

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN □ PAXTON □ PRINCETON □ RUTLAND □ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1342

Monday, April 27, 2020
7:00 PM

MEETING CONDUCTED REMOTELY, VIA GOOGLE MEET

Wachusett Regional School District Committee

Kenneth Mills, Chair	Robert Imber
Christina Smith, Vice-chair	Laura Kirshenbaum
Melissa Ayala	Matthew Lavoie
Scott Brown	Linda Long-Bellil
Michael Dennis	Amy Michalowski
Stephen Godbout	Karl Ottmar
Maleah Gustafson	Asima Silva
Sherri Haber	Megan Weeks
Jeffrey Haynes	Linda Woodland

Committee Members Absent:

Benjamin Mitchel	Adam Young
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Administration Present:

Darryll McCall, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Berlo, Deputy Superintendent
Daniel Deedy, Director of Business and Finance
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
Rebecca Petersen, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

Student Representatives Present:

Rianna Massoni-Nesman	Leah Michalowski
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Chair Mills called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

- I. Public Hearing
- II. Chair's Opening Remarks
- III. Student Representatives (R. Massoni-Nesman, L. Michalowski)

Chair Mills announced the meeting is streaming live on Holden TV, Channel 194, and is being conducted remotely, via Google Meet. Chair Mills extended his thanks to HCTV for assisting with broadcasting the meeting live. Chair Mills announced he will be taking

the agenda out of order, moving the Public Hearing to later in the meeting, with no objections from members. Chair Mills thanked Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson for joining the virtual meeting. With no objection from the membership, Chair Mills invited Representative Ferguson and Senator Gobi to address the Committee. Representative Ferguson noted things continue to change on a frequent basis, also explaining there is no scheduled date for the state budget debate. Senator Gobi gave an overview about the Economic Summit of April 14, 2020. State revenues are projected to fall by about 14%, the state unemployment rate is high, and when the economy will be up and running is unknown. Best case scenario is getting through the worst of things in the next month, and by July “life” will start to return to normal. A state supplemental budget and a Municipal Relief package should be released in the next couple of weeks, and Senator Gobi encouraged the District to consider submitting a request. Representative Ferguson invited members to email questions and requests which she can bring forward to upcoming meetings of the legislature. Senator Gobi mentioned regional grants that are set to expire June 30th and asked that if the District has any that would fall under this to let her or Representative Ferguson know so they can look into extensions of the grants. Chair Mills opened the floor to questions from the members.

Member Imber would like to suggest 100% funding for regional and a wavier of the 1.5 mile radius of transportation all towns without sidewalk areas). Representative Ferguson and Senator Gobi have worked on 100% reimbursement funding for regional transportation, but seeing it for this year is not likely. They will continue to fight for this, though they cannot guarantee any action during this budget cycle. Member Imber suggested this might be a good time to present new legislation, even if no action at this time.

Chair Mills asked Representative Ferguson and Senator Gobi to keep unfunded mandates (i.e. temperature checks when schools are back in session) in mind.

Member Godbout and Member Long-Bellil expressed thanks to Representative Ferguson and Senator Gobi.

7:21 PM Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson left the meeting.

Student Representative Michalowski asked about the returning of textbooks and refunding of My SchoolBucks funds to high school seniors. She also mentioned some students/teachers going over the time limit ceiling for required remote learning. Student Representative Massoni-Nesman agreed that assignments/lessons provided remotely can be over the cap/ceiling. Students are also asking if the weekly schedule of classes/remote learning can be shared in advance, so students can plan accordingly. Many seniors are disappointed about end-of-year events and plans being cancelled. Many senior students do hope for some sort of graduation ceremony, even if it is in the late summer, early fall, or next year. Some students have come up with suggestions for some sort of celebration at the end of this school year, more than a virtual graduation ceremony, while understanding a graduation ceremony in the traditional way is not an option this year. Superintendent McCall asked the Student Representatives to put their thoughts and questions in an email to him. Superintendent McCall reported he and high school administration are looking into the best way to celebrate seniors’ accomplishments and recognizing their graduation

from high school. Member Long-Bellil is hopeful creative options to celebrate graduation can be investigated.

Member Gustafson – “I have a logistical question re AP level classes but may be too specific for here. Maybe someone can clarify. I have read that they are only testing through material that should be covered through mid-March. In that case, there should not be excessive info to be covered. Maybe this needs to be clarified w teachers.” Student Representative Massoni-Nesman explained teachers are allowed to teach AP course materials in any order they determine, as long as materials are covered during a school year, which can cause difficulty in preparation for the AP exams this spring.

Member Weeks asked questions seeking clarification about refunding school lunch funds, as well as the returning of books, questions raised by the Student Representatives.

Superintendent McCall explained the Business Office is addressing the refunding of monies paid, and he also spoke about the return of textbooks and ChromeBooks, which will need to be organized in a healthy and deliberate manner.

Vice-chair Smith spoke about AP classes and exams, and she confirmed that teachers can teach the materials in the order determined by the teacher. She also mentioned the format for spring 2020 AP testing will now be different than what teachers and students had planned on.

Member Kirshenbaum also spoke about student workload and guidelines, noting the importance of teachers and students being aware of the ceiling for remote learning.

IV. Superintendent’s Report

A. Discussion of Report

Superintendent McCall reported on DESE guidelines and direction provided during an April 23, 2020 conference call, which Superintendent McCall feels WRSD is in line with.

Superintendent McCall spoke about a conference call of this day about finances and budgets.

Superintendent McCall reported on the continuation of distribution of F&R lunches, with approximately 100 students participating.

Superintendent McCall spoke about the high school graduation and the best way to celebrate WRHS 2020 graduates. Plans are underway, with options being investigated and considered.

Superintendent McCall spoke about his survey, to parents, students, and teachers, as well as school-based surveys sent from principals this date.

At Chair Mill's request, Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Dennis spoke about the subcommittee meeting held immediately before this School Committee meeting. Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Dennis explained how schools get funded and budget development (MLC, Operational, Debt, and Transportation assessments, state revenues, etc.). State budget/revenue numbers have been based on pre-COVID projections, which are no longer accurate. Subcommittee Chair Dennis explained that a 1/12th budget opening July 1, 2020 will be based on the District's FY20 budget, which will be significantly lower than the proposed FY21 budget. There is a cash flow impact with operating under a 1/12th budget. District administration is reviewing possible savings in FY20, which could be brought forward to FY21, but these discussions are preliminary. It is acknowledged these discussions are time sensitive. He also mentioned that planning for possible cuts is absolutely necessary, when looking at FY21.

Chair Mills gave all members the opportunity to ask questions about the Superintendent's Report and to make comments, if they wish.

Member Godbout: pass

Member Gustafson: She extended thanks to District administration for the recent surveys. She wanted to stress that "access" is more than "equipment." Member Gustafson also mentioned the Student Opportunity Act, noting SEPAC will be hosting a virtual meeting this week in order to get input from that group on use of SOA funds. Lastly, Member Gustafson mentioned planning for graduation and being open to student suggestions.

Member Haber: She is pleased to know there is a committee at the high school to plan for this year's graduation. She mentioned the surveys, and is concerned about SEL support and options for those who need support.

Member Haynes: He is pleased with current way remote learning is working, understanding teachers and students are all different. At the middle school level, a single link should be available for students to access all planned work. Social-emotional support from the principal level is very beneficial, showing students they are all a part of a school community.

Member Kirshenbaum mentioned the possibility of ending this school year in a remote learning environment and beginning the next school year the same way and this needs to be taken into consideration.

Member Imber extended his thanks to all for the work being done.

Member Lavoie voiced his concern and suggestion that those who are not able to access curriculum and who are being more impacted by schools being closed needs to be a priority. Member Lavoie acknowledged the class size information provided in the Superintendent's Report. Action by the Committee about school choice participation for the 2020-2021 school year is on the agenda, and Member Lavoie is looking for some additional information. Superintendent McCall explained he will

give his recommendation about school choice participation for the coming school year, once he is able to review information about FY21 funding and revenue.

Member Long-Bellil reported she has heard that some parents are pleased with the move to remote learning, whereas others are finding it overwhelming. What should a parent do if a parent feels a child's workload is too much? Superintendent McCall advised middle school parents/students reach out to the principals; at the elementary level, reach out to the student's teacher; and at the high school, parents/students should reach out to the principal or the assistant principals. It was acknowledged and agreed that social-emotional support is important.

Member Michalowski asked how students get help from teachers, in real time, especially with multiple classes and teachers to coordinate. Superintendent McCall recognized the importance of live time assistance.

Student Representative Massoni-Nesman: "This is just a general question about the graduation committee, which may need to be directed more towards Mr. Beando, but is it possible to have a student serve as a representative on that committee? As was mentioned, I completely agree that students feel disconnected." She also reported she has reached out to NHS Advisors about student tutoring for those who might be struggling with their academics.

Member Ottmar asked if there is any data or information available about the 98 students who live in the five Member Towns who school choice out of Wachusett, and the reason(s) they decide to attend schools outside the Wachusett District, because this information could be informative.

Vice-chair Smith shared her opinion of the importance of trying to address conflicts and coordination for students, especially at the high school, with assignments and remote learning coming from their various teachers.

Member Silva's questions have mostly been asked and answered, though she did voice the importance of consistency around the amount of time per class so there is a consistent amount of time of instruction

Member Weeks had questions about high school senior's last day of school and if there has been further direction from the Commissioner about competency and MCAS testing for high school seniors. Superintendent McCall reported May 22nd is the planned last day of school for WRHS seniors.

Member Woodland reiterated the importance of consistency across the District which needs to be stressed. She suggested more communication from the Central Office and from principals, to encourage parents and students during these challenging times. Technical support for parents might be helpful. Member Woodland asked if there are plans in place to address remediation when schools return to session. Per Superintendent McCall, who acknowledged the "summer slide" and the need for remediation, guidance and direction from DESE is needed.

Member Ayala thanked District administration for the surveys and she thanked Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Dennis for the budget update at the start of the meeting. At Member Ayala's request about the possibility of employee cuts due to financial uncertainty, Superintendent McCall spoke about operating under a 1/12th budget, explaining this district has been faced with this in the past.

Member Brown was pleased to know there are plans to try to bring forward to FY21 funds from FY20 savings. Member Brown is concerned about school choice participation in light of the current situation and the unknowns when it comes to schools opening.

Member Dennis echoed that WRHS seniors/soon-to-be graduates have a voice and they should be listened to, in order to celebrate and recognize these students' accomplishments.

Chair Mills shared that the District and all cities and towns are looking at an abyss, which District administration needs to look at and plan for. It is time to take local control of some of the difficult and important decisions. The School Committee needs information and data from administration to address these serious issues. Planning for a best case scenario, operating under a 1/12th budget for the year, must be done.

Member Gustafson understands DESE may be reporting on competency requirements at a meeting on April 28th. It seems that basic organizational skills are not easy for all students, especially when learning and teaching is remote, which results in some students missing assignments and virtual lessons.

Member Michalowski had questions with regard to planning ahead for the fall, and asked if the administration has considered changing the focus of the professional development days that remain to work with teachers on what re-entry might look like so that we can take advantage of focused conversations while teachers are "in the buildings." Superintendent McCall reported District administration is taking a hard look at what the two remaining professional development days (full-day on May 11th and half-day on May 22nd) will look like and how this time will be utilized.

B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

1. Motion: To amend the 2019-2020 WRSDC meeting schedule.

(M. Weeks)

(L. Kirshenbaum)

Chair Mills spoke about the amended schedule, explaining the need for the full Committee to continue meeting until Member Town local elections and Annual Town Meetings are concluded.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Kenneth Mills

Christina Smith
Melissa Ayala
Scott Brown
Michael Dennis
Stephen Godbout
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Amy Michalowski
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Megan Weeks
Linda Woodland

Opposed:
None

The motion was unanimously approved.

V. Unfinished Business

Motion: The Wachusett Regional School District will not participate in the school choice program for the 2020-2021 school year, and the Superintendent is directed to notify the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Office of School Finance that this district will not be accepting school choice students for the 2020-2021 school year.

Chair Mills asked for a motion to take the motion under Unfinished Business off the table. A motion to take a motion off the table is not debatable. No motion was made. Chair Mills explained the motion about school choice participation for the 2020-2021 school year will remain as Unfinished Business. Member Lavoie made a point of order, which Chair Mills recognized, that a motion to “lay on the table” is needed in order for the motion, under Unfinished Business, to be “taken off the table.” Discussion began. At Chair Mills’ suggestion and with no objection from members, the agenda was altered and approval of draft minutes was moved up on the agenda.

- A. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on March 9, 2029

Deferred

- B. Approval of #1341 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on April 6, 2020, 2020

Motion: To approve the minutes of the regular WRSDC meeting held on April 6, 2020.

(L. Long-Bellil)

(S. Haber)

Discussion ensued. Members' attention was called to the motion in the draft minutes of the April 6, 2020 meeting, found on page 10. Member Weeks, the maker of the April 6, 2020 motion, addressed the Committee, explaining and confirming her intent when making that motion on April 6, 2020 was to postpone School Committee action on school choice participation to a later meeting date. Some additional discussion about process, Robert's Rules of Order, and the motion about school choice participation ensued.

Member Godbout left the meeting.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Christina Smith
Melissa Ayala
Scott Brown
Michael Dennis
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Linda Long-Bellil
Amy Michalowski
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Megan Weeks
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Kenneth Mills
Matthew Lavoie

The minutes were approved 15-0-2.

C. Approval of #321 Special Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on April 14, 2020

Motion: To approve the minutes of the special WRSDC meeting held on April 14, 2020.

(L. Long-Bellil)

(C. Smith)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Kenneth Mills
Christina Smith
Melissa Ayala
Scott Brown
Michael Dennis
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Amy Michalowski
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Megan Weeks
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

None

The minutes were unanimously approved.

Chair Mills returned to the meeting agenda.

V. Unfinished Business

Motion: The Wachusett Regional School District will not participate in the school choice program for the 2020-2021 school year, and the Superintendent is directed to notify the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Office of School Finance that this district will not be accepting school choice students for the 2020-2021 school year.

Motion: To postpone to a time certain, May 11, 2020, action on the motion under Unfinished Business, WRSD participation in school choice for the 2020-2021 school year.

(M. Lavoie)

(A. Michalowski)

Discussion began, with requests that the Superintendent provide the Committee with additional information about school choice, data about Wachusett residents who school choice out of this district, if implementation of full-day kindergarten has had an impact on class size at the kindergarten level/kindergarten students being enrolled in the Wachusett schools, projected class size numbers for 2020-2021, and the Superintendent's recommendation about school choice participation for the coming school year. Member

Ottmar had shared information about school choice with members of the Business/Finance Subcommittee, and this information will be included in the next Superintendent's Report for the information of all members.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Kenneth Mills
Christina Smith
Melissa Ayala
Scott Brown
Michael Dennis
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Amy Michalowski
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Megan Weeks
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

None

The motion was unanimously approved.

VI. Secretary's Report

- D. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on March 9, 2029

Addressed above

- E. Approval of #1341 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on April 6, 2020, 2020

Addressed above

- F. Approval of #321 Special Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on April 14, 2020

Addressed above

VII. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

Chair Mills 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.

VIII. Committee Reports

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

This subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting. Subcommittee Chair Mills will speak with the Superintendent about scheduling and the need for a meeting.

- B. Education Subcommittee (R. Imber, Chair, C. Smith, Vice-chair, M. Ayala, S. Haber, L. Kirshenbaum, L. Long-Bellil, A. Silva)

Subcommittee Chair Imber reported this subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting.

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

Subcommittee Chair Dennis did not have anything additional to report and members did not have additional questions. Student Representative Massoni-Nesman did ask about a timeline for refunding monies to students and families. Superintendent McCall again reported refunding of these funds is being addressed. Subcommittee Chair Dennis reported the date for the next meeting of this subcommittee is to be determined.

- D. Legal Affairs Subcommittee (S. Brown, Chair, M. Lavoie, Vice-chair, R. Imber, A. Michalowski)

Subcommittee Chair Brown reported about reaching out to the three bargaining units with contracts that expire 6/30/2020, suggesting negotiating remotely. Chair Mills asked this subcommittee be in contact with the Superintendent about MOAs with the other unions.

- E. Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee (M. Lavoie, Chair, A. Michalowski, Vice-chair, K. Mills, M. Weeks)

Subcommittee Chair Lavoie took this opportunity to outline the timeline for the Superintendent's annual evaluation, with the anticipated deadline to have this process completed by the end of June 2020. The electronic evaluation questionnaire will be shared with Committee members to gather their input and feedback. Superintendent McCall will provide members with his updates at the beginning of June.

F. Facilities and Security Subcommittee (A. Young, Chair, L. Woodland, Vice-chair, S. Godbout)

Vice-chair Woodland reported this subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting.

G. Audit Advisory Board (B. Mitchel, Chair)

Superintendent McCall reported District administration is still working with the auditors around some minor questions,

H. Ad Hoc Subcommittees

1. Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Negotiate the Superintendent's Contract (K. Mills, Chair, M. Weeks, Vice-chair, S. Brown, M. Dennis, M. Lavoie)

Subcommittee Chair Mills reported on recent meetings of this subcommittee and on meetings with Superintendent McCall. He will keep the full membership apprised.

I. Building Committees

J. School Council Reports:

Central Tree Middle School (S. Haber), Chocksett Middle School (L. Woodland), Davis Hill Elementary School (K. Mills), Dawson Elementary School (L. Kirshenbaum), Glenwood Elementary School, Houghton Elementary School (M. Ayala), Mayo Elementary School (A. Young), Mountview Middle School (S. Brown), Naquag Elementary School (M. Lavoie), Paxton Center School (K. Ottmar), Thomas Prince School (A. Silva), Wachusett Regional High School (L.

Member Gustafson – SEPAC virtual meeting April 28, 2020, via Google Meet

Chair Mills had questions for Superintendent McCall about requirements of School Councils and legal requirements for meetings. Superintendent McCall reported he has not received any guidance/direction from DESE about School Councils, and that he will discuss with principals the status of SIMCO meetings at the next Principal Leadership Team meeting

IX. Public Hearing

No members of the public reached out to Chair Mills via email.

X. New Business

Member Michalowski referred to Policy 3510 *Class Size*, noting this policy was adopted in 2004 and she suggested that the Education Subcommittee may want to review the policy,

which Education Subcommittee Chair Imber reported is on the policy review docket of that subcommittee.

XI. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(L. Long-Bellil)
(S. Haber)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Kenneth Mills
Christina Smith
Melissa Ayala
Scott Brown
Michael Dennis
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Amy Michalowski
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Megan Weeks
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

None

The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

DM:rlp