

**WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

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

Minutes

Special Meeting #227 Wednesday, November 7, 2001

7:00 PM

Media Center  
Wachusett Regional High School

*Committee Members Present:*

Sherry Horeanopoulos, Vice-chairman	David Lowenthal
Mary Copeland	Peter MacDonald
Michael Gennert	Kelly Maxwell
Jeffrey Gibbs	John Nunnari
Sarah Jordan	Julie Scott
Duncan Leith	Kathleen Singh
Alice Livdahl	Jeffrey Wentzell

*Committee Members Absent:*

John Rokicki, Chairman	Kimberly Ferguson
Carol Esperti	Jane James
Kenneth Fensin	Elizabeth Pape

*Administration Present:*

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools  
Philip Campbell, Director of Student/Information Services  
Susan Sullivan, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

*Others present:*

Linda Lehans, *The Landmark*  
Richard Halloran, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*  
Christine Nelson, *Sterling Meetinghouse News*  
Joe Giotta, Holden Finance Committee  
Stanley Moss, Chair Princeton Advisory Committee  
Maureen Floryan, Holden  
Larry Floryan, Holden  
Bob Becker, Holden  
Debbie Croucher, Sterling  
David Gibbs, Sterling  
Susan Schneeweis, Sterling

I. Call to Order

Vice chair Sherry Horeanopoulos called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

Vice-chair Sherry Horeanopoulos opened up the meeting to public comment.

Maureen Floryan, Holden read a prepared statement (attachment 1).

II. Substitute Motion -- Section 4 Regional Agreement Language

Substitute Motion: That the school committee and Superintendent enthusiastically support and work towards the immediate implementation of the attached proposed language ‘Section 4 Method of Apportioning Costs of the Regional School District’ and the Superintendent forward to Town Selectboards, following review of counsel, for action at December 4, 2001 Town Meetings and the Superintendent to provide language to protect the budget assessment process.”

**Proposed Language for Regional Agreement and Bridging Plan**

**CURRENT LANGUAGE:**

“Section 4. METHOD OF APPORTIONING COSTS OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Payment of all operating costs shall be apportioned among the member towns on the basis of their respective previous five year average total enrollment as of October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year of the preceding five fiscal years.”

**PROPOSED LANGUAGE**

“Section 4. METHOD OF APPORTIONING COSTS OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT” SHALL BE DELETED AND REPLACED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

The payment of all operation costs for the District shall be apportioned among the member towns based on the following formula: the “**Required Net School Spending (NSS)**” for each Wachusett member town, as determined by the Massachusetts Department of Education, as well as any approved District appropriations over and above Required NSS, shall be aggregated. To that sum shall each town’s District enrollment percentage be multiplied; said percentage to be determined by the individual town’s “**Foundation Enrollment**” (as of October 1<sup>st</sup> of the previous year) during the fiscal year for which the appropriation shall take effect. From the resulting calculation shall each town’s total “**Chapter 70 Aid**”, as determined by the Massachusetts Department of Education, be subtracted. The net amount shall be each member town’s required payment to the Wachusett Regional School District for the fiscal year of the apportionment, except that there shall be an initial four-year period of transition as follows:

**4-YEAR BRIDGING PLAN**

**TRANSITION RULES**

YEAR 1

**LOCAL TOWNS** – The “**Required Net School Spending (NSS)**,” as well as any approved District appropriations over and above Required NSS, shall be totaled and multiplied by the 4-year rolling average enrollment percentage for each District town. From these resulting apportionment amounts shall each town’s total “**Chapter 70 Aid**” be subtracted, producing its Modified Per Capita assessment. Said assessment shall then be compared to each town’s “**Net Minimum Contribution**,” as determined by the State. For each town determined to have “underpaid” (Net Minimum Contribution minus Modified per Capita assessment), the resulting calculation shall be multiplied by **60%**. Said amount shall be added to the underpaying town’s assessment for the upcoming fiscal year.

**WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT** – An amount equal to **40%** of the underpayment as calculated above shall be subtracted from the overpaying town’s assessment for the upcoming fiscal year; said amount to be absorbed by the Wachusett Regional School District and not assessed to any member town.

YEAR 2

**LOCAL TOWNS** – The “**Required Net School Spending (NSS)**,” as well as any approved District appropriations over and above Required NSS, shall be totaled and multiplied by the **3-year** rolling average enrollment percentage for each District town. From these resulting apportionment amounts shall each town’s total “**Chapter 70 Aid**” be subtracted, producing its Modified Per Capita assessment. Said assessment shall then be compared to each town’s “**Net Minimum Contribution**,” as determined by the State. For each town determined to have “underpaid” (Net Minimum Contribution minus Modified per Capita assessment), the resulting calculation shall be multiplied by **70%**. Said amount shall be added to the underpaying town’s assessment for the upcoming fiscal year.

**WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT** – An amount equal to **30%** of the underpayment as calculated above shall be subtracted from the overpaying town’s assessment for the upcoming fiscal year; said amount to be absorbed by the Wachusett Regional School District and not assessed to any member town.

YEAR 3

**LOCAL TOWNS** – The “**Required Net School Spending (NSS)**,” as well as any approved District appropriations over and above Required NSS, shall be totaled and multiplied by the **2-year** rolling average enrollment percentage for each District town. From these resulting apportionment amounts shall each town’s total “**Chapter 70 Aid**” be subtracted, producing its Modified Per Capita assessment. Said assessment shall then be compared to each town’s “**Net Minimum Contribution**,” as determined by the State. For each town determined to have “underpaid” (Net Minimum Contribution minus Modified per Capita assessment), the resulting calculation shall be multiplied by **80%**. Said amount shall be added to the underpaying town’s assessment for the upcoming fiscal year.

**WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT** – An amount equal to **20%** of the underpayment as calculated above shall be subtracted from the overpaying town's assessment for the upcoming fiscal year; said amount to be absorbed by the Wachusett Regional School District and not assessed to any member town.

**YEAR 4**

**LOCAL TOWNS** – The “**Required Net School Spending (NSS)**.” As well as any approved District appropriations over and above Required NSS, shall be totaled and multiplied by the **prior October enrollment percentage** for each town. From these resulting apportionment amounts shall each town's total “**Chapter 70 Aid**” be subtracted, producing its Modified Per Capita assessment.

Approval by the member Town of this amendment shall constitute an election by the member Town to reallocate the sum of all the member towns required local contributions to the District in accordance with the Regional Agreement, pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 16B, effective for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2002 and for this amendment to be effective, the approval by all member towns of the amendment constituting an election by each member town to reallocate the sum of all member towns required local contributions to the District for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2002.

For subsequent fiscal years commencing July 1, 2003, this amendment shall be subject to the election of all the member Towns on or before November 30, 2002 and on or before November 30<sup>th</sup> of each calendar year thereafter at a Town meeting called by the Board of Selectmen at the Town's expense to reallocate the sum of all the member towns required local contributions to the District in accordance with the Regional Agreement for the ensuing fiscal year pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 16B.

Provided, however, in the event only four (4) of the member towns vote to approve the above amendment at Town Meetings in December 2001 in the event in any subsequent year all member towns do not elect to so reallocate, then Section 4 of the Regional Agreement shall be amended as follows:

“Section 4. METHOD OF APPORTIONING COSTS OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Payment of all operating costs shall be apportioned and assessed to each member town based upon the required net school spending for each member town as provided by Chapter 70 as well as any approved District appropriations over and above the net school spending which shall be totaled and multiplied by the prior October student enrollment percentage of each member town.

(S. Jordan)  
(M. Copeland)

In response to inquiry by the Committee the Superintendent clarified that the additional wording was consistent with the direction of the Committee at the October 23, 2001 Special School Committee Meeting:

- Year 1 deleting FY03 for consistency;
- The first two additional paragraphs (all caps) include a provision to cover the requirements of MGL Chapter 71, Chapter 16B;
- Paragraphs three and four (all caps) include a provision which would modify the Regional Agreement calculation for assessments above Net School Spending if four towns approve in December;

In response to additional member concern that the School Committee could request funds beyond Net School Spending, the Superintendent assured the Committee that that provision was included in the original motion.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Sherry Horeanopoulos  
Mary Copeland  
Sarah Jordan  
Duncan Leith  
David Lowenthal  
Peter MacDonald  
Kelly Maxwell  
Julie Scott  
Kathleen Singh  
Jeffrey Wentzell

Opposed:

Michael Gennert  
Jeffrey Gibbs  
John Nunnari

(Motion passed 11-3)

With consent of the Committee Vice-chair Horeanopoulos took item IV out of order.

IV. Paxton Request for Additional Warrant Articles

The Superintendent distributed copies of the Paxton Selectboard's request for additional articles (attachment 2).

Motion: To accept the Paxton Selectboard request to add warrant articles to the Town Meeting on December 4<sup>th</sup> and that the additional warrants will follow the two School Committee warrants.

(J. Wentzell)

(A. Livdahl

During discussion, and in response to an inquiry, the Superintendent assured the Committee that this was consistent with School Policy and that the Superintendent would charge the town for incremental costs.

Vote:

In favor:

Sherry Horeanopoulos  
Mary Copeland  
Michael Gennert  
Jeffrey Gibbs  
Sarah Jordan  
Duncan Leith  
Alice Livdahl  
David Lowenthal  
Peter MacDonald  
Kelly Maxwell  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Kathleen Singh  
Jeffrey Wentzell

Opposed:

None

(Motion passed unanimously)

III. Modular Classroom Proposal

The Superintendent distributed copies of information regarding the modular proposal (attachment 3) and recommended to the School Committee to adopt the modular classroom proposal at a cost of \$8,424,965. A PowerPoint presentation was made by the Superintendent containing information regarding the proposal (attachment 4). The Superintendent informed the Committee that although the presentation showed a site in the parking area, that review will be made as to the feasibility of placing the modulars in front of the building.

Motion: That the sum of \$8,424,965 is appropriated for the purpose of purchasing a modular school addition to be attached to the existing Wachusett Regional High School containing approximately 60,000 +/- square feet of floor space including classrooms, science and computer laboratories, a cafeteria, a gym and including administrative and maintenance services areas. The project shall include the design, prefabrication, site preparation, assembly/installation, and connections to all services required to complete and

deliver a usable, modular school addition designed and constructed, it is the intent of the District, in approximately three (3) equal phases over three (3) consecutive years, each phase to be delivered on or before August 1<sup>st</sup> of each of the successive years beginning with the year 2002 and ending in 2004; that this appropriation be raised by the incurring of debt by the issuance of bonds or notes under chapter 462 of the Acts of 1977, Section 16 of Chapter 71 of the General Laws and Section 15 of the amended Wachusett Regional School District Agreement and to that end the District Treasurer, with the approval of the regional district School Committee, be authorized to issue bonds or notes therefore; that pursuant to section 15.3 of the Amended Wachusett Regional School District Agreement it is hereby determined that the approval of said debt by the member towns shall be by vote taken at special town meetings with vote counts by a printed yes/no ballot; and that the Superintendent is hereby authorized to enter into and execute all contracts necessary or material to such work and to act or do anything relative thereto.

(D. Leith)

(J. Gibbs)

In response to discussion, the Superintendent explained that this proposal was the best of the worst alternatives left. The administration presented what it believed was the best, a new building, and the community did not support it. State reimbursement is going to significantly change, not only will the districts receive less, but it will take longer to initiate the reimbursement process beyond the five-year limit on short-term borrowing. The proposal as presented is intended to not only address the expanded enrollment but also to impede the loss of accreditation. The District will maintain its probationary status until such time as all deficiencies are corrected.

In response to discussion on extended school day, the Superintendent advised the Committee that the proposed solution is the best short-term resolution available – an extended day would erode the building at an incredible rate; staffing would be a nightmare; athletic programs would go askew; there is no room in the cafeteria.

In response to discussion on the possibility of the break-up of the District, the Superintendent advised the Committee that modulars would be available to towns for their own building programs at very reasonable costs.

The Superintendent reinforced the excellence of the District and the high school as manifest in the student performance on MAT-8, MCAS, advanced placement, and SAT scores, all of which continue to rise throughout the District.

Motion: To move the question

(J. Gibbs)

(J. Wentzell)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Mary Copeland  
Jeffrey Gibbs  
Duncan Leith  
Alice Livdahl  
John Nunnari  
Jeffrey Wentzell

Opposed:

Sherry Horeanopoulos  
Michael Gennert  
Sarah Jordan  
David Lowenthal  
Peter MacDonald  
Kelly Maxwell  
Julie Scott  
Kathleen Singh

(Motion failed 6-8)

In response to inquiry the Superintendent reinforced that accreditation must be addressed in the future; a permanent plan must be in place. He informed the Committee that parking accommodations would be addressed through additional spaces in front of the building and the leasing of available space within the community, which would require a shuttle bus.

In response to inquiry on how to reduce the requested amount the Superintendent informed the Committee that the project could be approved by phases, the first phase which would have to be \$4,732,452, per the proposal. Provisions were already contained in the Request for Proposal to enable the District to discontinue Phases II and/or III, and that was the cause of Phase I being so high because of the site preparation was included.

Motion: To amend the motion by inserting after “Wachusett Regional High School” in the first sentence, the following “such addition to serve as an interim solution to accommodate increasing enrollment and to forestall loss of accreditation.”

(M. Gennert)  
(J. Gibbs)

A friendly amendment was offered by Member Julie Scott to make the motion for a five-year proposal but it was ruled out of order.



Roll call vote on amendment:

In favor:

Sherry Horeanopoulos  
Mary Copeland  
Michael Gennert  
Jeffrey Gibbs  
Sarah Jordan  
Duncan Leith  
Alice Livdahl  
Peter MacDonald  
Kelly Maxwell  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Kathleen Singh  
Jeffrey Wentzell

Opposed:

David Lowenthal

(Motion passed 13-1)

A discussion ensued on the motion as amended.

Motion: To move the question

(J. Wentzell)  
(M. Copeland)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Mary Copeland  
Duncan Leith  
Alice Livdahl  
David Lowenthal  
Peter MacDonald  
Kelly Maxwell  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Jeffrey Wentzell

Opposed:

Sherry Horeanopoulos  
Michael Gennert  
Jeffrey Gibbs  
Sarah Jordan  
Kathleen Singh

(Motion failed 9-5)

Motion: To amend the motion by substituting

“That the sum of \$4,732,452 is appropriated for the purpose of purchasing Phase I of a modular school addition to be attached to the existing Wachusett Regional High School, such addition to serve as an interim solution to accommodate increasing enrollment and to forestall loss of accreditation, containing 32,000 +/- square feet of floor space, including classrooms, science and computer laboratories, life skills room, a cafeteria meeting and maintenance service areas and furnishings and equipment, and including a replacement fire suppression system for the high school building, including the modular additions, in compliance with the requirements of the Holden Fire. The project shall include the design prefabrication, site preparation for three phases, assembly/installation, and connections to all services required to complete and deliver a usable, modular school addition designed and constructed, it is the intent of the District, in approximately three (3) equal phases over three (3) consecutive years, each phase to be delivered subject to town approval on or before August 1<sup>st</sup> of each of the successive years beginning with the year 2002 and ending in 2004;” for

“That the sum of \$8,424,965 is appropriated for the purpose of purchasing a modular school addition to be attached to the existing Wachusett Regional High School containing approximately 60,000 square feet of floor space, more or less, including classrooms, science and computer laboratories, a cafeteria, a gym and including administrative and maintenance services areas. The project shall include the design, prefabrication, site preparation, assembly/installation, and connections to all services required to complete and deliver a usable, modular school addition designed and constructed, it is the intent of the District, in approximately three (3) equal phases over three (3) consecutive years, each phase to be delivered on or before August 1<sup>st</sup> of each of the successive years beginning with the year 2002 and ending in 2004”.

(J. Gibbs)

(P. MacDonald)

Member Mary Copeland left the meeting at 9:35 PM.

Discussion followed on the amendment.

Roll call vote on amendment:

In favor:

Sherry Horeanopoulos

Jeffrey Gibbs

Sarah Jordan

Peter MacDonald

Kelly Maxwell

John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Kathleen Singh

Opposed:

Michael Gennert  
Duncan Leith  
Alice Livdahl  
David Lowenthal  
Jeffrey Wentzell

(Motion passed 8-5)

Discussion continued on the main motion as amended.

Roll call vote on main motion as amended:

In favor:

Sherry Horeanopoulos  
Mary Copeland  
Michael Gennert  
Jeffrey Gibbs  
Sarah Jordan  
Duncan Leith  
Peter MacDonald  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Kathleen Singh  
Jeffrey Wentzell

Opposed:

David Lowenthal

(Motion passed 11-1)

IV. Paxton Request for Additional Warrant Articles

(Acted upon out of order.)

V. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(J. Gibbs)  
(J. Nunnari)

Vote:

In favor:

Sherry Horeanopoulos  
Michael Gennert  
Jeffrey Gibbs  
Duncan Leith  
David Lowenthal  
Peter MacDonald  
Kelly Maxwell  
John Nunnari  
Julie Scott  
Kathleen Singh  
Jeffrey Wentzell

Opposed:  
Sarah Jordan

(Motion passed 11-1)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:ss  
School Committee/Minutes