

**WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

**HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING**

Minutes

Special Meeting #249 Thursday, June 26, 2003

7:00 PM

Media Center  
Wachusett Regional High School

*Committee Members Present:*

Duncan Leith, Chairman	John Nunnari
Natalie Mello, Vice-chairman	Norman Plourde
Donald Benson	René Rodriguez, Jr.
Elizabeth Brennan	John Rokicki (8:06 PM)
Charles Capparelli	Julie Scott
Clifford Connell (7:14 PM)	Michael Sherman
Patricia Gates	Tammy Tod (8:04 PM)
Mark James	Margaret Watson
Alice Livdahl	

*Committee Members Absent:*

Carol Esperti	Patricia Young
Peter MacDonald	

*Administration Present:*

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools  
Paul K. Soojian, Director of Operations  
Steven Penka, Director of Administrative Services  
Philip E. Campbell, Director of Student/Information Services  
Susan H. Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

*Others present, who desired to be recorded as present (see attached Attendance Sheet – attachment 1)*

I. Call to Order

Chairman Duncan Leith called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM and took Item V out of order.

V. Executive Session for the Purpose of Discussing Strategies for Collective Bargaining and Taking any Appropriate Action

Motion: To enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategies for collective bargaining and taking any appropriate action  
(J. Scott)  
(N. Mello)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Mark James  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
René Rodriguez, Jr.  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Margaret Watson

(Motion passed 12-0-1)

Chairman Duncan Leith reconvened the meeting at 7:12 PM.

Chairman Duncan Leith announced the ratification of the agreement between the District and the nurses and distributed a copy of the Memorandum of Agreement (attachment 2). The agreement provides for a 3% increase in salary for each of three years and adds an additional step in the second year of the contract. The agreement is retroactive to July 1, 2002.

The Superintendent presented Member Patricia Gates with a plaque commemorating her induction into the WRHS Hall of Fame.

Members thanked Member Patricia Gates for her efforts in Princeton which resulted in the defeat of the motion to rescind or amend.

Chairman Duncan Leith distributed copies of Subcommittee/School Council Requests (attachment 3). He requested that Members complete the forms and return them to him before the end of the meeting.

Chairman Duncan Leith took Item IV out of order.

IV. Update on Construction/Project Management for High School Project and Related Actions

Motion: To rescind the School Committee action of June 9, 2003 appointing Payton Construction as Construction/Project Management Firm (attachment 3A)

(A. Livdahl)  
(M. Watson)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Clifford Connell  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
René Rodriguez, Jr.  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Motion: To appoint URS as Construction/Project Management Firm for the high school project

(J. Scott)  
(N Mello)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Clifford Connell  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
René Rodriguez, Jr.  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Chairman Duncan Leith returned to the Agenda.

## II. Strategies for Town Meeting Budget

The Superintendent reviewed the PowerPoint presentation for the Town Meetings on June 30, 2003 (attachment 4). Following the presentation, some suggestions were made to enhance the presentation. The Superintendent will make the changes and the presentations will be ready for the Town Meetings.

The Superintendent reported that the following administrators would present the PowerPoint at Town Meetings:

Holden

Superintendent Alfred Tutela

Paxton	Director of Operations Paul Soojian
Princeton	Thomas Prince Principal Mary Cringan
Rutland	Director of Administrative Services Steven Penka
Sterling	Director of Student/Information Services Philip Campbell

The Superintendent distributed a sample copy of the Superintendent's correspondence to member towns regarding the estimated assessment amounts (attachment 5). The Treasurer will issue the official assessment letters, but the Superintendent wanted the towns to have numbers for planning purposes.

The Superintendent reported on the Circuit Breaker.

Following inquiry, the Superintendent explained that high school reductions have already been made and no further reductions would be made to the high school staff and that completion of the schedule is limited due to the limited time in the summer to plan. Should further reductions be needed, foreign language would be eliminated at the middle school and art, music, and physical education would be reduced at the elementary school level.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that he will not, and cannot by law, spend unfounded dollars.

Following an inquiry, the Superintendent explained that excess debt, per Massachusetts General Law, only applies to districts below foundation. The Superintendent believes that the District is at foundation in the Conference Committee budget. An inquiry has been made to the Department of Education to clarify this.

District Counsel Leo McCabe joined the Committee at the table to answer questions and concerns regarding the process to be used at the Town Meetings.

Member Tammy Tod arrived at 8:04 PM.

The Superintendent reported that Holden and Sterling are splitting the budget into two articles. Paxton, per Selectboard Chair Scott Runstrom, will vote on one motion with a portion contingent upon a Proposition

2½ override. Rutland will be voting one number. The Superintendent reported that he suspects that Princeton will follow the Paxton model.

Member John Rokicki arrived at 8:06 PM.

Motion: That the District representative presenting the budget presentation make the following statement, prior to yielding the floor: “The Wachusett Regional School District Committee wishes to acknowledge the unanimous vote taken by the Town of Holden’s Selectboard on June 16, 2003, by which it expressed its endorsement of and support for the District’s FY04 budget appropriation, in its entirety, as submitted. The Committee appreciates this vote of confidence and respect, and commends the Selectboard for its farsighted commitment to preserving high-quality education in the Wachusett Region. Regardless of any differences this Committee may have with the Holden Selectboard about the process to be followed for funding our respective appropriations for FY04, the Committee stands ready to work in concert with the Selectboard to attain these common goals: while remaining fiscally prudent in difficult times, we shall do our best to uphold current levels of municipal services, preserve the quality of education provided by the District, and protect the livelihood of the municipal and District employees who provide these services and education” (attachment 6)

(M. Sherman)

(R. Rodriguez)

Superintendent reported that since the issue was only in Holden, the Superintendent would make a statement, before yielding the floor, without the need for a vote of the Committee to do so. Member Michael Sherman withdrew the motion.

The Superintendent restated that one motion with a portion contingent on an override would be possible but he does not recommend splitting the budget into two articles.

Following inquiry, Attorney McCabe explained that the School Committee cannot vote to cause a town to have an override, but can indicate support of such action.

The Superintendent suggested that a motion be made by the Committee recognizing the financial difficulty the towns are presented with. The Committee chose not to make such a motion.

The Superintendent asked the Committee if it was willing to give veto power to one town. The consensus of the Committee was that veto power by one town was not acceptable.

The following School Committee Members will be present to speak to the School Committee budget:

Holden	Duncan Leith
Paxton	Natalie Mello
Rutland	John Rokicki
Sterling	Charles Capparelli
Princeton	No School Committee member will be present.

The Superintendent reported that each member will receive a copy of the proposed amendment and the information regarding an appeal of the moderator's decision (attachments 7 and 8).

District Counsel Leo McCabe also indicated that he would provide a substitute motion, should it be needed.

The Superintendent distributed copies of correspondence from Holden Selectboard Chair Michael Wronski (attachment 9). The Superintendent also distributed a copy of the parent communication mailed from the Superintendent this week (attachment 10).

Motion: That the Chair respond to correspondence from Holden Selectboard Chair Michael Wronski

(M. Watson)  
(M. Sherman)

Vote:

In favor:

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

John Rokicki  
René Rodriguez, Jr.  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson

Opposed:  
None

Abstained:  
Charles Capparelli

(Motion passed 16-0-1)

The Superintendent read a sample motion from Paxton, which was approved by District Counsel and could be used in other towns.

Chairman Duncan Leith asked Holden Town Manager Brian Bullock if he wished to speak. He indicated that he did not.

### III. Action on Proposed Teacher Early Retirement Incentive Bill

Motion: To adopt the Teacher Early Retirement Incentive Bill, subject to approval by the legislative process

(J. Scott)  
(N. Mello)

#### Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Clifford Connell  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
JohnRokicki



René Rodriguez, Jr.  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

Chairman Duncan Leith asked if there were members of the public who wished to address the Committee.

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 11)

David Gibbs, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 12).

#### IV. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(J. Rokicki)  
(J. Scott)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Clifford Connell  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
John Rokicki  
René Rodriguez, Jr.  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss

schoolcommittee/minutes