

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN ♦ PAXTON ♦ PRINCETON ♦ RUTLAND ♦ STERLING

Minutes

Special Meeting #285 Tuesday, June 23, 2009

Media Center
Wachusett Regional High School

Committee Members Present:

Margaret Watson, Chair	Stacey Jackson
John Nunnari, Vice-chair	Julianne Kelley
Cynthia Bazinet	Duncan Leith
Robert Carter	Michael Pantos
Colleen Cipro	Robert Pelczarski
William Clute	Norman Plourde
Sherry Conrad	Michelle Sciabarrasi
Kristine Goodwin	Joseph Sova (7:04 PM)
Steven Hammond	Kori Stuart
Robert Imber	Dawn Torres-Gale

Committee Members Absent:

None

Administration Present:

Thomas G. Pandiscio, Superintendent of Schools
John Locke, Deputy Superintendent
Darryll McCall, Director of Operations
Susan Sullivan, Director of Human Resources
Peter Brennan, Business Manager
Rebecca Petersen, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

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

Chair Watson called the special meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:00 PM. Chair Watson introduced and welcomed new School Committee representative from Sterling, Kori Stuart. The meeting agenda was distributed to members and made available to the public (attachment 2).

Motion: To enter executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining, to return to public session.

(R. Imber)

(S. Conrad)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
John Nunnari
Cynthia Bazinet
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Michael Pantos
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Kori Stuart
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:

None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

The Committee adjourned to executive session at 7:02 PM

The Committee returned to public session at 8:20 PM.

Chair Watson turned the meeting over to Superintendent Pandiscio, who called the Committee's attention to *Tracking FY10 Assessments & Proposed Assessment 06.23.09* (Revenue), *FY2010 Appropriation Summary*, *FY10 Proposed Appropriation 06.23.09* (attachment 3). Before Superintendent Pandiscio gave the history of fiscal matters this year, he cautioned the Committee and the public that the numbers he would be referencing and explaining may be difficult to follow. Superintendent Pandiscio reviewed the spreadsheets, tracking what has happened between the April 14, 2009 vote of the School Committee and this date. He then called the Committee's attention to *Reductions FY10* which lists the reductions that will be made in order to realize budget cuts totaling \$2,541,242 (attachment 4). The Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions of the information presented.

8:50 PM Member Bazinet left the meeting.

Questions and answers continued.

Chair Watson read aloud, for the minutes, a memorandum she received from WREA President Bob Becker (attachment 5).

6/22/09

*From: Bob Becker, President, WREA
To: Ms. Margaret Watson, Chair, Wachusett Regional School District*

Dear Ms. Watson,

On behalf of the Wachusett Regional Education Association, I would like to convey some of our thoughts as the Wachusett Regional School District Committee makes budget decisions for school year 2009/2010. We believe that there have been great sacrifices made throughout the last year which have gone largely unnoticed by the Wachusett community, and I would like to take an opportunity to enlighten both the committee and the community regarding just a few points.

First, we wish to commend the leadership of both the committee and the school administration throughout this very challenging year. Starting with health insurance concerns last spring, through the ice storm crisis with its Saturday school and extended days, then negotiating a teachers' contract for next year and right up through the current budget crisis, the continual collaboration between the Wachusett school district and our association has allowed us to work through these problems in an amicable fashion. It is a testament to this collaboration that, until recently, few residents of our community realized that this has been the most challenging school year since regionalization.

Our association certainly recognizes that the district administration has worked for countless hours to reduce a very minimal budget by an additional two million dollars before teachers' jobs would have to be cut. We appreciate and applaud this effort. I wonder, however, how many residents know that every regional school district in the commonwealth was already spending more money per student than the WRSD before the administration made these cuts.

It is the best kept secret of our school system that, according to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, we have the lowest per pupil costs of all similar districts. If we were to pay just the average per

pupil costs of those districts, we would need to add nearly twenty-four million dollars to our annual school budget.

Even though we produce some of the best student achievement in the state we have some of the very lowest per pupil costs. How is it that we still seem to have perennial budget issues? It was not widely publicized, for example, when just over a year ago the Wachusett school administration asked our association to consider health insurance rates and plans for 2008/2009. After some deliberation, the WREA voluntarily agreed to a change in our health insurance coverage that would, among other things, double our copayments – a savings to the district of over \$300,000.

Furthermore, in February, the WREA and the school district negotiated a contract for 2009/2010 in which the WREA agreed to give back existing contractual salary increases of approximately \$300,000.

On June 18, moreover, WREA members voted for still more concessions, volunteering to be furloughed for 2 days next year – saving the school system more than \$350,000. In one year voluntary givebacks from the WREA have totaled nearly \$1 million!

We realize that the school committee has worked tirelessly with the administration to ensure that there is constant and careful oversight of our school budget; the fact that we spend less than every similar district is testament to that.

Unfortunately, it seems that these budget cuts and particularly the WREA concessions have gone essentially unnoticed in the community. The Wachusett teachers have given back nearly \$2,000 per teacher in the last year alone. The community is fortunate, indeed, that the educators in this system are willing to sacrifice so much for the students in our schools. We sincerely feel, however, that teachers cannot continue to bridge the gap between the school system that the residents want and the one that they are willing to fund.

These cuts made by both the administration and the teachers are unprecedented. Even with these cuts, however, the residents of our five towns need to understand that positions will go unfilled next year, badly needed supplies and equipment will be cut, and fixed operating costs will continue to rise. My veteran colleagues will tell you that the school

system that enticed many people to move into this district in the past is now eroding at an alarming rate.

Many of our members do not even live in this school district, and yet they have given back a million dollars so that the children of the Wachusett district can have a better education. We sincerely hope that this gesture prompts the residents of the Wachusett community to do their part to fund the schools that these children deserve.

I would like to thank you and the committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts. Hopefully the town residents will realize that our students deserve better than being last in school spending.

*Sincerely,
Bob Becker
President
Wachusett Regional Education Association*

9:25 PM Member Pelczarski left the table.

The Committee was again given the opportunity to ask questions. Elimination of the high school late bus was debated.

9:27 PM Member Pelczarski returned to the table.

Motion: The District Business Office be directed to contact the bus transportation provider about the possibility of offering late bus transportation as a service to students, such arrangement to be worked through parents and also that the Business Office provide vendor resources for school PTAs to look into the possibility of late bus services.

(M. Pantos)

(R. Carter)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
John Nunnari
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith

Michael Pantos
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Joseph Sova
Kori Stuart
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:

None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

Motion: That the Administrator of Special Education provide the School Committee with a detailed report of what effect the reduction of 21 aides will have on special education students of the District, this report to be prepared for review at the July 20, 2009 School Committee meeting.

(M. Pantos)
(D. Torres-Gale)

Vice-chair Nunnari reminded members that the School Committee does not have the authority to direct a District employee to take on a task or an assignment and suggested that the motion on the table should be revised, which the maker and the seconder of the motion agreed to.

Motion: To direct the Superintendent to provide the School Committee with a detailed report of what effect the reduction of 21 aides will have on special education students of the District, this report to be prepared for review at the July 20, 2009 School Committee meeting.

(M. Pantos)
(D. Torres-Gale)

The Superintendent spoke to the motion, letting the Committee know that when he asks principals to provide recommendations for such action, he is confident the principals' recommendations are educationally sound.

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
John Nunnari
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson

Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Michael Pantos
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Joseph Sova
Kori Stuart
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

Motion: To approve the FY10 Proposed Appropriation and the FY10 Proposed Assessments, dated 6/23/09, as presented.

(J. Sova)
(N. Plourde)

Superintendent Pandiscio spoke to the motion, wanting to be sure the Committee was comfortable with the amount of review and explanation that had been provided before they were asked to take a vote, specifically referencing the *FY2010 Appropriation Summary* and offering to continue discussion. Member Leith reminded the Committee that a 2/3 vote in favor (14 votes in favor) is needed to pass the appropriation.

Motion: To extend the meeting by 10 minutes, to 10:10 PM.

(R. Imber)
(M. Pantos)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
John Nunnari
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Michael Pantos
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi

Joseph Sova
Kori Stuart
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

Discussion of the motion on the table continued.

Motion: To move the question.

(K. Goodwin)
(J. Sova)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

John Nunnari
Robert Carter
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Robert Imber
Duncan Leith
Michael Pantos
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Joseph Sova
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:

Colleen Cipro
Steven Hammond
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Robert Pelczarski
Kori Stuart

Abstained:

Margaret Watson

(The motion passed 12-6-1)

Roll call vote on main motion:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
John Nunnari
Robert Carter

Colleen Cipro
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Duncan Leith
Michael Pantos
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Joseph Sova
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:

Robert Pelczarski

Abstained:

Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Kori Stuart

(The motion passed 15-1-3)

Chair Watson read a prepared statement (attachment 6).

Motion: To extend the meeting by 20 minutes, to 10:40 PM.

(S. Hammond)

(M. Pantos)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
John Nunnari
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Michael Pantos
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Joseph Sova

Kori Stuart
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

Chair Watson called the Committee's attention to a June 22, 2009 memorandum to the Committee from District Treasurer James Dunbar (attachment 7).

Motion: To approve the sale by the District of a \$12,100,000, RAN (Revenue Anticipation Note) to Janney Montgomery Scott, Inc. with a coupon rate of interest of 1.50%, dated July 02, 2009 and payable November 01, 2009, at par and accrued interest plus a premium of \$18,150.00.

That the consent to the financial advisor bidding for the Note, as executed prior to the bidding for the Note, is hereby confirmed.

That in connection with the sale of the Note, the preparation of a Preliminary Official Statement dated June 17, 2009, and a final Official Statement dated June 17, 2009, each in such form as may be approved by the District Treasurer, be and hereby are ratified, confirmed, approved and adopted.

That the District Treasurer and the Chairman of the Regional District School Committee be, and hereby are, authorized to execute and deliver a material events disclosure undertaking in compliance with SEC Rule 15c2-12 in such form as may be approved by bond counsel to the District, which undertaking shall be incorporated by reference in the Note for the benefit of the holders of the Note from time to time.

That the Chairman of the Regional District School Committee, the District Secretary and the District Treasurer be and hereby are, authorized to take any and all such actions, execute and deliver such certificates, receipts or other documents as may be determined by them, or any of them, to be necessary or convenient to carry into effect the provisions of the foregoing votes.

(J. Sova)
(M. Pantos)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
John Nunnari
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Steven Hammond

Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Michael Pantos
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Joseph Sova
Kori Stuart
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

Motion: To adjourn.

(D. Leith)
(S. Conrad)

Vote:

In favor:

Margaret Watson
John Nunnari
Robert Carter
Colleen Cipro
William Clute
Shirley Conrad
Kristine Goodwin
Steven Hammond
Robert Imber
Stacey Jackson
Julianne Kelley
Duncan Leith
Michael Pantos
Robert Pelczarski
Norman Plourde
Michelle Sciabarrasi
Joseph Sova
Kori Stuart
Dawn Torres-Gale

Opposed:
None

(The motion passed unanimously.)

The meeting adjourned at 10:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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

TGP:rlp