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## Wachusett beating could change policies

By John Weeks ITEM STAFF

**HOLDEN** — With four suspects facing assault and battery charges, and a visible police presence at Wachusett Regional High School, police believe their investigation into a videotaped fight that occurred near the school on Monday afternoon is nearing completion.

"Unless we learn that there were two other individuals involved, I'd say it's done," said Holden Police Chief George Sherrill. He said two culprits may have escaped being caught on camera and police are looking into that possibility. "We're fine tuning the investigation," he said.

Wachusett serves students from Sterling, Holden, Rutland, Paxton and Princeton. The school also participates in school choice.

Three minors and an adult are facing charges in the incident. Brendan Simpson, 17, of 47 Katahdin St., Worcester, is charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (a metal pipe), assault and battery and conspiracy. Police believe Simpson, who does not attend Wachusett, was called to the school by a friend to help him beat a fellow student.

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*"What would precipitate such an event? Clearly, it wasn't a bump in the hallway. There has to be a huge underlying factor."*

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GEORGE SHERRILL, HOLDEN POLICE CHIEF

A 16 year-old Worcester boy, who does not attend Wachusett, is charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (a shod foot) and assault and battery. A 16-year-old Worcester boy, who attends Wachusett, is charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (shod foot), assault and battery with intent to do bodily injury and being a disorderly person. A 15-year-old Holden boy, who attends Wachusett, is charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (the ground) and assault and battery.

The younger suspects were not named because of their age.

Police said the four suspects attacked a Wachusett student, knocking him to the ground, kicking him and hitting him with a pipe. When a friend of the victim tried to intervene, he was beaten as well. The attackers had left by the time police responded. However, one of the students in the group watching the fight videotaped it on his cell phone and sent the video to police.

"That was very helpful," Sherrill said. "Initially, we had no idea such an event had occurred. We pulled up and it was all over. We thought we had a minor skirmish. When I saw the video, I was shocked. And then, clearly, having that video, we were able to identify people. Posting it on our Web site prompted calls."

The video of the beating can be viewed at [holdenpd.com](http://holdenpd.com).

Sherrill said police are still investigating the motivation behind the attack and are maintaining a presence at the high school to prevent any further hostilities from breaking out.

"What would precipitate such an event?" Sherrill wondered. "Clearly, it wasn't a bump in the hallway. There has to be a huge underlying factor. We have a great working relationship with the State Police, having them right in town, and they have been very helpful in freeing up patrols to be on hand at the school before, during and after the attack. DA (Joseph) Early's office has been very helpful. This is still ongoing. We will maintain a presence at the high school throughout the week. We are thankful the school vacation next week and we'll just be dealing with the fallout."

At the time The Item went to press, school and district officials were unavailable for comment. However, Sherrill said there is the possibility the school district may create a harsher policy of punishment, including expulsion, when it comes to fighting.



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