

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Special Meeting #269, Tuesday, August 23, 2005
7:00 PM

Library

Central Tree Middle School, Rutland

Committee Members Present:

Alice Livdahl, Chair	Kelly Maxwell
Cynthia Ahearn	Phillip Mighdoll
Cynthia Bazinet	Judith Newton
Charles Capparelli	John Nunnari
Robert Carter	Norman Plourde
Shirley Conrad (7:10 PM)	Cheryl Rauh
David Gibbs	Kathleen Sweeney
Mark James	Tammy Tod (7:08 PM)
Mary Catherine Maher	Margaret Watson

Committee Members Absent:

Elizabeth Brennan	Michael Sherman
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Administration Present:

Alfred D. Tutela, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
John Locke, Interim Director of Operations
Rebecca Petersen, Interim Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

District Counsel Leo McCabe

- I. Chair Livdahl called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. Chair Livdahl stated public comment would be allowed at this meeting.

Glenn Gaudette, Holden, read a prepared statement (attachment 1)

Chair Livdahl reminded the Committee that 14 votes of the School Committee (2/3) are needed to vote an appropriation, not just a simple majority.

II. FY06 Appropriation

Chair Livdahl asked District Counsel Leo McCabe to speak to the Committee, explaining details of the budget process as outlined in his letter of August 16, 2005, which had previously been shared with the School Committee. Attorney McCabe clarified for the Committee that a budget is established one time for a fiscal year and the School Committee is responsible to act since there is no default position in the law. The Superintendent asked questions of Attorney McCabe, seeking clarification for the School Committee. The Superintendent informed the Committee that if the School Committee needs to increase the assessments, it requires a unanimous vote of the Member Towns. The Superintendent deferred comment on the budget process until opportunity was given to hear from the Members. Chair Livdahl called upon the seven School Committee Members who had requested this special meeting to speak, then opened the floor to all School Committee Members wishing to address the Committee. A suggestion was made that the Business/Finance Subcommittee suggest a reduction to the budget figure then approach the Member Towns asking that the reduced amount be taken from the monies the District pays the Member Towns for utilities. Although this was just a suggestion, other Members appreciated the creativity of this thought. Member Bazinet read a prepared statement (attachment 2).

The Superintendent addressed the Committee, explaining that law requires the budget be revised and assessments reduced, since the School Committee appropriation request was soundly rejected by all Member Towns. The Superintendent further told of his belief in compromise, not of values, but a compromise in order to reach a settlement. The Superintendent explained that until September 20th, the cost (increase or decrease) in employee health benefits will not be known, but at this early stage it appears there will be a savings to the District with less new employees signing up for health insurance and with staff being hired at less than projected salaries. The Superintendent offered a budget reduction proposal of \$626,769, which would reduce the FY06 appropriation to \$59,287,690. Six hundred twenty six thousand seven hundred sixty nine (\$626,769) is half the joint resolution amount difference, \$1,253,538. The Superintendent assured the Committee that before he departs on October 1st, he would provide a detailed appropriation.

Reference was made to Chair Livdahl's handout, **History of FY06 Appropriation** (attachment 3), and the information discussed. The Superintendent made note of discrepancies between the handout and Treasurer's numbers.

Motion: To adopt proposed amended FY06 appropriation of \$59,287,690 and to reduce town assessments by \$626,769.

(T. Tod)

(K. Maxwell)

Members continued discussion of this motion. At the request of a Member, Attorney McCabe explained the process of a citizens' petition, suggesting warrant wording to read "not less than \$XXX,XXX" rather than setting a dollar amount. The Superintendent said he would contact the Town Moderators to notify the towns that the School Committee might wish to make a PowerPoint presentation at the next Special Town Meetings. Some Members expressed the desire to once again sit down with representatives of the Member Town Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Committees in order to come to a compromise. At the request of the Chair, the Superintendent advised the Committee that the School Committee's town representatives should meet with their respective Selectboards and Finance/Advisory Committees to determine support and the status of overrides prior to making any petition decisions for their respective towns. The Superintendent explained that a non-roll call vote of affirmation by the School Committee is non-binding, but would give the School Committee a figure to bring to the Member Towns to discuss. As this meeting was a Special School Committee and not a Regular School Committee meeting, a Member asked if a vote on this motion could wait until the next Regular School Committee meeting in September. A vote on an appropriation must be a roll call vote.

Attorney McCabe suggested a friendly amendment to the motion that the vote of the School Committee on this date be a non-binding resolution. This friendly amendment was accepted by the makers of the motion. Citizens' petitions were discussed and, if it is decided that such will be used, the petitions should be to the Town Clerks in the Member Towns by September 12, 2005, as assessment letters would be due to the Towns by September 19th. The Superintendent assured the Committee that if the Committee desires, he would take a more aggressive role in the attempt to get voters to pass the budget, focusing on parents. The Community Outreach Subcommittee has committed taking an active role in encouraging and educating parents regarding the budget. The Superintendent suggested that the Community Outreach Subcommittee also include seniors. Member Mighdoll agreed to work with the Superintendent to design a PowerPoint presentation. The Committee affirmed that the Superintendent should get more actively involved.

Motion: To move the question.

(D. Gibbs)
(M. James)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Charles Capparelli
Robert Carter
Shirley Conrad
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Kathleen Sweeney
Tammy Tod
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

David Gibbs
Phillip Mighdoll
Judith Newton

Abstained:

Alice Livdahl

(Motion passed 14-3-1)

Motion: To approve non-binding resolution to accept proposed amended FY06 appropriation of \$59,287,690 and to reduce town assessments by \$626,769.

(T. Tod)
(K. Maxwell)

The motion carried on a voice vote.

8:42 PM Member Plourde left the table.

Motion: That the Wachusett Regional School Committee formally reject the joint resolution as 1) an unfair cap that maintains school

funding below what the School Committee believes is necessary for a quality education, and 2) an unfair restriction on the citizens, as the legislative body at town meeting, to deliberate how money within the tax levy is to be allocated. We direct the Chair of the School Committee to write a letter to the respective town managers, selectmen, and finance committee/advisory committee members informing them of the results of this motion.

(D. Gibbs)

(C. Rauh)

8:44 PM Member Plourde returned to the table.

8:47 Member Sweeney left the table.

8:49 PM Member Sweeney returned to the table.

Motion: To move the question.

(K. Maxwell)

(C. Rauh)

Chair Livdahl ruled that the motion had the necessary 2/3 majority.

(Motion passed)

Roll call vote on main motion:

In favor:

Cynthia Ahearn
Cynthia Bazinet
Charles Capparelli
David Gibbs
Mark James
Mary Catherine Maher
Kelly Maxwell
Judith Newton
John Nunnari
Norman Plourde
Cheryl Rauh
Margaret Watson

Opposed:

Robert Carter
Shirley Conrad
Phillip Mighdoll

Kathleen Sweeney
Tammy Tod

Abstained:
Alice Livdahl

(Motion passed 12-5-1)

Chair Livdahl requested that recent correspondence she received be made a part of these minutes – August 10, 2005 letter from Holden resident Kathy Greene to Chair Livdahl (attachment 4); August 22, 2005 email correspondence from Holden resident Glenn Gaudette to Member Robert Carter (attachment 5).

III: The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

ADT:rlp/School Committee/Minutes