

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1061, Monday, July 14, 2003
7:00 PM

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	Norman Plourde
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	John Rokicki
Elizabeth Brennan	Julie Scott
Charles Capparelli	Michael Sherman
Patricia Gates (7:43 PM)	Tammy Tod
Mark James	Margaret Watson
Alice Livdahl	Patricia Young (7:05 PM)

Committee Members Absent:

Donald Benson	John Nunnari
Clifford Connell	René Rodriguez
Peter MacDonald	

Administration Present:

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)

Chairman Duncan Leith called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Chairman Duncan Leith addressed Item V, C Presentation of MAT-8 Results. Director of Operations Paul Soojian introduced School Psychologist Liaison Jason Newton who reviewed the preliminary MAT-8 test results through a PowerPoint presentation (attachment 2).

Following the presentation, Director of Operations Paul Soojian answered questions from members. In response to a concern expressed regarding the decline in scores in Rutland, Director Soojian informed the Committee that Central Tree Middle School has developed a plan to improve scores. The District has concern due to the more than one-year decline in the scores.

School Psychologist Liaison Jason Newton explained that the MAT-8 tests are a national tests and MCAS is a state-developed test. Director Soojian explained that the increase in test scores over time is a direct result of the District's focus on student achievement from the Superintendent and executive staff to the principals and on to the teaching staff. Detailed analysis has been invaluable to the principals in developing a program to address student needs and to increase student achievement. Professional development in the District has focused on student achievement and new methods to increase that achievement.

Following an inquiry School Psychologist Liaison Jason Newton explained that parents should work directly with the classroom teachers to ascertain how individual students are performing on assessment vehicles such as MAT-8 tests.

Director Soojian explained that School Improvement Plans address student achievement but would not itemize the exact plan to improve schools. General overview would be included but not the detail.

Following discussion, it was noted that the scores in the District are increasing overall and yet the District spends considerably less than the State average per pupil.

Chairman Duncan Leith announced that the budget was approved in all five towns but that overrides have been scheduled in Holden on August 4th, Princeton on August 5th, and Paxton on August 11th. Chairman Leith urged all members to work towards a successful conclusion.

I. Public Hearing

A. Public Hearing

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 3).

David Gibbs, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 4).

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1060th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on June 9, 2003 – approved by consensus
- B. Approval of the 249th Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on June 26, 2003 -- approved by consensus with Member Patricia Young abstaining.
- C. Approval of the Executive Session Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on June 26, 2003 -- approved by consensus and released

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 Vice Chair Natalie Mello.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Student Advisory Committee

Chairman Leith reported that he was finalizing the Subcommittee assignments and would be reporting to the Committee by the end of the week.

B. Management Subcommittee

C. Education Subcommittee

D. Business/Finance Subcommittee

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

F. Building Committees

1. High School – John Rokicki

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the High School Building Committee will be meeting Tuesday, July 15,

2003 at 6:00 PM and will begin with a tour for some of the members. Principal Thomas Pandiscio and the architect will be in attendance. School Committee members were invited to attend.

2. Holden – Julie Scott

Holden Building Committee Chair David White has reported to the District that contractors have been contacted to address the outstanding issues.

Member Julie Scott reported that the Holden Building Committee is scheduled to meet Tuesday, July 15, 2003, to review the agreement made with the contractors to complete outstanding issues.

3. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree – John Rokicki

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the purchase of the additional parcel of land was approved overwhelmingly at Rutland's town meeting on June 30, 2003.

4. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

In Member John Nunnari's absence Member John Rokicki reported that he hoped that a meeting of the Rutland Building Committee would be scheduled soon.

5. Sterling

There is still no indication that the parking lot will be completed any time soon.

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

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Director Paul Soojian reminded Committee members that the August meeting has been changed to Tuesday, August 12, 2003, because of the Proposition 2 ½ override ballot in Paxton.

Chairman Duncan Leith thanked members who spoke at town meetings on June 30, 2003 and, in some cases, overcame efforts of Finance Committee members to reduce the School Committee budget.

Chairman Duncan Leith urged members to aggressively work towards a successful override. Friends and neighbors need to be contacted to vote, either in person or by absentee ballot.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. Motion: To approve the sale of a \$7,000,000 1.50% Revenue Anticipation Note of the District dated July 18, 2003 and payable June 30, 2004, to Eastern Bank at par and accrued interest plus a premium of \$28,831.56.

(J. Rokicki)

(N. Mello)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
Norman Plourde
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

C. Presentation of MAT-8 Results

VI. Public Hearing

No one from the general public wished to speak.

VII. Unfinished Business

VIII. New Business

Inquiry was made regarding the timeline for an appeal on the inequity issue. Director Paul Soojian reported that included in the June 27, 2003 Superintendent's report was a copy of the Town of Rutland's Motion for Final Judgment. The timeline for appeal has begun.

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the Holden Selectboard voted twice to unanimously support the override and to not discuss the inequity until after that vote.

Motion: To direct the Chair to contact the Holden Selectboard to request the appointment of a new member to the Wachusett Regional School District Committee as judiciously and expeditiously as possible, per the Regional Agreement.

(J. Rokicki)
(N. Mello)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
Norman Plourde
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman

Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 13-1)

Motion: To request that the Superintendent ascertain, on behalf of the Committee, the necessity to obtain Special Municipal Employee status for Member Peter MacDonald

(J. Rokicki)
(J. Scott)

Vote:
In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
Norman Plourde
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
Tammy Tod

(Motion passed 13-1)

Following an inquiry, Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the Superintendent distributed many borrowing scenarios to the Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Board to seek consensus. If consensus is not obtained, the Superintendent will make a recommendation to the Committee for action. The Superintendent has scheduled an administrative meeting with the town leadership on August 19, 2003.

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the District is doing a mailing which will include applications for absentee ballots and urged members to write letters to the editor regarding the upcoming ballot votes.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(J. Scott)
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
Norman Plourde
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss
School Committee/Minutes