

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1063, Monday, September 15, 2003
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	John Nunnari (7:50 PM)
Donald Benson	Norman Plourde
Elizabeth Brennan	John Rokicki (7:30 PM)
Charles Capparelli	Michael Sherman
Clifford Connell	Tammy Tod
David Dickman	Margaret Watson
Patricia Gates	Patricia Young
Mark James	

Committee Members Absent:

René Rodriguez	Julie Scott
----------------	-------------

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)

Chairman Duncan Leith called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Chairman Duncan Leith thanked the Student Council for the refreshments provided (attachment 2). Chairman Leith introduced the Student Council representatives, Amber Vaillencourt, Sydney Gusha, and Britney O'Connor.

I. Public Hearing

A. Five-Year Review of the Wachusett Region School District Agreement

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that suggestions will go to the Management Subcommittee for review. Any other suggestions may be forwarded to Chairman Duncan Leith through the Superintendent's office.

Michael Wronski, Chair, Holden Selectboard, reviewed concerns of the Selectboard regarding the review of the Regional Agreement, as detailed in correspondence distributed (attachment 3). In the correspondence, reference was made to section 15.2 and 15.3 and he amended the letter to indicate that the Selectboard would like a provision for a ballot election on major capital projects.

Tony Seeley, Holden, read a proposal (attachment 4).

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 5).

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

B. Other

Edwin Twarog, Princeton, commented on the mailing of information regarding the recent ballot election. He asked that the cost be calculated and billed to the Superintendent. He also requested an official reprimand to the Superintendent for violating the law.

Edith Morgan, Princeton, read prepared statement (a copy not provided for the public record). She commented that the entire burden of cuts has been placed on the K-8 students and cuts should come from other areas including the high school and the administration.

Chairman Duncan Leith corrected Ms. Morgan and reported that five positions were reduced at the high school and administrative costs had also been reduced.

Edwin Myer, Holden, accused the Superintendent of violating the open meeting law on two occasions and reported that the Holden Associated Taxpayers has filed an additional complaint. He also requested that the Superintendent return the money spent on mailings regarding the ballot vote.

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the Superintendent was not cited for violation of the law.

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

David Gibbs, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 8).

Chairman Duncan Leith addressed Agenda Item IV, A, *Student Advisory*. Members of the Student Council reported that the year has begun; classes are started; the football and soccer teams are already winning; clubs have begun; classes have started working on floats for the October 4th Homecoming; the first dance was very well attended. The Wachusett Singers will be singing the National Anthem at Fenway Park on September 16, 2003. Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the boys Cross Country team beat St. Johns.

Chairman Duncan Leith addressed Agenda Item IV, F, 4, a, *Presentation of the Preliminary Design of the Rutland Elementary School*. The Superintendent introduced Michael Pagano of Lamoureux Pagano Associates, Architects for the Rutland Elementary School project. Mr. Pagano introduced Bill Senecal, chief architect on the project. A copy of the preliminary proposal was distributed (attachment 9). Mr. Pagano also gave a copy of the submission to the SBA to the Superintendent for inclusion in the next Superintendent's report. The model used for the Rutland elementary school was Mayo Elementary School in Holden, which clusters the classrooms around a common space. Following inquiry, Michael Pagano informed the Committee that the building could be expanded on either end of the building. The Superintendent informed the Committee that the boundary for elementary schools is 480-500 students.

V. Superintendent's Report

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. Approval of the Preliminary Design of the Rutland Elementary School

Motion: To approve the preliminary design of the Rutland Elementary School, as presented by architects Lamoureux Pagano Associates

(J. Nunnari)

(J. Rokicki)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1062nd Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on August 12, 2003 – approved by consensus
- B. Approval of 250th Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on August 20, 2003 – approved by consensus
- C. Approval of the 251st Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on August 25, 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

See above.

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

A meeting will be scheduled following the Special Town Meetings to review the Regional School District Agreement.

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

The Education Subcommittee will meet on October 20, 2003 at 6:30 PM.

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

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello reported that she would be scheduling a meeting soon. The Superintendent suggested that of prime importance is discussion of the borrowing for the high school and that the recommendations from the joint meeting of Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Boards had included level debt and borrowing as much as possible up front.

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

1. Community Outreach (M. Sherman, Chair, E. Brennan, C. Capparelli, C. Connell, A. Livdahl)

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach Chair Michael Sherman reported that the first meeting was held tonight. He reported that the subcommittee discussed goals of the subcommittee, which will be included in the next Superintendent's report.

Chairman Duncan Leith encouraged involvement and support for the upcoming Special Town Meetings.

F. Building Committees

1. High School – John Rokicki

The submission to the Department of Education was made a few days early and delivered in person. Bids will go out in mid-November, with construction to start in March or April. Construction documents are now 70% complete. The focus on the next Building Committee meeting will be budget.

The Superintendent reported that the costs for permits are not reimbursable. There are \$200,000 worth of permits on the high school project. The Superintendent advised that the Committee may wish to ask the Holden Selectboard to charge only incremental costs for the fees.

The Building Committee discussed the permit fees and accepts that a fair price be paid but not necessarily the \$200,000.

Four Building Committee members toured the Algonquin project, which is a year or so ahead of the District project. The phasing looked good; disruption to the school was minimal.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that an article appeared in the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* regarding the North Brookfield bids being higher than expected.

2. Holden – Julie Scott

The Superintendent reported that there is still a problem with the gymnasium floor at Davis Hill and if not repaired now will be a major problem in the future. An independent vendor inspected the floor and reported that it is a low quality floor. The same floor was not installed at Dawson or Mayo. The District is awaiting a written report which will be forwarded to the Holden Building Committee.

3. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree – John Rokicki

Nothing to report.

4. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

a. Presentation of the Preliminary Design of the Rutland Elementary School

See above.

5. Sterling

Member Norman Plourde reported that the three Sterling representatives will be meeting with the Selectboard to discuss the plans for the expanded parking.

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).

If any School Committee liaison to a School Council would like a copy of the respective School Improvement Plan, notify the Superintendent.

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported on the new regulations by the Fire Department on decorations in the schools. Although a disappointment to the staff and students at the schools, the regulations were developed with the safety of students in mind.

The Superintendent explained that the enrollment in the developmentally delayed classes at Naquag is low at the beginning of the year and will increase as the year progresses.

The Superintendent reported that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of transfer requests from parents of Princeton middle school students to attend schools in Holden and Sterling. The Superintendent will attend the school council meeting in Princeton on September 16, 2003. He will ask the council to review the phenomenon and suggest some possible solutions. The Thomas Prince middle school program cannot absorb this type of reduction and continue to maintain a middle school program. Before the Superintendent reports any specific solutions to the Committee, the community of Princeton should be consulted.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained the teacher/pupil ratios. The report included in the Superintendent's report was the enrollment for each class.

The Superintendent will report the average per pupil class for high school and middle schools in his next report.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

2. Approval of the Proposed 2004 School Committee Meeting Schedule

Motion: To approve the proposed 2004 School Committee Meeting Schedule (attachment 10)

(J. Rokicki)
(J. Nunnari)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

3. Approval of the Resolution for Area Legislators

Motion: To approve the Resolution for Area Legislators
(attachment 11)

(J. Nunnari)
(C. Capparelli)

The Superintendent reported that if the Resolution was approved it would be printed and available at the next meeting for signature. Should any member not wish to sign the Resolution, the Superintendent should be notified so the name can be left off the Resolution.

The Superintendent thanked Member Michael Sherman for his assistance in preparing the Resolution.

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The Superintendent reported that he was hired as a risk taker and is the students' prime advocate. He sent a letter to parents to provide information and did not solicit a positive vote. The Superintendent had reported to the Committee with copies of the correspondence, shared with the Committee a summary of the telephone conversation with the Office of Campaign & Political Finance, and received no complaints from members regarding his actions. The Superintendent thanked Member Alice Livdahl for writing to the *Telegram & Gazette*. The Superintendent stated that there is not one piece of historical record that finds the Superintendent has ever violated the Open Meeting Law.

The Superintendent reported that he supports the establishment of the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach and hopes that it will be successful in getting positive messages to the public regarding the District and the School Committee. Currently there is a silent parent body; the Committee has not been effective in communicating with parents. The community needs to hear from School Committee

members and concerned citizens, rather than always from the Superintendent.

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that he did not hear one complaint from any Committee Member at the time of the mailing or any time after that.

Discussion occurred regarding the correspondence to the Superintendent from the Office of Campaign and Political Finance and the comments made during the public session of the meeting.

Unless the Committee would prefer that the Superintendent perform a passive role in regard to the upcoming Special Town Meetings, he will be sending out another letter to parents and staff, which will address the town meeting actions only, with no reference to override ballots.

Motion: That the Wachusett Regional School District Committee express its support for the Superintendent's actions and stated intentions with respect to parent mailings and are appreciative of his efforts towards responsible advocacy for the District

(J. Rokicki)

(M. James)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

Tammy Tod

Abstained:
Clifford Connell

(Motion passed 14-1-1)

If the intent of the Committee is to mail correspondence to all registered voters, the Superintendent can accommodate this in the future. The Superintendent reported that he would approach the Town libraries and request that copies of his correspondence be available at the libraries.

VI. Public Hearing

Edwin Twarog, Princeton, read a letter from David Lowenthal written to the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* (attachment 12).

Melinda Johnson, Paxton, suggested that information for the Paxton voters be included in the *Paxton Notes*, which is free to all.

VII. Unfinished Business

VIII. New Business

Chairman Duncan Leith re-stated that any suggestions for amendments to the Regional Agreement will be reviewed by the Management Subcommittee. Each suggestion will be considered.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(J. Rokicki)
(C. Capparelli)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates

Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
John Rokicki
Michael Sherman
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 PM

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes