Committee Members.

#### I. Public Hearing

Kelly Maxwell, Holden, read a prepared statement commending Member Tammy Tod from Rutland for her service to children.

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

Donna Dominguez, Sterling, thanked the Committee for their work for the children of the District and encouraged the Committee to continue to be the spokespeople for education in the District. She expressed concern that the reductions made in FY04 were not equitable; that the high school and elementary schools took the major hits. She expressed concern regarding the possible reduction of athletics and extra-curricular activities, noting that this would cause a considerable burden on students applying to colleges and universities. She reported that athletics and extra-curricular activities are critical to identifying a school and serve as a source of pride to the students and the community. She noted that the school is always busy, both after school and in the evening. She expressed concern as to where the students would go, if not to activities at the high school.

## II. Secretary's Report

### A. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 29, 2004

Chair Duncan Leith reported that copies of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 29, 2004 had been distributed to School Committee Members at the last meeting.

Motion: To approve the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 29, 2004, not to be released to the public until the matter is completed

(N. Mello)  
(C. Capparelli)

Motion: To table the motion, pending review in executive session

(M. Sherman)  
(N. Mello)

#### Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

- B. Approval of 1075<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on April 12, 2004 – approved by consensus with Member Julie Scott abstaining.

### 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 increase expense in *Benefits and Insurance*, the Superintendent informed the Committee, as previously reported, the health insurance premium was negotiated favorably but more staff are participating in the health insurance and unemployment payments were increased due to layoffs.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained that the data from the Department of Education for operating costs does not include debt service. The information included in Comptroller Brennan's report was merely reporting information now available on the Department of Education's website.

Following comment on the need to invest the District's money in other banks, the Superintendent reported that the Treasurer regularly looks at various banks and moves money when appropriate. Fleet Bank is only used as a convenience for payroll.

### IV. Committee Reports

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

No members of the Student Advisory Committee were 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 April 15, 2004 and April 26, 2004 in executive session.

Motion: To enter executive session at the end of the meeting, not to return to public session, for the purposes of reviewing the executive session minutes of March 29, 2004 and for discussing contract negotiations with non-union personnel

(N. Mello)

(J. Scott)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

1. Superintendent's Evaluation

Motion: To table the Superintendent's Evaluation

(P. Gates)

(J. Scott)

Following concern that the sitting Committee should evaluate the Superintendent, Chair Duncan Leith reported that it is his intention to call a Special meeting to conduct the evaluation.

Motion: To move the question

(N. Mello)

(C. Capparelli)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
John Kane  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod

Opposed:

Margaret Watson  
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 14-2)

Vote on the Motion to table:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
John Kane  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod

Opposed:

Margaret Watson

Patricia Young

(Motion passed 14-2)

Member Norman Plourde left the meeting at 8:00 PM.

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

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

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

(J. Scott)

(C. Capparelli)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Education Subcommittee Chair Julie Scott thanked Committee Members who served with her on the Education Subcommittee during her term on the School Committee.

- 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 has not met since the last report.

The Superintendent distributed copies of correspondence from Holden Selectboard Chair Michael Wronski and Holden Finance Committee Chair Joseph Giotta regarding the warrants for the School Committee budget and a request to meet with the Business/Finance Subcommittee (attachment 3).

The Superintendent asked Committee Members to defer questions on the FY05 budget until the discussion of his report later in the agenda. However, following inquiry, the Superintendent expressed concern regarding the increase in Circuit Breaker and regional transportation as there are stipulations to the increases. Of particular concern is the addition of providing transportation for students attending other schools, private and parochial.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that Member Towns can pass a budget in excess of available funds in anticipation of receipt of additional revenue.

Several Members expressed concern about the purpose of having another meeting with representatives from the Member Towns. Discussion continued on whether or not such a meeting should take place.

Motion: Since the Wachusett District does not have firm information concerning additional State subsidies to the District, a meeting at this time would not serve the purpose suggested in the correspondence dated April 23, 2004 from Holden Selectboard Chair Michael Wronski and Holden Finance Committee Chair Joseph Giotta. Therefore, the Committee respectfully declines to meet at this time.

(M. Watson)

(J. Kane)

Discussion continued. The Superintendent advised the Committee to hold up on action on this motion until after his



recommendation regarding the additional funding from the State. He advised that the Committee should take the opportunity to listen and take the opportunity to work out a solution at the table.

Motion: To postpone action on the motion until Item V on the Agenda

(M. Sherman)  
(N. Mello)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

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 plans are continuing for the April 29<sup>th</sup> informational meeting at the high school regarding the FY05 budget. The meeting starts at 7:00 PM at the auditorium. It will be moderated and presentations will be made by four principals. Questions are being collected in advance at [impacts@wrsd.net](mailto:impacts@wrsd.net). Cards will be available for members

of the audience. Following the event, interested parents will receive information to share with neighbors. Any questions will be posted on the District's website, as quickly as possible after the April 29<sup>th</sup> meeting. The meeting will be televised live in Holden and will be made available to the other towns following the meeting. Holden Community Cable informed Chair Sherman that the tape will be re-aired frequently. Babysitting services will be available.

The Superintendent reported that notification was made to the Town Halls and Town libraries and that Chair Sherman has notified the senior centers. Any Committee Members interested in answering policy-related questions should indicate their interest to Chair Duncan Leith.

Due to the possible meeting of a quorum of the Committee, Chair Duncan Leith scheduled a Special Meeting for Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, at the high school auditorium at 7:00 PM. Chair Leith reported that no business would be conducted at the meeting.

Ad-hoc Subcommittee Chair Sherman reported that no more meetings are scheduled at this time. After Member Town elections and town meetings, more meetings will be scheduled.

F. Building Committees

1. High School

Chair Duncan Leith reported that there was information contained in the Superintendent's Report. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 28, 2004, at 6:00 PM in the Media Center at the high school. The groundbreaking will be scheduled and the Committee and public informed of the time and place. Parking has changed at the high school, due to construction fencing; additional parking lots should be available for the start of school in September.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree  
No report.

3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

Member John Nunnari reported that next meeting for the Rutland Building Committee is scheduled for April 29, 2004.

4. Sterling

No 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).

Member Margaret Watson reported that the Mayo School Council scheduled a meeting for April 14, 2004 but due to illness, a quorum was not present. A working discussion ensued and members of the council were encouraged to attend the informational meeting on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

Member Alice Livdahl reported that Paxton Center School Council met recently and reviewed the report on the impacts of the FY04 reductions on instruction and discussed the importance of attending the meeting on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Pursuant to a request by Member Patricia Gates, the Superintendent distributed a copy of the proposed amendments to the Regional Agreement (attachment 4). Other information regarding the amendments to the Regional Agreement were included as attachments 28 and 30 in the Superintendent's Report.

Pursuant to a request, the Superintendent will request simple explanations for each amendment to help during Town Meeting discussions on the Regional Agreements.

B. Disposition of Special Education Van

The Superintendent distributed copies of the motion to dispose of the special education van (attachment 5).

Motion: That the Wachusett Regional School District is authorized to dispose of surplus tangible personal property, consisting of a 1992 Dodge Ram Van B350 special education van, with a wheelchair lift, at a fair market resale value. The sale and disposition may be made to another governmental unit within the provisions of General Laws Chapter 30B, Section 1(b)9 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 van.

(J. Scott)

(N. Mello)

Following School Committee action, the Superintendent reported that he would notify all senior centers and all superintendents of the availability of the van.

The Superintendent reported that the 1992 van has a wheelchair lift but that it could not be changed to the new van. The Superintendent reported that a new wheelchair lift would be put in the new van. It was suggested that Ford Motor Company may provide funding for such an installation. The Superintendent will explore that possibility.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
John Kane  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman

Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson  
Patricia Young

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

C. Reconsideration of 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.

Motion: To reconsider the 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)  
(M. Sherman)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion to Amend: To change “General Laws Chapter 30B,  
Section 1(b)7” to “General Laws Chapter 30B, Section 1(b)9”  
(D. Dickman)  
(J. Scott)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The Superintendent recommended that the Committee, in light of the recent information from the Legislature on agreed-to funding for education, the additional funds for Circuit Breaker, Regional Transportation and Chapter 70 Aid above any incremental impacts for which these funds are contingent upon be used to reduce the assessments for the Member Towns.

Motion: That the Committee, in light of the recent information from the Legislature on agreed-to funding for education, that the additional funds for Circuit Breaker, Regional Transportation and Chapter 70 Aid above any incremental impacts for which these funds are contingent upon be used to reduce the assessments for the Member Towns.

(N. Mello)  
(J. Scott)

A friendly Amendment was offered and accepted to replace “any incremental impacts for which these funds are contingent upon” with “additional costs imposed by the budget legislation”

Roll call vote on motion, which reads: That the Committee, in light of the recent information from the Legislature on agreed-to funding for education, that the additional funds for Circuit Breaker, Regional Transportation and Chapter 70 Aid above additional costs imposed by the budget legislation be used to reduce the assessments for the Member Towns.

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
John Kane  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott

Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson  
Patricia Young

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Following inquiry regarding the sale of the modulars, the Superintendent advised the Committee that the funds would probably be used to reduce the assessments for the high school project but that he advised the Committee that any action should be delayed until the project is completed, to assure that no unforeseen costs had arisen.

Following inquiry regarding information on page 10, second paragraph of the Superintendent's Report, the Superintendent reported that the numbers were reversed and that a correction would be included in the next Superintendent's Report.

Following inquiry regarding information contained in Director of Operations Paul Soojian's report to the Superintendent, the Superintendent reported that discussion has taken place regarding the possibility of changing the timing of the MAT-8 testing to the fall but that no final determination has been made at this time.

The Superintendent reported, following inquiry from a member, that maintenance checks are performed at all schools and as the schools are inspected, the School Committee is informed. Re-inspection of all schools is now underway.

Members Tammy Tod, David Dickman, and Julie Scott were thanked by the Superintendent for their service.

The Chair placed the motion deferred previously before the Committee:

Motion: Since the Wachusett District does not have firm information concerning additional State subsidies to the District, a meeting at this time would not serve the purpose suggested in the correspondence dated April 23, 2004 from Holden Selectboard Chair Michael Wronski and Holden Finance Committee Chair Joseph Giotta. Therefore, the Committee respectfully declines to meet at this time.



Members Margaret Watson and John Kane withdrew the motion.

The Superintendent advised the Committee that Chair Leith should notify each Member Town of the Committee's action and its willingness to utilize additional funds to reduce Member Town assessments, if the Towns would drop the Proposition 2 ½ override contingency.

Motion: That the Committee direct Chair Duncan Leith to notify each Town individually of the School Committee's action and offer the Business/Finance Subcommittee meet with each Town individually and that the Committee is committed to the appropriation adopted but is willing to share the additional revenues, if the towns are willing to take the override contingency off the table.

(N. Mello)  
(P. Young)

Motion to Amend: To delete "if the towns are willing to take the override contingency off the table".

(P. Gates)  
(D. Benson)

The amendment was accepted as a friendly amendment by Member Natalie Mello but not by Member Patricia Young.

Motion: To move the question

(J. Scott)  
(M. Sherman)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
John Kane  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson

Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Roll call vote on motion to amend:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
John Kane  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod

Opposed:

Mark James  
Margaret Watson  
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 12-3)

Motion to Amend: To add at the end of the motion, “subject to Member  
Town approval of the School Committee Appropriation”.

(D. Benson)

(J. Scott)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
John Kane

Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson  
Patricia Young

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Roll call vote on main motion, as amended, which reads: That the Committee direct Chair Duncan Leith to notify each town individually of the School Committee's action and offer the Business/Finance Subcommittee meet with each town individually and that the Committee is committed to the appropriation adopted but is willing to share the additional revenues, subject to Member Town approval of the School Committee Appropriation.

In favor:  
Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
John Kane  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson  
Patricia Young

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

VI. Public Hearing

No member of the public wished to speak.

VII. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. New Business

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that establishment of a Wachusett Trust may be brought before the new Committee following Member Town elections.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the current Business/Finance Subcommittee continues until the reorganization of the Committee in May and then remains in place until the new Business/Finance Subcommittee is appointed. This provides the District the ability to gain approval for payroll and accounts payable in the interim period until such time as the newly elected Chair appoints subcommittees. A motion will be requested at the May 26, 2004 School Committee meeting to continue the Business/Finance Subcommittee.

IX. Adjournment

The Committee entered executive session at 9:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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