

Warwick School Committee Minutes
Meeting of May 7, 2013 - Open Budget Meeting

The Warwick School Committee met in Open Session at Veterans Memorial High School, on Tuesday, May 7, 2013. Ms. Furtado called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. with the following in attendance:

COMMITTEE

Bethany A. Furtado, Chair
M. Terri Medeiros, Vice Chair
Jennifer Ahearn, Clerk
Eugene A. Nadeau
Karen Bachus

A stenographer was present to record the meeting. Chair Furtado said she would call the people who were signed up to speak at the May 2nd meeting down so they were able to speak first. There will be a three minute time limit and the Clerk will keep time.

Dr. D'Agostino said he would answer questions that were presented at the previous meeting. How many students and school buildings do other districts have: Providence 23,872 students/41 schools; Cranston 10,664 students/18 schools; Warwick 9615 students/23 schools; Pawtucket 9,300 students/16 schools. Present class size average and consolidation class size average: Aldrich 15.94; Gorton 14.28 students; Winman 14.67 students – and configuration class size average: 17.02. The current school data was used to see the numbers that were used during the short term meetings that provided a view of our district 10 years out to 2022. Winman has more “intensive special education programs and students” than the other two junior high schools. Aldrich 55 teachers; Gorton 53 teachers; Winman 59 teachers. Gorton has 100 fewer students than Aldrich and Winman. Warwick’s plans for the junior high school given the suggestions by some to move towards the middle school concept/model have contractual restrictions and certification. As of 5/6/13 elementary teachers 247 – 7 have middle school certification; presently 38 6th grade teachers 2 have middle school certification; secondary grade 7/8 teachers, 40 have certification. We did not request additional administrative positions; they were listed as a “wish list”.

Classroom usage: examined by principals of each school as to the number of rooms in each building and the capacity of those rooms as classrooms and not what they were presently be used for: Rooms: 3a (math enrichment room 14 students); 3b (team room 14 students); 105 (conference room 28 students); 200 (dept. head office 14 students); special education rooms (207/28 students; 14/28 students; 102b/15 students. Transportation to Aldrich and Winman will be affected minor to not at all. Presently the longest bus ride in the city is Potowomut to Winman – 30/40 minutes; present Gorton bus ride from Warwick Neck 13/26 minutes; and proposed ride from church Avenue to Gorton 23/26 minutes; present Gorton bus ride from suburban Oakland Beach 8 minutes; Proposed ride from Oakland Beach avenue/West Shore road to Winman 9/10 minutes [note: routes were driven and timed].

The vision – the long term plan – is in the strategic plan that was developed by teachers, principals, administrators, parents and school committee members and approved by the school committee 5-0 at the April meeting. Vision: to educate all students to become self-directed learners, highly productive responsible citizens, and contributors to a technological and global society. Initiatives as of 2013 – educational evaluation system, curriculum development, common core standards, graduation by proficiency, multi-tiered systems of supports, data use, comprehensive assessment system, and long term facilities planning. Goal 1(teaching and learning); goal 2 (technology); Goal 3(school environment to provide the students, teachers, and families with innovative structures that support 21st century learning and living. Buildings/structures – continue with LRFPC to reflect declining enrollment and student needs.

Warwick School Committee Minutes
Meeting of May 7, 2013 - Open Budget Meeting

Mr. Mullen said there is literature to support both sides of the argument for middle schools. Researchers have raised concerns with the middle school model. A research study by Bedard and Do, "Are Middle Schools More Effective," raised concerns including lack of personal attention and monitoring; decline in sixth grade math and science scores; lower on-time high school completion rates and less able students.

Public comment: Gene Andreozzi said Warwick is a good system and the reason not to close any school is safety; Draper Avenue is not a main road. You are thinking about money – not the safety of our kids. The numbers don't mean anything. Joanne Phillips (high school teacher) busing time is under estimated. Nicholas Berrefti (student) at Gorton I have unconditional love. Ed Ladouceur said he wouldn't support closing schools until accurate information and numbers that balance are presented. The numbers don't add up. He also said he submitted questions over six weeks ago and has never received any answers. He suggested starting to cut costs in administration. He also questioned the busing times that were presented. David Testa (parent and member short term committee) said the closing vote was 8/7 not the full committee. He also commented on middle schools. Jennifer Wrench (parent) said she is a school bus driver, and questioned the timing saying there are road conditions and driving slow in a school bus. Because her daughter is very shy, if she is in a larger class, she will fall back into the shadows. Dawn Johnson (parent) worried about travel time, and had concerns about her son not getting a proper education with a larger class size. Stephanie VanPatten said she was a member of the long-term planning committee. She said the decision to close Gorton is shortsighted. We need a comprehensive plan to build the infrastructure we will need in 2025 and beyond. Without a plan and vision is a waste of taxpayer resources and incompetent public management. Sarah Taylor (English teacher at Gorton) said that standards change names. Her students have had 30 days of state mandated testing. She said it is time for middle schools now, you were elected and should take charge. She said she didn't believe any schools need to be closed. Gloria Rossiter (teacher at Aldrich) said we will work with you and give the best learning experience for your students, but with that being said the most important thing is the education of our children. In the five classes I have, I don't have 14 or 15 students; I have 28, 25, 22, and 17. Tom Hewes (social studies teacher) said you "serve as people choice" - be their voices. The vote was 8 to close, 7 no, 2 abstains 2 not present. You are the voice of people of Warwick – please help us. Alanna Morrison (7th grade student at Gorton) said she would rather stay at Gorton. She said she would have no time for homework (because she'll be on the bus) and didn't want to get home after dark. Sherri Boisvert said in October of 2006, Ms. Furtado you said you would "not close any schools." Stand by your "words" of your platform. She also asked how can you do bus schedule when we have not redistricted yet. No one wants Gorton to close. Mary Townsend said she had a prepared statement, but said she wanted to comment on the complaints of students riding a bus ten to fifteen minutes more a day. Our special ed students go to Middle Street School or Bradley Hospital and other schools riding 30/45 minutes for their best education. No matter how the vote goes, WISE is committed to working with teachers and administrators to move forward. Carmella Vella Wilkinson said she had concerns about the bus schedule. She said our children deserve a long-range plan. Angelina Steinberg (parent) said put yourselves in the shoes of students and think about being tossed out of your elementary school and going to Gorton and now have to be tossed out again. Victoria (8th grader) commented on their antibullying campaign and listed many other Gorton activities. Julie Costello (teacher) suggested housing grade 6 in Gorton, Aldrich and Winman and asked if there any reason not to do it now; many teachers are certified, myself included. Mr. Andolfo (teacher at Gorton 13 years) asked if Gorton closes, what will it be used for in September?" . He said you have the power, if you have the slightest doubt put to vote next year when there is a plan. Kevin Shepard(student at URI) said he came with prepared statement but felt he would not be taken seriously. He commented on the bus route from Warwick Neck to Aldrich and said he never saw a

Warwick School Committee Minutes
Meeting of May 7, 2013 - Open Budget Meeting

classroom with 14 students when he was going to school in Warwick. Michael Pierce (teacher) said you have time; you have choices, all the choices in the world. Table this and come back to long a long-term committee. He said he was not sure of the numbers, not a clear savings. Dr. D'Agostino is not your boss, you are his boss. Jason Gervasini – (teacher) said this is a very tough decision to make. We need all day kindergarten and it is coming. Darlene Netcoh said it was great to see so many people here and was pleased to hear the comments. Commenting she said the School Committee has yet to vote and they have a very serious decision too make. Amanda Gorton asked what the long term plan would be. Sheri James (teacher) asked that everyone who went to Gorton to stand up. Madison Bateman (student) said she loved Gorton, the teachers and closing the school would separate her from her friends. Steven Andolfo said the student council raised \$500 for a school gift and have set up a scholarship fund. He also suggested having a sign with the number 30 on it to use instead of interrupting a speaker.

Ms. Furtado said that was our last speaker and the meeting is closed. It was noted that the meeting was posted on the agenda from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and could not legally continue. The next meeting will be held on May 14th at Toll Gate High School.

Moved by the Chair to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned: 7:30 p.m.