

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1062, Tuesday, August 12, 2003
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	John Nunnari
Donald Benson	Norman Plourde
Elizabeth Brennan	René Rodriguez
Charles Capparelli	John Rokicki
Clifford Connell	Julie Scott
David Dickman	Michael Sherman
Patricia Gates (7:08 PM)	Tammy Tod (8:35 PM)
Mark James	Margaret Watson
Alice Livdahl	Patricia Young

Committee Members Absent:

Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair

Administration Present:

Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative Services
Philip E. Campbell, Director of Student/Information Services
Peter Brennan, Comptroller
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 7:03 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Alan P. Moreau, Holden, expressed concern that the bussing number was increased from what was voted at Town Meeting. He also expressed concern regarding the amount of the override for the District.

Ed Meyer, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 2).

Michael Wronski, Chair, Holden Selectboard, read a letter to the School Committee from the Holden Selectboard. He also stated that the Holden Selectboard has scheduled a meeting for Wednesday morning at 7:30 AM to discuss the budget issue.

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that he would be having a meeting and would invite all five towns, even though Rutland and Sterling have already approved the School Committee budget.

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

Ed Benoit, Holden Finance Committee, urged the Committee not to make a decision tonight. He also asked that the process of deliberations be an open process.

Chairman Duncan Leith welcomed newly appointed Holden representative David Dickman to the Committee.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1061st Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on July 14, 2003 – approved by consensus

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

There are no student representatives in the summer.

- B. Management Subcommittee (D. Leith, Chair, N. Mello, D. Benson, C. Capparelli, P. Gates, A. Livdahl, J. Rokicki, J. Scott)

Management Subcommittee has not met.

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

Education Subcommittee has not met. Chair Julie Scott is requesting the third Monday of each month, except for the month of September for Education Subcommittee meetings

- D. Business/Finance Subcommittee (N. Mello, Chair, C. Connell, D. Leith, M. Sherman, T. Tod, P. Young)

No report.

- E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

- F. Building Committees

- 1. High School – John Rokicki

Information was distributed to the Committee in the Superintendent's report. The next meeting is August 26, 2003. Progress is continuing on meeting the August 29, 2003 deadline for final application to the Department of Education.

- 2. Holden – Julie Scott

No report.

- 3. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree – John Rokicki

No report.

- 4. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

The Rutland Building Committee has not met recently. Member John Nunnari reported that the Committee had requested an extension from the Department of Education for final application.

Chairman Duncan Leith addressed Item V, B, 2.

Adoption of the Glenwood Road site for the Rutland
Elementary School

Motion: To adopt the Glenwood Road site for the Rutland
Elementary School

(J. Nunnari)

(J. Rokicki)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Clifford Connell

(Motion passed 16-0-1)

5. Sterling

Member Norman Plourde reported that there is some
concern regarding the plans for the expanded parking.

The Superintendent reported that the plans are not completed.

- G. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School (J. Nunnari), Chocksett Middle School (C. Capparelli), Davis Hill Elementary School (R. Rodriguez), 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).

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

A question was raised regarding the process for amending the Regional Agreement. Chairman Leith responded that a simple majority is needed by the Committee to vote on recommendations to the Member Towns to amend the Regional Agreement and that four out of the five Member Towns need a majority vote.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that the meeting to discuss the borrowing options is open to the public since there will be recommendations to the Treasurer.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

- 1. Acceptance of the Donation of Equipment/Supplies from Intel Massachusetts, Inc. for the High School Project

The Superintendent reported that thanks to the efforts of Director of Administrative Services Steven Penka the District has been offered over \$500,000 worth of construction equipment for the high school project. The District is very grateful for the donation. The Superintendent reported that if donations are used in a project, there may be an increase in the reimbursement rate from the Department of Education.

Motion: To accept the donation of equipment/supplies from Intel Massachusetts, Inc. for the high school project

(J. Rokicki)
(J. Nunnari)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

3. Approval of FY04 Pre-Paid Vendor List

Motion: To approve the FY04 Pre-Paid Vendor List
(attachment 4)

(J. Rokicki)
(J. Nunnari)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman

Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

4. Approval of the Adoption of a Revolving Account for Technology

The Superintendent explained to the Committee that the District receives reimbursements for technology, which, if placed in a designated revolving account, could be used only for that purpose. He reminded the Committee that in times of budget issues technology maintenance must continue.

Motion: To approve the adoption of a revolving account for technology

(J. Nunnari)
(J. Rokicki)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari

Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
Patricia Gates

(Motion passed 16-1)

5. Transfer of \$7,050, the indirect cost value of state and federal grants, to professional development revolving account, as delineated in the Superintendent's Report.

Motion: To transfer \$7,050, the indirect cost value of state and federal grants, to professional development revolving account, as delineated in the Superintendent's Report.

(J. Rokicki)
(J. Nunnari)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

8. Approval of John Benoit as Interim Special Education Administrator

The Superintendent reported that this position would be effective August 30, 2003, following the resignation of Philip Campbell.

Motion: To approve the appointment of John Benoit as Interim Special Education Administrator

(J. Nunnari)

(J. Rokicki)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Following an inquiry as to why the District does not transport every student to school, the Superintendent explained that never in the history of the Wachusett Regional School District have all students been transported. A dialogue occurred during the budget process and the Committee decided to fund transportation only for those students who live one and one-half miles or further from their respective schools. The implication that all students should be transported is new and only has arisen because of the Committee vote to institute a fee for those students who wish to be transported who live less than one and one-half miles from their respective schools. It was suggested that this item could be reviewed when discussing amendments to the Regional Agreement and that is the Committee's prerogative. The Superintendent indicated that he could make no recommendation that would reduce Committee options.

The Superintendent distributed the proposed Amended FY04 Appropriation (attachment 5). The Superintendent read the report for the record and for the benefit of those in the audience. The Superintendent also distributed letters from the Princeton and Holden Selectboards regarding the budget process (attachments 6 and 7). The Superintendent described in detail the changes in the Amended FY04 Staffing Authorization and the proposed Amended FY04 Appropriation.

The Superintendent explained that he would not recommend the use of projected School Choice funding as it is so unsure due to enrollment fluctuations. His recommendation is to utilize the funds the next year. The Superintendent reviewed the history of administration over the years. Positions have been reduced in the Central Office.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained that this budget reflects the one-twelfth budget already approved by the Commissioner of Education, plus \$170,000 for high school renovation/addition.

The Superintendent explained that elimination of the foreign language program at the middle school would be in conflict with the School Committee curriculum and would water down the high school foreign language program and the value of high school foreign language preparedness.

Following an inquiry the Superintendent reported that if the budget was approved tonight, it would go to the towns for town meeting approval but could be lowered by the School Committee up to the town meetings..

The Superintendent distributed a memorandum from Comptroller Peter Brennan, entitled, Special Report – Specific Member Towns Overrides and RASA Assessments (attachment 8). At the request of the Superintendent, Comptroller Brennan reviewed the memorandum with the Committee.

Motion: That the Committee schedule a special meeting within the next week to allow town finance committees and selectboards to participate in the budget process
(C. Connell)
(M. Sherman)

The Superintendent urged the Committee to clarify what the Committee would expect from the Finance and Selectboards.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that school will be opening in three weeks and he needs to have a budget to work with and that staff who were to be let go needed to know. The longer reductions took to implement, the more that would have to be reduced.

Following a concern, Chairman Duncan Leith reminded the Committee that the responsibility of educating students is that of the Committee, not the Selectboards or Finance Committees.

Through consensus, the Committee agreed that the Member Towns should be requested to bring to the table what the towns could support – firm numbers.

Motion: To table the Motion
(R. Rodriguez)

The motion died due to a lack of a second.

A suggestion was made by the Superintendent to include a specific date, Monday, August 18, 2003, which was accepted by Members Clifford Connell and Michael Sherman.

A friendly amendment was offered by Member John Rokicki to include “and to include in the notification any actions taken by the Committee at tonight’s meeting”. This was accepted by Members Clifford Connell and Michael Sherman.

The Superintendent reported that the administrative staff would not be available on Monday, August 18, 2003, but would be available on Wednesday, August 20, 2003. This was accepted by Members Clifford Connell and Michael Sherman.

Member John Rokicki left the meeting at 9:30 PM.

Roll call vote on Motion: That the Committee schedule a special meeting on Wednesday, August 20, 2003 to allow

town finance committees and selectboards to participate in the budget process and to include in the notification any actions taken by the Committee at tonight's meeting

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Patricia Young

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Charles Capparelli
Mark James
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

(Motion passed 12-0-5)

Member John Rokicki returned to the meeting at 9:40 PM.

6. Approval of Amended FY04 Staffing Authorization

Motion: To approve the Amended FY04 Staffing Authorization, as recommended by the Superintendent (attachment 9)

(A. Livdahl)
(M. Watson)

Following discussion,

Motion: To move the question

(M. Watson)

(A. Livdahl)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
David Dickman
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates

(Motion passed 16-2)

Roll call vote on main motion:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
David Dickman
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson

Patricia Young

Opposed:

Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod

(Motion passed 13-5)

7. Approval of Amended FY04 Appropriation

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that Holden and Princeton put the entire RASA number up for the override. Paxton made an effort to maximize the local contribution.

Motion: To approve the Amended FY04 Appropriation (attachment 10), plus the appropriation of \$215,254 in certified FY03 Excess & Deficiency funds and an additional \$250,000 from an anticipated increase in transportation reimbursement for assessment reduction in fixed expenses.

(J. Rokicki)
(J. Nunnari)

Motion: To table the motion

(C. Connell)
(P. Gates)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates

Opposed:

Duncan Leith
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
David Dickman
Mark James

Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

(Motion failed 3-15)

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes
(M. Watson)
(C. Capparelli)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Discussion continued on the proposed Amended FY04 Appropriation

Roll call vote on motion:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
David Dickman
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Donald Benson
Clifford Connell
Patricia Gates
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod

(Motion passed 13-5)

VI. Public Hearing

Michael Wronski, Chair, Holden Selectboard, thanked the Committee for agreeing to host a meeting and also appreciated the discussion.

VII. Unfinished Business - None

VIII. New Business

The Superintendent publicly thanked Director Philip Campbell for his service to the District, especially in the area of special education. Director Campbell served the District well as a competent administrator and a key and valued advisor to the Superintendent. Chairman Duncan Leith also offered his thanks and best wishes on behalf of the Committee.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(J. Rokicki)
(J. Scott)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes