

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1093, Wednesday May 25, 2005
7:00 PM

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Alice Livdahl, Chair	Mary Catherine Maher
Michael Sherman, Vice-chair	Kelly Maxwell
Cynthia Ahearn	Phillip Mighdoll
Cynthia Bazinet	Judith Newton
Elizabeth Brennan	John Nunnari
Charles Capparelli	Norman Plourde
Robert Carter	Cheryl Rauh
David Gibbs	Kathleen Sweeney
Mark James	Margaret Watson

Committee Members Absent:

Shirley Conrad	John Kane
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Administration Present:

Paul K. Soojian, Deputy Superintendent and 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 Alice Livdahl called the meeting to order at 7:24 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Mark Henderson, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 2).

Edwin Meyer, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 3).

Edith Morgan, Princeton, expressed concern that the oversight system for school districts is flawed and that the legislators should act to change the

system. She suggested that perhaps more oversight by the Member Towns would be appropriate.

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 4).

II. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of 1092nd Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on April 25, 2005 – approved by consensus with Members Cynthia Ahearn, Charles Capparelli, Judith Newton, and Kathleen Sweeney abstaining
- B. Approval of the 260th Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on May 3, 2005 – approved by consensus, removing the second motion from attachment 1, with Members Cynthia Ahearn, John Kane, Judith Newton, Cheryl Rauh, and Kathleen Sweeney abstaining.
- C. Approval of the 261st Special Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on May 12, 2005 – approved by consensus with Members Cheryl Rauh, and Michael Sherman abstaining

III. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

Chair Livdahl 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 the Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Livdahl reported that Business/Finance would be asked to reconsider the courtesy transportation fee program in the District.

Chair Livdahl reported that the Superintendent has submitted his letter of resignation and will retire on September 30, 2005.

Chair Livdahl reported that the School Committee appropriation was either voted down or passed over in all five of the Member Towns.

Chair Livdahl reported that on a philosophical note, she was disappointed in the budget process.

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

No one from the Student Advisory Committee was present.

- C. Management Subcommittee

Chair Livdahl reported that the Management Subcommittee has not met since the meeting scheduled for the evaluation of the Superintendent.

- D. Education Subcommittee

Education Chair Margaret Watson reported that the Education Subcommittee has not met since the meeting scheduled for the evaluation of the Superintendent.

- E. Business/Finance Subcommittee

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Mark James reported that the Business/Finance Subcommittee met on Wednesday, May 18, 2005, and the Subcommittee had several recommendations for the School Committee.

Motion: To adopt the *Amended FY05 Appropriation*, as presented by the Superintendent and recommended by the Business/Finance Subcommittee (attachment 5).

(M. Sherman)

(K. Maxwell)

Roll call vote:

In Favor:

Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
David Gibbs
Mark James
Alice Livdahl

Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Michael Sherman
Kathleen Sweeney
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Member Elizabeth Brennan recused herself from the discussion regarding the Inspector General's Report.

The Business/Finance Subcommittee discussed the process for reviewing the Inspector General's Report. Member John Nunnari reported that he had met with two other members of the Business/Finance Subcommittee in order to identify an independent auditor and counsel. The group worked from a list of eight or nine attorneys and four certified public accounting firms. Member Nunnari reported that he had appointed an accounting firm, Greenberg, Rosenblatt, Kull, & Bitsoli of Worcester. Representatives from the firm have agreed to attend the June 1, 2005 Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting to review with the Subcommittee the parameters of the report. Member Cynthia Bazinet reported that she and Member Cynthia Ahearn called several law firms and announced that Elizabeth Vallerio of Deutsch Williams from Boston will be the independent counsel. Member Bazinet reported that there is not much for the counsel to do until the Fraud Risk Assessment is complete.

Member Nunnari reported that the Fraud Risk Assessment should be completed within two to three weeks.

Motion: To ask the auditor to specifically address each of the specific allegations in the Inspector General's Report and compare with the rebuttal from the Superintendent and determine what is the truth.

(K. Sweeney)
(M. Sherman)

Deputy Superintendent Soojian advised the Committee that the Inspector General's Report contained no claims of misappropriation of funds or evidence of fraud.

Motion: To table the motion.

(D. Gibbs)
(M. Sherman)

Members Kathleen Sweeney withdrew the main motion and Member David Gibbs withdrew the motion to table.

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Mark James reported that School Committee Members were asked, through the Superintendent's Report, to submit questions. Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair James collected the questions and reported to the School Committee that he would compile them and delete repetitious questions (attachment 6).

Discussion continued regarding the cost for the independent auditor and independent counsel. The auditing firm reported to Member Nunnari that the cost for the Fraud Risk Assessment would be \$4,000-\$8,000 and the hourly fee for Attorney Vallerio would be \$175 per hour. Deputy Superintendent Soojian reminded the Committee that the total appropriated at the previous meeting was \$8,000.

For the record, Member Nunnari reported that the representatives of the Inspector General have agreed to meet with the School Committee regarding the report.

The Business/Finance Subcommittee discussed the FY06 budget process and how to go about having discussions with Member Town officials. Three options were discussed at the Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting:

- ♣ Maintain open dialogue with Member Towns
- ♣ Delegate the dialogue to the Business/Finance Subcommittee
- ♣ Members meet with their respective Town leadership

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Mark James suggested that the Committee consider a fourth option, to have the Superintendent, School Committee Chair, and Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair meet individually with Member Town officials.

Deputy Superintendent Soojian reminded the Committee that a decision should be made as to whether a request should be sent to the Commissioner of Education for an additional fifteen days to present a revised budget to the Member Towns.

Motion: To begin the process of scheduling a meeting between designated members of the District Committee (the Business and Finance subcommittee) and the municipal leaders of the regional towns; that is the chairmen of the select boards and finance committees, and their town managers or administrator. The meeting should take place within 10 days at a neutral location within the district, and be moderated by George Balko, Holden's town moderator, with his consent. The Chairmen of the Business and Finance subcommittee should liaise with the moderator and the select board chairmen in each of the five (5) towns within two days to determine the logistics for the meeting (attachment 7).

(J. Newton)

(K. Maxwell)

A friendly amendment was offered by Member Phillip Mighdoll and accepted by Members Newton and Maxwell to delete the specific moderator's name.

Discussion occurred regarding whether or not a request should be made of the Superintendent to prepare any type of impact statements in preparation for meetings with Member Town officials.

Motion: To move the question.

(A. Livdahl)

(C. Capparelli)

Roll call vote:

In Favor:

Alice Livdahl

Michael Sherman

Cynthia Ahearn

Cynthia Bazinet

Elizabeth Brennan

Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Roll call vote on main motion, which reads: To begin the process of scheduling a meeting between designated members of the District Committee (the Business and Finance subcommittee) and the municipal leaders of the regional towns; that is the chairmen of the select boards and finance committees, and their town managers or administrator. The meeting should take place within 10 days at a neutral location within the district, and be moderated by a town moderator, with his consent. The Chairmen of the Business and Finance subcommittee should liaise with the moderator and the select board chairmen in each of the five (5) towns within two days to determine the logistics for the meeting.

In favor:
Alice Livdahl
Robert Carter
Kelly Maxwell
Judith Newton

Opposed:
Michael Sherman
Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli

David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Phillip Mighdoll
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney
Margaret Watson

(Motion failed 4-14)

Motion: That the Superintendent be directed to meet individually with the appropriate authorities of the five member towns to seek solutions to the current budget problems and that the chair of the school committee and the chair of the business/finance subcommittee accompany the superintendent to these meetings. Also, that the Superintendent shall report his findings to the school Committee when meetings have been completed (attachment 8)

(M. Watson)

(D. Gibbs)

Motion: To move the question.

(D. Gibbs)

(C. Capparelli)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Michael Sherman
Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney

Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Alice Livdahl
Robert Carter

(Motion passed 16-2)

Roll call vote on the main motion:

In favor:

Alice Livdahl
Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Michael Sherman
Robert Carter
Kelly Maxwell

(Motion passed 15-3)

A motion was made and withdrawn to direct the Superintendent to prepare impact statements on each Member Town's offer of funding. It was agreed by consensus that discussions should be initiated prior to any impact statements being developed.

Motion: Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 16B, to request that the Superintendent apply to the Commissioner of Education for an extension of fifteen days in which to adopt a revised budget following the defeat of the budget in the Member Towns

(M. James)
(M. Watson)

Vote:

In favor:

Alice Livdahl
Michael Sherman
Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

F. Community Outreach Subcommittee

G. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

1. Superintendent Search Committee (J. Nunnari, Chair, E. Brennan, R. Carter, D. Gibbs, M. James, A. Livdahl, P. Mighdoll, N. Plourde, M. Watson)

Chair Livdahl reported that the School Committee will need to appoint an interim superintendent, as the Superintendent search process will not be complete by the time the Superintendent retires. When asked if the Superintendent would consider extending his contract beyond September 30, 2005, Chair Livdahl reported that the Superintendent had

already resigned his position and has submitted his retirement papers to the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement Board.

Motion: To extend the meeting for thirty minutes
(M. Sherman)
(E. Brennan)

Vote:

In Favor:

Alice Livdahl
Michael Sherman
Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney
Margaret Watson

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Following inquiry, Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that some School Committees allow Interim Superintendents to also apply for the permanent position of Superintendent and other communities prohibit an interim superintendent from applying for the superintendency.

Motion: That the search for an Interim Superintendent be the responsibility of the Superintendent Search Committee
(N. Plourde)
(M. Watson)

Vote:

In Favor:

Alice Livdahl
Michael Sherman
Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

A motion was made and withdrawn to reconsider the make-up of the Superintendent Search Committee. This would be discussed at the next School Committee meeting, following review of the adopted motion establishing the Superintendent Search Committee.

H. Building Committees

1. High School

Chair Alice Livdahl advised the Committee that a School Committee Member must be appointed to the High school Building Committee. If any Member is interested in serving

in this capacity, please indicate that on the subcommittee request form distributed to Members.

2. Rutland – Naquag/Central Tree
3. Rutland – Elementary School – Elizabeth Brennan

Member Elizabeth Brennan reported that the Rutland Building Committee is meeting on May 26, 2005. Progress is being made on the site; the steel has been delivered. Member Brennan reported that to date there have been no surprises.

Deputy Superintendent Soojian requested that Member Brennan ask the status of repairs to be made at Central Tree Middle School. A request was made of the Rutland Selectboard to repair the cement walkway at Central Tree and that a commitment had been made to complete the repair during the summer and that the current contractor may be used to complete the repair.

- I. School Council Reports: Central Tree Middle School, Chocksett Middle School, Davis Hill Elementary School, Dawson Elementary School, Houghton Elementary School, Mayo Elementary School, Mountview Middle School, Naquag Elementary School, Paxton Center School, Thomas Prince School, and Wachusett Regional High School.
- V. Superintendent's Report
- A. Discussion of Report

Following inquiry, Deputy Superintendent Soojian reported that sixteen teachers leaving the District through retirement or resignation is not a large number. It is anticipated that next year the number of teachers retiring will be much larger.
 - B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee
 1. Amended FY05 Appropriation

See above.
 2. Amendment to 2005 School Committee Meeting Schedule

Motion: To adopt the Amended 2005 School Committee Meeting Schedule (attachment 9)

(P. Mighdoll)

(C. Capparelli)

Roll call vote:

In Favor:

Alice Livdahl

Michael Sherman

Cynthia Ahearn

Cynthia Bazinet

Elizabeth Brennan

Charles Capparelli

Robert Carter

David Gibbs

Mark James

Mary Catherine Maher

Kelly Maxwell

Phillip Mighdoll

Judith Newton

John Nunnari

Norman Plourde

Cheryl Rauh

Kathleen Sweeney

Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

3. School Improvement Plan Review Schedule – June 3, 2005

Deputy Superintendent Paul Soojian reported that copies of the School Improvement Plans had been given to School Committee Members and asked Members to sign up for the review of the School Improvement Plans. A sign-up sheet was circulated during the meeting (attachment 10).

Member Cynthia Bazinet left the meeting at 10:25 PM

Chair Alice Livdahl asked for volunteers to represent the School Committee at the high school and middle school graduations (attachment 11). The following Members agreed to represent the School Committee at the 2005 graduations:

High School	Alice Livdahl
Central Tree Middle School	Cheryl Rauh
Chocksett Middle School	Norman Plourde
Mountview Middle School	Judith Newton
Paxton Center School	Cynthia Ahearn
Thomas Prince School	Kathleen Sweeney

Deputy Superintendent distributed correspondence from the Superintendent which included copies of requests from Holden resident Edwin Meyer through the Freedom of Information Act, since the Inspector General's Report was released (attachment 12).

VI. Public Hearing

VII. Unfinished Business

Chair Alice Livdahl suggested that the following minutes be approved. Deputy Superintendent reported that the minutes have not been made available to the Superintendent for distribution.

- A. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on August 9, 2004
- B. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on March 28, 2005
- C. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on April 11, 2005

VIII. New Business

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(C. Capparelli)
(D. Gibbs)

Vote:

In Favor:

Alice Livdahl
Michael Sherman
Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Elizabeth Brennan
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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