

Warwick School Committee Minutes

Meeting of March 13, 2007

Open Session

The Warwick School Committee met in Open Session at Winman Jr. High School on March 13, 2007. Chairman Friel called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. with the following in attendance:

COMMITTEE

Christopher Friel, Chairperson

Lucille Mota-Costa, Vice-Chairperson

Bethany Furtado, Clerk

Joyce L. Andrade

Paul Cannistra

ADMINISTRATION

Robert J. Shapiro, Superintendent

Victor Mercurio, Director of Secondary Education

Rosemary Healey, Esq., Director of Compliance & Human Resources

MOTION 2007-73: Moved by Ms. Mota-Costa, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, to go into closed session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under General Laws of Rhode Island 42-46-5(a)(1), (a)(2), (a)(8) and (a)(9).

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra - Aye

Open session reconvened at 7:30 p.m.

Richard D'Agostino, Director Special Services

Robert T. Bushell, Director of Elementary Education

David E. Small, Director of Buildings and Grounds

Robert W. Dooley, Director of Business Affairs

MOTION 2007-74: Moved by Mr. Cannistra, seconded by Mrs. Andrade, to keep the Minutes of the Executive Session for March 13, 2007 private.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra - Aye

Announcement: Chairman Friel announced that in Executive Session two (2) votes were taken, both passing 5-0, to deny two grievances.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION 2007-75: Moved by Mrs. Andrade, seconded by Mrs. Furtado, to approve the minutes of the Open Session for February 13, February 20, February 26 and March 6, 2007.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra - Aye

MOTION 2007-76: Moved by Mrs. Andrade, seconded by Mrs. Furtado, to approve the Executive Minutes for February 13, February 20, February 26 and March 6, 2007.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra - Aye

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Transfers:

MOTION 2007-77: Moved by Mr. Cannistra, seconded by Ms. Mota-Costa, to approve the transfers presented to the Committee.

MOTION PASSES (4-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – not present for vote

Paul Cannistra – Aye

Warrants:

MOTION 2007-78: Moved by Ms. Mota-Costa, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, to approve the warrants presented to the Committee.

MOTION PASSES (4-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – not present for vote

Paul Cannistra – Aye

Professional Personnel items:

Retirements/Resignation

MOTION 2007-79: Moved by Mrs. Andrade, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, that the retirement of Sandra Gondusky, nurse/teacher at Hoxsie Elementary School, be accepted effective the last day of school.

MOTION PASSES (4-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – not present for vote

Paul Cannistra – Aye

MOTION 2007-80: Moved by Mrs. Andrade, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, that the retirement of Nancy Rice, special educator at Aldrich Jr. High School, be accepted effective the last day of school.

MOTION PASSES (4-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – not present for vote

Paul Cannistra – Aye

MOTION 2007-81: Moved by Mrs. Andrade, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, that the resignation of Kristin Pellegrino, music teacher on leave of absence for the 2006-2007 school year, be accepted effective the last day of school.

MOTION PASSES (4-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – not present for vote

Paul Cannistra – Aye

Lippitt School Playground:

MOTION 2007-82: Moved by Mrs. Andrade, seconded by Ms. Mota-Costa, to approve the proposed playground at Lippitt School.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra - Aye

Strategic Planning Team: Chairman Friel said that he will be a member of this team.

Appointment: Special Education Advisory Committee: Dr. D'Agostino recommended that William McCaffrey, Vice Principal of Veterans be appointed as a member of the Warwick Special Education Advisory Committee.

MOTION 2007-83: Moved by Mrs. Andrade, seconded by Mr. Cannistra, approved

the appointment of William McCaffrey.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra - Aye

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2006-07 Budget Adjustments – per audit

Mr. Dooley reported that with the completion of the audit for the 2005-06 fiscal year, we can now adjust our budget to put final numbers in place for the 2006-07 budget. The additional surplus of \$171,492 (total surplus of \$2,471,492 less the amount of \$2,300,000) is recognized. Since \$190,117 has to be added to our 3120 In-Service account, we must subtract the difference of \$18,625 from the professional salary account. When the city adopted their budget in June, their allocation of school revenues was the same total as ours but distributed differently between city, state and federal sources. To be consistent, the adjustments on the revenue page are required.

MOTION 2007-84: Moved by Mrs. Furtado, seconded by Mrs. Andrade, to approve the 2006-07 Budget.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra - Aye

(No bids or change orders)

Adoption of Policies: Graduation by Proficiency 2nd reading.

Mr. Mercurio – Changes made: Students must complete and demonstrate proficiency in Carnegie units, electronic portfolio, and senior exhibition project. Students must participate in all state subject area assessments. Under “state assessments”: Students are required to participate in all state subject-area assessments. Under “appeals”: All decisions of the district-based appeals committee are final at the district level. The student retains any and all rights that he or she may have to appeal the district’s decision to the Rhode Island Commission of Elementary and Secondary Education. Under “school-based advisory committee”: Community Member (not a parent of the student appellant). Under “district-based appeals committee”: All decisions of the district-based appeals committee are final at the district level. The student retains any and all rights that he or she may have to appeal the district’s decision to the Rhode Island Commission of Elementary and Secondary Education. Under “Transfer Students”: All decisions of the district-based appeals committee are final at the district level. The student retains any and all rights that he or she may have to appeal the district’s decision to the Rhode Island Commission of Elementary and Secondary Education.

MOTION 2007-85 Moved by Mrs. Andrade to make the insertion after “district’s decision to School Committee and/or RI Commissioner.”

The Chair called for a second on Motion 2007-85 – MOTION FAILED

NO SECOND

MOTION 2007-86: Moved by Ms. Mota-Costa, seconded by Mr. Cannistra,

to approve the second reading of Policy IKFA (Warwick Diploma System).

MOTION PASSES (4 ayes 1 nay)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Nay Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra - Aye

Information and Proposals:

From School Committee Members: Ms. Mota-Costa requested that the School Committee look at the packet she distributed regarding the revision of Policy B – School Committee Grievance and Operations. She said that a presentation would take about 45 minutes. She will speak to the Superintendent when she would like to put it on the agenda. This will be posted on the website. She also mentioned that there was a concern regarding reviewing the use of technology, and that both Beth and she were looking at the policy. We need a few more weeks to get this done.

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Public Comment: There were a number of people who presented with comments and the following is a summary of subject and discussion. Sharon from Special Ed Advisory Committee volunteered to be on the March 31st screening committee (Superintendent search). Michele Landri has serious concerns that intensive education programs are going to be cut and special education students are to be taught in the same classroom as non-honors students – referred to as “heterogeneous grouping.” She said heterogeneous grouping are a very costly endeavor; good education cost money – good education for neediest cost a lot of money.

Paula Morelli, a dispatcher in transportation department, said that less is rarely ever the same. First Student buses are overdue for oil changes, brakes and transmission repair. She asked that the School Committee really look into everything before you consider privatizing our special ed transportation. There would be less accountability to the School Department when vital services are taken over by private contractors. We go above and beyond. Now parents have someone to call and speak with (bus drivers) Can't do that with a private service. We would go from open and accountable to closed and secret. Since board awarded the bid for maintenance, we are thousands of miles overdue for oil changes – not including things that are wrong. Lynn Conti – Principal at Robertson – pleaded that the literacy coach positions not be cut. They are very important to our students and our teachers. Nicki Green & Ms. Murphy

(Robertson school teachers) said they had sent a letter to the Superintendent and the School Committee regarding the cutting of the literacy coach positions. Darlene Netcoh remarked she had a concern regarding eliminating stanines and urged the Committee not to do this. She also wanted to know about the plaque honoring John Thompson that was at Toll Gate and how did that happen? Ms. Andrade responded that a retirement dinner had been held for him and the plaque was gifted to him. Ms. Netcoh asked why he didn't take it home with him? Ms. Andrade said a decision was made to place it in the office. Darlene said she needs access to a computer because of absentee list.

George Landri: asked what policy was followed giving a plaque to Thompson. There are plaques for the Bowling playground and Mr. Shapiro, which are well deserved; how did it come about? Ms. Andrade said in lieu of giving an item for service on the School Committee, we opted to purchase a plaque instead and maintenance installed it. She said we do not have a policy to address that issue. Mr. Landri commented Danny Sheehan could have used a plaque. He then said that we need a policy regarding cell phones, they are no longer just a phone, they can go on the internet, take pictures, etc. Mr. Ginolfi said that the students will not benefit by privatizing the special ed transportation; only the private company will. He asked if it worth a few dollars in a budget of \$150 million? Cut from the top – not the bottom – where students are directly affected. He also requested a printout of the budget, and asked why it had not been

provided. He said he didn't have experience teaching special ed, and didn't know how he would teach these students. Mike from Potowomut asked what the cost was for a special ed student; and the Chair responded it would depend on the placement cost; Mr. D'Agostino said \$40,000. John Latierre remarked that literacy and math coaches are very valuable resources. Larry, who has a daughter at Aldrich, said she gets very anxious if the driver is running late and the driver will call the house; he said that will not happen under privatization. These children are not numbers, they are names to us.

Tom Daniels, whose son is a special ed student, said that the bus drivers are a vital part of education, they give them stability on the bus. He said that special ed kids don't like change. If you have 5 or 6 drivers working the same route, the students would not be able to handle the changeover. Donna Smith said she moved to Warwick, after going to every district in the state and made the decision to come to Warwick because Warwick had the most to offer for special education. Her son is a special ed student, said he is

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very attached to his bus driver, and they have done so much for him. She also said she had moved to the best district and now you're

cutting a service for the most susceptible students. Bob McGuire (teacher and parent of a Potowomut student) said that he read in the paper no definite plans for Potowomut closing. Chairman Friel responded that is still the case at this point. Mr. McGuire said that two years ago it was stated that before any school would be closed, Warwick would redistrict first, and asked if plans were being looked at. He said that Potowomut is an excellent school and we can't be coming back every year to fight for our kids. The children are in the middle. Lynn Gauthier said she has two disabled children and every day she went to work she knew they were well taken care of, and asked that we keep our wonderful drivers working. Tammy questioned that teachers who are not qualified to teach my child are now going to have to teach my child. Fred Aldrich, a 12-year special ed bus driver, said we call each other if a bus breaks down and get the kids transported and that would not happen with a private company. Joanne DeLuca, a 29-year special needs bus aide and driver spoke about privatization and their accountability. Betty O'Leary, a special ed bus driver and who has a son with special needs, said she applied for the job when she saw the professionalism and quality of service the drivers provided to her child that encouraged her to apply for her job. Bob, a parent from Potowomut, said don't close Potowomut, this is a very close-knit neighborhood, and closing a system is not the answer, what's next year? Denise, a special ed bus driver for 13 years said she loves the kids and the parents, and suggested having our own maintenance garage, and thanked the members for reading her recent e-mail and responding to

her. Bernadine Nolan said this was the second time she had asked the question, if you are making cuts, why does Rosemary have an assistant and in a short period of time going to hire an assistant for her assistant. Ann did the job for years with no assistants. Ms. Healey said they were hiring WISE employee to replace a management position, and there was no assistant hired for her assistant. She said she does two jobs, and there was a cost savings over what the director was making. The President of the Potowomut PTA said you are funding things that you did not have money to fund, now making us pay for it. There has been no long term planning. Lilly D'Angelo (parent with two children) said we need your support to keep everything the way it is. She asked that sign language be taught, as sign language would calm her children down, so please implement sign language for the teachers involved. Pam, a special ed driver, and mother of special needs student, said she had been out on medical leave, a Ms. D'Angelo called her every two weeks, saying the kids miss you. This will not be there if you privatize, so please consider other avenues. Michele Landri said "people" came to Warwick because of an excellent program for special ed, and every person is here because they are concerned about the kids. Ms. Landri said Warwick is known for its special education services and many parents move to the city for its program. The state is all about personalized education – that goes down to the bus drivers too – personalization not just in the classroom, but from when students leave home to when they return after school. Patty, parent from Potowomut said the small class room for her child has been good for

her, and that we don't want to bus our children anywhere. Michele again spoke saying give the authority to the professionals – teachers – concerning special education; we know how to teach these students well. We have a proud legacy of special ed left by past committees and administrators, ask yourself what kind of legacy you're going to leave.

MOTION 2007-87: Moved by Mr. Cannistra, seconded by Mrs. Furtado, to adjourn.

MOTION PASSES (5-0)

Christopher Friel - Aye Lucille Mota-Costa - Aye

Joyce L. Andrade – Aye Bethany Furtado – Aye

Paul Cannistra – Aye

Meeting adjourned: 9:25 p.m.

Bethany Furtado, Clerk

Betsey Snipes, Secretary