

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Special Meeting #223 Wednesday, October 3, 2001

7:00 – 9:00 PM

Curriculum Center
Jefferson School Central Office
1745 Main Street, Jefferson, MA 01522

Committee Members Present:

John Rokicki, Chairman	Alice Livdahl
Sherry Horeanopoulos, Vice-chairman	David Lowenthal
Carol Esperti	Peter MacDonald (8:15 PM)
Kenneth Fensin	John Nunnari (7:25 PM)
Michael Gennert	Elizabeth Pape
Jeffrey Gibbs	Julie Scott
Sarah Jordan	Kathleen Singh
Duncan Leith	

Committee Members Absent:

Mary Copeland	Kelly Maxwell
Kimberly Ferguson	Jeffrey Wentzell
Jane James	

Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Susan H. Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Others present:

James Keogh, *The Landmark*
Richard Halloran, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*
Christine Nelson, *Sterling Meetinghouse News*
Debbie Scheibel, Holden

I. Call to Order

Chairman John Rokicki called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

II. High School Facility Goals

Chairman Rokicki distributed copies of the Agenda (attachment 1), *Changing from Red to Green* (attachment 2), and Results of Survey at Holden Together (attachment 3).

During the discussion there were questions and concerns regarding the interim modular classroom solution. The Superintendent reported that the draft Request for Proposals was nearly complete. The proposals are due to the District by October 19, 2001 and once reviewed the Superintendent will recommend a final proposal to the School Committee for action. He reported that he had just advised the Management Subcommittee that the Department of Education School Building Assistance recently posted Advisory 01-5, which indicated that reimbursement might be possible for a renovation project if accreditation was in danger. The Superintendent contacted John Lawler at the DOE who requested a copy of the draft Request for Proposal. The Superintendent will be sending the copy by Friday, October 5, 2001.

The timeline for the modular classrooms necessitates town meetings the end of November/first of December. District Counsel has been asked to draft language for Committee action at the next meeting.

Members asked if it was possible to lease the modular classrooms. The Superintendent reported that this would be more costly and would require annual approval for funding at town meetings.

The Superintendent also reported that as part of the Advisory, DOE indicated that due to the increased number of projects on the list reimbursement could not be guaranteed within the first five years. Since temporary borrowing can only be for five years, this could be a significant problem for school districts.

Chairman Rokicki restated that the School Committee needs to establish a set of questions and goals that each long-term proposal must address. Members offered what was critical in any project:

K. Fensin: Stated that a solution needs to be implemented, whether one school or two or the District will be broken up.
Safety must be an objective.

- E. Pape: Any plan should accommodate 4 small groupings that foster kids knowing each other and teachers.
- K. Singh: Equal accessibility; size must be in line with what education recommends; we must realize possibility for regional realignment.
Any proposal without modulars?
The Superintendent explained that the Task Force reviewed all other possibilities. Double sessions and staggered sessions are educationally not sound and nearly impossible to implement.
- A. Livdahl: What needs to be done to solve NEASC problem?
Short-term problems shouldn't get lost in long-term debate.
If we build the modulars, is there still room to build a new building?
The Superintendent explained that there still would be room.
- D. Lowenthal: Reported that Senator Feinstein was sponsoring a bill encouraging smaller schools.
The Superintendent indicated that he would look up the information and include it in the Superintendent's report.
We must focus on smaller schools; different sizes in different locations.
Is the property at Rutland Heights Hospital a viable solution?
The Superintendent responded that this has been reviewed and the only part available is the fascia of one building; the site has considerable hazardous waste.
- C. Esperti: Interim and long-term solutions must be compatible.
The facility must be accessible to all member towns; extracurricular activities should be expanded.
The stress on Holden's infrastructure should be lessened.
We must find a plan that does not leave Holden with an empty high school building; the plan must have a contingency should Holden decide to leave the District.
- D. Leith: The educational program must not be watered down; we must provide program for the students not going to Harvard. We need more focus on the arts.

- M. Gennert: We must put kids first; we need to maintain fine articulation of school curriculum; we must have the lowest feasible teacher/student ratio, extracurricular activities, equitable opportunities, advanced placement/college preparatory where feasible, unified curricula across the middle schools. We must assess the students at the highest level but not teach to the MCAS test. The District must meet the accreditation criteria.
Buildings must be flexible.
- J. Gibbs: We must develop a timeline.
- S. Jordan: We must improve the curriculum for those not necessarily academic; the House Plan addressed this; the middle tier must be recognized.
Could the District draw off the population by making agreements with school choice districts or with magnet schools?
The Superintendent indicated that he would look into the Districts where Wachusett students are choosing to attend. He would provide a report to the Committee.

Following discussion, Chairman Rokicki summarized the critical components as:

1. Size
2. Regional Alignment
3. Long term and short term solutions must merge together and be compatible.
4. Safety
5. Academic Offerings (not forgetting the “middle students”)
6. Town/Community Accessibility
7. Affect of Town Infrastructure
8. Flexibility of Plan
 - a. Educational Model
 - b. Enrollment
 - c. Reuse – Flexibility
9. Proximity/Student alignment
10. Cost

Chairman Rokicki then restated (from Changing Red to Green) the Basic Process Assumptions:

- As a School Committee, we must acknowledge that there are three problems to solve – short term, interim, and long term.
- Any process must create a set of milestones, deliverables and schedules necessary in solving the three problems.
- The School Committee must strive⁴ to integrate the solutions as much as possible.

The goals should define the building, not the building defining the goals.

By consensus of the members present, Chairman Rokicki scheduled the next meeting for Thursday, October 18, 2001 in the Curriculum Center, District Offices, Jefferson School from 7:00 – 9:00 PM. It was also the consensus of the members present to post 9:00 PM as the end time for the meeting.

Chairman Rokicki reported that a Special Meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, October 23, 2001 at the Media Center at the High School to discuss Regional Assessment Issues, pending receipt of a copy of the adopted “Plan” from the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee – Town Funding Inequities. The copy will be distributed to members in anticipation of the meeting. Chairman Rokicki asked that all Chairs of member town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Boards also be sent a copy of the Plan and invited to attend the Special Meeting on October 23, 2001.

II. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(K. Fensin)
(J. Gibbs)

Vote:

In favor:

John Rokicki
Sherry Horeanopoulos
Carol Esperti
Kenneth Fensin
Michael Gennert
Jeffrey Gibbs
Sarah Jordan
Duncan Leith
Alice Livdahl

David Lowenthal
Peter MacDonald
John Nunnari
Elizabeth Pape
Julie Scott
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM.

ADT:ss