

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Special Meeting #252 Monday, October 20, 2003  
7:00 PM

Modular Cafeteria  
Wachusett Regional High School

*Committee Members Present:*

Duncan Leith, Chair	John Nunnari (8:00 PM)
Natalie Mello, Vice-Chair	Norman Plourde
Donald Benson	René Rodriguez
Elizabeth Brennan	John Rokicki (7:12 PM)
Charles Capparelli	Julie Scott
Clifford Connell	Michael Sherman
David Dickman	Tammy Tod
Patricia Gates (7:03 PM)	Margaret Watson
Mark James	Patricia Young (8:15 PM)
Alice Livdahl	

*Committee Members Absent:*

None

*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 7:00 PM. Chairman Duncan Leith turned the meeting over to the Superintendent who took a moment to pay public tribute to the late Louis Giantris, Ph.D., Principal, Paxton Center School.

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that there would be a public session following the recommendations requiring action by the School Committee.

I. Recommendations requiring action by the School Committee

A. Presentation on MCAS

The Superintendent introduced Jason Newton, School Psychologist Liaison, who presented the Spring 2003 MCAS Testing Analysis (attachment 2).

A brief question and answer session occurred among Committee Members. Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that there are no State or Federal financial incentives for continued high performance but rather a great deal of funding is available for lower performing districts.

B. Appropriation of SBAB funds in the amount of \$752,181 to the Town of Rutland for reimbursement for the renovation/addition at Naquag Elementary School

Motion: To appropriate SBAB funds in the amount of \$752,181 to the Town of Rutland for reimbursement for the renovation/addition at Naquag Elementary School

(J. Rokicki)  
(E. Brennan)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Clifford Connell  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
Alice Livdahl  
Norman Plourde  
René Rodriguez  
John Rokicki

Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

- C. Appropriation of SBAB funds in the amount of \$273,180 to the Town of Paxton for reimbursement for the renovation/addition at Paxton Center School

Motion: To appropriate SBAB funds in the amount of \$273,180 to the Town of Paxton for reimbursement for the renovation/addition at Paxton Center School

(N. Mello)  
(J. Rokicki)

Roll call vote:  
In favor:

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

Opposed:  
None

(Motion passed unanimously)

D. Approval of the Paxton Playground, as recommended by District Council

Motion: Whereas, under a certain lease entitled “School Lease Agreement,” dated July 1, 1994 (the “Lease”), the Town of Paxton, Massachusetts is Lessor and the Wachusett Regional School District is Lessee of a school building and the land appurtenant thereto known as the Paxton Center School, located at West Street, Paxton Massachusetts (the “Premises”);

Whereas, the Town of Paxton seeks to construct a new playground, including the installation of new playground equipment for toddlers, on an area within the Premises where there was formerly located a playground; and

Whereas, pursuant to Section 6.3 of the Lease, the construction of the new playground and installation of playground equipment on the Premises requires permission of the Wachusett Regional School District; and

Whereas, the Wachusett Regional School Committee finds that the installation and use of the proposed playground will not interfere with the use of the Premises for school purposes.

Now, therefore, the Town of Paxton be and is hereby authorized to use a portion of the Premises for the installation, construction, maintenance, access to and use of a playground and playground equipment, conditioned upon the following:

1. The playground and playground equipment shall be substantially constructed and installed within the area of the Premises where there was previously located a playground.
2. The new playground shall be constructed in accordance with the site plans attached hereto, and marked “Exhibit A”.
3. The Town of Paxton shall maintain liability insurance and property insurance on the playground and playground equipment “of combined/single limit coverage of \$3,000,000 for personal injury and property damage. The insurance certificate shall have both the Town and the District as insureds.
4. To the extent allowed by law, the Town agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the District from all claims,

losses, expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, as may be incurred by the District by reason of the use of the Premises.

5. The use of the playground shall not interfere with the use of the Premises for school purposes.

6. The Town will be responsible for all maintenance and repairs to the playground and the playground equipment.

The Town of Paxton may rely upon this vote as authorization by the Wachusett Regional School District, as Lessee under the Lease, for the Town of Paxton and/or its agents or contractor(s) to enter the Premises and construct and maintain the playground.

(A. Livdahl)  
(N. Mello)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

E. Approval of DP7142 **Policy Relating to Support Operations**  
***Energy Efficient Equipment*** – First Reading

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

(J. Rokicki)  
(N. Mello)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

F. Approval of DP3895 **Policy Relating to Pupil Services *Limited English Learners*** – First Reading

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

(J. Scott)  
(J. Rokicki)

Vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

F. Approval of Administrator of Special Education

Motion: To approve Steven Kaplan as Administrator of Special Education

(J. Rokicki)  
(N. Mello)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
René Rodriguez  
John Rokicki  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Margaret Watson

Opposed:  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Tammy Tod

(Motion passed 15-3)

II. Public Session

Kate White, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 3).

Tony Seeley, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 4).

Maureen Floryan, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 5).

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

David Gibbs, Sterling, read a prepared statement (attachment 7).

Patricia Wilmot, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 8).

Kim Paquette, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 9).

III. Discussion of FY04 Budget

Chairman Duncan Leith turned over the meeting to the Superintendent who presented an analysis of the FY04 budget (attachment 10). The Superintendent distributed a copy of the teachers' contract along with a summary of the teachers currently in the District.

Member Norman Plourde read a prepared statement (attachment 11).

Motion: In the event that more drastic cuts are necessary to have a school district budget by December 1, 2003, the School Committee



hereby directs the Superintendent of Schools to seek other avenues of reduction other than those affecting the curriculum and the necessary staffing to maintain the quality of education of the District

(N. Plourde)

(C. Capparelli)

Following inquiry, the Superintendent advised the Committee that rebalancing the school population would increase cost due to transportation, short of closing a school. The Superintendent reported that due to the requirements of the Regional Agreement, elementary school students cannot be transported over town lines, except for an emergency, which has been defined by District Counsel as flood, fire, or other natural disaster, unless both the sending community and the receiving community agree at town meetings. The only possibility would be to close one of the Holden elementary schools, which is not feasible due to the enrollment.

A suggestion was made to let the numbers speak to the community in order to convince the community that the value is in the classroom.

A friendly amendment was offered by Member David Dickman to direct the Superintendent to look at discretionary spending that may possibly be cut. This was not accepted by the maker of the motion, Member Norman Plourde.

The Superintendent reminded the Committee that when asked by a member previously to identify drastic cuts, he did not think that it would be appropriate to identify positions prior to the outcome of the override unless the School Committee directed otherwise.

Several members expressed the sentiment that no further cuts should be made unless the Commissioner so directs.

The Superintendent reported that there is no fat in the budget. The purpose of the budget presentation was to provide further knowledge to the Committee and the public. He reported that it is not prudent to consider reducing the heat in buildings or to reduce maintenance. The communities spent millions of dollars on new or renovated buildings and not to maintain the buildings would be foolhardy. The School Committee's budget is the community's budget for the children of the District.

The Superintendent recommended to the Committee that this is a time to listen, a time to hear. It is not a time to decide. He advised that the Committee should listen to what the Member Towns of Holden and Princeton are putting on the table. The Committee should not stop negotiating; should not stop listening.

The Superintendent explained that the purpose of a mediator is to listen to all positions, without taking sides and to provide clarity of each side's position, removing political and personal agendas.

Motion: To extend the meeting by thirty minutes

(J. Scott)

(M. James)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Clifford Connell  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod

Opposed:

René Rodriguez  
John Rokicki  
Margaret Watson  
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 15-4)

Following inquiry, the Superintendent reported that he had already approached the teachers union with a list of budgetary requests. The

concession made by the collective bargaining agents was a reduction in health insurance benefits, which saved the Committee money..

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the idea of a mediator was discussed at the Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Community Outreach. The idea was presented to the Holden and Princeton Selectboards.

Motion: To table the motion.

(C. Capparelli)  
(D. Dickman)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Clifford Connell  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Mark James  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
René Rodriguez  
John Rokicki  
Julie Scott  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson  
Patricia Young

Opposed:

Alice Livdahl

(Motion passed 18-1)

The Superintendent reported that due to the budget dilemma, the Employee Recognition dinner has been postponed. The meeting on Monday will be begin at 7:00 PM, not 7:30 PM as previously posted. The area legislators have been invited to come to the meeting to be recognized.

Chairman Duncan Leith reported that the Business/Finance Subcommittee is scheduled meet Tuesday, October 21, 2003, at 6:30 PM in the Curriculum Center at the Central Office.

Motion: To direct the Superintendent to detail what \$4.125 million in cuts would do to the budget.

(D. Benson)  
(A. Livdahl)

Motion: To extend the meeting by five minutes

(M. Sherman)  
(D. Benson)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
Clifford Connell  
David Dickman  
~~Patricia Gates~~  
Mark James  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Norman Plourde  
René Rodriguez  
John Rokicki  
Michael Sherman  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

PATRICIA GATES  
Julie Scott  
Patricia Young

(Motion passed 17-2)

Motion: To move the question

(M. Sherman)  
(D. Benson)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

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

Opposed:

John Rokicki

(Motion passed 18-1)

Roll call vote on main motion, which reads: To direct the Superintendent to detail what \$4.125 million in cuts would do to the budget.

In favor:

Donald Benson  
Charles Capparelli  
David Dickman  
Patricia Gates  
Alice Livdahl  
Norman Plourde  
Michael Sherman

Patricia Young

Opposed:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Clifford Connell  
Mark James  
John Nunnari  
René Rodriguez  
John Rokicki  
Julie Scott  
Tammy Tod  
Margaret Watson

(Motion failed 8-11)

IV. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(N. Mello)  
(J. Scott)

Vote:

In favor:

Duncan Leith  
Natalie Mello  
Donald Benson  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Charles Capparelli  
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)

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss/School Committee/Minutes