

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN □ PAXTON □ PRINCETON □ RUTLAND □ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1352

Tuesday, September 29, 2020
7:00 PM

MEETING CONDUCTED REMOTELY, VIA GOOGLE MEET

Wachusett Regional School District Committee

Megan Weeks, Chair	Linda Long-Bellil
Michael Dennis, Vice-chair	Kenneth Mills
Nicole Amos	Benjamin Mitchel
Melissa Ayala	Karl Ottmar
Krista Bennett	Deidre Shapiro
Scott Brown	Asima Silva
Maleah Gustafson	Christina Smith
Sherrie Haber	Kelly Williamson
Robert Imber	Linda Woodland
Laura Kirshenbaum	Adam Young
Matthew Lavoie	

Committee Members Absent:

None

Administration Present:

Darryll McCall, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Berlo, Deputy Superintendent
Jeff Carlson, Director of Human Resources
Brendan Keenan, Director of Social Emotional Learning
Christine Smith, Administrator of Special Education
Barry Sclar, Supervisor of Information Technology

Student Representatives Present:

Kenichi Gomi Kathryn Mangus

Chair Weeks called the meeting to order at 8:55 PM. Chair Weeks announced the meeting was being conducted remotely, via Google Meet, was streaming live on HCTV, and the recording of the meeting will be available on the District website. Members of the public could access the meeting via YouTube. Chair Weeks also spoke about members of the public submitting comments to questions@wrsd.net.

Chair Weeks explained the first order of business would be an executive session, to return to public session.

- I. Executive Session to discuss strategy for contract negotiations with three bargaining units (SEIU Local 888 – ABA Program Assistants; Teamsters Union Local 170 (paraprofessionals); Wachusett Administrators' Association), to provide an update on negotiations with Unit B, and to report on progress of negotiations with the Wachusett Regional Education Association, Inc. (WREA) on 2020-2021 school reopening, as the Chair deems a discussion in public session would have an adverse effect on the District's bargaining position, to return to public session.

Motion: To enter executive session to discuss strategy for contract negotiations with three bargaining units (SEIU Local 888 – ABA Program Assistants; Teamsters Union Local 170 (paraprofessionals); Wachusett Administrators' Association), to provide an update on negotiations with Unit B, and to report on progress of negotiations with the Wachusett Regional Education Association, Inc. (WREA) on 2020-2021 school reopening, as the Chair deems a discussion in public session would have an adverse effect on the District's bargaining position, to return to public session.

(S. Brown)

(K. Mills)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Michael Dennis
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Benjamin Mitchel
Karl Ottmar
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:

None

The motion was unanimously approved.

The Committee adjourned to executive session at 8:55 PM.

The Committee reconvened in public session at 9:41 PM.

Member Mitchel did not rejoin the meeting.

Member Young did not rejoin the meeting.

Motion: To ratify the Memorandum of Agreement between the Wachusett Regional School District and WREA Unit B (Speech Language Assistants, Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants, and Physical Therapy Assistants), as presented.

(S. Brown)

(K. Mills)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Michael Dennis

The motion was approved 18-0-1.

II. Public Hearing

Chair Weeks read aloud comments submitted to questions@wrsd.net.

Janice DeLeire of Rutland (attachment 1)

SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council) (attachment 2)

Crystal Roy (attachment 3)

9:59 PM Member Imber left the meeting.

Motion: To extend the meeting to 10:30 PM.

(M. Gustafson)
(K. Mills)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

Michael Dennis
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie

The motion was approved 15-3.

III. Chair's Opening Remarks

In Chair Weeks' opening remarks she spoke about the special meeting held in advance of this regular meeting, thanking members for their participation and patience. Chair Weeks extended thanks to building principals and assistant principals for their hard work and effort during these challenging times. She also welcomed principals and assistant principals to participate in School Committee meetings if able and interested.

IV. Student Representatives (K. Gomi, K. Mangus)

Student Representative Gomi reported he and Student Representative Mangus had the opportunity to tour the high school, a visit coordinated by Principal Beando, to view how classrooms and the cafeteria have been set up in preparation for students returning to schools when the District transitions to the hybrid model. Student Representative

Mangus spoke about SAT exams which have been and will be administered. She also reported that some clubs have started to meet, virtually. Virtual college visits have started. She also reported that nine WRHS seniors have been awarded National Merit Scholarships.

V. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

Superintendent McCall thanked the two Student Representatives for their reports, updating the Committee on activities going on at the high school. He extended his thanks to Supervisor of Information Services Barry Sclar and the technology staff for all their hard work the last several months and especially since reopening schools in the remote model. Superintendent McCall thanked members for their input offered during the special meeting in advance of this meeting.

Member Mills noted that principals do not report directly to the School Committee, and he requested when the Central Office and/or principals send out welcome back plans that the plans be precise and easy to understand, to lessen confusion.

Member Lavoie expressed his concern that the Technology Department responded to over 200 Help Desk tickets within one day and he asked if there might be the need for additional support for students. Member Lavoie noted a possible \$3M hit to the budget due to students unenrolling during the 2020-2021 school year, and he requested how the District plans to address this financial impact. Superintendent McCall acknowledged the potential financial impact of this year's enrollment numbers.

Member Gustafson expressed she is also concerned about the lower enrollment numbers and the potential financial impact. Member Gustafson asked when the Committee would receive updated enrollment numbers, based on October 1st data. Member Gustafson asked where building reopening plans will be accessed, which Superintendent McCall explained will be on both the District and school websites. At Member Gustafson's inquiry, Administrator of Special Education Smith confirmed parents are always included in Team Meetings. Member Gustafson asked the status of settlement agreements with the transportation vendors, which is an agenda item for the next Legal Affairs Subcommittee meeting.

Member Long-Bellil had a concern that the high school schedule has students departing the school close to lunch time, to go home, and continue instruction remotely/online. She explained she understands space concerns for lunch, etc., but is concerned about the high school hybrid schedule as currently presented.

Member Ottmar also spoke about student enrollment, and he asked if enrollment trends for the last several years and Chapter 70 funding during those last several years could be evaluated.

Member Mills asked that it be clearly explained when parents must respond to the survey about students participating in the remote model or the hybrid model. Supervisor of Information Services Sclar reported about half of the District's parents have responded to the PowerSchool Parent Portal data collection about remote v hybrid, and he also explained that parents do have the option to edit their responses if they wish to do so.

Member Silva asked if there is any way to give parents potential schedules for their individual child(ren) in order to make it easier for parents to make the decision about remote v hybrid. Superintendent McCall agreed that having a more specific schedule for individual students/schools/classrooms would make it simpler for parents to decide between remote or hybrid. Superintendent McCall spoke about staffing, due to the option for teachers to request to take a leave.

Member Woodland expressed concern that information being shared with parents is not clear when it comes to schedules, time on learning, and some of the information being shared contradicts previous information shared.

Student Representative Mangus asked when information about scheduling and individual school schedules is sent out, could it also be shared with students. Superintendent McCall agreed to the sharing of information with students, perhaps by way of building principals.

B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

10:55 PM Member Kirshenbaum left the meeting.

10:55 PM Member Smith left the meeting.

VI. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business brought before the Committee.

Motion: To extend the meeting to 11:00 PM.

(A. Silva)
(M. Gustafson)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Kenneth Mills
Asima Silva
Kelly Williamson

Linda Woodland

Opposed:

Michael Dennis
Scott Brown
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Karl Ottmar
Deidre Shapiro

The motion was approved 10-6.

11:00 PM Vice-chair Dennis left the meeting.

11:00 PM Member Shapiro left the meeting.

VII. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on August 24, 2020

Deferred

- B. Approval of #1351 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on September 14, 2020

(S. Haber)
(K. Mills)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Matthew Lavoie

The minutes were approved 13-0-1.

- C. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on September 14, 2020

Deferred

- D. Approval of #325 Special Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on September 23, 2020

(K. Mills)
(L. Long-Bellil)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

Matthew Lavoie

Abstained:

Linda Long-Bellil

The minutes were approved 12-1-1.

VIII. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

Chair Weeks reminded the Committee that if there were questions regarding the Director of Business and Finance'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.

IX. Committee Reports

- A. Management Subcommittee (M. Weeks, Chair, M. Dennis, Vice-chair, S. Brown, K. Mills, C. Smith, A. Young)

Chair Weeks reported on the September 21, 2020 meeting of the Management Subcommittee.

Member Mills suggested the Management Subcommittee add review of the Regional Agreement to a meeting agenda, as the Regional Agreement was last reviewed and amended in 2016 and it is to be reviewed every five years and voted on at the Member Towns Annual Town Meetings held in May.

Member Lavoie asked that the Management Subcommittee address the gathering of feedback from constituents about the reopening of schools, which Chair Weeks explained had been raised at the subcommittee meeting. Member Lavoie volunteered to assist the Superintendent with this task.

- B. Education Subcommittee (C. Smith, Chair, L. Long-Bellil, Vice-chair, N. Amos, K. Bennett, S. Haber, R. Imber, L. Kirshenbaum, D. Shapiro)

In Subcommittee Chair Smith's absence, Vice-chair Long-Bellil reported the meeting of this subcommittee scheduled for this date was cancelled.

- C. Business/Finance Subcommittee (M. Dennis, Chair, K. Mills, Vice-chair, M. Gustafson, B. Mitchel, K. Ottmar)

In Subcommittee Chair Dennis' absence, Vice-chair Mills reported the subcommittee will meet on October 5, 2020.

- D. Legal Affairs Subcommittee (S. Brown, Chair, K. Ottmar, Vice-chair, R. Imber, K. Mills)

Subcommittee Chair Brown reported this subcommittee will meet on October 1, 2020.

- E. Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee (K. Mills, Chair, L. Kirshenbaum, Vice-chair, K. Williamson, L. Woodland)

Subcommittee Chair Mills reported on the September 21, 2020 meeting of this subcommittee.

- F. Facilities and Security Subcommittee (A. Young, Chair, L. Woodland)

In Subcommittee Chair Young's absence, Member Woodland reported this subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting.

- G. Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism Subcommittee (A. Silva, Chair, L. Woodland, Vice-chair, N. Amos, M. Ayala, K. Bennett, S. Brown, M. Gustafson, L. Kirshenbaum, L. Long-Bellil)

Subcommittee Chair Silva reported on the September 22, 2020 meeting of this subcommittee, and reported the subcommittee will meet next on October 8, 2020.

H. Audit Advisory Board (B. Mitchel, Chair, A. Young, Vice-chair)

No report was made.

I. Ad Hoc Subcommittees

J. Building Committees

K. School Council Reports:

Central Tree Middle School (M. Lavoie), Chocksett Middle School (K. Williamson), Davis Hill Elementary School (K. Williamson), Dawson Elementary School (L. Kirshenbaum), Glenwood Elementary School (N. Amos), Houghton Elementary School (D. Shapiro), Mayo Elementary School (A. Young), Mountview Middle School (S. Brown), Naquag Elementary School (S. Haber), Paxton Center School (K. Ottmar), Thomas Prince School (A. Silva), Wachusett Regional High School (K. Mills), Early Childhood Center (L. Woodland), Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) (M. Gustafson)

Member Gustafson – SEPAC to meet on October 5, 2020

X. Public Hearing

Lauren Salmon-Garrett, Holden (attachment 4)

XI. New Business

There was no new business brought before the Committee.

Chair Weeks asked members who might have requests for information to email the requests to her for sharing with the Superintendent.

XI. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(K. Mills)
(S. Haber)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil

Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland

Opposed:
None

The minutes were unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 10:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

DM:rlp

Attachments:

- Public Comment – Janice DeLeire (attachment 1)
- Public Comment – Special Education Parent Advisory Council (attachment 2)
- Public Comment – Crystal Roy (attachment 3)
- Public Comment – Lauren Salmon-Garrett (attachment 4)

To: Dr. McCall, Chair Weeks and School Committee Members:

From: Janice DeLeire, 3 Julie Ann Cir, Rutland

Date: September 27, 2020

I am writing to you as a parent of a 7th grader and a 10th grader. My questions refer to the most recent School Committee meeting on Wednesday, September 23, 2020 regarding parent choice of remote v. hybrid learning. I attempted to ask my questions in chronological order as presented by Dr. McCall.

Slide 1 Remote to Hybrid

Who is the "most vulnerable"?

"Increased hybrid hours?" Can you list how many hours? From how many to how many, in numbers please?

"some additional students" means who? And who determines which ones?

Slide 2 School Schedules Hybrid

Exceptions on Holiday Monday – omitting the Wed all remote? does that mean instead of Mon/Tues those students will be Tues/Wed? Please clarify.

Slide 3 School Schedules Remote Only

Not on the slide, but McCall says "there's still the possibility that we will need additional support from other teachers...teachers will continue to work with kids in that remote setting while at the same time those students would also have support from their own staff who would be supporting remote only students." – what does this mean? Please be clear and specific. – how? In what capacity? Are you hiring more teachers? Paras? Why are they getting more support than hybrid students?

From slide, clarify "they (remote only) will have synchronous on-line instruction with their in-person classmates" - how much time? – full period, half period?

and "as well as well as asynchronous learning opportunities and instruction" – again for how much time? When?

Is the at-school teacher instructing hybrid in-school students at the same time as remote only at home and hybrid at home on their off days? For example, on Monday period 2, does the teacher instruct all students simultaneously? And if so, what does that look like – teacher in front of their computer so as to stay on camera "live" as they have been directed to do (at the high school at least)? Will the teacher be able to:

- walk around the room to assess in person students?
- perform demonstrations such as science experiments/models in person
- have in-person students get out of their seats at any time to do activities while masked and socially distancing?
- other forms of instruction that typically keeps students engaged and increases learning

Or instead does the teacher and the in-person students stay put in their seats the entire period?

Additionally, is the teacher required to wear mask while students are in classroom and if yes, then students viewing teacher remotely will see them with mask on?

The following questions refer to the rest of the slides and discussion:

Are days in school going to be full days or half days? – seems like at high school they will be half. Please clarify.

Dr. McCall states report from HVAC company will be done by a few weeks – that is after Oct. 5 date, so are students and staff returning before that report?

Why weren't any on-line formats purchased for the full remote students, as other districts have done?

If choose **remote**, will any special education services be in person? e.g. counseling – please explain

If choose **hybrid**, will all special education services be in person? e.g. counseling – please explain



Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: SEPAC statement for tonights school committee meeting to be read

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Oct 5, 2020 at 8:55 PM

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **WRSD SEPAC** <wrsdsepac@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Sep 29, 2020 at 12:14 PM
Subject: SEPAC statement for tonights school committee meeting to be read
To: Maleah Gustafson <maleah_gustafson@wrsd.net>, Christine Smith
<christine_smith@wrsd.net>, <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>, <questions@wrsd.net>

Through COVID, the SEPAC has closely partnered with the SPED office – through ESY planning and more recently with providing special updates and Parent Q&A. The SEPAC appreciates the extra time spent by the SPED team along with union reps, principals, teachers and parents to provide more answer.

However, we have more to do. We have outstanding issues we need to escalate to have resolved. In a similar manner the School Committee is creating more transparency around risks, issues and plans, the SEPAC also is pursuing more documented updates for outstanding risks, issues and plans.

Sepac will be holding their next Meeting on Oct 5th at 6:30pm via zoom. At this meeting we will be holding our yearly elections and getting an update from Christine Smith on the reopening of the schools for our Special Needs children.

We wanted to let the school committee know that as parents we are very concerned about the education and well being of our children. The most vulnerable children were scheduled to start school during the summer, but with unexplained last-minute changes that didn't happen. DESE had made it clear that in person instruction was necessary for Special Needs children. Yet **we are still** have zero children in school in our district. How do we find this acceptable? We understand the times have been difficult, but there are schools such as BayPath that have every IEP child attending in person school daily since school started, yet we still have zero. The plan submitted to the School Committee called for the most vulnerable children to be returned to school Oct 5 for half-days, then proceeding to full days the following week. On Friday, parents were notified of yet another change from the plan. Now the limited number of students will only receive half days for 3 weeks. Why do they need to be part-time

instead of in the building fully accessing the curriculum and their teachers? How does this effect the next, much larger, group of students that are to return that following week who have received no communication from administration? We are asking that the committee to put our children first, and find a way to get them back into in person schooling immediately. We ask that you hold Administration accountable and responsible for finding a way to education our children. Every day a child doesn't attend in person school education cannot be accessed, skills regress or disappear, and their independence lost. Our children cannot afford to wait any longer.

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Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: Return to In Person Learning

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>

Mon, Oct 5, 2020 at 8:54 PM

To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Crystal Roy** <casavant220@charter.net>
Date: Tue, Sep 29, 2020 at 1:07 PM
Subject: Return to In Person Learning
To: <questions@wrsd.net>

Hello

Is the decision for hybrid learning effective for the remainder of the school year?

As noted in the presentation if 5 communities are green or unshaded we should be full time in person.

Can the district please explain if there are any plans to return to full in person learning this year? And if not – why not?

Thank you

Crystal Roy

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Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: For tonight's public address if it's not too late

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>

Tue, Oct 6, 2020 at 8:09 AM

To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Found it!

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lauren Salmon-Garrett** <guppiesalmon@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, Sep 29, 2020 at 2:58 PM

Subject: For tonight's public address if it's not too late

To: <questions@wrsd.net>

Lauren Salmon-Garrett
49 Cook St, Holden

I think during all of this, it would be helpful for anyone with an opinion to have a few fundamental facts before them.

1. Wachusett is the 24th largest school district in the state out of 319 districts. In enrollment, we're bigger than Leominster, Malden, and Cambridge. **We are BIG, but we don't act like it.**
2. Wachusett spent the 3rd LEAST on administration in the state, as reported by the state for FY19. We spend very little to run our massive district. Dr. McCall has referenced our lean administration many times and it should be noted, because **we are BIG, but we don't act like it.**
3. We have been underfunded for years by the state and by ourselves. We are the LARGEST regional school district in the state, we could have a big voice in the advocacy fight for more from the state, but **we are BIG and we don't act like it.**
4. In one way that we do act big is the size of our school committee. 22 people with their varied opinions and experiences is a huge body to make decisions in a timely and effective manner. It creates frustration when the members can't speak to all of their constituents' concerns because they are limited to 3 minutes to speak, 2 minutes, or no time at all. After we have stabilized our district and the pandemic has passed, I think that the 5 towns of this district need to take a long, hard look at the

district and help it to start acting BIG where it counts by creating a smaller committee to be more effective. **We are BIG, let's act like it.**

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