

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1068, Monday, December 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
Elizabeth Brennan	Norman Plourde
Charles Capparelli	John Rokicki (7:25 PM)
Clifford Connell	Julie Scott
David Dickman	Michael Sherman
Patricia Gates	Margaret Watson
Mark James	Patricia Young

Committee Members Absent:

Donald Benson	Tammy Tod
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 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 7:03 PM. Chair Duncan Leith, who recognized the high school football team's perfect year and Super Bowl achievement, introduced the Superintendent, who praised the performance and standards for the high school football team. The Superintendent introduced Thomas Pandiscio, Principal of Wachusett Regional High School, who introduced the senior players of the Super Bowl Champion football team and its coach Michael Dubzinski. The School Committee commended the team for their hard

work and commitment to the school and to football. The team members introduced themselves to the School Committee.

I. Public Hearing

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 2).

II. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of 1067th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on November 24, 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 (C. Brennan, R. Hinson, A. Vaillancourt)

No representatives from the Student Advisory Committee were present.

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 the Subcommittee has not met and that District Counsel Leo McCabe has requested census information of the Member Towns.

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

Education Subcommittee Chair Julie Scott reported that the Education Subcommittee met before the regular meeting. The Subcommittee discussed a policy on class size. Following revisions, the draft policy will be available at the January 12, 2004 meeting for School Committee review. Once reviewed by the School Committee, the Education Subcommittee will request

an impact study before recommending adoption by the School Committee.

Next meeting Education Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2004 at 6:00 PM in the Modular Cafeteria.

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

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello reported that the annual District audit was presented to the Business/Finance Subcommittee and that it should be noted that the audit was successful, with no notations.

1. Treasurer's Evaluation

Motion: To approve the Treasurer's Evaluation as presented (attachment 3)

(M. Sherman)
(C. Capparelli)

Chair Mello reported that she had spoken to Treasurer Connors and told him that no increase in compensation is being recommended. The Treasurer indicated that he was willing to accept the contract with no increase in fee.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously).

Motion: To offer a contract to Treasurer Martin Connors from January 1, 2004 – December 31, 2004 at the current fee

(N. Mello)
(C. Capparelli)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Patricia Gates
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

2. **DP4120 Policy Relating to Budget/Finance Standards for Budget Development** – first reading

This will be addressed under the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach.

E. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

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

Chair Michael Sherman reported that the Subcommittee did not have an official meeting, due to a lack of quorum. The Superintendent conducted an administrative meeting due to the attendance of a guest. Professor Kent Rissmiller from WPI talked with the members present regarding a possible partnership with WPI. Further discussions will continue with Professor Rissmiller.

Sterling School Committee representatives reported that the meeting with STERLING PTO'S ~~Sterling~~ PTA's was very positive. Holden representatives reported that a similar positive meeting was held with the Mayo PTA.

The Superintendent reported that a School Committee retreat has been scheduled for Saturday, January 17, 2004, from 8:00 AM – noon in the Hagglund Room, Campus Center at WPI. Coffee and bagels will be served.

The Superintendent presented draft policy DP4120 **Policy Relating to Budget/Finance *Standards for Budget Development***, as a start for the discussion (attachment 4).

If any Committee Members have information to share prior to the retreat, please forward to the Superintendent for inclusion in the Superintendent's report. Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that the meeting would be posted and public. Chair Duncan Leith reported that the School Committee had previously held a similar retreat and that the press and public were nice enough not to come, allowing the Committee to have open discussion.

F. Building Committees

1. High School – John Rokicki

Member John Rokicki reported that the Holden Planning Board has approved the plan with conditions, a copy of which will be forwarded to the District. The conditions were conditions in line with being a good neighbor.

The Holden Conservation Commission was to have met today to view the site but with the weather, Member Rokicki was not sure if the meeting took place.

The bid documents are out; the Pre-bid Conference is scheduled for Wednesday, December 17, 2003, at 3:00 PM.

The next High School Building Committee is scheduled for January 15, 2004, the day after general bids are opened.

Member John Rokicki indicated that it was not clear whether the School Committee needed to officially accept the bids. The Superintendent indicated that the purchasing and contract process was to be used and that he would review the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws to affirm this for the Committee.

Chair Duncan Leith reported that an additional invoice from District Counsel Leo McCabe has been paid on services related to the Edwin Meyers suit, now totally over \$3,000.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that in January 2002 Commissioner David Driscoll and Associate Commissioner Jeffrey Wulfson attended a Holden Selectboard meeting and stated that the modulars would be included in the long-term high school reimbursement. Subsequently, the DOE corresponded with the District, indicating that the modulars would be included. Then in a subsequent letter, it was reported that during the final audit the DOE would re-evaluate whether the modulars would be included. The Superintendent reported that the District needs the information up front and will continue to keep the dialogue ongoing and the Committee would most likely adopt an amended high school building appropriation for Member Town approval, if necessary.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree – John Rokicki

No report.

3. Rutland – Elementary School – John Nunnari

Member John Nunnari reported that the Rutland Building Committee met on December 4, 2003. The architects are

continuing to submit documentation to the DOE to complete the application process. Member Nunnari reported that DOE has approved the education specifications. He also reported that the Board of Health, Fire, Police, and Zoning officer have approved the plan. The architects are in the process of completing the drawings; the purchase of the land is finalized.

Member Nunnari reported that the DOE has capped the reimbursement on the project at \$15.5 million. The Superintendent reported that the Committee does not have the authority to lower the cost, as it was acted upon at Town Meeting and at the ballot when a debt exclusion vote was taken.

4. Sterling

No report.

- 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, T. Tod).

Member Charles Capparelli reported that the Chocksett Middle School Council met on November 18th and December 9th. The School Council discussed the MCAS scores and the impact of No Child Left Behind. The issue of a dress code will be the focus for the spring.

Member Capparelli reported that during the time of tragedy at Chocksett, the Crisis Intervention Team did a great job and should be commended.

Member Margaret Watson reported that the Mayo Elementary School Council met on November 25th and presented the results of a survey on communication. The Council was disappointed as only sixty parents responded. Member Watson will share the results of the survey with the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach.

Member Patricia Gates left the meeting at 7:46 PM.

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Natalie Mello requested that it be noted in the minutes that no representatives from the community, either from Finance Committees or the press, attended the recent Business/Finance Subcommittee.

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that the District is still trying to get a better handle on the Circuit Breaker, and the implications it will have on the District's budget. One third of the Districts in Massachusetts will be getting less than if the 50/50 were still in effect. The Superintendent expressed concern that the District is one of the five Districts in the State losing 20% of State aid and is now losing reimbursement for special education costs.

The Superintendent explained, following inquiry, that the Municipal Revenue Growth Factor (MRGF) helps to determine the non-Proposition 2 ½ internal taxing capability for Member Towns. There will always be a disparity, as the State has previously capped the growth rate for schools.

The Superintendent reported that he is forming a Task Force to review special education costs. He reminded the Committee that once an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is signed it becomes the law and services must be provided. It was suggested that the report provided in the Superintendent's report, prepared by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), would be a good starting point for FY05 budget discussions and should be discussed at the School Committee retreat.

The Superintendent reported that the District checks daily on the status of the Foundation Reserve Account (pothole). This is a slow process. The Superintendent reported that at first he did not think that the District was eligible but now believes the District is eligible. The Committee was reminded that these funds would be one-time funds and that the School Committee has utilized more than \$1 million in these types of funds to offset the FY04 budget. This will cause a major problem in FY05.

The Superintendent reported that he would be including an analysis of the Excess & Deficiency Fund (E & D) in the Superintendent's report. This analysis will show where the funds have come from and where the money has been transferred.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that the bleachers at Davis Hill were fixed but that nothing will be done to fix the floor. The Superintendent reported that he would look into another fix recommended by Maple Flooring experts.

The Superintendent reported that the District's Financial Advisor, First Southwest, gave misinformation to the Treasurer who corresponded with the Treasurers in Paxton and Princeton. Apologies have been extended.

B. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

1. To appropriate SBA funds in the amount of \$1,682,234 to the Town of Holden for reimbursement for the elementary school projects

Motion: To appropriate SBA funds in the amount of \$1,682,234 to the Town of Holden for reimbursement for the elementary school projects

(J. Scott)

(D. Dickman)

Member John Nunnari left the meeting at 8:10 PM.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Mark James
Alice Livdahl
Norman Plourde
John Rokicki
Julie Scott
Michael Sherman
Margaret Watson
Patricia Young

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously).

Member John Nunnari returned to the meeting at 8:12 PM.

VI. Public Hearing

No one from the public wished to speak.

The Committee thanked Holden resident Maureen Floryan for attending meetings and for her dedication to the education of the District's students.

VII. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. New Business

There was no new business.

IX. Adjournment

Chair Duncan Leith extended Happy Holiday wishes to all as he recognized the following motion:

Motion: To adjourn

(J. Scott)
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith
Natalie Mello
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Clifford Connell
David Dickman
Mark James
Alice Livdahl

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

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT/ss

school committee/minutes