

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1137 Monday, November 26, 2007

Cafeteria
Davis Hill Elementary School

Committee Members Present:

Margaret Watson, Chair	Julianne Kelley
Cynthia Bazinet, Vice-chair	Duncan Leith
Robert Carter	Judith Newton
Colleen Cipro	John Nunnari
Shirley Conrad	Norman Plourde
Melinda Coyle	Michael Sherman
Steven Hammond	Kathleen Sweeney
Robert Imber	Marcie Zaharee (7:15 PM)

Committee Members Absent:

Thomas Ackerman	Mark James
Cynthia Ahearn	Joseph Sova

Administration Present:

Thomas G. Pandiscio, Superintendent of Schools
Jack Locke, Deputy Superintendent
Darryll McCall, Interim Director of Operations
Peter Brennan, Business Manager
Rebecca Petersen, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

Student Representatives Present:

Hillary Blakeney
Sean Lane
Stephen Palombo

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

Chair Watson called the regular meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:05 PM.

I. Public Hearing

Chair Watson read the Guidelines for Public Hearing.

Jesse Caplan, Holden, addressed the School Committee.

Kimball Gross, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 2).

Member Zaharee joined the meeting.

Chair Watson took this opportunity to address the public and the School Committee regarding the letter which appeared in the Telegram & Gazette's The People's Forum on November 20, 2007 (attachment 3). Chair Watson referenced School Committee Policies 6436 and 3240. Superintendent Pandisico distributed copies of the Anti-Defamation League publication "The December Dilemma" (attachment 4). The Superintendent explained what can be done and what cannot be done per the Anti-Defamation League guidelines, which he believes all principals and schools follow. Chair Watson thanked Mr. Caplan and Mr. Gross for bringing this matter before the School Committee.

Dawn Torres-Gale, Holden, read a prepared statement and shared a handout (HiFi Program Description) (attachments 5 & 6).

Jean Theurkauf, President of Upstage (WRHS drama program parent support group) invited School Committee members to attend the upcoming production of *A Christmas Carol* and told members interested in attending to contact the high school for complimentary tickets.

II. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of 1136th Regular Meeting Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on November 13, 2007

The minutes of the regular meeting held November 13, 2007 were approved by consensus, with Members Carter, Newton, Sweeney and Zaharee abstaining.

B. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the WRSD Committee held on November 13, 2007

Chair Watson asked members to review the minutes and if no corrections of substance were noted, these minutes could be approved in public session. If substantive corrections are noted, the minutes would be approved in executive session.

Motion: To approve the executive session minutes of the WRSD Committee held on November 13, 2007, not to be released.

(D. Leith)

(M. Coyle)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson

Cynthia Bazinet

Colleen Cipro
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
Robert Carter
Judith Newton
Kathleen Sweeney
Marcie Zaharee

(The motion passed 12-0-4)

III. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

Chair Watson reminded the Committee that if there were questions regarding the Business Manager'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 Watson offered congratulations to Member John Nunnari, recipient of a MASC Lifetime Achievement 2007 award. The School Committee gave Member Nunnari a round of applause.

Chair Watson turned the meeting over to Superintendent Pandiscio, who showed a PowerPoint presentation explaining 2007 MCAS results (attachment 6). Following the presentation, members were given the opportunity to ask questions of the Superintendent.

8:05 PM Member Zaharee left the table.

B. Student Representatives

High school student Hillary Blakeney reported on behalf of the student representatives. She told that report cards had been recently distributed, the

modular buildings have been disassembled and are being removed from the high school site, and the winter sports season is underway. Hillary also reported that the microscope donated by UMass is available for use in classrooms when signed out by teachers, a Nobel winner addressed a group of 150 students at the high school and the Black Box Theater is getting used. Hillary's report was very upbeat and positive.

8:10 PM Member Zaharee returned to the table.

- C. Management Subcommittee (M. Watson, Chair, D. Leith, Vice-chair, C. Ahearn, C. Bazinet, R. Carter, R. Imber, J. Nunnari, M. Sherman, J. Sova)

Chair Watson reported the next meeting of the Management Subcommittee will be Monday, December 3, 2007, at 6:00 PM in the Curriculum Center.

- D. Education Subcommittee (C. Bazinet, Chair, S. Hammond, Vice-chair, C. Ahearn, J. Kelley, J. Nunnari, N. Plourde, K. Sweeney, M. Zaharee)

Subcommittee Chair Bazinet reported on the November 14th meeting, which students Hillary Blakeney, Sean Lane and Stephen Palombo attended. Subcommittee Chair Bazinet thanked the students for preparing the backpack tip sheet, which Sean Lane reported has been copied and will be distributed in Freshmen Seminar classes.

Subcommittee Chair Bazinet referred to attachment #4 of the November 21, 2007 Superintendent's Report (Evaluation of the Superintendent, Thomas G. Pandiscio, Ed.D., Performance Period: 7/1/2006 through 6/30/2007 Education Subcommittee), which she read aloud.

Motion: The School Committee accept the Education Subcommittee's recommendation for the Superintendent's evaluation, as presented.

(C. Bazinet)

(S. Hammond)

Discussion ensued.

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith

Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Kathleen Sweeney
Marcie Zaharee

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

- E. Business/Finance Subcommittee (M. Sherman, Chair, S. Conrad, Vice-chair, T. Ackerman, M. Coyle, M. James, J. Newton, J. Sova)

Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Sherman reported the subcommittee will meet December 5, 2007, at which time the evaluation of District Treasurer James Dunbar will be addressed.

- F. Community Outreach Subcommittee (K. Sweeney, Chair, N. Plourde, Vice-chair, C. Cipro, M. Coyle, J. Newton)

Community Outreach Subcommittee Chair Sweeney announced the next meeting will be December 6, 2007.

- G. Audit Advisory Board (Shirley Conrad, Chair, Judith Newton, Vice-chair, School Committee Representatives)

Audit Advisory Board Chair Conrad informed the School Committee that auditors from Powers & Sullivan began their work at the Central Office on November 26, 2007. AAB members will be polled to determine if a meeting can be scheduled shortly, to give the AAB an opportunity to meet with the auditors. If a meeting cannot be scheduled in the next week or so, AAB Chair Conrad will wait until after the first of the year to call a meeting.

- H. Ad-Hoc Subcommittees

1. Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Review the Regional Agreement (J. Nunnari, Chair, M. Coyle, S. Hammond, R. Imber, N. Plourde)

Ad Hoc Subcommittee Chair Nunnari reported on the November 19th meeting and advised the School Committee of the ad hoc subcommittee's next meeting on November 29th. Ad Hoc Subcommittee Chair Nunnari called the School Committee's attention to Attachment #2 of the November 21, 2007 Superintendent's Report and asked Member Hammond to review this document with the School Committee (attachment 8). Member Hammond explained that during public hearings hosted by the Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Review the Regional Agreement, some Member Town officials brought

forward issues of concern, these issues not having direct connection to the work of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee. This document was reviewed and discussed.

Motion: To remand the following to the Business/Finance Subcommittee:

1. *The first issue outside the regional agreement to be brought up was the budget process. Representatives of the Paxton Finance Committee and the Paxton Selectboard would like to see two changes to our budget process.*

1.1 *First they would like to see us present a budget to the towns in December or January. This would give the towns a solid understanding of what we were asking for as they prepared their own municipal budgets. In the absence of state revenue information a "worst case" budget might be better than nothing.*

1.2 *Secondly they would like to see a cap on the budget increase. Initially the number 2 1/2% was put forwards as the same cap the towns have. Other numbers like 6% were also discussed. The Paxton representatives felt this was reasonable because the towns were capped and having this cap would allow them to predict the "worst case" school budget very early in their budget planning cycle.*

2. *The Sterling Selectboard had a number of concerns which were outside of the Regional Agreement.*

2.1 *The Sterling Selectboard recommends that the district be responsible for all safety related item, including streetlights, signage and signals near the schools.*

2.2 *Town functions should be exempt from paying fees for the use of the buildings as long as they are responsible for paying for major repairs to those buildings.*

2.3 *Towns should be fully reimbursed for maintenance expenses, and the reimbursement rate should be indexed to inflation.*

(M. Sherman)
(S. Conrad)

Member Carter suggested a friendly amendment (to direct the Business/Finance Subcommittee to report back to the full School Committee before the School Committee vote on the FY09 budget), which was accepted by the maker and seconder of the motion.

Motion: To remand the following to the Business/Finance Subcommittee and direct the Business/Finance Subcommittee to report back to the full School Committee before the School Committee vote on the FY09 budget:

1. *The first issue outside the regional agreement to be brought up was the budget process. Representatives of the Paxton Finance Committee and the Paxton Selectboard would like to see two changes to our budget process.*

1.1 *First they would like to see us present a budget to the towns in December or January. This would give the towns a solid understanding of what we were asking for as they prepared their own municipal budgets. In the absence of state revenue information a “worst case” budget might be better than nothing.*

1.2 *Secondly they would like to see a cap on the budget increase. Initially the number 2 ½% was put forwards as the same cap the towns have. Other numbers like 6% were also discussed. The Paxton representatives felt this was reasonable because the towns were capped and having this cap would allow them to predict the “worst case” school budget very early in their budget planning cycle.*

2. *The Sterling Selectboard had a number of concerns which were outside of the Regional Agreement.*

2.1 *The Sterling Selectboard recommends that the district be responsible for all safety related item, including streetlights, signage and signals near the schools.*

2.2 *Town functions should be exempt from paying fees for the use of the buildings as long as they are responsible for paying for major repairs to those buildings.*

2.3 *Towns should be fully reimbursed for maintenance expenses, and the reimbursement rate should be indexed to inflation.*

(M. Sherman)

(S. Conrad)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman

Kathleen Sweeney
Marcie Zaharee

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

Motion: To remand the following to the Management Subcommittee:
3. *Representatives from a couple of towns felt that this was a good process and that we should go to the towns to solicit input more often.*

(S. Hammond)
(D. Leith)

Member Imber suggested this matter might be more appropriately addressed by the Community Outreach Subcommittee. This friendly amendment was accepted by the maker and seconder of the motion.

Motion: To remand the following to the Community Outreach Subcommittee:

3. *Representatives from a couple of towns felt that this was a good process and that we should go to the towns to solicit input more often.*

(S. Hammond)
(D. Leith)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Kathleen Sweeney
Marcie Zaharee

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

I. Building Committees

1. High School

Member Leith credited Hillary Blakeney for giving a thorough and accurate update on the high school building project. Member Leith gave additional updates on the auditorium flooring and the tennis courts. He reported on recent sporting activities at the high school site (alumni road race and an alumni field hockey game) and commented how impressed he was by the enthusiastic participation by many (high school custodial staff, students, teachers, alumni). Member Leith brought copies of the recent publication – Mountaineer Magazine 2008. The next High School Building Committee meeting will be November 29th.

J. School Council Reports

Central Tree Middle School (J. Nunnari), Chocksett Middle School (J. Sova), Davis Hill Elementary School (C. Bazinet), Dawson Elementary School (M. James), Glenwood Elementary School (J. Kelley), Houghton Elementary School (N. Plourde), Mayo Elementary School (S. Hammond), Mountview Middle School (M. Sherman), Naquag Elementary School (C. Cipro), Paxton Center School (C. Ahearn), Thomas Prince School (R Imber/K. Sweeney), Wachusett Regional High School (D. Leith), Special Education Parent Advisory Council (M. Zaharee)

Member Carter questioned why School Council Reports appear on every School Committee meeting agenda. Chair Watson explained the importance of this agenda item and updates given by School Committee liaisons, especially when school councils are developing School Improvement Plans. Following discussion and debate, it was recommended, and agreed to, that this agenda item continue to be included on School Committee agenda.

Member Zaharee reported on the SEPAC meeting, with information provided her by SEPAC President Erica Ploof.

Member Nunnari – Central Tree Middle School, November 14th

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Member Kelley asked for an update on the vans used to transport Wachusett students. The Superintendent reported that District transportation providers have confirmed they do not use 15 passenger vans to transport students. Member Sweeney asked if the correspondence received on this matter, from

Holden residents Jackson, has been responded to. To date, there has been no written response to the Jacksons, but one will be prepared.

8:54 PM Member Sweeney left the table.

Member Kelley requested that the Superintendent confirm in writing that McCarthy Bus does not use 12 passenger vans to transport WRSD students, which the Superintendent agreed to do.

8:56 PM Member Sweeney returned to the table.

B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

There were no recommendations requiring action brought before the School Committee.

VI. Public Hearing

No one from the public wished to address the School Committee.

VII. Unfinished Business

Member Carter gave a report on his recent attendance at the MASC/MASS Joint Conference. Copies of the resolutions voted on at the Joint Conference were distributed and Member Carter reported on the votes taken on the resolutions (attachment 9).

9:00 PM Superintendent Pandiscio left the table.

Chair Watson thanked Member Carter for representing this School Committee.

9:03 PM Superintendent Pandiscio returned to the table.

VIII. New Business

Motion: To remand the HiFi Program Description, presented by Holden resident Dawn Torres-Gale, to the Education Subcommittee for consideration, with a report back to the full School Committee.

(J. Newton)

(M. Coyle)

This motion was discussed and debated.

Motion: To move the question.

(R. Carter)

(D. Leith)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Kathleen Sweeney
Marcie Zaharee

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Margaret Watson

(The motion passed 15-0-1)

Vote on main motion:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Kathleen Sweeney
Marcie Zaharee

Opposed:

None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

Member Carter brought back up for discussion the letter which appeared in the November 20, 2007 edition of the Worcester Telegram & Gazette, The People's Forum. He voiced his opinion that since the letter appeared to contain false charges against the District, these allegations should be addressed. Chair Watson offered to write a letter of response.

Motion: Within seven days the School Committee Chair or the Superintendent of Schools will respond in writing to the letter in The People's Forum, November 20, 2007 edition of the Worcester Telegram & Gazette.

(R. Carter)
(J. Kelley)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Kathleen Sweeney
Marcie Zaharee

Opposed:

None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

Discussion of the topic of diversity continued.

Motion: To direct the Superintendent, through the operations managers to the Cabinet, to address the concept of diversity.

(C. Cipro)

This motion was withdrawn when it was explained that school principals have previously been provided with relevant information and materials dealing with diversity.

IX. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn

(M. Coyle)
(D. Leith)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
Shirley Conrad
Melinda Coyle
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Michael Sherman
Kathleen Sweeney
Marcie Zaharee

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas G. Pandiscio, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

TGP:rlp