

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1079, Monday August 9, 2004
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	Alice Livdahl
Donald Benson, Vice-chair	Natalie Mello
Cynthia Bazinet	John Nunnari
Patricia Gates	Norman Plourde
David Gibbs	Cheryl Rauh
Mark James	Michael Sherman
John Kane	Margaret Watson

Committee Members Absent:

Elizabeth Brennan	Kelly Maxwell
Charles Capparelli	René Rodriguez
Clifford Connell	

Administration Present:

Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
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 7:07 PM.

I. Public Hearing

No one wished to address the Committee.

II. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of 1078th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on July 19, 2004 – approved by consensus, with

Members Donald Benson, Alice Livdahl, and Natalie Mello 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.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Student Advisory Committee

No report.

B. Management Subcommittee (D. Leith, Chair, D. Benson, C. Capparelli, P. Gates, D. Gibbs, M. James, N. Mello, J. Nunnari, M. Watson)

The Management Subcommittee has not met. Chair Duncan Leith reported that he will contact the Members of the Management Subcommittee to schedule a future meeting.

C. Education Subcommittee (M. Watson, Chair, C. Bazinet, E. Brennan, A. Livdahl, J. Nunnari, N. Plourde, R. Rodriguez, M. Sherman)

Education Subcommittee Chair Margaret Watson reported that no meeting has yet been scheduled.

D. Business/Finance Subcommittee (N. Mello, Chair, C. Connell, D. Gibbs, M. James, J. Kane, D. Leith, K. Maxwell, C. Rauh)

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello reported that two applications have been received for the Treasurer's position. She has scheduled a Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting for August 18, 2004 at 6:00 PM in the Curriculum Center to review the resumes and determine the process for selecting a treasurer.

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

1. Review the Process for Selection of a Superintendent (N. Plourde, Chair, C. Connell, M. James, A. Livdahl, J. Nunnari)

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Norman Plourde reported that he has scheduled a meeting for August 16, 2004 at 6:30 PM at Paxton Center School. He has prepared an agenda, which will be shared with the School Committee.

F. Building Committees

1. High School

Chair Duncan Leith reported that during a recent storm three to four inches of rain fell on the building site, causing major silt problems around the pond. The contractor is required to prepare the site for normal storms. This recent storm was considered a “fifty year storm,” one that is not likely to happen but every fifty years. Chair Leith reported that the Department of Environmental Protection will be coming out to the site to review it. Parts of the site have already been redone to protect the pond in the future.

Chair Leith reported that he brought up the idea of offering tours to the School Committee members to view the progress of the project. Both the contractor and architect felt that it was not a good idea at this point.

Chair Leith reported that the footings have been started and that the steel will be delivered shortly. The paving of the parking lot, in anticipation of the start of school, is scheduled for August 23, 2004. Chair Leith reported that it will be a long walk from some areas of the parking lot to the school. When asked about the possibility of using a shuttle van in the parking lot, Chair Leith reported that the Building Committee is not interested in spending project money on unnecessary items and that this is considered unnecessary by the Building Committee. When asked about the outside lighting, Chair Leith reported that the Committee has been discussing the outdoor lighting but

will bring the School Committee's concern to the next meeting.

Chair Leith reported that it was not necessary to put in a handicapped ramp to link all levels, as there is sufficient handicapped access. When the parking lot and field were constructed the fill that was used had not been compacted sufficiently enough to support a building. The fill had to be removed and re-compacted.

Chair Leith also reported that there is a good check and balance system with URS as the project management firm. If Committee members have any questions or concerns they should be addressed to Chair Leith who will bring them forward to the Building Committee.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree
3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

Member John Nunnari reported that the situation has not changed since the last meeting. A meeting is scheduled for August 12, 2004 with the Rutland Finance Committee and Selectboard. The architect will give monetary amounts for possible reductions to the project. The Building Committee is seeking a recommendation from the Rutland Finance Committee. Senator Brewer has corresponded with the Town to indicate that he is trying to contact agencies regarding a land exchange; the Town is awaiting a response from the proper agencies to determine if a land exchange will be possible.

4. Sterling

Member Norman Plourde reported that the area was surveyed. No trees will be cut – scenic road.

- G. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School (C. Rauh), Chocksett Middle School (D. Gibbs), Davis Hill Elementary School (C. Bazinet), Dawson Elementary School (M. James), Houghton Elementary School (N. Plourde), Mayo Elementary School (M. Watson), Mountview Middle School (M. Sherman), Naquag Elementary School (E. Brennan), Paxton Center School

(A. Livdahl), Thomas Prince School (C. Connell), and Wachusett Regional High School (K. Maxwell).

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

A concern was raised regarding the clearing of trees on an abutter's property during the expansion of the fields at the high school. Chair Leith reported that the contractor and architect are working on this, although it is a District problem.

When asked about the Department of Education (DOE) Mid-Cycle Review of Special Education, Director of Operations Paul Soojian reported that District staff is reviewing the report and that overall it was not a bad review. Most items noted were partial implementation. Director Soojian also reported that there could possibly be serious considerations with some of the items that the DOE would like implemented, which could impact budget. There are some training issues, which are already being addressed. The District will seek further clarification from the DOE as to whether what is expected in some areas of the report is within the law. When asked about limited vocational offerings in the District, Director Soojian reported that there is no statute, which states the number of offerings a District must make available. Further clarification from the DOE will be sought before developing a plan of implementation.

Concern was expressed regarding the increasing legal costs for defending the Meyer lawsuit. The last time the Committee was updated as to the cost for defending the suit, it was approximately \$5,000. It was requested of the Superintendent, in a future report, to update the Committee as to the cost to date. When asked if the District could recover its legal fees, since the Committee felt that it was a frivolous lawsuit, Chair Leith reported that since the funds are coming directly out of the building project, he will bring up the issue of recovery of legal costs with the Building Committee and the Superintendent. Chair Leith reminded the Committee that the issue was not resolved in court initially; that only the denial of an immediate injunction to stop the process was decided in Court. The lawsuit continues.

It was noted by a member that the lawsuit was based on misinformation that the reimbursement from the State would not begin for a considerable length of time. The Committee moved ahead a year and a half ago with the project, in spite of a possible delay of up to seven years before reimbursement monies began to flow into the District and fortunately the project remained on the list, along with Rutland. Now that the legislature has enacted legislation to reform the School Building Assistance Program, reimbursement will come in total in three and a half years and will save the taxpayers considerable interest expense for the project.

When asked about the Superintendent's concern regarding the distribution of flyers in students backpack, Chair Leith referred the issue to Management Subcommittee for review.

The Committee briefly discussed the correspondence to and from Holden Selectboard Chair Kimberly Ferguson regarding State revenue receipts. When asked if the final numbers for State revenues were now available, Director Soojian reported that regional transportation is now known and is lower than what was estimated by the Superintendent, but that Circuit Breaker reimbursement will be an unknown until the money is in hand.

It was noted that as revenues are received from the State they are reported to the Committee. It was also noted that Chair Leith responded appropriately to Holden Selectboard Chair Kimberly Ferguson. Chair Leith reported that he will continue to remain non-committal in communications such as these, unless there is a vote of the Committee.

B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the Committee

There were no recommendations brought forth from the Superintendent.

VI. Public Hearing

No one wished to address the Committee.

VII. Unfinished Business

VIII. New Business

Following a brief discussion, the Committee decided, by consensus, to move future School Committee meetings to the Media Center. Since the September meeting is scheduled at Paxton Center School, following the Employee Recognition Dinner, meetings in the Media Center will begin in October. It was also suggested by the Committee that a speaker be used so that the public can hear the deliberations of the Committee.

A. Acceptance of 2005 School Improvement Plans

Chair Duncan Leith explained that the plans have already been officially accepted, as there was no action by the School Committee within thirty days of the presentation. Members expressed its support of the quality of the plans and wanted to publicly affirm its acceptance of the plans.

Motion: To accept the 2005 School Improvement Plans, as presented to the School Committee on June 11, 2004

(J. Nunnari)

(A. Livdahl)

Chair Leith reported that he would forward a letter of gratitude to the principals for the quality and friendly format of the School Improvement Plans.

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Cynthia Bazinet
Patricia Gates
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson

Opposed
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

When asked if the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach could become a permanent committee, Chair Leith reported that, pursuant to the School Committee By-Laws, a simple majority vote is needed to establish a standing or ad-hoc subcommittee.

Motion: To make Community Outreach a standing subcommittee
(D. Gibbs)
(J. Kane)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Cynthia Bazinet
Patricia Gates
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion: To enter executive session for the purpose of discussing strategies for negotiation with non-union personnel, at the end of the meeting, not to return to public session.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson

Cynthia Bazinet
Patricia Gates
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Following inquiry on the status of the parent request at the July 19, 2004 School Committee meeting for transportation for a student to a vocational high school outside the District, Member John Kane reported that the parents had approached the Town of Rutland and that the Town could not afford the cost. Member Kane reported that the father expressed understanding of the cost and the reasons for the Town to decide not to pay for the transportation.

During a brief discussion surrounding the disposal/sale of the modular cafeteria and classrooms, it was noted that the Rutland Selectboard has established a Feasibility Committee to review the needs of the Town for future school classrooms. It was suggested that Director Soojian forward to the Superintendent a suggestion to contact the original vendor to see if the vendor would serve as a broker to the sale, paying the vendor a commission. Director Soojian reported that he would follow-up with the Superintendent.

When asked whether the District would participate in discussions regarding the joint purchase of health insurance with Member Towns, Director Soojian reported that Director of Administrative Services Steven Penka attended the first meeting in Princeton and explained to the group that the District reviewed this possibility last year and that the cost to the District would be increased due to the inclusion of firemen and police officers. Director Soojian reported that he did not know if the District would attend further meetings and that he would follow-up with the Superintendent.

IX. Adjournment

The Committee entered executive session at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes