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Wachusett expels boy over attack

15-year-old accused in brutal recorded fight

By Jean Laquidara Hill TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

HOLDEN— One of the teenage boys charged in the brutal after-school fight near Wachusett Regional High School April 14 was expelled from the regional school system last night.

The 15-year-old freshman lives in the school district but was permanently expelled. His case will be reviewed in September 2009 for possible reinstatement, according to Superintendent of Schools Thomas G. Pandiscio.

Described by police as vicious, the fight involved several teenage boys who beat a Wachusett Regional High School student and another boy who tried to help him. The fight quickly hit the Internet after a student used his cell phone to record it, then transmitted it to a news station.

Police used the video to help identify the three teenagers who were later charged. The video shows boys beating one student and stomping on him while he was down, then striking another boy in the face with a pipe when he tried to help his friend.

Charges emanating from the fight are pending in Juvenile Court against the 15-year-old who was expelled last night and against a 16-year-old boy who lives in Worcester but was attending Wachusett Regional High School under the school choice program.

The Wachusett Regional School Committee vote last night to expel the 15-year-old freshman followed a disciplinary hearing in closed session for more than an hour attended by the youth, his parents, a lawyer and a fourth person who did not identify herself.

The committee heard testimony from Wachusett Regional High School Principal William Beando and other parties, then dismissed the youth and his family and lawyer and deliberated in closed session for roughly an hour and a half before inviting the family back into the room and informing them of its decision.

The lawyer, Lynsey M. Heffernan of Worcester, declined to comment or disclose her client's name because he is a minor.



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An expulsion hearing was also planned last night for the 16-year-old school choice student, but he had not arrived at the school board meeting by the time the hearing was set to begin.

Mr. Pandiscio said the school board had voted to exclude the 15-year-old student from the Wachusett school district and all of its advantages and privileges, but would set standards by which the youth's case would be reviewed in September 2009 with the possibility of him returning to the school at that time if he has met conditions to be set by the school administration.

According to Mr. Pandiscio, state law allows a school board to hold an expulsion hearing and exclude a student from school for behavior that happened off school grounds if the behavior started at school and continued off school property; or if the behavior was so egregious that the student's attendance at the school would be detrimental to other students.

He said he believes both instances fit this case because the fight was planned during school and carried out at a place known as an after-school meeting place for students

Brendan M. Simpson, 17, of Worcester who does not attend school and was allegedly called in to help beat up the Wachusett Regional High School student, also was charged and pleaded not guilty in Leominster District Court.

He was charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, a metal pipe; assault and battery; and conspiracy.



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