

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1059, Thursday, May 29, 2003
7:00 PM

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	Alice Livdahl
Donald Benson	John Nunnari
Elizabeth Brennan	René Rodriguez
Charles Capparelli	John Rokicki
Clifford Connell	Julie Scott
Carol Esperti	Michael Sherman
Patricia Gates	Margaret Watson
Mark James	Patricia Young

Committee Members Absent:

Natalie Mello	Tammy Tod
Peter MacDonald	Norman Plourde

Administration Present:

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

Others present, who desired to be recorded as present (see attached Attendance Sheet – attachment 1)

Chairman Duncan Leith called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM.

The Superintendent distributed a packet of information mailed to parents regarding transportation fees (attachment 2).

I. Public Hearing (Speaker List – attachment 3)

A. Public Hearing – School Choice

Chairman Duncan Leith asked the Superintendent to explain the process of School Choice. The Superintendent advised the Committee that there will not be a recommendation that the Committee vote to **NOT** become a school choice district, as the additional revenue from being a School Choice District could help the District during the difficult budget times. The Superintendent explained that choice would begin at the elementary level. Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained that the District would cap the number of students at forty to sixty and that a lottery would be established to choose the students. Parents would request admission to the District for a particular grade, but not to a particular school. First selected students will get first preference to a school.

The Superintendent reported that the sending school district would pay the incremental costs for special education service costs.

Chairman Duncan Leith asked if any member of the public wished to speak on School Choice. No one from the general public wished to speak. Chairman Leith closed the public hearing.

Motion: That the Wachusett Regional School District become a School Choice District for FY04 for grades 1-5 only.

(C. Esperti)

(C. Connell)

A friendly amendment was offered by Member Donald Benson that the Wachusett Regional School District become a School Choice District for FY04 for grades K-5, which was accepted by Members Carol Esperti and Clifford Connell.

Vote:

In Favor:

Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
Patricia Gates

Mark James
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion was passed unanimously)

B. General Public Session

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

Eileen Robinson, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 5).

David Gibbs, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 6).

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 7).

II. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of 1058th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD
Committee held on April 28, 2003 -- enclosed

Motion: To accept the minutes, adding on page 7, second paragraph, after the words "Following inquiry", the words "by Member Carol Esperti"

(J. Rokicki)

(J. Scott)

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that if any member desires to have their stated position as part of the minutes, then the member should so state.

Vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Carol Esperti
Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Elizabeth Brennan
Mark James
René Rodriguez
Michael Sherman

(Motion passed 12-0-4)

III. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

Chairman Duncan Leith explained the procedure for questions regarding financial information. Any questions should be directed to the Superintendent. The Superintendent reminded the Committee that the Treasurer is an annual appointment, made by the School Committee.

Following inquiry regarding the professional development spending report contained in Comptroller Brennan's report, the Superintendent explained that a minimum spending requirement is not known yet for FY04. The Governor eliminated the requirement but the House and Senate have included it.

Member Carol Esperti left the meeting at 8:02 PM.

The Superintendent explained the two charts contained in Comptroller Brennan's report, regarding Charter and Choice.

IV. Committee Reports

Chairman Duncan Leith informed the Committee that he would be soliciting requests from members for appointment to subcommittees. He explained briefly the responsibilities of the three subcommittees.

A. Student Advisory Committee

No members of the Student Advisory Committee were present.

B. Management Subcommittee

Chairman Leith reported that the Management Subcommittee had not met since the last meeting.

C. Education Subcommittee

Education Subcommittee Chair Julie Scott reported that the Subcommittee had scheduled a meeting for May 28, 2003 but a quorum was not present. On the agenda was review of the History and Social Science Curriculum and a request made at a previous meeting to discuss policy direction regarding budget reductions.

The Superintendent advised the Committee that Senator Harriette Chandler's office had contacted him and reported that the Senator intended to make a motion on the Senate floor to reinstate regional transportation. The Superintendent would keep the Committee informed.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent restated to the Committee that his original recommendation still stands regarding transportation. He had recommended that the Committee adopt a separate line item for transportation and request that the towns vote on the issue, as a debt exclusion.

The Superintendent restated the budget timeline: the Senate's budget is to be released shortly. The House and Senate budgets would be reviewed by a conference Committee, presented to the two bodies and then submitted to the Governor. The Governor would have line-item veto power. The House and Senate would remain in session to over-ride the Governor's vetoes, if necessary. The Superintendent expected that the District would have a better sense of a budget by the third or fourth week in June.

The Superintendent reported that the Early Retirement Incentive is supposed to be considered for inclusion in a Local Supplemental Relief Bill, scheduled for debate next week.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that non-renewal notices would be sent to employees by June 15, 2003 and that layoffs would not happen until August, and then only if necessary. The Superintendent is not recommending reducing the FY04 budget and if no action is taken by the School Committee to the contrary, there would be not reduction in program, however, there would be reduction maintained by the unbudgeted FY04 projected increases in tuition and transportation.

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

(J. Scott)
(J. Nunnari)

Motion to Amend: To add on page one, paragraph two, the sentence "All students must comply with the Massachusetts Department of Education Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) regulations prior to receiving a diploma."

(J. Rokicki)
(J. Scott)

Vote on Motion to Amend:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman

Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The Superintendent advised the Committee that if they desired students who did not pass the MCAS test to receive a "Certificate of Attainment", then the Committee should amend the policy accordingly.

Vote on the Main Motion, as amended:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

2. Motion: To adopt AP3311.31 **Policy Relating to Education Online Education Policy** for the first reading, waiving the reading

(J. Scott)
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

3. Motion: To adopt AP3350 **Policy Relating to Education**
Experimental and Innovative Programs for the first reading,
waiving the reading

(J. Scott)

(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott

Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

4. Motion: To adopt AP6650 **Policy Relating to Pupil Services Confidentiality** for the first reading, waiving the reading, adding “and among” following the word “between” in the first line

(J. Scott)

(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

- D. Business/Finance Subcommittee

No report.

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that there are no current ad-hoc subcommittees.

F. Building Committees

1. High School – John Rokicki

High School Building Committee Chair John Rokicki reported that the Committee continues to meet. The committee is working with the architect to finalize the design. The Superintendent suggested that the phasing plan should be brought to the Committee.

The Superintendent reported that the District's financial advisor has developed several scenarios regarding the borrowing for the high school project. More scenarios have been requested, particularly declining debt rather than level debt.

The Superintendent reported that a meeting is scheduled with District Counsel Leo McCabe and Princeton Town Counsel Gary Brackett regarding the potential suit by the Town of Princeton. District staff reviewed the tape of the Town of Princeton Special Town Meeting and there was no mention of short-term borrowing. The Superintendent will attempt to inform Princeton Town Counsel of the issues.

A request was made for Bond Counsel Jay Gonzalez to review the actual motion on the Princeton Warrant and issue an opinion. The Superintendent indicated that he would request an opinion from Bond Counsel before Princeton's Special Town Meeting on June 17, 2003.

Member Clifford Connell reported that an Informational Committee was formed in Princeton to provide information only to the taxpayers and he was serving on the Committee. Member Patricia Gates chose not to participate due to a potential conflict of interest. Member Connell was asked to present concerns of the School Committee. ~~Member Connell reported that the Committee was not going to consider any of~~

~~the scenarios developed recently but instead is using the information provided by the architect.~~

The Superintendent advised the Committee that the same proponents of rescinding the project have already cost the taxpayers millions of dollars due to multiple delays.

Chairman Duncan Leith informed the Committee that since 1948, School Building Assistance has always funded projects, not always at the estimated number of years.

2. Holden – Julie Scott

Member Julie Scott reported that the vote of the Holden Building Committee was for \$150,000 instead of the \$125,000 that had been previously requested and approved by the School Committee.

Motion: To reconsider and amend the following motion, adopted at the April 14, 2003 School Committee Meeting: *To approve an increase of \$25,000 to the Holden Elementary School Project, contingent upon a positive vote of the WRSD Holden Building Committee by substituting \$150,000 for \$125,000*

(J. Scott)
(D. Benson)

Roll call vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson

Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The Superintendent asked Member Julie Scott to bring to the Building Committee the concern of the District regarding the shrinking of the Davis Hill gymnasium floor slats.

3. Rutland – John Rokicki

No report.

Rutland Elementary School Project – John Nunnari

4. Sterling

No date has been given the District for the additional paving of the parking lot.

G. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School, Chocksett, Davis Hill, Dawson, Houghton, Mayo, Mountview, Naquag, Paxton, Thomas Prince, and Wachusett Regional High School.

The Superintendent distributed copies of the School Improvement Plans (attachment 8). The Superintendent asked for volunteers to attend the annual review of the School Improvement Plans on Tuesday, June 10, 2003 (attachment 9).

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

For the public record, Member Patricia Gates stated, "As a School Committee Member from the Town of Princeton, I am appalled that the Selectboard from the Town of Princeton has decided to sue this Committee. It boggles my mind that one duly elected body with jurisdiction over town affairs would see fit to enjoin another duly elected body in an area over which it has no jurisdiction and I think that the residents of the Town of

Princeton should make their opinions on the lawsuit obvious to the Selectboard.”

The Superintendent distributed Attachment 40 of the Superintendent’s Report as it had been miscopied (attachment 10).

For the public record, Member Donald Benson requested that Member Clifford Connell confirm that he will indeed present School Committee’s concerns to the Information Committee in Princeton. Member Connell agreed.

Recognition of staff included in the Superintendent’s report was noted.

The Superintendent announced that he had just been notified that Dawson Elementary School’s PTA is only the second PTA in the State to receive an award. Further information will be forthcoming.

The Superintendent reported that the transportation provider has agreed to provide late bus for a fee.

The Superintendent restated to the Committee how the transportation fee was calculated, that the incremental cost was calculated and determined to be \$260 per rider.

Following inquiry regarding the discrepancy in enrollment between the Department of Education’s enrollment and the District projected enrollment, the Superintendent explained that the DOE enrollment is based on last year’s October 1 report and the District’s budgetary enrollment are projections based upon NESDEC’s annual projections for September 2004.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. Motion: To approve the Amended School Calendar (attachment 11)

(J. Scott)
(C. Capparelli)

Motion: To extend the meeting for thirty minutes
(J. Scott)
(M. Watson)

Vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Roll call vote on motion, which reads, “To approve the Amended School Calendar”

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Mark James
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman

Opposed:

Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl

John Nunnari
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Abstained:
Clifford Connell

(Motion passed 9-5-1)

2. Motion: To recommend appropriation of FY03 District Funds as contained in the Superintendent's Report to include the transfer of the following from *Excess & Deficiency*:

- \$210,000 to *Regular Education – Other Schools*
 - \$320,000 to *Special Education Tuitions – Other Schools*
 - \$40,000 to *Transportation*
- and including transferring all remaining funds to *Instructional Support*

(J. Nunnari)

(J. Rokicki)

Members Patricia Gates and René Rodriguez left the meeting at 10:09 PM.

Roll call vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

3. Motion: To appropriate SBAB funds in the amount of \$1,077,495 to the Town of Sterling for reimbursement for the renovation at Houghton/Chocksett Schools

(J. Scott)
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Members Patricia Gates and René Rodriguez returned to the meeting at 10:13 PM.

- C. Schedule for School Improvement Plan Review

See above.

- D. History and Social Science Curriculum

Motion: To adopt the History and Social Science Curriculum, as presented by the Superintendent

(J. Rokicki)
(M. James)

Vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Margaret Watson

(Motion passed unanimously)

Chairman Duncan Leith thanked Member John Rokicki for his service for the past two years as Chair. The Committee joined in the recognition.

VI. Public Hearing

No one wished to speak.

VII. Unfinished Business

VIII. New Business

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(J. Scott)
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In Favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson

Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

The meeting was adjourned at 10:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes