

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1082, Monday October 25, 2004
7:00 PM

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	John Kane
Cynthia Bazinet	Alice Livdahl
Elizabeth Brennan	Natalie Mello
Patricia Gates (7:52 PM)	Norman Plourde
David Gibbs	Margaret Watson
Mark James	

Committee Members Absent:

Donald Benson, Vice-chair	Kelly Maxwell
Charles Capparelli	John Nunnari
Clifford Connell	Cheryl Rauh
Michael Sherman	René Rodriguez

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative Services
Susan H. 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 7:04 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Donna Scully, Holden, read a prepared statement regarding the mathematics instruction on the Mountview seventh grade gold team, due to the absence of a teacher out on sick leave (attachment 2).

The Superintendent responded to the parents that he shares the parents' concerns but that the District must act within the collectively bargained agreements and available resources. The absent teacher has indicated that a return to work will happen within a month and a half. In the interim, an excellent retired Mountview mathematics teacher has agreed to substitute for up to four days per week. The retiree substitute has completed an assessment and accepted the planning of lessons and, although she cannot be at the school every day due to personal reasons, is confident that she can bring the students back to the proper level. The District is working on a long-term solution. The Superintendent reported that he had spoken with Mountview Principal John Sullivan who had assured the Superintendent that the parents would get regular reports on the progress of the students.

The Superintendent informed the parents that the responsibility of educating the students at Mountview rests with the principal but that the Superintendent is providing whatever support is necessary and available. Following inquiry by a parent, the Superintendent reported that there are no contingency funds available to pay two people for the same position, since the School Committee committed the *Excess & Deficiency Funds* (E & D) to lower the assessments to the Member Towns.

The Superintendent assured the parents that they would receive another update from Principal Sullivan by Tuesday, November 2, 2004.

Chair Leith informed the Committee that Items V, B, 1 and 2, will be taken out of order.

V. Superintendent's Report

B. Presentations

1. 2004 MCAS Test Results

The Superintendent introduced Jason Newton, Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services, who reviewed the 2004 MCAS Test Results via a PowerPoint presentation, *Using MCAS to Improve Educational Outcomes for ALL Children* (attachment 3).

As the educational leader in the community, the Superintendent expressed dissatisfaction with MCAS results due to budgetary decreases and reported that the

budget presented to the School Committee for FY06 will reflect the funds necessary to restore the educational program and support services dismantled over the past three years. The budgets, which resulted in larger class sizes, less planning time for teachers, and less academic support for teachers also contributed to lower MCAS scores. The Superintendent reminded the School Committee that *Instructional Support* had been reduced by almost \$2 million. In addition, the limited education resources are being absorbed by special education costs.

2. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

The Superintendent reviewed the District's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) via a PowerPoint presentation, *Focus on Proficiency for ALL Children by 2014: WRSD Adequate Yearly Progress 2004 (AYP) Determination* (attachment 4).

The Superintendent re-stated his intent to present a budget for FY06 which will restore the educational program in the District. The Superintendent reported that he had reviewed all testing data with principals, who have done a superb job analyzing data and working with teachers. However, the principals do not have the necessary resources.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent advised the Committee that the Chapter 70 Aid formula is being reviewed by the legislature. The bill proposed and adopted by the Senate provides an increase of Chapter 70 Aid to the District by approximately \$350,000. The Superintendent reported that he expects that the legislature is holding back any further increase in funds due to the unknown dollars that may be necessary to fund the final decision on the Hancock case. The Superintendent is predicting that, once again, the burden will be on the District's Member Towns and that once again the School Committee will face the issue of defending the School Committee budget to the Member Towns.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent confirmed that the fourth grade class, District-wide, is one of the largest and the scores are the lowest. The issue of class size must be addressed. Educational research confirms that the best use

of funds is in the primary grades, where class sizes should be the lowest. Since the *No Child Left Behind Act* is a federal act there are federal funds, but those funds are distributed throughout the states. The emphasis for State funding support has been for districts with lower high school graduation rates.

The Superintendent reported that District staff has conducted a school and grade analysis of every single test item on every single test and compared the results from each District school to the State average. Previously, when a school was struggling, the District provided additional intervention. There are no funds now available to provide extra intervention support now.

Following inquiry regarding the increase in class size at grade four at Thomas Prince and the addition of a school choice student making the class size even larger, the Superintendent advised the Committee that the whole population of Thomas Prince is of concern, not just one class in one grade. The Superintendent further advised that the review of class sizes is conducted across the District when determining the number of school choice students accepted to a school. The decision as to whether the District accepts school choice is a School Committee decision in March. The determination as to assignment of students is a Superintendent decision. The Superintendent advised that a report on school choice and class size is planned for a future report but that he could not determine when that report would be completed due to demands on the time of the limited District staff.

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1081st Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on October 12, 2004 – approved by vote of the Committee with Member Patricia Gates opposed and Member John Kane abstaining,

Chair Duncan Leith referred a concern regarding the content of the School Committee minutes to the Management Subcommittee for review.

- B. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on October 12, 2004 – approved unanimously by roll call vote of the Committee.

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.

Chair Duncan Leith thanked Treasurer Martin Connors for his service to the School Committee.

IV. Committee Reports

- A. Student Advisory Committee (C. Brennan, K. Getchell, J. Leger, C. Wilde)

No report.

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

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the Management Subcommittee will meet on Wednesday, November 17, 2004, in the Superintendent's Conference Room at 6:00 PM.

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

Education Subcommittee Chair Margaret Watson reported that the next meeting of the Education Subcommittee is Tuesday, October 26, 2004, in the Curriculum Center at 6:00 PM.

- 1. **DP3321.1 Policy Relating to Education *Field Trips Involving Late Night or Overnight Travel*** – second reading

Motion: To adopt DP3321.1 *Policy Relating to Education Field Trips Involving Late Night or Overnight Travel* for the second reading, waiving the reading

(M. Watson)

(J. Kane)

Following inquiry regarding the Department of Education's proposed policy which includes approval by the School Committee, the Superintendent advised the School Committee that decisions such as those regarding a field trip are operational decisions of the principal and Superintendent. If the Committee would like that approval authority, the policy should be changed but that the same standards should be used for all field trips.

Motion: To add as a second sentence of item C, 3, "Student vehicular (bus and auto travel) between midnight and 6:00 AM is prohibited."

(P. Gates)

(N. Mello)

Vote on amendment:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Patricia Gates
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
Norman Plourde
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion to amend passed unanimously)

Vote on motion, as amended, for first reading:

In favor:

Duncan Leith

Elizabeth Brennan
Patricia Gates
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
Cynthia Bazinet
David Gibbs
Norman Plourde

(Motion passed 8-3)

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

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello reported that the Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting of October 26, 2004 was canceled, as there were no issues before the subcommittee.

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello extended her thanks to Treasurer Connors and reported that the newly appointed Treasurer has executed his contracts and will begin on December 1, 2004. The Superintendent reported that Treasurer Connors requested that the new Treasurer start earlier but that it takes six weeks to obtain the new signature plate for the check-writing machine.

Following inquiry, Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair reported that the new Treasurer would save the District approximately \$3,000 per year.

- E. Community Outreach Subcommittee (D. Gibbs, Chair, C. Bazinet, E. Brennan, C. Connell, D. Leith, A. Livdahl, M. Sherman)

Community Outreach Subcommittee Chair David Gibbs reported that the Subcommittee met on October 20, 2004 and that the meeting focused on the goals and objectives for the subcommittee. Relations with the media were discussed, with

the concern that the positive aspects of the District be reported. A more detailed discussion will take place at the next subcommittee meeting on Wednesday, November 3, 2004 at 6:30 PM in the Curriculum Center at the Central Office. The subcommittee also discussed the elimination and possible restoration of late busses, an issue referred by the Business/Finance Subcommittee. The Community Outreach Subcommittee agreed that a survey needed to be conducted before any actions were taken to restore the late busses.

Chair Duncan Leith asked each subcommittee to review and establish goals for the upcoming year and to request of each subcommittee what it expects that the District will accomplish over the next three to five years.

Chair Duncan Leith also reported that he would be reviewing with the Management Subcommittee the possibility of scheduling another goals meeting, as was done in January 2004.

F. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

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

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Norman Plourde reported that the next meeting of the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee is scheduled for November 1, 2004 at Chocksett Middle School. This meeting is a free workshop to be conducted by NESDEC.

G. Building Committees

1. High School

Chair Duncan Leith reported that the next High School Building Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 27, 2004, at the high school. The meeting originally scheduled for November 24 has been postponed until December 1, 2004, due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Chair Leith reported that the project is moving along. The Holden Conservation Commission authorized work to begin on the building housing the media center. The Superintendent reported that the Holden Conservation

Commission maintains a checklist of items to be completed before the cease and desist order is released in its entirety. The Superintendent also reported that the general contractor has presented a counter proposal to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding the amount of the fine imposed. The two parties are negotiating a settlement. The Superintendent also reported that there has been no response from the abutter to the high school project regarding the damage done to her property.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree

Member Elizabeth Brennan reported that the Rutland Building Committee has not met since the last School Committee meeting.

The Superintendent reported that the District has asked for a sample of the brick to be used on the outside of the building to check for its abrasive qualities. The Superintendent reported that he called Treasurer Cahill's office to determine which set of building regulations should be followed for the Rutland project and that the decision be put in writing. The District is awaiting a response.

3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

No report.

4. Sterling

Member Norman Plourde reported that the parking lot project is progressing and that the town is awaiting delivery of asphalt.

H. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School (C. Rauh), Chocksett Middle School (C. Capparelli), 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).

Member Margaret Watson reported that Mayo School Council met on October 14, 2004. The meeting was primarily a planning meeting for the year. The School Council reviewed the three policies being considered by the School Committee, with some discussion generated regarding the taping of parent meetings.

Member Cheryl CYNTHIA Bazinet reported that the Davis Hill School Council met and reviewed the drills for security and to what extent the students should be drilled. The School Council also reviewed the emergency evacuation plan. Some concern was raised regarding parent conferences. Also reported was the use of fifth grade buddies in the kindergarten in order to assist the teachers.

Member Alice Livdahl reported that the Paxton School Council met recently and reviewed the test results and noted with concern that the rank of the school had declined. The School Council has decided to conduct a parent survey this year. Discussion occurred regarding the determination of the honor roll and whether or not art, music and physical education should be weighted as the students do not have those classes for as long a period of time each week as the academic classes.

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Following inquiry, the Superintendent advised the Committee that there are no school funds, grant or otherwise, for replacement of windows at the Paxton Center School. The decision rests with the Town of Paxton. School Building Assistant rules under the new law have not been completed.

The Superintendent advised the Committee, following inquiry regarding the challenge courses at some of the District schools, that since some schools do not have challenge courses, District staff will be obtaining quotes for the purchase of equipment, in order that equitable instruction be available to all District students. In addition, the Superintendent also reported that training was scheduled for staff and parent volunteers on the use of challenge course equipment. A review of Dawson's challenge course was made by the training company and its determination was that \$13,000 in repairs were necessary before training could

be done at Dawson. The District is having Dawson's challenge course assessed by another training firm. The District's *Physical Education Curriculum* will be reviewed so that physical education instruction utilizing challenge course equipment is developmental and not repetitive in nature.

It was reported that the Community Outreach Subcommittee will use the recently updated information regarding per pupil cost and MCAS rank in its plan to promote the positive aspects of the District.

When asked by a Member if the Superintendent had issued a directive to the schools regarding parent conferences, the Superintendent advised the Committee that the language regarding parent conferences in the teachers' contract was collectively bargained. The Superintendent does not allow substitute teachers to be used to free up teachers for parent conferences. If a parent wants to schedule a meeting with a teacher, the teacher must accommodate; if the teacher does not accommodate the parent, the principal will schedule the meeting. The Superintendent recognized concern for kindergarten teachers as they have twice as many students and less teacher aide support had been reduced.

When asked if the parent conference options were in the student handbooks, the Superintendent reported that he would review the handbooks and advise the Committee. The Superintendent did advise the Committee that the specific language, negotiated by the teachers, was included in the *District Pride*, a publication, in the past, mailed to all families in the District, NO LONGER IN PUBLICATION.

Margaret Watson, Mayo School Council liaison, reported that the issue of parent conferences was discussed at the council meeting and that the council does not want to go back to separate days for parent conferences. The current system of scheduling parent conferences is working well at Mayo.

The Superintendent reported that the District has a very professional staff and that he is proud to work with such a staff as Superintendent.

When asked how the invoice from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) was made available to the

Committee, the Superintendent reported that the District received the invoice and that it was included in the Superintendent's Report for the Committee's information.

B. Presentations

1. 2004 MCAS Test Results

See above.

2. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

See above.

C. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

1. **AP5274 Policy Relating to Personnel Management
Unrepresented Non-Contract Employees Benefits –
second reading**

Motion: To approve AP5274 **Policy Relating to
Personnel Management *Unrepresented Non-Contract
Employees Benefits*** for the second reading, waiving the
reading

(N. Mello)
(J. Kane)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Patricia Gates
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
Norman Plourde
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

VI. Public Hearing

No one from the public wished to speak.

VII. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. New Business

Chair Duncan Leith reported that Wachusett Regional High School Alumni celebrated the school's Fiftieth Anniversary. The celebration started with the induction of new members into the Wachusett Athletic Hall of Fame, an Alumni Reception on Friday night, a parade and various sporting events on Saturday, and a Jubilee Celebration at the Centrum, attended by approximately 600 people, on Saturday night. Chair Leith thanked the Alumni Association for its hard work and thanked Tim Ethier, who provided movie clips for each inductee into the Athletic Hall of Fame.

Following inquiry regarding whether a postponed motion could be brought up prior to the date mentioned in the motion, the Superintendent reported that he would review Robert's Rules of Order. Chair Leith reported that he would look into the issue prior to the next School Committee meeting.

Member Margaret Watson provided the Committee with a report on the School Building Authority's meeting at Tahanto (attachment 5).

Chair Duncan Leith expressed concern that eight School Committee Members were not in attendance at the School Committee meeting and only two had notified either the Superintendent's office or the Chair. Chair Leith urged Members to please notify either the Chair or Superintendent if unable to attend a meeting. If a Member is not able to attend a subcommittee meeting, either the Chair of the subcommittee or the Superintendent's office should be notified.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(M. Watson)
(J. Kane)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Patricia Gates
David Gibbs
Mark James
John Kane
Alice Livdahl
Natalie Mello
Norman Plourde
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes