

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1065, Monday, October 27, 2003
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Duncan Leith, Chair	John Nunnari
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	Norman Plourde
Donald Benson	René Rodriguez
Elizabeth Brennan	John Rokicki (7:35 PM)
Clifford Connell	Julie Scott
David Dickman	Michael Sherman
Patricia Gates (7:10 PM)	Tammy Tod
Mark James (7:22 PM)	Margaret Watson
Alice Livdahl	Patricia Young

Committee Members Absent:

Charles Capparelli

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative 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 7:02 PM.

Chairman Duncan Leith recognized the Area Legislators for their help in assuring that the high school and Rutland elementary school projects remain on the Department of Education, School Building Assistance list, by presenting the

following resolution, signed by the members of the School Committee and the Superintendent:

Whereas, the Wachusett Regional School District Committee worked for more than seven years to meet the critical need for a long-term high school facility solution that would modernize and expand the high school facilities; and

Whereas, the Wachusett Regional School District Committee was ultimately successful in its efforts to obtain approval for a long-term high school facility solution from the region's member towns; and

Whereas, the Wachusett Regional School District Committee began to implement that plan, contracting architectural services for the renovation and addition to the high school, and proceeding with a purchase of more than twenty two acres of land adjacent to the high school site; and

Whereas, the Wachusett Regional School District Committee was subsequently notified that the Commonwealth's School Building Assistance Program waiting list was to be frozen and that the Wachusett Regional High School renovation and addition project and the proposed new Rutland elementary school would not be added to the Commonwealth's School Building Assistance waiting list; and

Whereas, legislators from the region – Senators Robert Antonioni, Stephen Brewer and Harriette Chandler, and Representatives Lewis Evangelidis, Harold Naughton and Robert Spellane – then took immediate action, proposing an amendment to the Commonwealth's FY04 Budget and Municipal Relief Bills to allow projects that had received town approval to continue the application process; then

Therefore, be it resolved that the Wachusett Regional School District Committee and Superintendent of Schools recognize, on behalf of students, parents and staff, Senators Robert Antonioni, Stephen Brewer and

Harriette Chandler, and Representatives Lewis Evangelidis, Harold Naughton and Robert Spellane and express deepest appreciation for the extraordinary and successful efforts made on behalf of the students of the Wachusett Regional School District and the citizens of its member towns.

Legislators in attendance included: Senators Stephen Brewer and Harriette Chandler. Each spoke briefly thanking the School Committee and the Superintendent. Senator Brewer reported that State Treasurer Cahill is working on a plan to refinance in order to fund additional projects. The Superintendent thanked the two senators and then expressed his concern regarding the Circuit Breaker. He requested that the senators initiate a stop on the Circuit Breaker legislation and re-institute the 50/50. Senator Brewer reported that the problem has been and continues to be funding. Senators Brewer and Chandler are co-sponsors to a bill to find resources to fund this bill. Senator Brewer reported that \$5 billion has been reduced in the past five years. Senator Brewer said would respond to questions from the audience.

Edwin Meyer, Holden, asked Senator Brewer how the Town of Holden can be expected to weather the storm of no reimbursement within the seven years of temporary borrowing. Senator Brewer answered that State Treasurer Cahill is working on a borrowing scenario to fund school building assistance projects. A supplemental budget is being considered.

Following inquiry regarding the projected \$2 billion shortfall in FY05 and the impact on school funding, Senator Brewer answered that FY05 is a concern but reiterated that health care and pension funding are the biggest concerns. Senator Chandler stated that municipalities and school districts need to continue to tighten the belts next year.

The Superintendent reported that District Counsel Leo McCabe represented the Superintendent at the court appearance today. Attorney McCabe provided an affidavit to the court from the Superintendent (attachment 2). Judge Fecteau has taken the complaint under review and expects an expedited decision. Members Patricia Gates and John Rokicki were also in attendance.

Chair Duncan Leith reported that he would be taking some items out of order on the agenda to accommodate the Superintendent.

The Superintendent reviewed through a PowerPoint presentation the impact of Holden's two proposals on the District's budget (attachment 3). Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that Holden had presented a written proposal,

Princeton did not, but that Princeton representatives had agreed to Holden's proposal. Representatives from Princeton agreed to the Holden numbers without an override. A request was made to get the agreement from Princeton in writing. Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that with a \$1.7 million reduction in assessment, the School Committee reduced the Staffing Authorization by 29.6 full time positions. A member estimated that now that the year has progressed, the number of positions would be in excess of 80 positions, to which the Superintendent reported he thought that the number was low.

Following discussion at the October 20, 2003 Special School Committee Meeting, the Superintendent sent an email to the president of the WREA asking to sit down and further discuss the issues of the budget.

The Superintendent reported that a reduction of the magnitude suggested by the Holden proposals would seriously impact the schools.

Motion: To reject Holden's proposals and return to the table for further discussions

(A. Livdahl)
(T. Tod)

Member Donald Benson offered a friendly amendment that the Business/Finance Subcommittee be given the authority to negotiate to a point and present a recommendation to the full Committee. This was not accepted by Members Alice Livdahl and Tammy Tod.

Member Mark James offered a friendly amendment that a mediator be used. This also was not accepted by Members Alice Livdahl and Tammy Tod.

The Committee was reminded that under Massachusetts General Laws, the Superintendent determines personnel decisions, but that the personnel appropriation is a School Committee decision.

Member John Rokicki publicly acknowledged Member Clifford Connell for his work on analyzing the budget and sharing that analysis with the Committee as well as representatives from the Member Towns of Holden and Princeton. A request was made to have the Superintendent detail the impact of a \$500,000 reduction. There was not consensus on this request.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained to the Committee that the \$725,000 shortfall must be included in any presentation because it is reality. A recommendation was made to match the \$250,000 offered by Holden. The

Superintendent reminded the Committee that Holden's \$240,000, translates to \$575,263 assessment reduction because of the Regional Agreement formula.

Motion: To move the question

(M. Sherman)
(D. Benson)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
René Rodriguez
John Rokicki
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Patricia Gates
Norman Plourde
Tammy Tod
Julie Scott

(Motion passed 14-4)

Roll call vote on main motion:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Clifford Connell
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde

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

Opposed:

Donald Benson
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Tammy Tod

(Motion passed 14-4)

The Superintendent left the meeting at 8:05 PM.

Chair Duncan Leith returned to the agenda and noted that budget discussions would continue during the report of the Business/Finance Subcommittee.

I. Public Hearing

Michael Wronski, Chair, Holden Selectboard, expressed disappointment that the School Committee rejected Holden's proposal and indicated that the proposal was for \$500,000, not \$490,000, as presented by the Superintendent. He thanked Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Mello for the running the meeting. He explained the rationale for Holden's offer, that the \$250,000 came from the belief that proportionally and in parity the suffering would be the same. Chair Wronski expressed concern for the timetable for Special Town Meetings, November 6th for Princeton and November 10th for Holden. He stated either the School Committee "offer a counter proposal or we are not negotiating." He reported that Princeton and Holden have empowered their representatives to negotiate, and requested the same of the Business/Finance Subcommittee. Chair Wronski acknowledged that any reductions would be staff, in particular, teachers. All agreed at the Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting that this was a revenue problem, not inefficiencies in the operation of the District and that the District delivers high quality services. Chair Wronski reported that the Holden Selectboard is offended by comments that Holden does not have the interests of the children in mind; the Holden Selectboard has supported both budget proposals, including the Proposition 2 ½

overrides. He stated, "This is your problem. Holden's proposals represents our best effort without jeopardizing the safety of our town."

Edwin Meyer, Holden, commented on the Superintendent's salary and provided his analysis for the public record (attachment 4). He also reported that if the suit filed in court today is unsuccessful, Holden Associated Taxpayers has met with Attorney David Ashworth and HAT intends to file a second suit with an attorney. Another possible action would be to file under Chapter 44 a ten taxpayer suit to stop the project until it has been re-voted by taxpayers.

David Gibbs, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 5).

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 6).

Melinda Johnson, Paxton, read a prepared statement (attachment 7).

Kim Paquette, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 8).

Edith Morgan, Princeton, read a prepared statement (attachment 9).

Louis Cornacchioli, Chair, Rutland Selectboard, asked that the Selectboards and Finance Committees of Rutland, Paxton, and Sterling be informed of the time of negotiation meetings. He reported that the Rutland Selectboard voted at its October 27, 2003 meeting to ask legal counsel to look into the injunction, filed by Edwin Meyer.

On another matter, Chair Cornacchioli read a letter to retired Rutland School Secretary Joan Viner from William Carey, Former Assistant Superintendent, detailing her retirement benefits (attachment 10). Ms Viner contacted the Town of Rutland concerning this matter and Chair Cornacchioli is requesting the District honor the commitment.

Patricia Wilmot, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 11).

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1063rd Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on September 15, 2003 – approved by consensus, with Member Julie Scott abstaining.

Member Donald Benson noted that on page 8 the Superintendent reported that he would supply the Committee with average per

pupil classes for the middle school and high school and that the information had not yet been received by the School Committee.

- B. Approval of 252nd Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on October 20, 2003 – approved by consensus, with the change on page 12 that Member Patricia Gates voted in opposition to the motion to extend the meeting for five minutes.

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 (A. Vaillancourt, R. Hinson, C. Brennan)

Chair Duncan Leith read a thank you note to the Student Council for the refreshments supplied to the School Committee at the September meeting (attachment 12).

The Student Advisory Committee members reported that the Student Council is part of a regional Student Council and as such has taken a position that MCAS should not be a graduation requirement, but should be used as a diagnostic tool. These votes will be brought to the State organization.

The Student Council has met and has divided the group into five areas: school climate, school policy, curriculum frameworks, community outreach, and budget.

Representatives expressed appreciation for the work of the Committee; they stated that the students put their faith in Committee to represent the students.

Chair Leith told the representatives that they can speak on any subject.

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

Chair Duncan Leith reported that Regional Agreement changes suggested by the Management Subcommittee are being reviewed by District Counsel, and that a report will be forthcoming. The next Management Subcommittee meeting has not yet been scheduled.

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

Education Chair Julie Scott reported that the Education Subcommittee met on October 20, 2003. The Subcommittee reviewed the DP3895 **Policy Relating to Pupil Services *Limited English Learners*** and recommended approval by the School Committee. The Subcommittee discussed developing language on a possible class size policy, and a policy to protect the curriculum.

The next Education Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 3, 2003, 6:30 PM, in the Superintendent's Conference Room.

1. Approval of– Second Reading

Motion: To approve DP3895 **Policy Relating to Pupil Services *Limited English Learners*** for the second reading, waiving the reading

(J. Scott)
(N. Mello)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
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)

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

Chair Natalie Mello reported that the Business/Finance Subcommittee met on October 1, 2003 to discuss the borrowing options for the high school. Through consensus, the Member Towns agreed to send written recommendations to the Superintendent to be shared at the November 3, 2003 meeting, where a recommendation will be developed for the School Committee. The meeting will be at 6:30 PM in the Curriculum Center.

An additional meeting took place on October 21, 2003; the meeting was recessed and reconvened on October 23. The Subcommittee discussed mediation. Chair Mello noted that there was one correction to the Minutes of the Business/Finance Subcommittee meetings on page 2, first full paragraph. Holden representatives strongly objected to speaking through one representative but agreed to speak through the Chair. Chair Mello expressed disappointment in hearing Holden Selectboard Chair Wronski say that he did not know that the Business/Finance Subcommittee did not have the authority to negotiate; this was made clear at the meeting. Chair Mello reminded all present at the Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting that reductions to the assessment have already taken place twice by the School Committee.

Motion: To empower the Business/Finance Subcommittee to enter into non-binding negotiations with the Member Towns, as required, and return to the full Committee with a recommendation at the next meeting

(D. Benson)

(D. Dickman)

Member Tammy Tod requested representation from Rutland on the Business/Finance Subcommittee. Chair Duncan Leith responded that he would.

A recommendation was made that any proposal coming from the Business/Finance Subcommittee should be reviewed by the Education Subcommittee to determine the educational impact of the decision. It would then go to the School Committee. There was no consensus reached on this.

Member Margaret Watson read a section of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 16B:

In the event that the regional school district budget in a regional school district is not approved by at least two-thirds of the member municipalities as required by this section, the regional school district committee shall have thirty days to reconsider, amend and resubmit a budget on the basis of the issues raised.

Member Watson noted that there is no mention of the word “negotiate” in the law.

Following inquiry, Chair Natalie Mello clarified to the Committee that Princeton has the tax levy capacity needed to fund the District’s budget, but are choosing not to recommend that to the voters.

It was noted that it is not a coincidence that Princeton’s proposal number matched that of Holden.

The motion was withdrawn by Member Donald Benson.

Motion: To have the Business/Finance Subcommittee continue discussions with Holden and Princeton but to also have the

Business/Finance Subcommittee speak to the impacts on the District pursuant to Holden's Proposal A

(P. Gates)

(M. James)

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes

(J. Scott)

(M. James)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith

Natalie Mello

Donald Benson

Elizabeth Brennan

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.

Roll call vote on main motion:

In favor:

Duncan Leith

Natalie Mello

Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
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)

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

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

Ad-Hoc Subcommittee Chair Michael Sherman reported that the next meeting of the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach is scheduled for Wednesday, October 29, 2003, at 6:30 PM in the Curriculum Center at the Central Office.

F. Building Committees

These reports were deferred until the next meeting.

1. High School – John Rokicki
2. Holden – Julie Scott
3. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree – John Rokicki

4. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari
5. Sterling

G. School Council Reports:

These reports were deferred until the next meeting.

Central Tree Middle School (J. Nunnari), Chocksett Middle School (C. Capparelli), Davis Hill Elementary School (R. Rodriguez), Dawson Elementary School (M. James), 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), Wachusett Regional High School (N. Mello, T. Tod).

V. Superintendent's Report

- A. Discussion of Report
- B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee
 1. Approval of DP7142 **Policy Relating to Support Operations *Energy Efficient Equipment*** – Second Reading

Motion: To approve DP7142 **Policy Relating to Support Operations *Energy Efficient Equipment*** for the second reading, waiving the reading

(J. Rokicki)
(N. Mello)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan
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)

VI. Public Hearing

No one from the general public wished to speak.

VII. Unfinished Business

VIII. New Business

A. Procedures for Negotiating with Member Towns

This issue has already been discussed.

B. Member Tammy Tod reported that she would like to discuss correspondence received by School Committee Members from Deann Seeley, but agreed to defer it to the next meeting.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(N.Mello)
(J. Scott)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Donald Benson
Elizabeth Brennan

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:

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes